



# Popular or Scholarly?



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**General Reference Service, 180 Wilson Library, (612) 626-2227**
**The Web version of this publication is available at: <http://wilson.lib.umn.edu/reference/popular.html>**

There are several types of periodical publications found in research library collections. Knowing something about the characteristics of each type—popular, scholarly or trade—will help you identify periodical titles appropriate to the type of writing you are looking for.

## How to Recognize Popular Periodicals (Magazines)

<b>Length of articles</b>	Short (1-5 pages).
<b>Audience</b>	General, non-academic, non-specialized audience.
<b>Authority /Expertise</b>	Journalists, rather than researchers or specialists in a given field.
<b>Bibliography</b>	None. The reader cannot check the author's information by tracking down and reading the original information source.
<b>Frequency</b>	Published frequently ( <i>i.e.</i> , weekly, biweekly or monthly).
<b>Inclusions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many photographs or other illustrations.</li> <li>▪ Extensive commercial advertising.</li> </ul>
<b>Subjects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Variety of topic/subject areas (<i>Time</i>, <i>The New Yorker</i>, <i>National Review</i>).</li> <li>▪ Or single subject area with the intention of informing or <u>entertaining</u> a general audience. <i>Sports Illustrated</i> or <i>Audubon</i> are good examples.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Use conventional/conversational language, as opposed to a specialized vocabulary.
<b>Availability</b>	Can be purchased at newsstands and grocery stores.
<b>Examples</b>	<i>Time</i> , <i>Newsweek</i> , <i>U.S. News and World Report</i> , <i>Sports Illustrated</i> , <i>Ms</i>

## How to Recognize Scholarly Periodicals (Journals)

<b>Length of articles</b>	Lengthy articles (5-50 pages).
<b>Audience</b>	Are intended for an academic or scholarly audience.
<b>Authority / Expertise</b>	Publish articles written by academics, specialists or researchers in the field (as opposed to articles written by journalists reporting on or synthesizing research).
<b>Bibliography</b>	Bibliography, also called footnotes or cited references. Allows the reader to consult the same material that the author used in his/her research.
<b>Frequency</b>	Usually monthly, quarterly, or once or twice per year
<b>Inclusions</b>	Often publish reviews of the literature.
	Rare use of news photos and other types of graphics unless the research is visual in nature, such as art, design or architecture. Little or no advertising.
<b>Subject coverage</b>	Generally confined to a single, very specific aspect of a subject area ( <i>e.g.</i> , music theory, European political science, film studies, language development).
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Use technical or specialized vocabulary.
<b>Availability</b>	Journals are purchased by libraries and by professionals in a given field; they are not widely available for purchase at newsstands.
<b>Other</b>	Are often produced under the editorial supervision of a professional association ( <i>e.g.</i> , <i>Journal of the American Medical Association</i> ) or by a scholarly press ( <i>e.g.</i> , <i>Elsevier</i> , <i>Pergamon</i> ).
<b>Examples</b>	<i>New England Journal of Medicine</i> , <i>Journal of Religion</i> , <i>Developmental Psychology</i> , <i>Journal of American History</i>

## **Trade Publications (also called Professional Publications)**

There is a third type of publication, often referred to as *trade* or *professional*. These publications are geared towards very specific audiences, usually managers or administrators in business, finance, and industry. They are issued weekly or monthly to take advantage of fast-breaking changes in products or technology. They often contain regular columns of news and commentary, as well as lengthier articles about current issues and trends of interest to people in the field. Articles may be written by specialists or journalists. Examples of better known trade publications include *Beverage Industry*, *Adweek*, and *Food Processing*.

## **Grey Areas**

There are always *grey areas* with respect to pinning down what is popular or scholarly. Titles like *Harpers*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Parabola*, and *Science* contain sophisticated writing, footnoted articles, and authors that hold advanced degrees. At the same time, they display advertisements, have regular columns, photos, and brief articles, and are published by large media conglomerates.

If you are concerned about whether the article you want to use falls within a particular category, **look for a bibliography**, or lack of one, at the end of the article. Also, look for a brief biography of the author, either at the beginning of the article, or at the end of the publication, for information about the author's education and/or institutional affiliation. Most scholarly publications will identify the department and college, university or research lab where the author works.

## **For More Information**

*Magazines for Libraries* (a misnomer!) describes core scholarly journals as well as popular magazines.

**Location:** Wilson Reference Desk Quarto PN4832 .M34x (current edition)

What type of publication you have selected? If you still have questions after using the criteria on the other side of this sheet and consulting *Magazines for Libraries*, talk with a reference librarian or your instructor.

## **Article Indexes**

<http://www.lib.umn.edu/articles>

The most efficient way to identify periodical articles on your topic is to use indexes. If you know an author's name, have a general description of the subject(s) you want, or the title of a magazine or journal you are interested in looking at, there is probably an index available to help you find what you need.

*General Reference Center Gold* provides access to the contents of popular magazines. *ProQuest Newsstand*, *Lexis-Nexis*, *Ethnic Newswatch*, and *Alternative Press Index* are some of the more frequently used online sources for finding news articles on current issues.

In college and university libraries, where most of the periodicals in the collection are scholarly, the majority of indexes are geared towards providing access to academic publications. There are indexes that cover a single subject area (*Social Work Abstracts*, *Philosopher's Index*, and *America: History & Life*), as well as indexes that cover a number of different, though interrelated, disciplines (*MLA Bibliography*). Use the online *Expanded Academic Index* to look for scholarly and/or popular sources on a subject or topic. The software will allow you to look at and compare selections your retrieve.

Indexes in the collection are available in a variety of formats. In addition to print volumes, an ever-increasing number of indexes are searchable electronically. Some of these indexes contain full-text articles. A number of these databases are available in CD-ROM format, most are networked and can be searched through MNCAT. Each campus library provides computer terminals that offer access to electronic indexes. With so many options to choose from, **finding the appropriate indexes to search can be the most important step** in any search for periodical articles. For additional help determining which indexes are best suited to your needs, consult the guide racks in reference area lobbies, talk with a reference librarian or select **ResearchQuickStart** from LUMINA at <http://research.lib.umn.edu>. Follow instructions to identify indexes in your field of study or your topic.

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