



# Finding Scholarly Sources

## Introduction

First of all, you need to understand where scholarly articles can be found. The Library has a collection of materials known as **periodicals**. Periodicals are publications that come out on a regular basis (quarterly, monthly, daily, etc.). They can be broken into three main groups:

- **Newspapers** (report current happenings, opinions, and special interest features)  
(Examples: The Middletown Journal, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal)
- **Magazines** (present articles of popular interest on a variety of subjects)  
(Examples: Time, Newsweek, Popular Science, Psychology Today)
- **Journals** (offer the results of studies and experiments conducted by scholars)  
(Examples: New England Journal of Medicine, RN, Nature, Journal of Leisure Research)

**Scholarly articles** (also known as journal articles, refereed articles, peer-reviewed, or research articles) are found in journals. This type of article is greatly respected as a source of information on a topic. Periodical articles from magazines or newspapers will provide information on a topic but will usually lack the depth or specificity that scholarly journal articles provide. For some assignments, you may be required to find scholarly articles when researching a topic. In other cases, you may wish to find scholarly articles to be sure your information has some authority. Check out the chart to see how scholarly sources compare to popular magazines.

Type of Periodical	Scholarly Journal	Popular Magazines and Newspapers
<b>Purpose</b>	Original Research In-Depth Analysis	Report current events Entertain Summarize research of general interest Not original research by the author
<b>Audience</b>	Scholars, researchers and students in a particular field of study	General Population
<b>Authors</b>	Researchers, Academics Experts in the subject they are writing about Always named	Journalists May be unnamed
<b>Sources</b>	Almost always has a list of Works Cited Extensive documentation	Rarely documents sources Documentation vague (e.g. "A study was done...")
<b>Publisher</b>	Scholarly societies, University Presses	Commercial publishers
<b>Characteristics</b>	Tends to be longer Few or no photographs Includes charts or tables Technical or specialized language Describe research methodologies Regular white paper Peer-reviewed*	Tends to be shorter Many photographs and pictures Large number of advertisements Everyday language Glossy paper Not peer-reviewed*
<b>Examples</b>	Nature JAMA-Journal of the American Medical Association IEEE Software	Cosmopolitan Sports Illustrated New York Times

Below are some ways you can find scholarly articles or determine if a given article is scholarly in nature.

## Using periodical databases

Periodical databases contain citations to articles in newspapers, magazines, and journals. You can find periodical databases related to your topic using the **Subject & Course Guides** link on the [GHL website](#). Many of the periodical databases available through Miami University Libraries allow you to restrict your search to journal articles. **Articles and More** and the **Ebsco databases** (e.g., **Academic Search Complete**, **CINAHL Plus**, **Computer Source**, **SOCIndex**) offer two ways to limit your search to scholarly materials:

1. On the main search screen, enter your search terms and then click on the little box next to **Scholarly (Peer-Reviewed) Journals** under the “Limit your results” section of the screen. Then click **Search**. All of the citations in your results will come from scholarly publications.
2. If you have already run a search, look on the left-hand side of the page for the “**Refine your results**” options, and click on “Limit to Peer-Reviewed Journals” or click on “Academic Journals” under “**Limit by Material Type**” to limit to scholarly journals.

## Google Scholar (scholar.google.com)

Can you find scholarly sources on the Web? Yes you can, and Google Scholar is a simple way to broadly search for scholarly literature. From one place, you can search across many disciplines and sources: peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, abstracts and articles from academic publishers, professional societies, preprint repositories, universities and other scholarly organizations. Keep in mind that you have access to many of these same materials in full-text through the Miami University Library system! Setting your preferences using the directions below will help you see if a given resource in Google Scholar is available through the libraries:

- Choose “Settings” → “Library Links” → then enter “Miami University Libraris” and check the box next Miami University Libraries – Find It @MiamiOH (then “Save”). Then click “Find It @MiamiOH” by articles that interest you to check our online holdings.

## Examining a citation

As you look at the citation for an article, there are really no guaranteed signs to alert you to a scholarly article. The title of the periodical may have the word “journal” in it, but then so does Ladies Home Journal. One action to take in the Ebsco databases is to click on the *journal title* of an article that interests you. A screen will appear with information on the journal, including whether or not it is *peer reviewed*.

The image shows a screenshot of an Ebsco database search result on the left and a detailed publication record on the right. The search result is for the article "Bias and dispersal in the animal reintroduction literature." by authors BAJOMI, BALINT<sup>1</sup>, PULLIN, ANDREW S.<sup>2,3</sup>, STEWART, GAVIN B.<sup>2,3</sup>, and TAKÁCS-SÁNTA, ANDRÁS<sup>1</sup>. The source is cited as "Oryx; July 2012, Vol. 44 Issue 3, p358-365, 8p". The subject terms include "CONSERVATION biology", "SCIENTIFIC literature", "WILDLIFE reintroduction", "DATABASES", "BIBLIOGRAPHY", and "BIOLOGY -- Classification". The keywords are "conservation biology", "literature search", "reintroduction", "scientific literature", and "systematic review". The abstract states: "We examined the literature on animal reintroductions to assess the challenges face decision making. We undertook an extensive search in eight electronic literature da We found 3,826 potentially relevant publications totalling at least 29,290 pages of 1 programmes. We examined whether the literature on reintroductions is based in a".

The detailed publication record on the right is for the journal "Oryx". It includes the following information: Title: Oryx; ISSN: 0030-6053; Publisher: Cambridge University Press; Information: The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom; Bibliographic Records: 01/01/1998 to present; Link to this: http://search.ebscohost.com; Publication: BOOK; Publication Type: Academic Journal; Subjects: Wildlife Management; Description: Aims to provide a comprehensive view of the conservation of wild conservation government departments etc.; Frequency: 4; Peer Reviewed: Yes.

## Reading an abstract

All of our periodical databases offer brief abstracts, or summaries, of all or many of the articles they index. If you find an article that has an abstract, you can read the abstract to learn a bit more about the article.

Sure signs that the article is scholarly in nature include:

- the abstract refers to a study or research completed by the author(s)
- watch for numbers – statistics are often mentioned. For instance, there is a reference to a group of items (people, microbes, ovens) which were studied, and the number of the items is given
- a conclusion or “proof” of an argument is implied

## Looking at the article itself

Even with an abstract or a good guess made from a citation, you often cannot be certain whether an article is scholarly or not until you actually look at it. This is the most dependable way to ensure that you have found the right article for your information need. Scholarly articles tend to have certain characteristics that other periodicals do not. These include:

- the article is written in the technical language of field of study
- it opens with a discussion of earlier work that the study or experiment is based on
- it includes a discussion of the methodology used
- it reports results and their implications
- it has several citations to other articles and books

If you find an article with at least two or three of these characteristics then your chances are excellent that it is a scholarly article.

## Citing Sources

Now that you have found your article, how do you cite it?

- Check out the resources on the [Citing Sources](#) page (linked from the main page of the Library site) for information on how to cite your sources and also some tools that will help you do so. The guides to APA and MLA linked near the top of the page for will cover all of the essentials for creating proper citations in that style for a bibliography, as well as the basics of creating an in-text citation to reference a source within your paper. It also provides links to additional guides you can consult for more detailed information on citing sources).
- And whatever you do, don't forget the ability to **email yourself an APA or MLA citation** from Articles and More and other databases. If you don't know or remember how to do this, just ask!

## When all else fails . . .

If you have tried the ways listed above to find scholarly journals and have not had any luck, be sure to check with one of our librarians for advice. We are at your service to help you find the information that you need. You may use the contact information below to reach us, or feel free to schedule a [Research Consultation](#) meeting with a librarian.