Identifying Scholarly Resources
Clues for Periodicals

1. Magazines:
   a. Substantive News or General Periodicals: The main purpose is to provide information, in a general manner, to a broad audience of concerned citizens. They are generally published by a commercial enterprise, have an attractive appearance, are heavily illustrated and seldom cite sources
   b. Popular periodicals: The main purpose is to entertain the reader, to sell products (their own or their advertisers), and/or to promote a viewpoint. They are slick and attractive in appearance, heavily illustrated, very seldom cite sources, contain second or third hand information, have little depth of content, and the audience requires minimal education

2. Journals/Scholarly Journals: The main purpose is to report original research or experimentation to scholars of the world.
   a. Authors will always cite their sources and the articles will contain references/bibliographies
   b. Lengthy articles usually signed; Many will contain scientific methodology with sections like Background, Objective, Methods, Procedure, Statistics, Results, Discussion;
   c. Sober serious look; Contain graphs and charts but few glossy pages; Seldom contain advertisements
   d. Purpose is to report on original research; Topics are often very specific
   e. Author is a scholar in the field
   f. Language is that of the discipline being covered
   g. Assumes scholarly background on the part of the reader
   h. Sometimes the title itself suggests the article is scholarly; Often but not always have “journal” in the title.
   i. Often published by institutions of higher learning, professional organization or sponsored by a government body
   j. When an assignment requires the use of scholarly journals only, confirm with the professor whether or not “journals” are as acceptable as “scholarly journals” (i.e. the professor really just wants to make sure you don’t use magazines)

3. Peer Reviewed/Refereed journals: The criteria listed above for scholarly journals applies to peer reviewed and refereed journals in addition to which articles are reviewed by editors and specialists (peers) in the field before being approved for publication within the journal.
   a. The journal itself may be peer reviewed but all of the articles within it may not be, for instance an editorial or a book review would not be considered a peer reviewed article.
   b. Types of Peer Reviewing:
      i. Blind Peer Reviewed - (or Double Blind Peer Reviewed) - Articles are reviewed by external reviewers outside of the journal’s publishing company
      ii. Editorial Board Peer Review - articles appearing in a journal are reviewed by an internal board of editors.
      iii. Expert Peer Review - articles are reviewed by experts credentialed within the subject field of the article under review. Many periodical indexes will have a limiter that can be set to retrieve only articles from peer reviewed/scholarly journals (when an assignment requires peer reviewed journals only, confirm with the professor whether or not scholarly journals are as acceptable as peer reviewed journals)
   d. Some indexes will indicate scholarly/peer reviewed in the citation itself
   e. Search the publisher’s Web site for information about their review process; do a Google search on the journal title
   f. Use a Periodical Directory to identify peer reviewed or refereed journals (see below). If available, Ulrich’s Periodical Directory Online is the easiest and fastest method. Most libraries will have at least one periodical directory in their reference collection. To access Ulrich’s from the library Web site select Find Articles, type “ulrich” in the free-text search box. This is accessible anytime anywhere to the TMC Community.
   g. For peer reviewed/scholarly titles in EBSCOhost indexes go to EBSCOhost Titles List and select the database and format needed.
   h. For peer reviewed/scholarly titles in ProQuest indexes go to ProQuest Research Library Titles List. From the box marked “Include”, be sure “Scholarly/Peer Reviewed” is checked and from the box marked “Format”, select the desired format for downloading data.

4. Indexes can be used as indicators of both the type and content of a journal. To ascertain if a journal is scholarly, ask these questions:
   a. Is the periodical indexed and where – the type of index is an indicator of the type of journal: what branches of knowledge are comprised; is the index interdisciplinary or subject specific?
   b. What is the scope of the index: how much of the field is covered; what subjects are included
   c. What other titles are indexed by this same index: does it index magazines and journals, only journals, journals and other scholarly documents?

5. Periodical Directories: For publication information about indexing, size, audience, scope, political slant, affiliation, document type (e.g. magazine, scholarly, general, peer reviewed, etc.) see:
   c. Serials Directory

© Janet Tillman/The Master’s College, 2008-2011, permission is granted for non-profit educational use; any reproduction or modification should include this statement.

Last updated January, 2011