Characteristics of Scholarly and Popular Writing

A *scholarly publication* is one that contains articles written by experts in a particular field of study. The primary audience for these articles is field study experts and students, and as a result the articles are typically much more sophisticated and advanced than articles found in more general magazines. While many of your research projects will require you to read articles published in scholarly journals, there is also a wealth of information to be found in more *popular publications*. This latter source aims to inform readers about issues of common interest to the general public and are much more informal in tone and scope.

The following is a list of general criteria that can be used to distinguish between scholarly and popular publications and the articles contained within each of them.

Criteria	Scholarly Publications [Journals]	Popular Publications [Magazines]
Advertisements	Few ads, usually for publications or services in the discipline covered.	Many advertisements, often full-page and in colour.
Appearance	Plain, black and white, containing charts, graphs, and tables.	Slick, glossy, with colour pictures, photographs, and illustrations.
Audience	Professors, researchers, college and university students.	General public.
Author	Written by scholar within an academic discipline and/or field.	Written by journalists who may lack subject expertise.
Editing	Experts in the field review articles submitted for publication. [1]	Only the magazine editor reviews submitted articles.
Language	College level, in the specialised vocabulary of the discipline covered.	Non-technical, simple vocabulary accessible to majority of readers.
Publisher	Professional organizations, universities, research institutes, and scholarly presses.	Commercial, for-profit enterprises.
Purpose/Intent	Report on original research, experimentation, methodology, and theory.	Inform or entertain the reader, sell products, and/or promote a viewpoint.
Research documentation	Footnotes and bibliographies cite the author's research.	Sources are rarely cited.
Sample references	Zuidema, R. Tom. 1992 Organization of sacrifice in the city of Cuzco. Journal of Latin American Lore 18(1-2): 63-78.	Pringle, Heather. 1999 Temple of Doom. Discover 20(3): 78-85.

1. *Publications that undertake this editorial process are also known as peer-reviewed or refereed publications.*

Other Reference Tools for Distinguishing Scholarly and Popular Publications

Ulrich's International Periodical Directory
http://toby.library.ubc.ca/resources/infopage.cfm?id=100
This comprehensive online directory provides basic bibliographic, subscription and contact information about scholarly and popular publications worldwide, as well as newspapers, trade journals, and government publications. The document type field can be used to identify whether a publication is or is not academic and scholarly. This resource is searchable by keyword, publication title, and subject.

Magazines for libraries: for the general reader and school, junior college, college, university and public libraries
Call number: KOERNER REFERENCE Z6951.K38 2000
This print resource is an annotated list of the best and brightest periodicals in specific subject areas. Annotations include bibliographic, descriptive, evaluative, subscription, and contact information about each item. Each write up outlines whether it is scholarly/academic or popular. Periodicals are listed alphabetically within subject areas.

Academic Search Premier
http://toby.library.ubc.ca/resources/infopage.cfm?id=196
This online database provides full text for 3,430 journals, with indexing and abstracting for more than 4,425 journals. Includes coverage of 3,280 peer-reviewed journals, and offers information from a broad range of disciplines, including Political Science and Public Administration, Biological Sciences, Computer Sciences, Education, History and Medical Sciences. A key feature of this database is the ability to limit your search to articles in journals that are peer-reviewed by checking the Peer Reviewed box in the Search Options section of the main search screen.