

# Scholarly Sources

Scholarly sources are written by academics or scholars for an audience of other academics or scholars. They usually report the findings of a study or research project in a way that contributes to an ongoing debate, fills a gap in the knowledge of a topic, or intervenes by pointing out limitations to what scholars knew before.

## Author, Audience, and Purpose

Scholarly publications are the primary way that scholars and experts communicate the findings of their research to other scholars and experts. Authors of scholarly journal articles are almost never paid, and authors of scholarly books usually earn a very small amount of money in the form of royalties, if they earn any at all.

### Examples:

- *Cultural Anthropology*
- *Journal of Applied Psychology*
- *Communication, Culture, and Critique*
- *Journal of American History*
- *Journal of the American Medical Association*

## Reliability

The peer review/referee process of scholarly journals is designed to ensure quality, though not all scholarly journals are peer-reviewed/refereed. Some scholarly works have a different editorial and vetting process. Scholars are expected to provide a literature review, extensive citations, and a thorough demonstration of claims backed by evidence.

## Uses in the Research Process

For most university-level research, the peer-reviewed scholarly literature will be most important. The credibility of the authors and assurance of reliability offered by the peer review process observed by most scholarly journals make these good sources on which to base research. However, careful analysis of the relationships between research questions, hypotheses, methods, evidence, and findings is still needed. These sources provide evidence relevant to research questions, theories to help understand topics, and examples or research methods to help shape research projects.

## Tips for Identifying Scholarly Sources

- **Publication name:** Many scholarly journals are called “Journal of...”
- **Bibliographic information:** Scholarly journals usually have issue and volume numbers. Page numbers usually start at the beginning of the volume, rather than the beginning of the issue.
- **Genre:** Most scholarly articles will have several of these features: abstract, keywords, literature review, extensive citations to other sources, methods section, theory section, findings/results section and/or a body with substantial analysis of some primary text(s), conclusion, and references section.
- **Language:** These sources are usually written in academic language specific to scholars in the field.
- **Editorial oversight:** Check the *UlrichsWeb* database to see if the source is refereed (peer-reviewed) and has its content type listed as “Academic/Scholarly.” If it does not appear in *UlrichsWeb*, try googling the journal title. On the publisher’s website, look at the “About” page or submission guidelines for information about the peer review/refereeing process. Most library databases have a “Peer-reviewed” filter used to limit results to only peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles.

## How to Find Scholarly Sources

General research databases like [Academic Search Complete](#), [ProQuest Central](#), and [JSTOR](#) are good places to start. If you need more in-depth or subject-specific information, try a subject-specific database. They are found on the [Mason Libraries database webpage](#).

