Academic (Peer-Reviewed/Scholarly) Journals

How Can You Tell?

Overview

Problem: Many students do not know what an instructor means when an assignment requires that sources must be scholarly and articles used as references in a student's paper must be from journals, or more specifically, must be from academic/scholarly journals. Typically the instructor is requesting that the student use articles from publications that are reasonably highly regarded in the college environment. Unfortunately, many people may not know how journals become respected in a given field.

Definition: A journal becomes academically respected based on how articles are accepted for publication. For many journals, authors have to justify the quality of original research or their interpretation of the ideas and research presented by others. These articles have an evaluation called a review before the article is accepted. The manuscripts are sent out to several editors or reviewers to be judged for quality. This process can also be called a referee or peer review when the reviewers are also scholars of similar interests or expertise as the writer.

Off-Campus Access

While some of the resources in this guide are freely available, most research databases and electronic journals and many online library services have access restrictions that require that you be a current UT Arlington student, faculty member, or staff member.

Solution 1, Issue is available

Examine the front of the issue to find a statement about how articles are accepted for publication or to see if the journal has an editorial board and a review or referee process. There would be many editors and they are typically associated with colleges and universities.

Solution 2, Issue is not available

Sometimes only a copy of the article is available and there is no access to the issue. Libraries have directories listing journals by title with notes about referee. These directories include: The Serials Directory, Magazines For Libraries, Cabells Directory of Publishing Opportunities, or one of several indexing services such as CINAHL or other EBSCO databases which provide this information as part of their service.

Solution 3, Asking

The instructor can say if a journal is acceptable since the instructor is grading the paper. A librarian can also determine if a specific journal is considered scholarly for a subject area, often by consulting the directories mentioned in Solutions 2.

Contact Info:

Your instructor's contact information should be on your syllabus.

The UT Arlington Library phone number is: 817 272-3394

To find and contact your subject librarian, visit the library page at http://www.uta.edu/library
Solution 4, Using Clues

It can be difficult to determine if articles are quality resources if they were obtained from a fulltext electronic source, including the Library's databases or the Internet.

Clues to quality include (a) where the article originates (from an indexing service, a research institution, etc.) and (b) if the article has references, how many and of what type.

Just as a student has to include references for a particular paper, an article of any depth would mention other views of the issue under discussion.

Solution 5, Still In Doubt

As always, if there is any doubt if an item should be included, ask the instructor. After all, it is the instructor who gave the assignment and will give the grade.