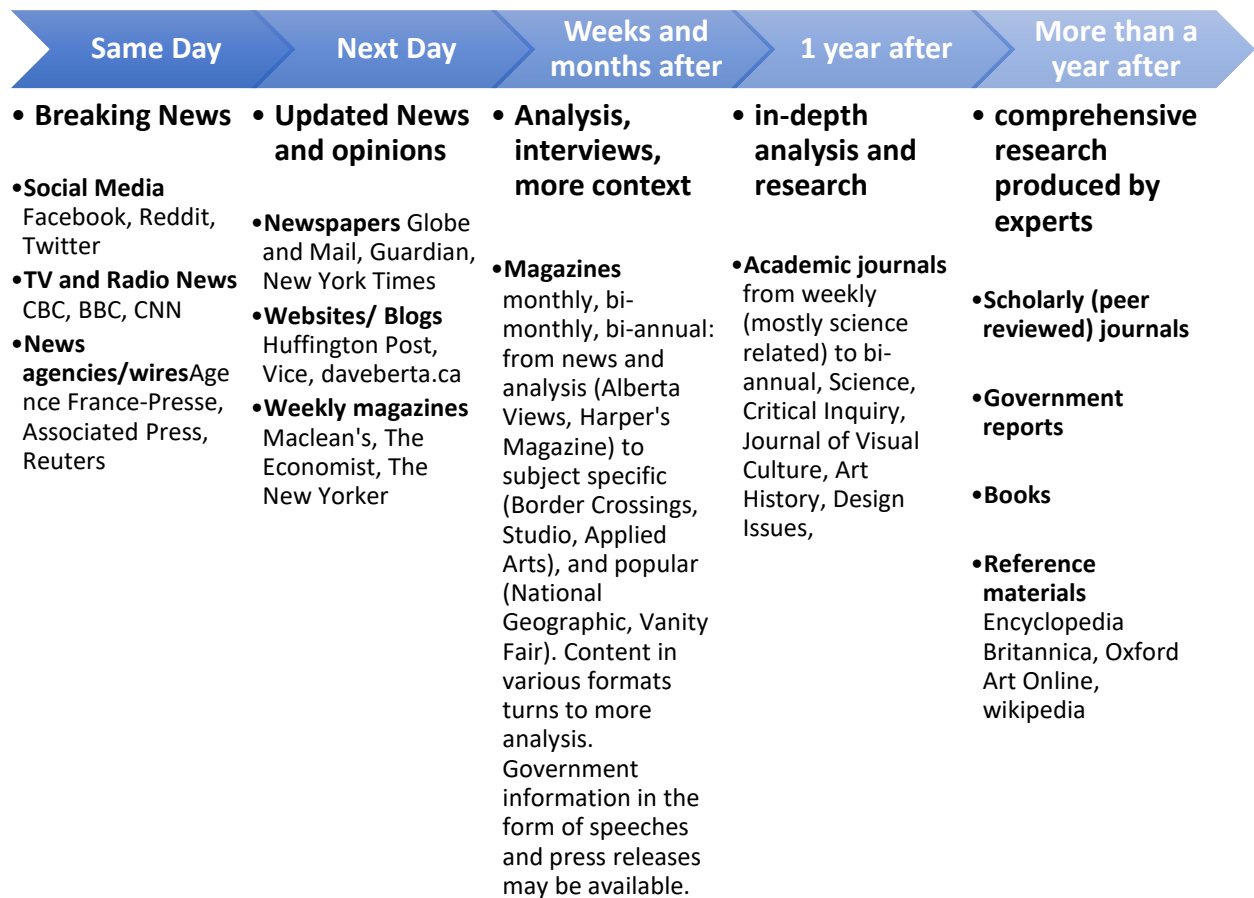# EVALUATING SOURCES

Contents

1. What type of information is it? Do you have different types of information to give you a comprehensive understanding of the subject?

The **information timeline** is one way to describe how information is produced, distributed and how it changes over time.

Knowing how information and our understanding of events changes over time can help you find the information you need. **In general, but certainly not always, the reliability of information about a particular event improves with time.** The reality is not so neat and tidy. However, over time, we tend to have a more comprehensive overview of the event.

a. Information timelines

Same Day	Next Day	Weeks and months after	1 year after	More than a year after
• **Breaking News**	• **Updated News and opinions**	• **Analysis, interviews, more context**	• **in-depth analysis and research**	• **comprehensive research produced by experts**
•**Social Media** Facebook, Reddit, Twitter	•**Newspapers** Globe and Mail, Guardian, New York Times	•**Magazines** monthly, bi-monthly, bi-annual: from news and analysis (Alberta Views, Harper's Magazine) to subject specific (Border Crossings, Studio, Applied Arts), and popular (National Geographic, Vanity Fair). Content in various formats turns to more analysis. Government information in the form of speeches and press releases may be available.	•**Academic journals** from weekly (mostly science related) to bi-annual, Science, Critical Inquiry, Journal of Visual Culture, Art History, Design Issues,	•**Scholarly (peer reviewed) journals**
•**TV and Radio News** CBC, BBC, CNN	•**Websites/ Blogs** Huffington Post, Vice, daveberta.ca			•**Government reports**
•**News agencies/wires**Agence France-Presse, Associated Press, Reuters	•**Weekly magazines** Maclean's, The Economist, The New Yorker			•**Books**
				•**Reference materials** Encyclopedia Britannica, Oxford Art Online, wikipedia

Check out Joshua Vossler's great 10-minute information cycle video on Vimeo.

# SCHOLARLY AND OTHER TYPES OF ARTICLES

Reading a scholarly, peer-reviewed article is like joining a very long, sometimes ancient and ongoing conversation.

Scholarly articles are generally written by experts in their field with academic training (often graduate students and professors at universities). Peer-review is a process whereby written work is sent to fellow scholars in the same field to ensure standards and quality of original research work before publication. Follow this link for more information about peer-review.

Unlike other articles, scholarly articles always include citations (in-text, footnotes or endnotes) and a list of works cited. Rather than represent one person's opinion, scholarly articles tend to acknowledge the much wider conversation, across space and time, in which their research has taken place.

Looking for scholarly peer-reviewed articles?

- Use the chart below to better identify scholarly publications.
- To learn more about the typical parts of a scholarly journal article, check out Andreas Orphanides' Anatomy of a Scholarly Article.
- When searching databases for peer-reviewed articles specifically, **add filters to limit your search to peer-reviewed articles only**.
- Watch this short clip What are Scholarly Sources? From Ryerson University Library & Archives to learn more about the differences between scholarly and non-scholarly articles.
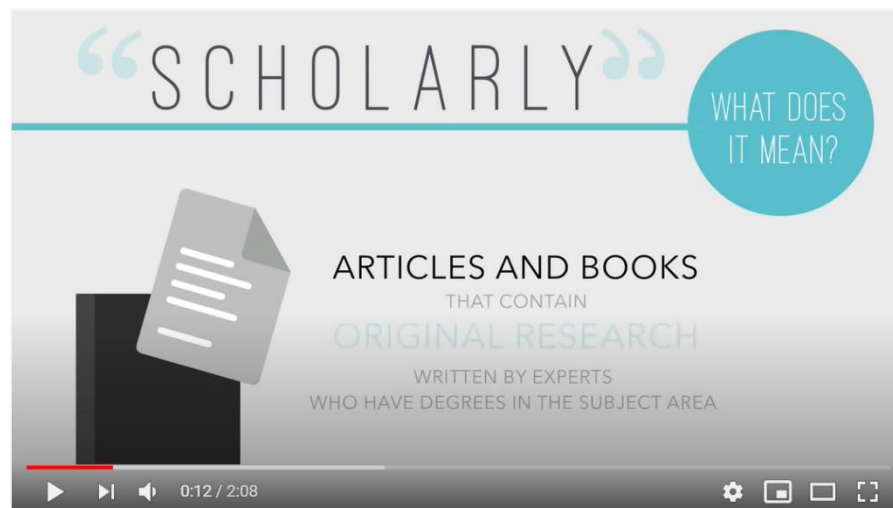
Scholarly vs Trade vs Popular publications

Characteristics	Scholarly	Trade	Popular
Author	Named expert.	Industry representative, not always named.	Journalist or non-professional, not always named.
Audience	Scholars or researchers.	People in the industry.	General public.
Content	Original, mostly peer-reviewed, in-depth research, lengthy, using technical or subject-specific language.	Reporting industry/trade trends, best practices, products and news. Often uses technical language.	Reporting current events, opinions and general information. Variety of writing for different education levels, but generally does not require special knowledge or background.
Appearance	Plain, some images and mostly text with data illustrated by graphs, charts and figures.	Often glossy with many colour images.	Glossy with many colour images.
Frequency	Usually bi-monthly or quarterly.	Usually weekly or monthly.	Usually weekly or monthly.

ABOUT PEER REVIEW

Peer review refers to a process of review by the author's professional peers (scholars or experts in their field).

There are a few different types of peer review processes including:

- *blind peer review* whereby an article is sent to external reviewer outside of publishing/sponsoring organization and the author's identity or the reviewer's identity is unknown;
- *editorial board peer review* (review by internal board of editors);
- *expert peer review* (internal or external experts, author's identity may be known or unknown); and
- *open peer review* (disclosure of peer author and reviewer identities and more transparent and participatory process).

The words "academic" and "scholarly" are often used interchangeably and are usually used to describe peer-reviewed articles. Some databases however for example ArtSource (EBSCO) differentiate between "academic" (may or may not be peer-reviewed) and "scholarly" (MUST be peer-reviewed) articles.

In addition to the hundreds of journals available online through our E-Resources, here are a few peer-reviewed journals available in print in the library's Reading Room: Art Bulletin, Art Journal, Design Issues Journal, Journal of Modern Craft, and October, RACAR, and TOPIA.

PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY SOURCES

Sources of information may be divided into three types: primary, secondary and tertiary.

Primary	1st hand accounts: information or artifacts created at the time being researched • Direct evidence of an event including: historical or legal documents, artifacts, diaries, emails, speeches, art works, photographs, interviews, surveys, data and lab notes, conference proceedings
Secondary	2nd hand accounts: analysis or interpretation of an event, time period, artifact or phenomenon • Second-hand account of an event, analysis or interpretation of primary source including: biographies, literary and art criticism, exhibition reviews, magazine and academic journal articles, monographs (NOT fiction or autobiography),
Tertiary	3rd (or 30th) hand account: synthesis of information from well-established primary and secondary sources • Bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, guidebooks, directories, manuals

1. ACT UP and evaluate your sources critically!

There are lots of way to help you remember **what questions to ask yourself when evaluating resources** (e.g. who, what, where, when, why, how?; is it CRAAP? currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, purpose). Dawn Stahura, librarian at Simmons College, thought of the acronym **ACT UP** to challenge ideas about what authoritative sources are:

- ☐ **A = Author:** Who wrote the publication? Who are they? What is their background?
- ☐ **C = Currency:** When was the resource published? Was it published recently? How well does it fit with your research interest(s)?
- ☐ **T = Truth:** How accurate is this information? Can you verify any of the claims in other sources? Are there typos and spelling mistakes?
- ☐ **U = Unbiased**: Is the information presented to sway the audience to a particular point of view? How is the author funded?
- ☐ **P = Privilege:** Think about the privilege of the author, editors, etc. What voices are represented, which ones are not?

Stahura, Dawn. "ACT UP for evaluating sources: Pushing against privilege." College & Research Libraries News [Online], 79.10 (2018): 551. Accessed 28 Sep. 2020

2. Is it fake news? From "true" to "pants on fire", how to spot fake news.

Fake news is not news at all, but fictional content deliberately disguised as fact and created for the purpose to mislead and misinform.

Watch this [TEDEd video to learn more about how to evaluate news sources](#) and consult these fact checking website:

- [Factcheck.org](#)
  A nonpartisan, nonprofit fact checking project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

- [Factscan.ca](#)
  An independent and nonpartisan fact-checker on Canadian federal politics.

- [Politifact.com](#)
  Run by editors and reporters from the Tampa Bay Times, Pulitzer Prize winning PolitiFact fact-checks the "accuracy of claims by American elected officials and others who speak up in American politics".

- [Snopes.com](#)
  Founded by David Mikkelson in 1995, Snopes has grown from researching urban legends to becoming a Webby winning website and highly respected fact checking website.

Read about the state of news media in Canada in [The Shattered Mirror (2017),](#) a major report by the Public Policy Forum, for a Canadian perspective on fake news and the state of journalism in Canada.

3. Information literacy and critical thinking in the post-truth era.

In 2016, Oxford Dictionaries announced "post-truth" as its 2016 Word of the Year. Learn how to be more information literate and think critically in the post-truth era. Browse **LinkedIn Learning** in myApps (or Library E-Resources) and check out course on Information Literacy designed taught by Elsa Loftis, director of library services at the former Oregon College of Art and Craft.