

Academic journals and the Web

Teaching staff occasionally state that Web-based content is not acceptable in assignments. The reason is that many sites on the Open Web contain misleading or inaccurate information.

Teaching staff generally do not mean to exclude journal articles from subscribed indexes such as *SpringerLink* or *Wiley*.

Google Scholar

In theory, *Google Scholar* allows you to run a Web search restricted to high-quality, scholarly literature.

However, *Google Scholar* contains more than just articles from academic journals.

Some articles are from journals which are not peer-reviewed. For example, *Google Scholar* provides extended abstracts from the journal *Foreign Affairs* (this US publication is highly regarded, but it is not peer-reviewed).

Items in *Google Scholar's* index also include books, pre-prints of articles submitted for publication (but which have not yet passed peer-review), abstracts, conference papers and scientific reports.

You therefore sometimes need to check carefully before assuming that an article in *Google Scholar* has actually passed peer-review.

If you are off-campus, go to *Google Scholar* using the **Search** box on the Library Home Page and you will be able to access many full-text articles in journals to which we subscribe.

When in doubt

Check with your Unit Coordinator or Supervisor if there is any doubt about the acceptability of a journal article.

He or she is the ultimate judge of acceptability.

What is an academic journal?

Teaching staff will often insist that you restrict your research to academic journals.

What does this mean in practice?

Academic journals are also known as scholarly journals. However, the correct terms are “peer-reviewed” or “refereed”.

These journals send articles to experts (“referees”) for assessment. Articles must pass this review to be published. In most cases, the reviewers are outside the journal’s editorial team. However, some journals use an internal review process rather than external. These are often journals in business and management, such as the *Harvard Business Review*.

The process of review means that the articles in academic journals are generally of a higher quality than those published in other types of publications.

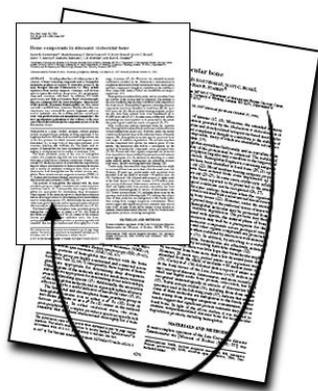
How can I tell the difference?

In most cases, you can tell an academic journal just by looking at it. Use these guidelines:

- There is a list of editorial board members in the inside front cover or first few pages of an individual issue. To discover this, you might need to check the paper copies of the latest issues in the new journal display area on the First Floor of Dixson Library.
- Articles include the source of information, such as author/date references in the text, footnotes or bibliographies.
- Such journals often contain tables, charts, black-and-white line illustrations or photographs.
- Articles in an academic journal are never anonymous. The name and academic affiliation of the author are usually found at the beginning or end of the article.
- The language of academic journals is formal and sometimes highly technical. Sensational, highly-emotional language is almost never used.
- Most academic journals report original research to the exclusion of most other topics.

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Most, but not all, academic journal articles on the Web are published in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format. Their online appearance is therefore the same as their appearance in print.



Online articles from academic journals in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) have a distinctive, formal appearance

What about articles from online databases?

Many databases (such as *ProQuest*, *Gale*) give you the choice of limiting your search to scholarly journals and/or peer-reviewed/refereed journal articles.

Most of our full-text only indexes (eg *SpringerLink*, *Wiley*, *Emerald*, *Sage* and *JSTOR*) contain **only** peer-reviewed journals.

Sometimes, you need to check. For example, the *Informit* full-text indexes include both peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed journal articles.

How can I check if a journal is peer-reviewed?

The main source of information on journal titles is an online index: *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory* (often simply called "*Ulrich's*").

To discover if a journal is peer-reviewed using *Ulrich's*:

- Go to <<http://www.une.edu.au/library/find/list.php>>.
- Click on the letter **U**.
- Click on the **Ulrichsweb** link.
- Enter your UNE username and password when prompted.
- Enter the title of the journal in the **Search** box.

- Click on the **Search** icon or press the **Enter** key on your keyboard.
- Click on the matching title in the list of search results.
- Look for the **Yes** next to Refereed in the **Basic Description**.

If you find this information, you know that the journal is peer-reviewed.

Sometimes, however, a journal is not in *Ulrich's*. Fortunately, there are additional steps that you can take.

What if a journal is not in *Ulrich's*?

One option is find the journal's Web site. If you have a printed copy of the journal, the inside cover or back cover will probably contain a Web address.

Otherwise, you can search for the journal's home site on the Web using *Google*.

If the journal's home page does not state that the journal is refereed or peer reviewed, look for headings such as 'Notes for Contributors' or 'Submission Guidelines'.

If you read the Notes for Contributors carefully, you will usually be able to determine the status of the journal relatively easily.



Notes for Contributors will almost always indicate if a journal is peer-reviewed (This example is from <http://antiquity.ac.uk>).

The staff on the Service Desk can help with finding or interpreting a journal's home page.

Contact details for the Service Desk are available at the end of this handout.