

Library Research for Geography and Environmental Studies Students

Tutorial 1: What is scholarship?

Hello, in this video, we'll look at the concept of scholarship, and how it's foundational to what you do at the university.

At this point in your university experience, you've already likely been asked to use "academic articles" or "scholarly sources" in your research papers.

You've probably also used the library's comprehensive database, Omni, to find and download academic articles.

But have you wondered about those terms?

What are scholarly sources?

What is "scholarship"?

You may be wondering, "what makes an article 'academic' versus any other article?"

To answer that, we need to step back and briefly look at what happens at the university.

The university is in many ways thought of as a "scholarly community"; in other words, a community of people known as scholars.

The term scholar was first documented in English over 700 years ago.

The Oxford English Dictionary Online tells us that the original usage of this term was to indicate: "a person studying at an advanced level, especially at a university or other higher educational institution ... or, a member of a university or college."

The term was later used to refer to "a person who pursues or is expert in a particular field of study..."

Similarly "scholarly" was a term applied to something ... "involving or concerned with research, education, and scholarship."

That last point is particularly important and introduces the term "scholarship."

We think of scholarship then as the type of work – high level research or study – conducted at the university.

Now, this last term can also be used to refer to a monetary award to a student, but that's not what we're thinking of.

Today we use the terms academic and scholarly interchangeably in most cases to refer to the same concept.

Let's now think of the scholarly community, which we mentioned previously.

The scholarly community is a group of experts formed around in-depth study of particular fields.

Like any community, the scholarly community has a particular language it speaks that you have to learn before you become fluent and knowledgeable about the life of that community.

Learning that language is part of what you are doing when you study at a university, when you read the scholarly literature, and when you talk to other scholars in a field.

Scholarship, or the work that is done at the university, is like a conversation.

The conversation takes place in many ways and through many media.

Scholars can talk face-to-face in their offices, discuss ideas in a seminar class, meet and share scholarly presentations at an academic conference, or put their words into article or book form.

These are just a few of the ways the scholarly conversation occurs.

The most formal method and recognized method of scholarly communication is known as peer-review.

I'm going to stop there.

In the next video, I'll look at peer-review, and what this means for finding academic articles.