

Library Research for Geography and Environmental Studies Students

Tutorial 2: Finding and identifying academic articles

In the first video, we discussed the concept of scholarship, the scholarly community, and how scholarship is like a conversation.

In this video, we'll consider the concept of peer-review, how it works, and how knowing this will enable you to find academic articles for your assignment.

You're going to have to find academic articles for your research papers later in the term.

You'll recall that "academic" and "scholarly" are synonymous terms for high level research and teaching activities done at the university.

Here are two additional related terms: "peer-reviewed" and "refereed."

You'll probably hear these four terms used interchangeably in many courses and assignments throughout your university career.

When used in the context of articles or books, they refer to the same concept, exemplified by the term peer-review.

Peer review involves experts in a field checking material before it's published in a scholarly work, such as a journal article or an academic book.

Here's what the publishing process looks like as a visual.

A researcher writes and submits a research paper to the editor of an academic journal.

The editor sends copies of the paper to experts in their field, also known as peer reviewers.

They check the work.

They send comments about the paper anonymously back to the editor, who sends those comments to the researcher.

The researcher may then revise the paper and re-submit it to the journal for publication.

The process as shown here is extremely simplified.

In reality its extensive and time consuming in comparison to publication in a popular press or online newspaper.

In comparison, what I'm terming the non-academic publishing process is a little more straightforward.

A writer sends an article to an editor who may make some changes and then publish it to the reader, and this process could theoretically happen in a very short time, almost instantaneously.

So that's the difference between the peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed publishing process.

How can you best access peer-reviewed materials, like academic articles?

If you do a search in Omni, it's fairly easy to limit your results to peer-reviewed articles, as shown in this example.

Once you've done a search, simply select "peer-reviewed journals" and "articles" as the resource type in the check boxes in the left side facets.

Our other licensed research databases like ProQuest and EBSCO let you use check boxes to refine your results to peer-reviewed articles as well.

Other databases, like GeoBase, Web of Science, and JSTOR, contain primarily peer-reviewed journals, so all you have to do is refine your search results to the articles only.

I haven't mentioned Google Scholar, which is also a popular source you're probably aware of.

Google Scholar can be a source of scholarly articles, but be aware that not everything in Google Scholar is scholarly.

If you have any questions about what you find, please ask me.

I'm also not discussing scholarly books, since you're not asked to find them for your assignments.

I'll include a link to a short video on how to find scholarly books if you're interested to learn more.

In the next video, I'll talk a bit about the academic information ecosystem.

Knowing more about that will help you navigate the complex landscape of academic resources available to you.

