Is this a scholarly journal?

To some extent, the decision about whether a publication is a scholarly journal or not is a subjective one. There is no absolute definition of a scholarly journal. There is no official list to consult. Scholars may disagree about which journals are satisfactory within their discipline.

Most journals that are considered to be scholarly share certain characteristics. Ask yourself the following questions when evaluating a journal:

1. **HOW DID I FIND THIS JOURNAL?**
   - Was it cited in a **subject-oriented index or abstract**? Examples of both print and online indexes and abstracts that primarily cite scholarly journals include Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), MLA International Bibliography, PsycINFO, Sociological Abstracts, and many others.

   Most of the journals cited in subject-oriented indexes and abstracts are considered scholarly in nature.

2. **DOES THIS JOURNAL HAVE “CREDENTIALS”?**
   - Is it published or sponsored by a professional or scholarly association, or perhaps associated with a college, university or other academic institution?

   Many scholarly journals are published by or for organizations concerned with research in a particular field of study, with a specific profession, or with education.

3. **HOW ARE ARTICLES CHOSEN FOR THIS JOURNAL?**
   For print titles check inside the front or back cover or on the first or last few pages and for online or electronic titles check the publication website:
   - Is there a purpose statement or editorial policy that addresses the research standards for articles submitted?
   - Is there a list of reviewers, an editorial board, submission guidelines, or some other process described for approving articles for publication? (This type of journal is known as a “refereed,” “juried,” or “peer reviewed” journal.)

   Most articles published in scholarly journals have undergone some sort of evaluation by scholars in the subject area.
4. **ARE THE ARTICLES TYPICAL OF THOSE FOUND IN SCHOLARLY JOURNALS?**

- Are the articles organized into at least some of the following kinds of sections?
  
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<th>Abstract</th>
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>or Literature</td>
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- Are statements in the articles well documented? Do the articles have **bibliographies** or lists of **references**?

- Are the **authors’ credentials** listed?

- Are articles based on **original research** or the work of **authorities in the field** (as opposed to personal opinion)?

Most scholarly journal articles present information in a systematic way, cite significant research done previously on the topic, list authors’ credentials, and present new information based on experiments, surveys, or other information-gathering processes.

Further information on specific journals can often be found in standard periodical bibliographies and guides to the literature. *Magazines for Libraries* (REF Z 6941 .K2), despite its title, includes descriptions of hundreds of important scholarly journals. Most descriptions indicate the intended audience, the indexes which cite the journal, whether the journal is refereed, and other useful information. *Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory* (REF Z 6941 .U5), while not as informative as *Magazines for Libraries*, is far more comprehensive including thousands of periodical titles. It, too, indicates which indexes cite a particular journal and whether it is refereed. Both of these titles are shelved at the Ask A Librarian Service Desk counter.

The Indiana University Kokomo Library *EnLITen* interactive tutorial has several modules one of which discusses **Scholarly vs. Popular Publications**.

Rutgers University Libraries interactive tutorial, *What Makes a Journal Scholarly?* and the *Popular Literature vs Scholarly Peer-Reviewed Literature: What’s The Difference?* tool may also be helpful in learning more about scholarly journals.

For other sources of information about journals, please ask a librarian at the Ask A Librarian Service Desk. If, after your best efforts, you are still unable to determine whether a periodical title is a scholarly journal or not, please remember: **The final authority on whether any publication is scholarly or not is your course instructor, who will be grading your assignment.**