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EVALUATING PERIODICAL LITERATURE

Some [literary men] were selling their souls to the periodical press.¹

Goal: To recognize what a periodical is and its importance in research.

Objective 1: Define a periodical.

Objective 2: Identify types of periodicals and their levels of authority.

Objective 3: Understand the editorial perspectives.

Many college instructors require that students cite only scholarly periodicals in their term projects and often express this requirement in their syllabuses with such phrases as: “academic periodicals,” “professional journals,” “periodicals of a scholarly nature,” or “research journals.” While this requirement is quite clear to experienced researchers, novice students become confused as to what is wanted or assume that “academic periodicals” means anything that is available via the university library. Consequently, they are susceptible to accessing unsatisfactory sources in the vein of *Society*, *Psychology Today*, and *National Geographic*. Whether you are teaching a one-shot session or an entire

course never assume the students—lower division as well as upper division—know the definition of a periodical or can differentiate between the types of periodicals.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND INSTRUCTOR ACTIVITIES

Objective 1: Define a Periodical.

Scenario:

INSTRUCTOR: What is a periodical?

STUDENT A: It's a magazine.

STUDENT B: Yeah. Something like *Newsweek*.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes, *Newsweek* is a periodical, but what makes *Newsweek* a periodical?

STUDENTS: [blank looks]

Describing what makes a periodical a periodical stumps many students. Ironically, while most have been exposed to periodicals all their lives, they are stymied when asked to differentiate them from other types of sources. The following section begins with the definition of a periodical and then proceeds to flesh out some of its salient features.

Features of Periodicals: The Periodical versus the Scholarly Monograph. A periodical can be defined as a publication that is issued at regular intervals. Its regularity distinguishes it from the monograph, which deals with a single subject and is published once (unless it is revised or reprinted). Moreover, the scope of a periodical article is very different from that of a monograph; the former treats a topic narrowly, while the latter treats it globally. For example, let's examine how a scholarly periodical and scholarly monograph treat the topic of personal ads on the Internet. An article in the *American Sociological Review* might focus on what women want versus what men want based on their preferences, whereas a monograph might provide a historical context and an in-depth analysis of the various facets of cyber-match-making.

Periodicals Are the Great Communicators. Periodicals communicate current events, trends, and research much faster than books.

Exposing others to one's research findings is much quicker in periodicals than books. Some disciplines, especially the sciences, emphasize periodicals because scholars can readily share their ideas, experiments, theories, and discoveries with colleagues.

Periodicals Expose the New and Different. Periodicals often break stories that are arcane, provocative, or newfangled, such as bio-fouling, the South Beach Diet, and metrosexuals.

Periodicals Provide a Forum for Controversy. Each periodical claims an editorial stance that offers readers an opportunity to explore diverse perspectives—moral, social, political, and racial. For example, facts and opinions about the rights of Palestinians are reported differently according to the editorial position of the magazine. The following is a brief list of magazines and their political or social stances:

- *Tikkun* (Jewish perspective)
- *Arab American News* (Arab perspective)
- *Newsweek* (somewhat middle of the road)
- *National Review* (conservative)
- *The Nation* (liberal)
- *Reason* (libertarian)
- *Monthly Review* (socialist)

One of the best tools to determine the political position of a periodical is Katz's *Magazines for Libraries* and, for lesser-known periodicals, *The International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*. In addition, the website of a periodical will often state its political perspective via the "About Us" link.

Objective 2: Identify Types of Periodicals and Their Levels of Authority.

While all periodicals have some properties in common, specific types of periodicals vary greatly in their audience, content, and purpose. Although students might be aware of the categorical differences of periodicals (e.g., newspapers, magazines, and scholarly journals), they assume that the authority of the articles is relative. That is, students give as much authoritative weight to *National Geographic* articles as

those in the venerable *American Anthropologist*. While there are many distinctions between popular and scholarly, the major one to emphasize is that newspapers, trade periodicals, and magazines are not held to the same standards of documentation as scholarly journals. For instance, a reporter for the *Washington Post* can get away with citing “anonymous congressional sources” or “sources close to the Pentagon,” yet a biologist writing for *Nature* could not cite “several anonymous cell biologists.” While popular magazines and the trades are held to a looser standard in the attribution of facts and sources, the scholarly press is not—it is expected to produce full documentation to support facts, assertions, refutations, and conclusions.

The following section delineates the major periodical types that students will most likely encounter in their research.

Nonscholarly Press

Newspapers Newspapers report day-to-day events, trends, and issues and include feature articles, editorials, opinion polls, graphics, and advertisements. They are very useful in announcing the release of new scholarly studies, polls, and surveys and in determining the date an event occurred.

The following are examples of national newspapers:

- *Boston Globe*
- *Chicago Sun Times*
- *Christian Science Monitor*
- *Houston Chronicle*
- *Los Angeles Times*
- *New York Times*
- *Sacramento Bee*
- *Wall Street Journal*
- *Washington Post*²

Popular Magazines Popular magazines are usually published weekly, biweekly, or monthly; are geared to a specific niche (news and commentary, intellectual and cultural life, the arts, hobbies, fashion, and gossip); and whose editorial content may inform, explain, interpret, comment, or advocate. The following are popular magazines in order of authority.

Magazines that report the news and discuss sociopolitical problems, the arts, and intellectual concerns are considered the top tier of the hierarchy of popular magazines. However, many in this category fail to meet social historian Russell Lynes's definition of *highbrow*.³ These newsweeklies and magazines aim to contribute to serious public discourse with in-depth reporting, analysis, and criticism on the issues and problems facing society. Some of these publications survive not by selling advertising but by relying on subscriptions, donations, and grants. While biased reporting exists, most of these periodicals attempt to adhere to journalistic standards of objectivity and factual reporting. However, while some sourcing can be independently verified, many stories are based on anonymous or secondhand sources. Regardless of how the sources are reported, there are no formal citations as in scholarly journals. Yet, for research, newsweeklies and periodicals on intellectual and cultural affairs are rich in research possibilities:

- They keep abreast of political, social, and cultural news.
- They use primary materials in historical research.
- They provide deep background into complex topics.

These are some examples of some well-known periodicals:

- *American Spectator* (www.spectator.org)
- *The Atlantic* (www.theatlantic.com)
- *Economist* (www.economist.co.uk)
- *Harper's Magazine* (www.harpers.com)
- *Humanist* (www.thehumanist.org)
- *Mother Jones* (www.motherjones.com)
- *The Nation* (www.thenation.com)
- *National Geographic* (www.nationalgeographic.com)
- *National Review* (www.nationalreview.com)
- *New Criterion* (www.newcriterion.com)
- *New Republic* (www.tnr.com)
- *New Yorker* (www.newyorker.com)
- *Newsweek* (www.msnbc.msn.com)
- *Slate* (www.slate.com)
- *Time* (www.time.com/time)
- *Utne Magazine* (www.utne.com/pub)

Following are examples of databases that include well-known periodicals:

- *Academic Search Elite (EbscoHost)*
- *Academic Search Premier (EbscoHost)*
- *Expanded Academic ASAP*
- *Lexis/Nexis Academic*
- *Reader's Guide Full Text (WilsonWeb)*⁴

Entertainment and Style These magazines emphasize celebrity, fashion, style, and trendy products. Exorbitant amounts of money are spent on splashy layouts and advertising to entice readers to buy their products. But, beneath the hype and color, the editorial content is shallow and expressed in simple language. These magazines have very little research value, however students may use them for inspiration. For example, *Vogue's* "Age Issue" may inspire students to develop topics, such as "middle-aged women adjusting to physical changes brought about by aging" or "age stereotypes in older and younger women."

Following are some examples of entertainment and style magazines:

- *Entertainment Weekly*
- *GQ*
- *People Weekly*
- *Vogue*

The following are examples of databases that include entertainment magazines:

- *Academic Search Elite (EbscoHost)*
- *Expanded Academic ASAP*
- *Lexis/Nexis Academic*
- *Reader's Guide Full Text (WilsonWeb)*

Supermarket Tabloids Nearly everyone has read the *National Enquirer* or *Star*—but few admit to it. Historically, the tabloids have been ostracized from the mainstream press for their "trashy" coverage of politicians, celebrities, crime, and the ubiquitous aliens from outer space.

But the mainstream press no longer can ignore the tabs; since the 1980s, they have broken big stories that have affected the careers of politicians and influenced the outcome of criminal trials. For example, *Star* first exposed the alleged affair between Gennifer Flowers and President Bill Clinton. And the *National Enquirer* published a photograph of O. J. Simpson wearing Bruno Magli shoes—which he denied owning—that served as a key piece of evidence in the civil suit brought against him by the victims' families. Moreover, *Time* named Steve Coz, editor of the *National Enquirer*, as one of America's twenty-five most influential people.⁵ Gone are the days when the mainstream press could write off the tabs as nothing but “sex, gore, and bizarre tales of human behavior.”⁶ The barrier between the tabs and the mainstream press appears to be gone, and, as a result, “the cultures of entertainment, infotainment, argument, analyses, tabloid and mainstream press not only work side by side but intermingle and merge.”⁷ This “mixed media” environment has been created because market forces have compelled the mainstream media to compete with the tabloids for attention-grabbing headlines; thus, competition for audiences has relaxed traditional newsgathering standards and practices. The mainstream press no longer decides what is news.

While the tabloids are negligible in terms of research due to stories based on questionable reporting standards, sensationalized stories can lead to serious questions. For example, stories surrounding Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky could be used as a springboard for studying the meaning of lying or the ethics of exposing the private lives of politicians. Here are some examples of tabloid magazines:

- *National Enquirer* (www.nationalenquirer.com)
- *Star Magazine* (www.starmagazine.com)⁸

Trade/Professional Magazines Positioned between general interest magazines and scholarly journals, trade magazines focus on a specific profession (archaeology or biology) or industry (biotechnology or advertising). Unlike peer-reviewed journals, trade articles focus less on the scholar and more on the practitioner who strives to be more aware, productive, and effective in his or her profession or business. Consequently, trade magazines review and analyze products and techniques,

highlight the latest news and trends, and introduce new practices and technologies. Writers contributing to the trades may be scholars and practitioners trained in the field or authors who have developed a good reputation within the professional or trade community. For research purposes, trade publications can help researchers to identify hot topics and new innovations and to seek out solutions to problems. The following are examples of trade magazines:

- *Advertising Age* (www.adage.com)
- *Archaeology* (www.archaeology.org)
- *Editor & Publisher* (www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/index.jsp)
- *History Today* (www.historytoday.com)
- *New Scientist* (www.newscientist.com)
- *Psychology Today* (cms.psychologytoday.com/pto/home.php)
- *Science News* (www.sciencenews.org)
- *Scientific American* (www.sciam.com)
- *Society* (www.transaction.com)

The following are examples of databases that include trade magazines:

- *ABI/Inform*
- *Academic Search Elite (EbscoHost)*
- *Academic Search Premier (EbscoHost)*
- *Expanded Academic ASAP*
- *Lexis/Nexis Academic*
- *Omnifile Full Text (WilsonWeb)*

Note that some specialized databases will index professional magazines. For example *America: History & Life* includes *History Today* in its database.

Alternative Press Born into the activism of the 1960s, the alternative press emerged to expose the news and voices that have been downplayed, distorted, or ignored by the established press because of fear of alienating corporate heads, advertisers, or readers. Consider this recent example. According to Carl Jensen and Peter Phillips, the American mainstream press “ducked and covered” from reporting that the United States destroyed Iraq’s water supply during the 1991 Gulf War and

prevented efforts to rebuild the water system after the war.⁹ In September 2000, the *Sunday Herald* (Scotland) broke the story, followed by a brief article in the *Orlando Sentinel* and an in-depth article written by Thomas J. Nagy for the alternative *The Progressive*. Subsequently, only the *Capital Times* (Madison) and the *National Catholic Reporter* reported on the findings of Nagy's article.¹⁰

Alternative magazines provide readers with divergent perceptions, points of view, and explanations of social, political, and economic issues. Encouraging students to supplement their research with alternative articles enables them to acknowledge that many issues are inherently complex and thinking about them through a black/white or either/or mindset clouds sound reasoning, judgment, and an appreciation for divergent views. Moreover, students can become vicarious learners by going beyond articles in the mainstream to examine points of view that may seem alien to them. Consider the topic of school prayer. Students can learn the arguments put forth by atheists in *American Atheist*, by libertarians in *Reason*, by socialists in *Monthly Review*, and by followers of Pat Buchanan in the *American Conservative*.

Further, students can learn through the voices of people who come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds than themselves. The points of views, perceptions, and opinions of blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans, American Indians, Arab Americans, and Jews, which often are invisible in the mainstream press, can provide additional contexts from which to understand a topic. For example, students who critique the black male experience in film may run the risk of stereotyping if they base their evidence solely on movie reviews written by mainstream critics. Yet, the critique will be much more authentic if the student researches the perceptions of critics writing for the black press and other alternative publications. Listed are examples of alternative magazines:

- *American Atheist: A Journal of Atheist News and Thought* (www.americanatheist.org)
- *Amsterdam News* (www.amsterdamnews.org/news/default.asp)
- *Asian Week* (news.asianweek.com/news)
- *Cineaste: Magazine on the Art and Politics of the Cinema* (www.cineaste.com)

- *ColorLines Magazine: Race, Culture and Action* (www.ctwo.org)
- *Extra! Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting* (www.fair.org/extra/index.html)
- *GeneWatch: A Bulletin for the Council for Responsible Genetics* (www.gene-watch.org)
- *In These Times* (www.inthesetimes.com)
- *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (www.jpp.org)
- *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* (www.monthlyreview.org)
- *Off Our Backs* (lesbian feminist politics) (www.offourbacks.org)
- *Texas Observer: A Journal of Free Voices* (texasobserver.org)

Examples of databases that specialize in alternative publications include the following:

- *Alternative Press Index*
- *Al-t PressWatch*
- *Chicano Database*
- *Ethnic NewsWatch*
- *Ethnic News (Lexis/Nexis)*
- *GenderWatch*¹¹
- *Left Index*

Political Blogs The freewheeling blogs (short for Web logs), otherwise known as online diaries, emerged out of distrust toward big media's incompetent journalists, homogeneity of news, and bypassing of ideas and stories. Bloggers post immediate personal reactions to commentary, events, and news reported in the mainstream press. Blogs are biased and proud of it. As *Time* points out, "Blogs don't pretend to be neutral: they're gleefully, unabashedly biased." Moreover, blogs "act like a lens, focusing attention on an issue until it catches fire."¹² For example, bloggers were the first to challenge the authenticity of the documents that CBS claimed proved George W. Bush received preferential treatment during his National Guard service.¹³ Defenders of blogs praise them for opening up political and cultural discourse and challenging the credibility of the mainstream press. Critics, on the other hand, argue that bloggers are biased, insular, and operate outside the rules of journalism,

ignoring objectivity, editing, and fact checking. Finally, while blogs offer fresh insights and at times serve as effective fact checkers to mainstream news services, they also spread gossip, unsubstantiated information, and spin. Thus, students must be instructed to apply the same skepticism to blogs as they would any other source of information.

Examples of political blogs include the following:

- instapundit.com
- littlegreenfootballs.com
- talkingpointsmemo.com
- www.andrewsullivan.com/index.php
- www.ojr.org/ojr/blog

Examples of blog search engines and directories include the following:

- Fagan Finder (www.faganfinder.com/blogs)
- Google Weblog Directory (blogsearch.google.com)
- Topix.net: Top Stories in Blogosphere (www.topix.net/blogs)
- Yahoo Weblog Directory (dir.yahoo.com)

The Popular Press in Academics, Citizenship, and Careers

Academics Newspapers, magazines, and the trades lack scholarly status. Nonetheless, they can alert researchers to current and future trends. For example, an article in *Business Week* reports, “New studies point the way to more effective use of lung cancer drugs.”¹⁴ While lacking specific references, the student could use the alert to do a follow-up search on the increasing effectiveness of drugs used to treat lung cancer. The popular press also announces new releases of scholarly studies, reports, and surveys. For example, Roger Highfield reported in the *Daily Telegraph* that a new University of Michigan study has shown that “a lovey-dovey movie can put couples in a romantic mood.”¹⁵ Granted, some detective work is usually required to locate the exact study because most of these “research alerts” rarely provide full citations. While the popular media lacks the same level of authority and analysis as peer-reviewed journals, popular periodicals can fill gaps left by the scholarly press. Because the popular press is not bound by scholarly standards and the peer-review process, information can be disseminated much

quicker. Thus, scanning relevant current popular print media for announcements of current research can be very advantageous.

Citizenship In addition to keeping abreast of current research, reading newsweeklies can engender an awareness of national and world affairs. Consider September 11, 2001. Like many Americans, college students were not only shocked by the terrorist attacks on September 11 but also were blindsided; they could not fathom why Arab terrorists would want to attack America. Yet, perhaps students would not have been taken so unawares if they had been regular news readers of foreign affairs. If they had, their uncertainty as to what happened might have been mitigated. Regular news readers become better-informed citizens and voters. They become less reliant on friends and family for information and gain confidence in drawing their own conclusions based on sources.

Careers Knowing what is going on in the world enhances one's conversational skills in the workplace. Having the confidence to converse on a myriad of topics reduces the fear of saying something stupid or being at a loss of what to say to the boss. Further, being a sophisticated conversationalist may give one an edge when interviewing for a job, negotiating a business deal, or forming a business relationship.

Scholarly Press

Scholarly Journals Are the Heavyweights in Academia. Scholarly journals bring new contributions to knowledge and ensure the continuity of the literature in a research field. Three basic types of journals exist in most disciplines: research, theoretical, and applied/practical. Typically, the most prestigious journals are peer-reviewed, which means manuscripts undergo an intense examination by the editor and two or more reviewers who are unknown to the author (i.e., a blind review). However, a few highly respected journals (e.g., *Harvard Educational Review*) are nonrefereed, either because their prestigious status attracts top scholars or the editors want more control over journal content.¹⁶

Scholarly Journals Challenge Students. Unlike pop magazines, scholarly journals terrify many students. They are intimidated by the technical content and unfamiliar with the methods of presentation and the jargon used to communicate information. Thus, to help mitigate students' trepidation of scholarly content, encourage them to skip the in-between material (i.e., the detailed data used to support the authors'

theses or hypotheses) and concentrate on the understanding introduction and conclusion as well as deciphering the author's thesis or hypothesis. As students become familiar with reading about the subject in journals, they will begin to feel comfortable interpreting results and identifying strengths and weakness of the article. In the process, students will become increasingly confident in working with the evidence-based approach.

One caveat of emphasizing the importance of scholarly journals—many students will leave the classroom thinking that everything published in journals is true and anything written for the popular press is biased, false, or trivial. It is probably wise to emphasize the importance of scholarly journals but with the proviso that just because an article is published in a scholarly does not automatically make it authoritative or that it significantly contributes to the field.

General Types of Scholarly Articles Following are major types of scholarly articles:

- Research Reports: data from original empirical or scientific results; contributes to theory, concept analysis, research, or practice
- Practice: qualitative or quantitative assessment of methods, applications, strategies, and so on
- Technical Reports: significant advances of methods, practices, and techniques
- Literature Reviews: surveys of what is known about a topic. For example, these articles are reviews of literature:

“Biological Influences on Homosexuality: Current Findings and Future”¹⁷

“Tube Feeding in Patients with Advanced Dementia: A Review of the Evidence”¹⁸

“The Concept of Popular Religion: A Literature Review.”¹⁹

Literature reviews can be very beneficial to a student's research. Reviews of research describe, compare, and contrast research in a subject area and evaluate the interpretation of thesis, argumentation, method, and evidence and the degree to which it contributes to the field. Many literature reviews will identify gaps and

suggest future directions for research. Nearly all disciplines have journals that publish literature review articles as well as sources that are devoted to literature reviews, such as *Annual Review of Biochemistry*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, and *American Literary Scholarship*.²⁰

Objective 3: Understand the Editorial Practices of Periodicals.

Editorial Perspectives Magazines and scholarly journals differ radically in their purpose and content. Whereas journal articles vary in type, they all must substantiate a thesis or hypothesis through interpretation, observation, experiments, or theory. Conversely, popular media aim to inform, interpret, entertain, advocate, or teach. In theory, objectivity and balance are generally valued by most magazines and journals, however several factors can affect these values. In the case of magazines, objectivity can be influenced by advertisers, the parent company, or the sociopolitical orientation of the editorial staff. Objectivity in journals, on the other hand, can be colored by an editor's biases toward certain theoretical or methodological approaches or predispositions to an author because of institutional affiliations.²¹

Audiences While academic and many popular magazines target specialized audiences, the audiences of the former are smaller and less diverse than the latter. A journal's audience is a tightly knit community composed of scholars, students, and instructors who are interested in deepening their knowledge of a very specific research area. Readers of magazines, on the other hand, read for a variety of reasons: they may want to be entertained, to relax, or to understand current events.

Acceptance and Rejection Practices The review policies of journals differ from magazines in how they assess, accept, and reject articles. Unlike the scholarly press, the popular press does not have a rigorous review process. While journals depend, for the most part, on solicitations from scholars, many mass market magazines employ a staff of writers or hire freelancers or stringers to write stories from outlines suggested by the editor. Other magazines rely on unsolicited material, which is accepted or rejected by the editor based on audience and advertiser appeal.

Manuscripts submitted to a scholarly journal undergo a peer-review process. The manuscript is reviewed either by external reviewers or by

selected members of the journal's editorial review board. In an external review, the editor sends an article to two or more referees who are identified as experts in the field. An alternative to the external review is one in which referees are selected from the journal's editorial review board. To ensure objectivity, the review process may be "blind," meaning the author's identity is unknown to the reviewers or "double blind" where the reviewers and author are unknown to each other. In either case, the reviewers evaluate the manuscript based on its significance to the field, methodological approach, and presentation. Each reviewer makes recommendations to the journal editor. Based on these comments, as well as the editor's own reading, the fate of the manuscript may be as follows:

- The article is accepted as is.
- The article is conditionally accepted, provided the author agrees to make revisions.
- If there is a "tie" between the reviewers, the editor may invite the author to submit a rebuttal.
- The article is judged to be potentially publishable, and the author is invited to resubmit the article with improvements.
- The article is rejected outright because of faulty research, poor methodology, or sloppy writing.

The peer-review process is not entirely a "fraud detector."²² Occasionally, manuscripts clear the peer-review process and are published, after which it is discovered that the authors used flawed or fabricated data. Referees are not always privy to the data and methods authors use to write their articles. In addition, reviewers may not devote the time required to scrutinize the data and scientific method. The peer-review process is based on trust; it is assumed that the research has been conducted according to standards of scholarship. However, some studies that have been successfully peer reviewed have been contradicted by subsequent research. In his 2005 study on flawed research, John Ioannidis of Tufts University School of Medicine, concludes that nearly "one-third of top research articles have been either contradicted or seriously questioned."²³

In response to publicized reports of fraudulent and flawed research, many are debating the value of the peer review process. Peter Herson and Candy Schwartz articulate some of these issues:

- Are [peer reviewers] accountable? To whom?
- Should the results of [peer] reviews remain confidential?
- Does peer review improve the quality of published research?²⁴

While many journal editors believe the peer-review process is not “broken” and has been instrumental in “sav[ing] countless prominent scientists from publishing seriously flawed work,” others in the scientific community feel peer review is “outdated and outmoded” and radical changes are required.²⁵ One change that has been suggested is to remove anonymity from the process and “replace [it with] a version of Amazon.com, in which scientists from around the world contribute their thoughts to constantly updated research.”²⁶

How can students determine whether a periodical is peer reviewed? Unfortunately, there is no one source that helps students determine which of the thousands of periodicals are peer reviewed. However, here are some tools and strategies that can assist them:

- Ulrich’s *International Periodical Directory*
- Katz’s *Magazines for Libraries*
- a journal’s website links, such as “Submission Guidelines,” “Editorial Policy,” or “Notes to Contributors”
- the submission guidelines in the print versions of journals

Note: Be wary of trusting subscription databases to correctly tag those periodicals that are peer reviewed. For example, *The Humanist* is tagged as a peer-reviewed journal by *Academic Search Elite*.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

One-Hour Sessions

1. To develop students’ ability to differentiate popular, trade, and scholarly periodicals, display examples of scholarly journals, preferably those that relate to the course content. Ask the class to mentally compare and contrast these journals with popular magazines that they have read. If there is time, solicit comments on the differences, and try to get students to tease out the most significant differences.

2. To reinforce a brief discussion on scholarly versus popular press, distribute a chart that illustrates the differences between the different types of periodicals. See later in this chapter, “Websites on Periodical Types.”
3. For beginning students, give tips on how they can approach a scholarly article by first reading its introduction and conclusion and skipping the middle portions. To help students understand the jargon, remind them to consult the library’s specialized dictionaries.
4. Show students how to limit database searches to peer-reviewed journals.

Multiple Sessions and Courses

1. To develop students’ ability to differentiate between periodical types, display examples of popular, alternative, trade, and scholarly periodicals. Ask the class to compare and contrast them and identify at least three major differences between the four types.

Today, news is disseminated in a variety of ways. Help students identify the different news outlets [e.g., newspapers, newsweeklies (print and electronic), blogs, RSS feeds, and personalized news services]. A good starting point is the tutorial “News Sources: An Overview,” developed by Ohio State University Libraries (gateway.lib.ohio-state.edu/tutor/news).

2. Do some role-playing to help students understand how tabloid writers, journalists, and scholars gather information. For example:

INSTRUCTOR: Pretend I am the editor of [name a tabloid]. I want you to write a juicy profile on [name a celebrity or politician]. Now, where and how are you going to get the “dirt” on this person?

INSTRUCTOR: Pretend you are a journalist writing for [name a newspaper or magazine]. You have been assigned to write an investigative piece on [name a controversial topic]. What sources would you use? Who would you contact? What pictures

would you use to tell the story? What background research is required?

INSTRUCTOR: Pretend you are a psychologist and you would like to study [name a topic]. How are you going to measure or assess this behavior? Will you use tests? Telephone surveys? Focus groups? Questionnaires?

3. Reinforce the fact that some subscription databases will index periodicals ranging from the popular to the scholarly. Examine the results of a search that covers a topic (e.g., personal ads) in both popular and scholarly articles. Discuss how each type of periodical treats the topic based on how titles are expressed and content is described in abstracts.
4. Illustrate the differences in points of view among newsmagazines. Use a controversial topic to discuss how conservative/libertarian, moderate, and liberal/progressive periodicals would frame the issue. The following list places mainstream newsmagazines within the political spectrum:

- Conservative/Libertarian
 - American Spectator*
 - New Republic*
 - New American*
- Moderate
 - Time*
 - Newsweek*
 - U.S. News and World Report*
- Liberal/Progressive
 - Nation*
 - Progressive*
 - Mother Jones*

Include in the discussion ways in which students can identify point of view. For example, political perspectives embed stock phrases. Karen Diaz and Nancy O'Hanlon identify several buzzwords for conservative/libertarian publications (e.g., *free*

enterprise, family values, and states' rights) and liberal/progressive magazines (e.g., *equity, inclusion, and sustainable development*).²⁷

5. To help students become familiar with alternative periodicals, ask them to compare the results of a search in an alternative press index with the results of a search in a general periodical index.
6. Emphasize the value of the author's works cited. To help students know the importance and benefits of the literature cited in an article, have them examine references from a scholarly article. Ask them to look at each reference and determine if it is a book, article, conference paper, government document, and so on. Then, focus on one citation and discuss how one would locate the full text of the item.
7. Provide an article in a popular magazine or newspaper that announces the release of a new study, and ask the students to try to find the full text. For example, the following is an excerpt from a *New York Times* article announcing the release of new evidence concerning early education:

Now evidence from an experiment that has lasted nearly four decades may revive Horace Mann's faith. "Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40" was released earlier this week. It shows that an innovative early education program can make a marked difference in the lives of poor minority youngsters—not just while they are in school but for decades afterward.²⁸

Note that the article does not provide information on the exact location of the study. All we have is the title of the report. Ask the students how they would go about procuring the full text of the study. In this case, the full report can be found by entering the title of the study as a Google search, which points to the High Scope Educational Research Foundation (www.highscope.org/Research/PerryProject/perrymain.htm).

To develop other examples from newspapers or magazines, enter a search with the keyword *study* and connect it to a topic in Lexis/Nexis or a general periodical database. For example:

