PRIMARY/SECONDARY, SCHOLARLY/POPULAR/TRADE SOURCE TYPES
Sometimes, when you are given an assignment, you will be required to use a specific type of source. Most often, you will be required to use academic (scholarly) sources. Other times, it might be okay to use popular sources or trade publications. While there are characteristics that can be used to distinguish each type of source from the other, it is important to remember that many sources will not match all of the characteristics of a particular source type. For example, *Scientific American* has glossy pages and color pictures, but includes scholarly articles as well as those geared toward a more general audience. The *American Journal of Nursing* is a glossy trade publication that includes both popular and scholarly articles written for those in the nursing profession.

A note about articles: It is not always easy to tell what type of publication an article comes from. Therefore, you must examine the content and quality of each article to determine what type of source it is.

The following table will summarize the differences between the different types of sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>POPULAR</th>
<th>TRADE</th>
<th>SCHOLARLY</th>
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| APPEARANCE | • include glossy color photos and illustrations  
• often printed on glossy paper  
• eye-catching covers  
• each issue begins with page 1 | • may include color pictures and illustrations  
• often printed on glossy paper  
• covers depict industrial settings  
• each issue begins with page 1 | • include graphs, charts, or tables  
• plain paper  
• plain covers  
• pages are sometimes consecutive throughout each volume |
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| **AUTHORS** (Who writes these?) | • freelance writers, journalists, staff members, and occasionally scholars  
• author credentials usually not provided  
• sometimes are unsigned | • field or industry specialists, or staff writers with expertise  
• author credentials usually provided | • experts, scholars, researchers, or authorities in their field  
• author credentials almost always provided |
| **AUDIENCE** (Who are they written for?) | • nonprofessionals, the general public  
• sometimes an educated and interested public | • people in specific trades, industries, or professions  
• employment seekers in specific industries | • researchers, scholars, experts, professionals, college and university community |
| **CONTENT** (What’s in them?) | • news, general interest articles, personalities and celebrity coverage  
• editorials on current events, world affairs, and politics  
• language for general readership (no specialized jargon) | • industry trends, new products or techniques  
• organizational news/industry forecasts  
• job openings in that profession  
• extensive use of jargon and terminology of the industry or trade  
• may include original and/or industry related research | • original research, bibliographies, or literature reviews  
• theoretical discussion  
• usually include abstracts  
• extensive references  
• extensive use of jargon and terminology of the discipline |
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<tr>
<td>PURPOSE</td>
<td>• to make money&lt;br&gt;• to provide general interest information to a wide audience&lt;br&gt;• to entertain&lt;br&gt;• to sell advertising, products, and subscriptions&lt;br&gt;• to promote a particular viewpoint</td>
<td>• to provide industry news, contacts, and updates&lt;br&gt;• to keep trade professionals informed&lt;br&gt;• to contribute practical knowledge to industry professionals</td>
<td>• to explore theories&lt;br&gt;• to add to the body of research in a particular discipline&lt;br&gt;• to guide future research&lt;br&gt;• to present new ideas or invite discussion</td>
</tr>
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<td>ACCOUNTABILITY</td>
<td>• editorial review&lt;br&gt;• may use unidentified sources&lt;br&gt;• may give “suggested readings” list, but no formal bibliography or footnotes&lt;br&gt;• published by commercial presses and specific interest groups</td>
<td>• editorial review&lt;br&gt;• may have limited reference list or bibliography&lt;br&gt;• published by trade or professional associations, corporate or commercial presses</td>
<td>• some (not all) are peer reviewed&lt;br&gt;• provide formal reference lists or bibliographies, usually lengthy&lt;br&gt;• published by professional or scholarly organizations, academic presses</td>
</tr>
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<td>ADVERTISEMENTS</td>
<td>• usually heavy advertising (glossy photos and the like)&lt;br&gt;• type of advertising depends on the magazine and its intended audience</td>
<td>• moderate amount&lt;br&gt;• most or all ads are trade related and directed to specific industries and professions</td>
<td>• few or none&lt;br&gt;• may have ads for conferences, job openings, professional publications, and other journals</td>
</tr>
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</table>
At some point you may have a professor who requires that you find primary research articles. How can you know if you’ve found the right kind of source for the assignment? Think of **primary sources** as first-hand accounts or reports written by the person or people who experienced the event. A primary research article will be one in which the authors of the article are the same people who conducted the research, analyzed the results, formed some conclusions, and reported their findings and methodology in the article. Primary sources may also include such things as diaries and journals, autobiographies, memos, photographs, and eyewitness newspaper articles written at the time of the reported event.

**Secondary sources** review and summarize the research conducted by others. Articles in which the authors study and analyze past events they did not experience themselves are also considered to be secondary sources. Other examples of secondary sources include encyclopedia articles, biographies written by someone other than the subject, and textbooks.

This video discusses how scholarly articles are different from other articles, and provides tips on limiting to scholarly articles in the article databases: [http://library.weber.edu/il/libs1704/textbook/videos/ScholarlyArticles.html](http://library.weber.edu/il/libs1704/textbook/videos/ScholarlyArticles.html)

This video discusses the various types of popular sources and what they are used for: [http://library.weber.edu/il/libs1704/textbook/videos/PopularSources.html](http://library.weber.edu/il/libs1704/textbook/videos/PopularSources.html)

Don’t confuse primary and secondary sources with popular and scholarly sources. Think of **primary and secondary sources** in terms of the **author**—did the author experience the event he’s writing about or write with first-hand knowledge of research he conducted?

Think of **popular and scholarly sources** in terms of the **audience and content**. An article which reviews and summarizes a large number of research studies would be a secondary source. If that article was written for scholars or researchers in a field and listed numerous references, it would be a scholarly secondary source.

Following are a few more examples:
SECONDARY & SCHOLARLY ARTICLE
This article is a literature review (secondary) on fish stranding, which was published in a peer-reviewed (scholarly) journal.

PRIMARY AND TRADE ARTICLE
This article has practical advice for individuals in the field of librarianship, which makes this a trade publication. However, it is also a report on original research, which makes it a primary source.

PRIMARY & SCHOLARLY ARTICLE
This is a report on research done by the authors. It is published in the Journal Marine Micropaleontology, which is a scholarly peer-reviewed journal. Since the authors conducted the research themselves, this is considered primary.
**PRIMARY AND POPULAR BOOK**

*Eat Pray Love* is a primary and popular book. This book is a memoir (primary) written for the general public (popular).

**PRIMARY AND POPULAR WEBPAGE**

This webpage presents an eyewitness (primary) newspaper account (popular) of a nuclear power plant disaster in Japan.


**SECONDARY AND SCHOLARLY BOOKS**

Both of these books are secondary and scholarly. *Dividing the Spoils* is a history book on the Egyptians with footnotes and bibliography.

*The Dust Bowl* also has an extensive bibliography and covers the 1930’s environmental disaster in the Great Plains of the US.
SECONDARY AND TRADE BOOK

This is a book that gives instruction on how to create a business plan. This source took information from a number of other sources (secondary) and the intended audience is small business owners or entrepreneurs (trade).

SECONDARY AND POPULAR BOOK

This book, written for the general public (popular), pulled information from many sources (secondary), including interviews with survivors, to present an account of the “Great American Dust Bowl.”

PRIMARY AND NEITHER POPULAR OR SCHOLARLY

Some sources, such as interviews, diaries, and photographs are primary sources if they are created at the time of the event, but aren’t considered either popular or scholarly.

The photo below depicts a farm house surrounded by sand dunes.