<table>
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<tr>
<th>Popular vs. Scholarly Sources – Technical Writing</th>
<th>What’s the difference?</th>
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### Substantive News Periodicals

**Los Angeles Times**

**What is the purpose?**
Inform a general audience about current events and general interest articles.

**Who writes them?**
Staff writers, journalists, and freelancers who may or may not have educational background in or experience with the topics about which they write. Names or credentials may not be stated.

**Who reads them?**
General public

**What is the level of review for accuracy?**
Editors working for the publication review the articles; these editors are most likely not experts on the topic of the article they are editing.

### Trade Publications

**Power Engineering**

**What is the purpose?**
Inform professionals of current trends and news in fields related specifically to their business or industry area. Sell field-specific products.

**Who writes them?**
Often, but not always, specialists or practitioners in the fields about which they write. Sometimes a journalist with subject area expertise. Often published by a trade association.

**Who reads them?**
Practitioners in a field who want to know news, trends, and best practices for their specific industry or profession.

**What is the level of review for accuracy?**
Editors working for the trade publication review the articles. These editors are more likely to know about the topic the article is about than a magazine or newspaper editor would, but they still are not experts on it.

### Scholarly Journals

**Knowledge and Information Systems**

**What is the purpose?**
Inform other scholars and students in higher education of new research and findings (research articles), reviews of research (review articles), and reviews of scholarly books (book reviews).

**Who writes them?**
Experts in their fields: researchers conducting original research, practitioners, professors and scholars. Credentials are usually stated in the article. Scholarly/Academic Journals are produced and published by university presses and scholarly groups.

**Who reads them?**
Scholars (professors, researchers, students) knowledgeable about a specific discipline.

**What is the level of review for accuracy?**
An editorial board made up of other scholars and researchers reviews the articles. Many, but not all, scholarly articles are peer reviewed.* Peer reviewed articles are considered the gold standard of tested information.

*The peer review and publication process often takes well over one year; depending on the field, so it might be hard to find a peer-reviewed article for a currently emerging topic.

### Conference Proceedings

**Proceedings of the 2014 IEEE International Conference on Software Engineering and Service Science**

**What is the purpose?**
Inform the scientific/engineering world about a new technology faster than a peer-reviewed or journal article could.

**Who writes them?**
Experts in their fields: researchers conducting original research, practitioners, professors and scholars. Credentials are usually stated in the article.

**Who reads them?**
Scholars (professors, researchers, students) knowledgeable about a specific discipline.

**What is the level of review for accuracy?**
Organized by an editorial team. The amount of scrutiny applied to these proceedings varies with the conference; some are read and either accepted or rejected right then, while others go through more vigorous scrutiny via peer-review or some other system before they are released.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substantive News Periodicals</th>
<th>Trade Publications</th>
<th>Scholarly Journals</th>
<th>Conference Proceedings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What to look for:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Also called academic, peer-reviewed, or refereed journals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Colorful, glossy images on covers and with articles</td>
<td>• Colorful, glossy images covers often featuring an “industrial” or trade-specific setting</td>
<td>• Long, in-depth articles</td>
<td>• Collections of research papers presented at research conferences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Easy-to-understand, non-technical writing</td>
<td>• Includes field-specific terminology.</td>
<td>• Data and evidence, e.g. tables, charts, graphs, images (but no advertisements)</td>
<td>• Are not official journal or peer-reviewed articles at this stage of their life, but may soon become that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Substantial advertisements</td>
<td>• Includes industry-related advertising</td>
<td>• Specialized or discipline-specific language and jargon</td>
<td>• Uses very field-specific terminology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Does not cite information sources formally; may refer to studies or sources in the text.</td>
<td>• Varied article length (e.g. short news blurbs, longer “feature” articles)</td>
<td>• Reference lists and in-text citations</td>
<td>• Often includes graphs and charts to help explain its findings.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What are the advantages?</strong></td>
<td>• May or may not cite information sources or include reference lists</td>
<td>• Abstract or summary</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Written for non-specialists (easy to understand)</td>
<td>• Timely coverage of industry trends</td>
<td>• Author affiliations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Timely coverage of popular topics and current events</td>
<td>• Sometimes contain short bibliographies</td>
<td>• Peer review information: dates of article submission and acceptance (provided in some journals)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Good sources for background information, to get an overview of an issue, and to follow references in the text to original research studies</td>
<td>• Shorter articles that are informal and practical</td>
<td>• Articles are usually evaluated by experts before publication (peer reviewed)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What are the disadvantages?</strong></td>
<td>• Articles are usually evaluated by experts before publication (peer reviewed), but not always</td>
<td>• Footnotes or bibliographies support research and point to further research on a topic</td>
<td>• Articles are often use specialized terminology of the field that can be difficult for non-specialists to read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Articles are selected by editors who may know little about the topic</td>
<td>• Not peer reviewed, though author is usually a professional in the field</td>
<td>• Authors describe methodology and supply</td>
<td>• Articles are often use specialized terminology of the field that can be difficult for non-specialists to read</td>
</tr>
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<td>• Authors usually do not cite sources</td>
<td>• Use of specialized terminology of the field</td>
<td>• Articles often use specialized terminology of the field that can be difficult for non-specialists to read</td>
<td>• Research and review process takes time; not as useful for current events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Published to make a profit, usually; the line between informing and selling may be blurred</td>
<td>• Evidence drawn from personal experience or common knowledge but NOT rigorous research</td>
<td>• Research and review process takes time; not as useful for current events</td>
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