Source Types

Part of evaluating a source is understanding what kind of source it is. Scholarly articles in academic journals include articles, reviews, analyses, and studies written by academics and people who are experts in their fields. Peer reviewed scholarly journals, the most credible of academic journals, require the articles they publish to go through a process where other subject experts critically evaluate their content. Academic journals are generally published by a university press or other scholarly publishing organizations. Trade publications are another type of journal specific to an industry, usually a trade organization. While academic journals cater toward a scholarly readership, trade publications cater towards a more popular or industry specific audience.

A primary source is a record, document, or physical object that contains first-hand information about a specific event or inside views about the time being studied. Secondary sources are generally scholarly books and articles. These might analyze or evaluate a primary area of interest. Secondary sources talk about or review an event, idea, or object. Popular sources aim to inform a wide array of readers about issues of interest and tend to be more informal in tone and scope than academic articles.