Types of Resources, Part 1: Library Resources

When you search the Library, as well as the internet, you’ll find a variety of types of sources are available.

Why does it matter what type of source you use? To answer this question, we’ll take a look at the characteristics of a few of the main types of sources you might find during your research and the type of research you might use them for.

Let’s start with the characteristics of books and e-books. Books provide in-depth coverage of topics. The publishing process for books takes time, so they are not always the most current source of information on a topic.

So when would you use books or e-books in your research? Books are best used to find in-depth information on a topic, as well as background information that will help you to understand your topic. They also help you find historical information.

You can find books and e-books by using the Discover Service or Library Catalogue to locate print and e-books through the LRC. You can tell when you’ve found a book or e-book because they are labelled in your search results. You may also find books online through Google Books but not usually the whole book.

What about the characteristics of newspapers?

Newspapers are a good source for information on recent events and issues. Articles tend to be short and to the point. References are not usually included. When would you use newspapers for research? Typically, you’d use them to find information on current events and issues, international perspectives on a topic, or local information.

You can find newspapers by using the LRC’s Discover Service, or one of our databases. You’ll be able to tell when you’re viewing a newspaper, because article are usually labelled, and you can filter to see just news articles. Newspapers can also be found on the web but not all articles will be available in full-text.

To decide whether or not you’re viewing a newspaper website, look for the name of a city in the title of the website. Also look for subscription information to determine if the content is released in issues or editions, usually daily.
What about the characteristics of magazines and journals? Magazines and journals contain reports, research findings, discussion of news and issues, product and service information, etc. You can locate them using the LRC’s Discover Service, or one of our databases, and often view articles as PDFs.

Magazines and Journals can be popular, professional, or academic in nature. Which type you need will depend on the purpose of your research... You would use popular magazines to find up-to-date information about current events and issues, written by journalists.

You’d use trade or professional magazines to find information related to a specific field or profession written by experts working within the profession.

You’d used academic journals to find very specific research on a topic, written by scholars in the field. To find magazines and journals, Use the LRC’s Discover Service or one of our databases.

You’ll be able to tell when you’re looking at a magazine because they are labelled in a few different ways: periodical, magazine, trade publication, etc. Also, take a look at the title of the publication to see if it seems to be directed at a certain profession.

If you’re still in doubt, evaluate the content of the magazine to determine who the audience is.

Journals are labelled “journal”, so it’s easy to tell when you’ve found one!

You may also find magazines and journals online through Google or Google Scholar but often not the full-text. To decide whether or not you’re viewing a magazine or journal website, look for subscription information to determine if the content is released in issues or editions, usually monthly.

In this tutorial, we’ve explored the major types of sources and their application in research. We’ve also learned some tips on identifying the type of source you’ve found.

If you need more assistance, please ask at the LRC Service Desk.