

For your annotated bibliography assignment you will be expected to use scholarly sources, and to differentiate them from popular sources. In this video, we will explain the differences using an extended metaphor. Sound good? Well, we're going to do it anyway.

The difference between popular sources and scholarly sources is similar to the difference between starlets and serious actors. Clever, no?

Starlets get a lot of attention from the masses because they are easy on the eyes and have broad appeal, which sells movies, but they are not really known for their depth. They can be pretty entertaining too (sometimes on purpose).

On the other hand, serious actors have undergone rigorous training and are known for their range, depth, and intellect. They lend respectability to films in which they appear, but they appeal primarily to film buffs and other dateless wonders (librarians).

If you were casting an award winning movie, you would want to hire serious actors to give your movie substance, and starlets to make people want to see it. Your approach should be similar when finding sources for your annotated bibliography.

Point being, look for a variety of sources: Don't get everything from one place.

cough Google

So, how do we tell whether a source is scholarly or popular? Listen up, because this is something you will be expected to understand and use for the rest of your college career.

Scholarly Sources are usually Black and white text, have no pictures apart from charts or graphs. They use complex language. They are not short. Usually 10-30 pages long. They contain numerous references, often ten or more. They are divided into sections that have labels: abstract, introduction, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The name of the journal it comes from might sound educated "Journal of English and Germanic Philology."

Popular sources often have fancy formatting, bright colors, and photographs. They use simple language and are usually 1 or 2 pages long. They contain few or no references and usually won't be divided into sections. The name of the publication it comes from is simple and memorable: Maxim, Time, Playboy etc.

You can use this checklist to make an educated guess if a source is scholarly or popular. These are not hard and fast rules. When in doubt, ask a librarian. Seriously, they get paid for that.