

Selecting the best information source

Information Source	Best For:	The Information:	Watch For:
Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive information about the topic • Background and historical information • Bibliography of other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often places an event into some sort of historical context • Can provide broad overviews of an event • Can be intended for a broad audience depending on the book, ranging from scholars to a general audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dated information • Content level can range from general public to expert • Bias or slant (dependent on author)
Popular/ Special Interest Magazine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current information • Shorter, easy to understand articles • Photographs and illustrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is contained in long-form stories. Weekly magazines begin to discuss the impact of an event on society, culture and public policy • Can include detailed analysis of events, interviews, as well as opinions and analysis • Offers perspectives of an event from particular groups or geared toward specific audiences • Is intended for a general audience or specific non-professional groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authors are usually not experts • Articles can lack depth • Sources not always cited • Editorial bias of a publication
Professional/ Trade Magazines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized information related to a particular discipline or profession • Current information • Some bibliographies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is contained in long-form articles or reports • May provide context and analysis of an event as it relates to a specific interest group • Is intended for a professional organizations or groups with similar interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article length can vary between short, easy to understand to lengthy and highly specific • Sources not always cited • Characteristics similar to both popular and scholarly sources sometimes make it difficult to recognize source type

Information Source	Best For:	The Information:	Watch For:
Scholarly/ Academic Journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In depth information • Articles written by experts • Charts and graphs • Recent research on a topic • Bibliographies of other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is often theoretical, carefully analyzing the impact of an event on society, culture and public policy • Is peer-reviewed • Often narrow in topic • Is intended for other scholars, researchers, professionals and university students in the field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terminology and depth of articles may be difficult to understand by novices • Dated information (sort your results by date if you are looking for the most recent information, as some journals extend back several decades)
Newspapers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily information • Localized information and events • Beginning to apply chronology to an event and explain why the event occurred 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May include statistics, photographs and editorial coverage • Includes quotes from experts, government officials, witnesses, etc. • Is intended for a general audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authors usually not experts
Web Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government information • Varied points of view on a topic • Statistics • Company information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is primarily provided through resources like Internet news sites when related to a specific event • Explains the who, what, when and where of an event • Is intended for a general audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility and accuracy cannot be assured (check for author credentials, publication date, etc.) • Information may be highly biased • Sources not always cited

Source:

“Selecting the Best Information Source”. University Library – The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign., 2 Jan. 2013. Web. 12 Aug. 2013