

How Library Stuff Works Videos: Scholarly Books

You have a research assignment coming up and your professor wants you to find five scholarly resources, by now you're a pro at finding peer-reviewed journal articles but you haven't a clue where to find scholarly books!

You make your way to the library but now what?

There are a lot of books here! Plus how are you even supposed to know if that perfect book you found is scholarly or not?!?! Well, don't panic!

A scholarly book is written by an expert or experts in the field and is intended for a specialized audience. In essence it uses discipline specific methodology, terminology and theory to discuss and analyze original research.

Now that you know what a scholarly book is, here's a series of tips to help you decide whether that book you're interested in is scholarly or not!

When you first pick up a book, make sure to look at:

1. The Publisher
2. The Author
3. The Documentation (of sources)
and,
4. The Content

To begin, (The Publisher) most scholarly books are published by a university press though remember there are also other publishers of scholarly books out there so this can't be your only criteria.

Also take a look at (The Author) the author or authors. Scholarly books are written by a recognized expert or experts in the field with advanced degrees, who are usually based at a university, college or research institute.

These authors use scholarly books to communicate their research to others in the academic community. In this way scholarly books are part of a larger ongoing academic dialogue and so in their writing the authors need to be referring back to the sources they consulted during their research.

As such, (The Documentation), a scholarly book will use in-text citations, footnotes or endnotes as well as include a bibliography at the end of each chapter or at the end of the book. This tells the reader where the author got their information.

Finally (The Content), the language and writing style of a scholarly book is discipline specific and the book may include figures, tables or primary documents but will include very little other visual information unless you're dealing with an art history or visual studies book of course!.

So to review, when trying to decide if a book is scholarly, take a look at the publisher, the author, the documentation of sources and the content.

If you are still unsure you can always ask for help at the library! Happy reading!