What Are Journals and Why Are They Useful?

Journals (also known as serials or periodicals) include trade & professional magazines and academic journals. They are published at regular intervals - usually weekly, monthly or quarterly - and can be published in print, both in print and online, or online only. Newspapers are also a type of journal.

Journals usually have a distinct subject focus and contain articles written by subject experts, practitioners, academics and researchers. Examples of journals include British Journal of Educational Studies (online only), The Historian (print and online) and The Psychologist (print only). They often also contain news stories, book reviews and professional development opportunities.

Journals are particularly useful because they focus on developments, issues and debates in particular industries, professions and fields of study, and because the content is very current and up-to-date.

How Do Academic Journals Differ From Other Journals?

Academic journals are also called scholarly, peer-reviewed or refereed journals and usually focus on studies and research in a particular discipline. Prior to publication the articles published in such journals are scrutinised by a small number of subject-experts to ensure their integrity and validity. This process is called peer review and is essentially a form of quality control to ensure that the content of an academic journal is authoritative and trustworthy.

This three minute video What Is A Scholarly Journal?, produced by librarians at La Trobe University in Australia, provides an informative and entertaining explanation of scholarly journals.

What Are Open Access Journals?

The majority of journals are made available via subscription. The Library subscribes to both individual journals and to journal collections (i.e. several journals published by the same publisher, or several journals from different publishers made available via a journal database like ProQuest Central). However, some publishers choose to make their journals ‘open access’. This means that they are freely available to anyone, with no subscription fees to pay. An example of an open access journal is the London Review of Education. The (international) Directory of Open Access Journals provides a gateway to the many open access, peer-reviewed journals currently available.

Which Journals Does The Library Provide Access To?

The Library provides access to tens of thousands of journals covering all subjects taught at the University. A small number are print only*, and are therefore only available to view in the Library, but the vast majority can be accessed online. To see a selection of the journals available for your subject access your subject LibGuide and click on the Journals tab.

How Do I Find A Specific Journal?

To find a specific journal you need to use WorldCat.

Perform a basic WorldCat search for the title of the journal you are looking for: for best results enclose it in speech marks, e.g. “British Educational Research Journal”.

* The latest issues of the Library’s print journals are displayed on shelves on the ground floor; back issues must be requested from the Service Desk. Print journals are for reference only and must not be removed from the Library.
Next, select the Journal, magazine filter on the left of the screen. This will refine your results to journals. You can then choose to refine your results further, for example by selecting the Full Text, eJournal and/or Peer-reviewed filter. A journal with full text access will display a View Now link and an orange icon. Click on View Now and you will see listed the means by which you can access the journal. In the example below the British Educational Research Journal is available via three different databases (look in the brackets to see which dates are covered by which database and which one might best suit your needs); to access any of them click on Access Journal. NB. If you are off-campus you will be prompted to login with your BGU credentials.

If there is no View Now button displayed it means that the Library doesn't provide online access to the journal. It may however provide print access; click on the journal title to open the record and scroll down to the Notes field to view information on any available print holdings. For example, if you perform a search for the journal Museums Journal you will see the information below displayed in the Notes field:

How Do I Search For Journal Articles On A Particular Subject?
To find articles in journals, newspapers, and magazines on a particular subject you need to use WorldCat. Perform a basic keyword search (click here for guidance on constructing searches) and then, on the left of the screen, click on both the Article and Full text filters (see the screenshot below). You can also choose to refine your results further, for example by selecting the Peer-reviewed filter. Articles with full text access will display a View Now link and an orange icon. Click on View Now and then View full text to view the content. NB. If you are off-campus you will be prompted to login with your BGU credentials.
How Do I Find A Specific Article?

There may be instances where you know the full citation of a journal article, for example:


To find this article you would perform a basic WorldCat search for the article title (for best results enclose it in speech marks: “The development and consequences of national curriculum assessment for primary education in England”).

Next, on the left of the screen, select the Full text filter (you can also select the Article filter if you need to). This will refine your results to full text; full text articles will display a View Now link and an orange icon. Click on View Now and it will display details of the database the article is available through. In the example below the article is available via Taylor & Francis Social Science and Humanities Library. To open the article click on the View Full Text link. NB. If you are off-campus you will be prompted to login with your BGU credentials.

If there is no View Now button we may provide access to printed ‘copyright-cleared’ copy of the article, as in the example below (copyright-cleared articles are available from the Service Desk and cannot be taken out of the Library), or we may provide access to printed copies of the journal issue in question: to find out, perform a WorldCat search for the journal title (see the section above on How To Find A Specific Journal).
Alternative Ways of Finding Online Journals and Articles

There are two alternative ways to find journals and electronic journals online.

The first is to use WorldCat’s eJournal & eBook Search functionality. This can be accessed via the top-left drop-down menu on the WorldCat homepage.

The second is to search individual journal databases via the Library’s A-Z Databases page: go to the homepage and select Journals from the All Database Types drop-down menu. (Click here for guidance on constructing searches.)

What Can I Do If The Library Doesn’t Provide Access To The Article I Need?

If there’s an article the Library doesn’t provide access to you can request a copy via inter-library loan and the Library team will try to acquire a copy for you from another library. Charges apply, but the article will be yours to keep.

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