



**iResearch**  
information skills for life

## **UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY LIBRARY: SCHOLARLY VS NON-SCHOLARLY RESOURCES**

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### **Summary**

After completing this learning tool, you should be able to:

- Provide a definition of a scholarly resource
- Use the REVIEW criteria to evaluate if a resource is scholarly
- Identify which type of resources are scholarly

### **Copyright**

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## WHAT IS A SCHOLARLY RESOURCE?

In your assignments you will be required to use the most scholarly material possible to support your arguments. Scholarly means written by qualified academic experts and supported by research and references. You can test whether a resource is scholarly by applying the REVIEW criteria:

- R** – **Relevance**
- E** – **Expertise of Author**
- V** – **Viewpoint of Author/Organisation**
- I** – **Intended Audience**
- E** – **Evidence**
- W** – **When Published**

## THE REVIEW CRITERIA

### **R is for Relevance**

- How relevant is the resource to your topic or question?
- Does the resource provide a broad overview, or does it relate to just one aspect of your topic/question?
- Have you read a variety of sources to determine whether this one is useful?

### **E is for Expertise of Author**

- What is the educational background of the author?
- Is this topic in the author's area of expertise?
- Are they regularly cited by the other authors in the field?

### **V is for Viewpoint of Author/Organisation**

- Is the author or organisation associated with a particular view or position?
- What is the purpose of the resource? (is it intended to inform? To persuade? To entertain?)

### **I is for Intended Audience**

- Who is the intended audience for the resource?
- Is the resource at the appropriate level for your needs – is it too basic or too technical?

### **E is for Evidence**

- Has the author cited appropriate evidence to back up their theories/conclusions?
- Is there a bibliography or reference section? (this may contain further useful resources)
- Has the resource been through the peer review process?

### **W is for When Published**

- When was the resource published?
- Is the information still current, or have there been further developments in the topic area?

## APPLYING THE REVIEW CRITERIA

What will happen if you apply the REVIEW test to this **textbook**?

Singer, S. Fred.  
**Unstoppable global warming : every 1,500 years.**  
Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

**Relevance:** Excellent. There is lots of useful information in the book.

**Expertise:** Very good. The author works at two well-known universities and the publisher is respected.

**Viewpoint:** Challenging. Disputes prevailing scientific views of climate change.

**Intended audience:** Good. University students and researchers.

**Evidence:** Excellent. The author cites in-depth scientific evidence.

**When published:** Good. Published recently.

Would you use this **textbook** as a scholarly resource?

The REVIEW criteria clearly demonstrate that this is a scholarly work.

Would you use this **peer reviewed journal article** as a scholarly resource for this assignment?

Marcel E. Visser  
"Keeping up with a warming world; assessing the rate of adaptation to climate change"  
Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society Series B: Biological Sciences  
Volume 275, Number 1635 / March 22, 2008  
Special Issue 'Evolutionary dynamics of wild populations' compiled and edited by Loeske  
E. B. Kruuk and William G. Hill

**Relevance:** Deals with the effects of global warming on the evolution of animal species

**Expertise:** Scholarly affiliation of the author is given. The research is original.

**Viewpoint:** Objective, as the article has gone through a peer review process

**Intended audience:** Aimed at scholarly researchers, including students and academics

**Evidence:** Superb. The article was subject to peer review checking before publication and contains extensive references. However you should still research the alternate point of view.

**When published:** Recent research on the topic

Would you use this **journal article** as a scholarly resource?

Peer reviewed journal articles are the most scholarly material available

What will happen if you apply the REVIEW Test to this **Wikipedia article**?

Global warming  
Wikipedia  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_warming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming)  
Accessed on 10/06/2008  
No author listed.

**Relevance:** Very good. It's an article specifically about global warming, covering a range of issues in a structured way.

**Expertise:** Unknown. Anybody can edit Wikipedia, so you don't know who wrote the information.

**Viewpoint:** The article aims to reach a consensus for approach and neutrality, but this may not be represented at any given moment, as the site is changing constantly.

**Intended audience:** Provided for the general public, but contains a large amount of scientific data.

**Evidence:** There is extensive referencing, Wikipedia articles often refer to more authoritative sources, but the references need to be verified.

**When published:** Superb. Wikipedia is updated constantly.

Would you use this **Wikipedia article** as a scholarly resource?

Wikipedia articles are not scholarly, because we don't know the qualifications of the author. However, they can be a good source of further reading.

## CONCLUSION

You can apply the REVIEW criteria to all kinds of information – blogs, podcasts etc  
If you are not sure whether to use a resource, apply the REVIEW criteria, or ask a lecturer or librarian.