Anatomy of a Journal

Introduction
This short activity will walk you through the different elements which form a Journal.

Allow approximately 10 minutes to complete the task.

Aims
By the end of the activity you will be able to:

- Understand what an academic journal is
- Identify a journal publication
- Distinguish between peer-reviewed articles and other elements in a journal.

What is a journal?
Firstly, let's look at a description of a journal.

Journals are like academic magazines and cover a particular topic or area of interest and are usually published or issued on a regular basis: quarterly, monthly or even annually. Ejournals are simply online versions. As with magazines each issue of a journal contains a number of articles.

To explore more about how to identify whole journals and sections of journals in your search read the information below about publishing, content and peer-review.

Publishing
A journal publishes regularly; this could be monthly, quarterly or even annually. However the content is entirely different each time, it is closer to a magazine than a book in this regard.

A book is published once, any new publications are:

- Reprints - where the content doesn't change
- Editions - where the content is updated

A magazine is published regularly under the same title. Think of a popular magazine like Cosmopolitan, the content is different in each new issue but the title Cosmopolitan is the same.

It is important to understand the differences in publishing times as the frequency of publications allows journals to cover more up to date research than a book.

Content
Journals can contain a whole range of items.
Finding and using journal articles is a key part of academic study, we will look at how to identify the different elements that make a journal later on in this tutorial.

Peer-review
Academic journals often go through a quality check process called peer-review.

It involves a board of experts scrutinizing an academic paper before agreeing to publish it in the journal.

It is good to use peer-reviewed journals as it means the content is:
- very reliable
- conforms to high academic standards
- a suitable source for an assignment.

The process of a journal
The nature of a journal means that different content is regularly published under the same title. It can be confusing to understand which section you are accessing online as it is often broken up into shorter files.

We need to be able to distinguish between this month's publication and last month's publication.

Put the sentence fragments into the correct order. (Answer in Appendix 1)

- A Journal is published regularly in...
- Individual journal articles.
- Volumes, which are often published in sections as...
- Issues, these issues contain...

Elements of a Journal
We've narrowed down to an individual issue of a journal, now we need to look at the content.
A journal contains more than just journal articles, look at the sections of the contents page (Figure 1) and identify the different elements.

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of The British Society for the Philosophy of Science
CONTENTS

ARTICLES

1 EINSTEIN, METEORON AND THE ROLE OF MATHEMATICS IN PHYSICAL DISCOVERY
Elie Zahar

45 BAYESIANISM VERSUS BACONIANISM IN THE EVALUATION OF MEDICAL DIAGNOSES
L. Jonathan Cohen

111 BRAIN STATES
Kathleen Wilkes

131 BAYESIAN CONDITIONALISATION AND THE PRINCIPLE OF MINIMUM INFORMATION
P. M. Williams

145 MODELS IN PHYSICS
Michael Redhead

165 ON THE INTERPRETATION AND TRANSITIVITY OF NON-STANDARD SYNCHRONISMS
R. Francis

213 A NEW BEGRIFFSCHRIFT (1)
John P. Mayberry

255 CONVENTIONALISM ABOUT SPACE AND TIME
Richard Swinburne

317 SOCIAL PROPENSITIES
Peter Urbach

320 A NEW BEGRIFFSCHRIFT (II)
John P. Mayberry

DISCUSSIONS

63 POPPERIAN LANGUAGE-ACQUISITION UNDEFEATED
Geoffrey Sampson

175 SOME COMMENTS ON THIRD WORLD EPISODENOLOGY
L. Jonathan Cohen

273 ZAHAR ON MACH, EINSTEIN AND MODERN SCIENCE
Paul Feyerabend

282 ON THINGS AND CAUSES IN SPACETIME
Hugh Mellor

REVIEW ARTICLES

69 ARMSTRONG'S THEORY OF UNIVERSALS (review of D. M. Armstrong: Universals and Scientific Realism)
David H. Sanford

181 THE EARTH AND THE HIND: PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF SCIENCE
(review of C. Howson (ed.): Method and Appraisal in the Physical Sciences)
Thomas Kuhn
Sections of the Contents page:

1. Articles
Articles are listed in the contents page here.

2. Discussions
Discussion papers are listed here, these are opinion pieces.
Tip: Discussions provide good insight into current positions, disagreements and debates on a particular subject. However, discussion sections are not peer-reviewed.

3. Reviews
Reviews of recently published literature is published here.
Tip: While the authors of book reviews are usually experts on their subjects, these sections are not peer-reviewed.

4. Further Information
Details of the journal are often listed at the bottom. This is a good place to look for volume, issue and date of publication.

Anatomy of a journal article
Explore the layout of a journal article (Figure 2)
Article Title

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Abstract


I. INTRODUCTION


II. METHODS

Maecenas sed ultricies felis. Sed imperdiet dictum arcu a egestas.

- Donec dolor arcu, rutrum id molestie in, viverra sed diam
- Curabitur feugiat
- turpis sed auctor facilisis
- arcu eros accumsan lorem, at posuere mi diam sit amet tortor
- Fusce fermentum, mi sit amet euismod rutrum
- sem lorem molestie diam, iaculis aliquet sapien tortor non nisi
- Pellentesque bibendum pretium aliquet

*A thank you or further information

Figure 2 – example article front page
1. **Article title**
Title of the article, not the journal title.

2. **Author details**
The names of the authors and any institutional affiliation they have.
Tip: You can look up the authors online for more information on the article and their research.

3. **Date published**
This the date the article was published, you use this date in your reference.

4. **Abstract**
This is a summary of the article.
Tip: Read the abstract to determine whether or not the article is likely to focus on the topics in which you are interested.

5. **Introduction**
This is the background to the article and explains why the topic has been researched for this article.
Tip: It can also be helpful to read the introduction and conclusion of an article before reading an article straight through.

6. **Main body of the article**
This is often broken up into subsections.
In this example, the next section ‘Methods’ sets out the methodology they used.
The final section is always the ‘Conclusion’.
Tip: It is often helpful to read the conclusion as gives an overview of the article findings.

7. **References**
At the end of the article there will be a reference list containing every article cited by the author.
Tip: You can use their references to follow-up claims and evidence made by the author; try inputting an author/title from the reference list into Library Search.

**Identifying an article**
Now consider the importance of being able to identify an article from other content in a peer-reviewed journal, note down the key identifiers.
Example answer in Appendix 2.
Red Flags

By now you should be confident in your understanding of a journal and how it is structured. As you become familiar with academic study you will start to spot the same distinguishing features of a journal item which is **not** an article. These will act as your red flags and help you filter out what you need.

Select the answers which raise a red flag as **not** being a journal article.

1. There is no abstract
2. Page length is less than 2 pages
3. The journal title is "Oxford Review of Education"
4. No publication date
5. The title is: "Joe Bloggs, Contextualisation in an academic environment"
6. More than one person is listed as an author
7. All the articles in the journal issue are by the same author

Correct answers are in Appendix 3

Summary

You should now be able to:

- Understand what an academic journal is
- Identify a journal
- Distinguish between peer-reviewed articles and other items in a journal.

End of session.
Appendix 1 – Process of a Journal
Correct sentence structure:
A Journal is published regularly in... Volumes, which are often published in sections as... Issues, these issues contain... Individual journal articles.

Appendix 2 – Identifying an Article
Question:
Now consider the importance of being able to identify an article from other content in a peer-reviewed journal, note down the key identifiers.

Model answer:
Scholarly articles always have an abstract or an introduction; the majority of articles have both. You will also find a conclusion and references at the end of the article (after the main body of text).

Be cautious of search results with the word “Review” in their title. These can be book reviews, which are not peer-reviewed. However, some journals include “Review articles” which are usually summaries of literature on a given subject rather than original research on a new area. Review articles are peer-reviewed and can be helpful for your studies.

If you are not sure from the title, scan the content and author details to help you determine if it is the original item or a review (of the research/book). The journal issue may have an abstract or introduction written by the editor, as a summary of the articles published in this particular issue. Be aware, editorials are rarely substantial or original enough to be suitable for use in assignments.

Page length is another quick thing to check. You can assume that a scholarly article will always be longer than two pages (and can be up to about 20). Anything shorter is likely to be a book review or editorial material.

Appendix 3 – Red Flags
By now you should be confident in your understanding of a journal and how it is structured. As you become familiar with academic study you will start to spot the same distinguishing features of a journal item which is not an article. These will act as your red flags and help you filter out what you need.

Feedback
Not a Red Flag- No abstract
It is good academic practice to have an abstract and is required by many journal publishers, however it is not necessary. You may find older articles without abstracts in particular, but you can still use them.

Red Flag- Page length
A journal article should contain in-depth analysis of the subject, this may be a review of the original article instead.

Not a Red Flag- The journal title is "Oxford Review of Education"
This is the title of the journal, not an article. So we can assume the journal is based on this topic. It may contain article/book reviews but we cannot be sure from the journal title.
Red Flag- No publication date
Peer-reviewed journals are published regularly, if you cannot see a date this may not have been published in an academic journal.

Red Flag- The title is: "Joe Bloggs, Contextualisation in an academic environment"
An article title should not include the authors name, this does not fit the structure of a journal article. It is likely to be a review of Joe Bloggs article on Contextualisation in an academic environment, rather than being the original article by Joe Bloggs.

Not a Red Flag- More than one person is listed as an author
Articles do usually have more than one author, it is normal practice in research.

Red Flag- All the articles in the journal issue are by the same author
If you are certain they are the author and not the journal editor, then it may be a personal publication such a blog.