Types of Scholarly Articles

Consider the purpose of the author when analyzing an article published in the scholarly literature. Not all articles are "research."

For example,

- Is the author reporting on his own research and data collection or data collected by someone else?
- Is it the opinion of the author or a commentary on the work of others?
- Is it an analysis of the many studies conducted and published on a specific topic?

Here are the major types of articles published in scholarly journals:

Research
A paper or article reporting on the results of one or more specific research projects. Presents the problem statement, literature review, theoretical framework, logical structure, objectives, research questions and/or hypotheses, research design, methods of data collection, data analysis, reliability and validity, presentation of research findings, and conclusion of the study. The article is normally authored by the researcher(s).

Review (not a book review)
A summary, synthesis, discussion, or assessment of one or more research articles. Such an article might review selected works on a particular topic (as in a literature review). Review articles are significant in that they present conflicting, opposing, and/or supporting points of view. They are intended to provide credibility, balance, and an objective analysis and/or summary of the studies reviewed. They discuss effective methodologies for conducting research in the area. Review articles are traditionally authored by an expert in the field or a graduate school faculty member. Consider the authority of the author of the article when analyzing the article itself. Review articles include extensive bibliographies and serve as a guide to the research topic. They sometimes suggest future research ideas and needs.

Commentary, Editorial, or Reply
An opinion piece or discussion on an issue, topic, or study. The author is normally a scholar or researcher in the field who expresses a strong opinion with the intention of motivating or persuading others to adopt his or her perspective. The author makes an insightful point that might produce change. Commentaries and editorials are brief.

Discussion
Full-length articles that raise and discuss current issues, ideas, and opinions. They often provide a forum for discussion without the rigors of academic publishing. They may or may not draw upon existing literature. They often suggest areas for future research. They may explore new areas that have scant published research. They present and discuss current issues, ideas, and opinions in a conversational style.

Shortened from Anne C. Moore's handout from Evaluation of Information Services, 7/6/2006. Simmons College, Graduate School of Library & Information Science.
A Few Research Methodologies

Every major field of study has their own methodologies. These are some common methods.

Case study
- Detailed description or study of a specific individual or context; may focus on specific aspects of the case; qualitative.

Citation analysis
- Determine the impact of a single author on a given field by counting the number of times the author has been cited by others
- Titles are ranked according to the frequency that they are cited in bibliographies

Content or Text Analysis
- Study of the words, phrases, concepts, themes, characters, sentences, paragraphs found in textual or media materials.
- Identify patterns and themes in text.
- Qualitative or quantitative.

Focus Groups
- An exploratory, guided interview or interactive conversation among seven to ten participants with common interests or characteristics.
- An unstructured interview of a group.
- Develop an understanding of participants' attitudes and perceptions on the topic; exploratory; guide d-m.
- Qualitative

Observation
- Researcher is observer, participant, or a combination.
- Participant observation: researcher immerses self in culture or context; can be lengthy; field notes.
- Direct observation: researcher watches rather than participates; recording frequently used; focused on certain situations or interactions; brief
- Record behavior as it occurs.
- Compare what people actually did to what they said they did.
- Not attitudes, feelings, or beliefs; external actions.
- Can be qualitative or quantitative.

Interviews (unstructured and structured or survey)
- Unstructured Interview: direct conversation between researcher and subject; no formal instrument, protocol, or set of questions; researcher has initial questions, but conversation evolves organically; exploratory; collects perceptions, attitudes, and motivations; each interview unique; tough to analyze; qualitative.
- Structured or survey: runs according to a specific, predetermined protocol; everyone asked the same questions; the answers may be fixed; may be conducted with technology (Web, conferencing, IM, chat, email) scheduled in advance; quantitative.

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