

Let's start off with two simple questions: How is information created? and how is it shared?

Let's start with today. When something happens somewhere in the world, what are the **first** places that you typically read or hear about it? Who tells these stories?

Some major sources for late breaking news are: Newspapers, TV, Radio, and Social Media. And the authors in these places are professional journalists and – especially with the social media outlets – ordinary citizen observers. These types of information sources are not considered scholarly. In fact, we call them “**popular**” sources and they usually can't go much deeper than reporting on the Who, What, Where, When of an event. And that's only fair, considering that they are not written by experts on the relevant topic and they appear within just hours or days of an event.

But what about the deeper questions like the How and the Why of an event? Well, they can't be answered instantly – these complexities take time and perspective to begin to understand.

So, what kind of timeline is needed, then, to get scholarly work out to the world? Well, even weeks and months may not be enough time – you *will* see publications come out with more information and some attempts at analysis – but in those first few months these are typically still being written by editors and journalists in popular magazines and newspapers.

Scholarly sources, written by expert researchers, working in universities and other types of research institutions, can take much longer to appear, sometimes years. This time-lag isn't because scholars aren't interested in current events - but because it simply takes time to conduct quality research; to analyze findings; seek out other interpretations of events and

attempt to draw some conclusions that make sense to the researcher – and to other experts in the field. In addition to all this work, academic book and journal publishers have got their own editorial or peer- review processes that can add months to the journey towards publication.

So what does this mean for you? Simply this: when you're choosing a topic you'll need to consider where your topic sits on the publication timeline. You may find that you've settled on something too recent to yield up scholarly sources. If so, you'll need to figure out if you can salvage your topic by tying it to something similar that happened in the past or if you're better off changing topics entirely.

For help with this process drop by, call email or chat online with us at the Library. If you'd like to know more about distinguishing between scholarly and popular sources, check out the guide in the Research Help portal on the Library website.