The Information Cycle

The information cycle refers to the way information changes over time, through various types of publishing formats.

Each format can be used for academic research and is found in a different way.

Read on to find out more.
Books

Books often cover a topic in great detail and the author or authors have ample time to research their information. They are usually reviewed by an editor for grammatical errors. The editor may not review the accuracy of the content, but the library uses many tools to help determine the quality of the books in its collection. Books are published for different audiences, in both fiction and non-fiction.
Books

The best place to locate a book in the library is through the catalog found on the library website. Make sure you limit your results to “Library Catalog” on the left!
Reference Books

Reference materials are best used for getting background information on a topic, but their coverage is usually too short to be used as the single source for a paper or project. They can, however, give you a good introduction to a topic and provide you with more search terms you may not otherwise have thought of.

Common reference books include dictionaries, encyclopedias and almanacs. These materials often give short overviews of many topics relating to a theme. Reference books are not updated as often as other sources, and print versions can take years to be updated.
Newspaper Articles

Newspaper articles are meant to provide brief, informative content on current events. Articles are written by journalists who often have a short deadline, and may not have time to do extensive background research. Articles are usually reviewed by an editor before publication. They can be found in print, on newspaper websites, and in databases, such as Infotrac Newsstand, that collect digital versions of news content.

Score one for safety

In early May 2010, former Sentinel High School wide receiver Dylan Steigers took a hit during a scrimmage at Eastern Oregon University. Steigers remained on the ground for a moment before walking to the sideline under his own power. Minutes later he was vomiting. After being rushed to the emergency room, doctors diagnosed him with an acute subdural hematoma resulting from a concussion. Steigers, 21, died the next day.

Steigers' high school coach, Pete Joseph, later told a reporter, "[Steigers] was an exceptional, exceptional football talent. He played the game the way it should be played. He had excellent physical tools, he played the game hard, he played the game fast, and he loved football. He played the right way."

But according to Sen. Anders Blewett, D-Great Falls, "the right way" is exactly what needs re-evaluating. On Jan. 9, Blewett introduced SB 112, or "The Dylan Steigers Protection of Youth Athletes Act," which would require each school district "to adopt a policy addressing the dangers of concussions."
Magazine articles often go beyond what is found in the newspaper by devoting more space to articles and combining current events with established information.

Magazines are written to different audiences; for example, an article found in “Science” magazine may be more creditable than one found in “People” magazine.

Articles can be found in print, on magazine websites, and in databases, such as ProQuest Central.
Journal articles are written by authors with scholarly backgrounds who may be working as professionals in a field or as educators. Journal articles often take months or years to write, and many include independent research done by the authors to back up their hypotheses.

Scholarly journal articles are usually peer reviewed, meaning a panel of experts has reviewed the article for accuracy.
A peer reviewed article will always be a good source of information on a topic, especially for academic research. Journal articles can be found in print, on journal websites, and databases such as ProQuest Central.

**Please note** that most journal websites will require a subscription to view articles, so your best bet at finding peer reviewed articles is through the library and NC LIVE.
Websites can be changed every second, and can therefore be a good place to find the most up-to-date information. However, this rapid ability to change information on websites often means they don’t have to be checked for accuracy.

See the “Internet Searching” tab on this Guide for more on evaluating websites for scholarly research.