# Information Sources: Uses, Advantages, and Disadvantages

| Source Type | Access | Utility | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| **Book (nonfiction)** | Print, Online | Research, information | Thorough treatment of a topic | May not contain the latest information; may not be scholarly |
| **Encyclopedia** | Print, Online | Research, information | Good topical coverage; good source for background information | Information is usually not very specific |
| **Magazine** | Print | Entertainment, information | Good for general information; contemporary focus | Not scholarly in nature |
| **Trade/Professional Journal** | Print | Information | Articles written by specialists in their fields | Oriented toward specific fields; not scholarly in nature |
| **Newspapers** | Print, online | Information | Good source for current events; primary sources | Not scholarly; information may be biased |
| **Scholarly Journal** | Print, Online | Research, information | Articles written by authorities; scholarly discussion; may be peer-reviewed* | Subject may be very focused – sometimes and advantage and sometimes not |
| **Government Documents** | Print, online** | Research, information | Many produced; cover wide variety of topics; good source of statistics | Information is very specific |
| **Research databases** | Online | Research, information | Many topics; articles written by authorities; scholarly discussion; may be peer-reviewed* | Access restricted to authorized users; user name and password required; may be very focused |
| **Videos** | DVD, streaming | Research, information, entertainment | Good for visual learners; wide variety of topics. | More difficult to mark a useful passage than print media. |
| **Open web** | Online | Entertainment, information | Quantity of information | Quality of information is uneven; authority of some sources is unknown |
| **Google Scholar** | Online | Research, information | Scholarly information | May not be peer-reviewed; access may be restricted |
| **Social media** | Online | Entertainment, information | Information updated frequently | Quality of information is uneven; authority of some sources is unknown |

*Peer review is a process by which a panel of experts reviews an article for quality assurance.

**The SVCC library is not a government documents repository, so only online government documents are available.