Definition and Significance of Periodical Literature

The term periodical refers to publications such as:

- Magazines
- Journals
- Newspapers.

Periodicals are usually published relatively frequently and in an ongoing manner year after year.

Periodicals typically are soft cover publications with simple bindings.

Periodicals are not limited to the print format. Some periodicals are published as online, digitized information residing in a remote database or in CD-ROM or other optical disc format.

The periodical publishing cycle is the second quickest one, coming in only behind the Internet as a publishing format.

The bulk of published information (either online or print) appears in periodical format!

The content of a periodical article reflects the opinion that is the most contemporary treatment of an event or issue.

If you are interested in reviewing the evolution of opinion or thought on a particular topic, periodical literature is the best place to look for this change over time.
Periodical literature may also be the only source for information on some topics. Those topics may have been too faddish or too fleeting (in terms of interest to a readership) for those topics to have appeared in book form.

**Popular vs. Trade vs. News vs. Scholarly**

The term "magazine" is usually used to refer to general periodicals, popular periodicals that appeal to broad groups of readers. Articles in popular periodicals tend to be shorter in length and do not usually contain highly specialized or technical language.

**News** can refer to some periodicals and newspapers. Newspapers consist of short articles and are also non-technical in nature. They tend to cover current events and issues. They are excellent "primary information" resources because they provide firsthand reports or accounts of events.

News periodicals such as "Time" and "Newsweek" are current event oriented literature in magazine format.

**Trade** periodicals refer to magazines that are targeted at specific occupational groups and businesses. They contain shorter articles but tend to be aimed at those who share an occupation or business goal in common, and offer insights into trends and thought on particular aspects of commerce and service industries.
Scholarly periodicals are more highly specialized, contain a higher level of technical terms and tend to follow a more complex conversational pattern that recalls earlier treatments of a topic or research area.

The intended audience for the scholarly periodical article is usually a more specific and limited segment of the population. Scholarly articles frequently contain many references and a lengthy bibliography.

Scholarly journals frequently have rigorous submission standards. Articles are usually either peer-reviewed (also know as refereed) and can also be "blind-refereed."

Scholarly periodicals can be divided into three general areas: humanities (such as art, literature or journalism), sciences (medicine, CIS, agriculture) and social sciences (sociology, anthropology, business).

Finding periodical articles (print and online)

Indexes and abstracts

The periodical index is a list of citations that refer to full periodical articles. An article can be indexed by subject headings that describe the article content. Articles are also indexed by author names and broad or specialized subject areas.

The index will include a minimum of the full citation for the article,
including author(s), title, name of periodical in which the article appears, the volume and issue number of the journal, the date and page numbers of the article.

Some indexes include abstracts, or brief concise summaries, of the article itself.
Print indexes will contain the article citation and sometimes abstracts, depending upon the index.
An online index may also contain the full text of the periodical article itself.

Indexes can be specific to a single periodical or a group of periodical articles from many different periodicals. These can be arranged by academic areas such as the Humanities, the Sciences, and the Social Sciences. Or, these indexes can be targeted at general populations such as public library users. Other indexes exist which only target medical professionals.

Choosing a Periodical Index
Knowing where to go to find relevant periodical articles for your research means exploring the resources of the library. Different institutions (colleges, universities, public libraries) offer different types of indexes and different types of technology for locating information.

As you are aware, to find books owned by the SRJC libraries, you look in the online catalog. You can also look up the titles of periodicals themselves and see if the SRJC libraries subscribe to that periodical.
What you cannot currently do is expect to find individual article citations and/or full text of periodical articles in the online catalog.

Always question yourself when you sit down to search for information:

- Where will this resource (the computer, the search engine, the print periodical index, etc) look when I choose and use search terms?

- What materials are included? Excluded?

- Will this resource lead me to an article citation? Will the full text of the article be there? What years of the journals will be covered?

Step by Step Process for searching the Print Periodical Indexes

- Choose your search terms
- Choose the Index that best suits your needs (the general “green books,” humanities index, biography index, etc.)
- Find articles in the index.
- Check the blue book that lists SRJC Periodicals and their formats for your source.
- Use the green card to request articles from the Periodicals desk in the library.
- Note the format: is your source available in microform, bound or paper issues?
- Read your source: make copies or take notes if you need to. Don’t forget to note complete citation information!