The Information Cycle Time Line

What do we mean by “Information Cycle?”

We get information from a variety of sources reflecting the passage of that information through time & how we interact with it. As the information progresses from the beginning of its life cycle (for example, the beginning of an event that takes place), the information becomes more detailed as we know more about it.

News Sources & Magazines
- Give readers the basic who, what, & where of something that has recently happened
- Articles & posts written immediately or soon after something happens
- Provide just reporting & opinion

Scholarly Research Journals
- Get into the why & how
- Articles written after years of research on highly focused topic of interest
- Articles look at the data that has been collected over the years & the research that has been done

Books
- Written often years after scholarly articles are published
- Give overview, trends, history, bigger picture
- Or chapters that each focus, like scholarly articles, on one aspect of a topic of research

Content in news sources & magazines is close in time to when the information first appeared & can give just the bare facts and/or opinions, whereas articles & books are published after much research has been done.

Content in journal articles can provide the most current research; they are published before books yet offer the in-depth information that news sources & magazines can’t.

Content in books can often provide history & trends that have emerged over long periods of time. Books can also provide a bigger picture & context for understanding the highly focused research articles.

Reference Books vs. Books of Research

Books that are published by scholarly publishers are meant to provide in-depth research.

Reference books (for example, specialized encyclopedias) are farthest along the information cycle & can provide overviews and general summary information & point you to articles and books for further reading. They can also be used to help identify the issues surrounding a given topic of research.