How to find scholarly books

Start

Library

Laurier
You’ve probably already seen how easy it is to find and access peer-reviewed journal articles through one of our research databases.
But your assignment stipulates you also need to find scholarly or academic books.

Those aren’t as easy to determine, so I’m going to give you three things to note when searching for scholarly books in the library’s collection.
1. Publisher

- Books published by a recognized university press

Slide notes
The first is the publisher: many scholarly books are published by a recognized university press.
Slide notes

It’s safe to assume that if you see a university press as the publisher, the book is a scholarly one.
But there are many publishers that publish scholarly books that aren’t university presses. Here are a just a few.

So, we need to know a few more things that identify scholarly books.
2. Documentation

• How the author documents sources

Slide notes
The second characteristic to look at is the documentation - how the author documents sources.
Two hundred and ten years ago southern Ontario was almost totally without human occupants. Today it is the most populous part of what is known as the heartland of Canada. It contains one-third of the total population of Canada, and it is currently attracting much more than its "fair share" of growth. Its metropolitan centre, Toronto, has become the most populous urban municipality in Canada.

The metamorphosis of Ontario from a wilderness to a heartland for half a continent still calls for attention from social geographers 40 years after Wreford Watson's pioneering contributions. This essay reconstructs changes in distribution and composition of the population, from the earliest European settlement to the present, in an attempt to lay a foundation for social geographies of Ontario. There is an emphasis on the first century of the settlement when many persistent and fundamental social and political realities were established. The main themes taken up in this essay are, in order, the initiation of the European agricultural settlement, chronological variations in the size of the population, changes in its distributions and composition and, finally, some theoretical propositions bearing on the social geography.

5.1 Refugee Beginnings
5.1.1 American Upheaval

The bicentennial of the arrival of the first Euro-American agricultural...
2. The Hippocratic Treatise “Airs, Waters, Places”

Throughout this work I have used the name of Hippocrates as if it were self-evident that he is the author of Ancient Medicine and Airs, Waters, Places, but there is little but custom to warrant such a practice. Through the eighteenth century there was general agreement that the works traditionally ascribed to him were indeed his; only in the nineteenth century was this view challenged, were the problems of authenticity examined, but no agreed-upon solution was found. No one knows if Hippocrates is the author of any of these works. Ancient Medicine may date from the end of the fifth century, possibly being composed by an early disciple of Hippocrates. Airs, Waters, Places apparently is genuine in the sense that with very few demurrers it has been included in the ancient so-called Hippocratic corpus. Editors of Hippocrates’ works have included both in the corpus, a practice followed by Littre and Jones. It is reasonable to suppose that the essay was composed early enough to influence men like Aristotle, and some have seen its influence in the concluding chapter of Herodotus’ histories. These uncertainties regarding dating and authenticity should not obscure the fact that rightly or wrongly Hippocrates through the ages has been regarded as a very real physician, as the author of the work, and that Airs, Waters, Places has been one of the most popular of his treatises.

2 Kirk and Raven, FSP, #233, 234, p. 205. The first is Fr. 118, Stobaeus, Anth. III. 5, 8; the second Fr. 117, ibid., III. 5, 7. These authors think Heraclitus’ main philosophical activity ended by 480, p. 185. The floruit follows the OCD.


Slide notes

Scholarly books use citations or detailed footnotes in the text, and include an extensive bibliography at the end of each chapter, or at the end of the book.
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This documentation indicates the author has done detailed research in the topic at hand and is interested in communicating where they have drawn on other authors’ information sources to add to their argument.

This is one of the hallmarks of scholarly communication.
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Popular or non-scholarly books usually don’t use such extensive documentation.
Additionally, they often contain a lot of visual information as well as text.
3. Author

- Scholarly author = recognized expert
Scholarly or academic authors often have advanced degrees, like a doctoral degree, and are very often based at a university, college, or research institute.
Scholarly authors use scholarly books to communicate the findings of their research to other experts in their field, or the broader scholarly community.
Now that we’ve identified 3 key features of scholarly books, you might be wondering: aren’t all the books in the Laurier Library scholarly?
While the library has many scholarly books, we also carry a number of popular books, such as graphic novels, and works of literary fiction that would not be considered scholarly.

These works are collected by the library to support the research and teaching interests of our faculty and students.
To make sure you know whether a book is scholarly or not, you really need to consult the book itself and look for the three characteristics of scholarly books.
To recap, ask:

1. Publisher?
2. Documentation?
3. Author?

Slide notes
And to recap, the three main things we want to ask are: who is the Publisher, does the work include extensive documentation to support their claims, and is the author a recognized expert in their field?
Slide notes

It’s important to remember, though, that for any book you use in a research assignment, the most important question to ask yourself is does the book give you the information you need to answer your research question?

If you're still uncertain, please ask one of the subject librarians for additional help
Questions?

library.wlu.ca/help/askus

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