12.10: Popular Periodicals (aka "magazines")

Characteristics that help you identify a periodical as popular:

- Tend to have short articles (1-5 pages)

- Cover a variety of topic/subject areas (Time, The New Yorker, National Review). Conversely, they may cover a single subject area – Sports Illustrated or Audubon are good examples – with the intention of informing or entertaining the readership

- Scott Hess – Time magazine article – CC BY-NC 2.0

Have articles that do not contain a bibliography or a cited reference page. The reader cannot check the author’s information by tracking down and reading the original information source

- Are intended for a non-academic, non-specialized audience
• Use conventional/conversational language, as opposed to a specialized vocabulary

• Contain articles written by journalists, rather than researchers or specialists in a given field

• Contain articles often accompanied by photographs or other illustrations

• Contain extensive commercial advertising

• Are issued frequently (i.e., come out weekly, biweekly or monthly)

Finding popular periodical articles is no longer a challenge for most information gatherers. There are hundreds of database resources that help you locate articles that have appeared in print and digital news sources. The larger challenge is to evaluate the appropriateness and trustworthiness of the search tool you use, and to understand what you are and are not searching when you use one of them.

A few of the most useful search tools include Google News, Lexis/Nexis, Factiva, ProQuest Newsstand and the social media search tools that allow you to track news stories through the Twitter-verse and related platforms. Remember, too, that if you are just looking for information from a specific publication, going to that publication’s website and searching within their archive will be the most specific route. Again, your strategy for locating information will depend on what it is you are trying to accomplish.