

[Upbeat music]

[Music]

In your college classes you might hear some of your professors explain the concept of a "scholarly conversation" through the metaphor of a party. At this party you've arrived late and you don't know anyone. You approach a group engaged in conversation and you have to spend some time listening, so you understand what they're talking about. Eventually you'll be able to add some ideas of your own to the discussion.

Here's how this metaphor applies when you're doing research.

As you read a scholarly article you'll see that the author is making references to other researchers - both within the text of the article and in a long list of citations at the end. The author might be building on someone else's ideas, comparing the findings of two or more scholars, or even arguing against another researcher's theories. But, unlike sources you're more familiar with - like news and magazine articles - you see the conversation documented every step of the way.

The scholar who wrote this article was once a lot like you - entering the party for the first time and walking into the middle of an unfamiliar conversation. She thought the party was so much fun she decided to stay, which meant going to school to earn a PhD and become an expert in her field, getting a job as a professor, and contributing to the conversation by researching and writing articles and publishing them in academic journals. Publishing an article in an academic journal is one of the main ways a professor can make a new contribution to a scholarly conversation.

The author submits her work to a journal and it will be vetted by an editor as well as a selected group of peer reviewers, who are professors and experts in the same area of study. During the peer-review-process, authors are often asked to revise their work before publication, and some articles get rejected. Journal articles are considered credible, quality sources because they're written by experts and go through a great deal of review and revision. But after they're published other scholars will critique and question them as they make new contributions to the discussion.

When you're reading academic articles for English 110 and other college classes it's important to spend some time considering how the author is taking part in a scholarly conversation. What is the author's field of study? How does the author engage with the work of other researchers? And while you certainly can't read all of the articles the author has cited, are there one or two that seem particularly important and might also be relevant to your research? These are great strategies to use while you're in the listening stage of the conversation, preparing to make your own contributions through your research projects.

In the next video you'll learn more about using library databases to search for scholarly journal articles and other sources you can use for research.