

Writing an Annotated Bibliography

What is an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography contains the citation of the source and a descriptive paragraph of about 8-12 sentences. This paragraph would include a summary, an evaluation and a reflection of the usefulness of the source. When preparing an annotated bibliography, you need to be a critical and analytical reader.

How do I prepare an annotated bibliography?

The annotated bibliography is written in paragraph form and composed of 4 parts: the citation, the summary of the content, an evaluation of the source, and a reflection on its use. Follow these steps.

1. **Citation** - Create a standard MLA citation for the source. Remember to indent every line except the first line. Double space the citation but single space the annotated information. Your citations should be in alphabetical order and follow MLA format. For websites, you will need to search the website and home page for information about the author; publication, copyright or last update; and the sponsor of the site. Some website may not provide an author and you will then alphabetize by title.
2. **Summary** - Write 2-4 sentences summarizing the content of the material. Be sure to include all the main points but add detailed information as you critically examine the entire source.
3. **Evaluation** – Add 2-5 sentences evaluating the information and author. The information should be detailed and specific and reflect your critical reading and analysis of the source. Is the author a respected authority on the subject? Can you trust the facts provided? What type of audience was this source written for? Is the author biased in their point of view? Does this information from this source corroborate with information from other sources?
4. **Reflection** - Add 1-3 sentences reflecting on the usefulness of this source. Did this source provide you with a major portion of information about your topic or miniscule amounts? Did the source contain interesting information? Did the source enlighten you on an aspect of your topic you weren't aware of?

Double space and alphabetize the citations. See below for an example of an annotated bibliography.

Caution: Using Wikipedia as a source can be helpful but the content is not guaranteed to be accurate due to it being a “wiki”. Corroborate information used from that source and be sure to cite the information at that time because of its dynamic nature.

Annotated Bibliography

Engle, Michael, Amy Blumenthal, and Tony Cosgrave, "How to Prepare An Annotated Bibliography." Cornell University Libraries. Mar. 06 2007. Cornell University. 25 Mar 2007 <<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>>.

This source defined an annotated bibliography and provided information on the process needed to create one. An important point is the format of the annotated bibliography is designed to highlight the relevancy, accuracy and quality of the sources. This is a credible source of information as Cornell University is a respected institution. One of the authors is listed as the reference librarian and therefore a credible source of information. The second author received an award for her service at the Cornell University Libraries. I found the information on the process to create a bibliography helpful in providing questions one might ponder. Moreover, the embedded hotlinks such as "How to Critically Analyze Information Sources" were extremely useful in creating questions for this handout. One suggestion was to consider what type of source is being reviewed, primary or secondary. "Primary sources are the raw material of the research process. Secondary sources are based on primary sources" (Engle). I felt this resource was very helpful in providing an example of an annotated bibliography. I would recommend exploring the many hyperlinks for additional information and suggestions on what to focus on when preparing an annotated bibliography.

Stacks, Geoff Stacks and Erin Karper, "Annotated Bibliographies." Online Writing Lab. July 2001. Purdue University. 25 Mar 2007 <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_annotatedbib.html>.

This source provides a description, purpose and format for an annotated bibliography. It indicates that writing an annotated bibliography forces a researcher to read more carefully and critically rather than focus on collecting information about a topic. Examples are provided to assist the learner in the type of information that should be included as well as the format. One suggestion to consider the timeliness of the source “Is the source 20 years out of date?” was thoughtful (Stacks). This website published by Purdue University provides reliable information. While specific information on the authors was not provided on the website, an internet search revealed both are Ph. D. candidates as are others who are currently on the OWL writing staff. I found this website particularly helpful in determining what information is contained in an annotated entry. I felt the simple explanation in defining an annotated bibliography provided an excellent basis on which to build an understanding of this research format and how it is utilized in the academic world. This resource also provided several embedded hotlinks to explain other citation concepts.