

Preparing an Annotated Bibliography

What is an annotated bibliography?

A **bibliography** is a list of sources (books, journal articles, Web sites, etc.) used when researching a specific topic. This is also sometimes called a “reference” or “works cited” page. Each source in a bibliography is called a citation. An **annotation** is a brief summary and/or evaluation of a source. Thus, an **annotated bibliography** is a list of sources used in your research with a summary/evaluation for each cited source.

Why create an annotated bibliography?

Creating an annotated bibliography has several advantages over a standard bibliography:

- Writing annotations for all your sources will make you more familiar with your topic.
- Most annotations include a summary and a short evaluation of the source.
- Writing evaluations involves thinking critically about your source and how it relates to your topic.
- Your reader benefits from learning the content of your sources.

How do I write the annotation?

Annotations are written in paragraph form. There are three main types:

Summary (a.k.a. informative): This annotation style includes the topic of the book or article and its main arguments. Most summary annotations are about 150 words or less. Depending on your assignment, you may have to write a longer, more detailed summary.

Evaluative: This annotation style includes an evaluation of the source. Who is the author? What are his/her qualifications? Who is the intended audience and does the article or book adequately address the topic? Is there a bias to the writing? Was this article relevant to my research topic?

Combination: Most annotated bibliographies are a combination of the two annotations. They include both a summary of the book or article and an evaluation of its usefulness.

Because most annotated bibliographies have summary and evaluative components, they can be much more useful than abstracts. Abstracts are found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles, and they only summarize the content; there is no evaluation.

Examples of Combination Annotations

MLA (Modern Language Association) – In this style the annotation starts immediately after the citation. Anything below the first line must be indented. Check with your professor for any specific requirements.

Kenney, George Churchill. *The MacArthur I Know*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce,

1951. Print. The air commander who helped to turn the tide of General MacArthur’s Pacific War operations gives a popular and personal account of MacArthur. One chapter out of 13 is devoted to the occupation period. Outlined therein are the achievements of MacArthur’s administration of occupied Japan such as the liberation of Allied prisoners, the purge of Japanese war leaders, the release of Japanese political prisoners,

the dissolution of the “thought control police,” land reform, the abolishment of Shinto as the state religion, educational reform, and the war crimes trials. The discussion tends to be superficial and laudatory.

APA (American Psychological Association) – In this style, the second line (and any additional lines) of a citation are indented. The annotation starts on a new line and is indented two additional spaces from the citation. Check with your professor for any specific requirements.

Roughgarden, J. (2004). *Evolution's rainbow: Diversity, gender, and sexuality in nature and people*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

This book is a discussion of the diversity in sexuality and gender among fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. The author's main argument is that Darwin's theory of sexual selection is false. This book is written for a wide audience and will likely satisfy the needs of most readers. Those with an interest in this area will probably want to consult other resources, including the ones cited by the author. The author is a Professor of Biological Sciences at Stanford University. She is also a transgendered woman and writes from that perspective, although she is careful to present both sides of an argument.

Need more help? Check out these useful references!

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>

- Outlines the process for creating an annotated bibliography, selecting the proper format, and includes sample annotations for both APA and MLA formats.
- Permission for the use of this source has been granted from Olin Library Reference, Research & Learning Services, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, NY, USA.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>

- Guide from The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University.
- Includes the process of how to write an annotated bibliography, samples for MLA and APA, and links to APA and MLA citation handouts.

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/AnnotatedBibliography.html>

- Guide created by The Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Overviews the contents of the annotation illustrated by the four most common forms: indicative, informative, evaluative, and combination.
- Covers different types of writing styles including telegraphic, complete sentences, and paragraph forms with an example provided for each. Direct links are provided for information about citation styles.