HOW TO WRITE AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Introduction

This guide offers background, examples and web resources on how to write an annotated bibliography. The directions given by individual instructors may differ in content from the examples offered here. If there is a discrepancy between this format for an annotated bibliography, and that offered by your instructor, check with your instructor regarding the preferred format.

Bibliography

A **bibliography** is an alphabetical list of sources (books, articles, documents, reports, interviews, web sites, non-print materials, etc.) at the end of a written work to which the author referred in his research. Bibliographies can also be referred to as "References" or "Works Cited." A standard bibliography includes the **citation** information for the sources: author(s), date of publication, title and publisher's name and location (for articles, the citation information also includes journal title, volume, issue and page numbers). A primary purpose of a bibliography is to help the reader find the sources mentioned in the author's research work.

Annotated Bibliography

An **annotated bibliography** adds to the basic citation by including descriptive and evaluative information regarding the cited work. The brief (usually under 150 words) commentary provides the reader with critical judgments about the cited work including its relevancy, accuracy and quality. The annotation attempts to give enough critical information to the reader to provide a foundation for further research.

Purpose of the Annotated Bibliography

Whether an annotated bibliography concludes an article or book, or is itself a comprehensive, book-length listing of sources, its purposes include, but are not limited to, the following: to illustrate the scope and quality of the research the author has done; to review the literature published on a particular subject; to provide the reader with supplementary, illustrative or alternative sources; to allow the reader to see if a particular source was consulted; to place the research in an historical context.

Abstracts vs. Annotations

Abstracts are descriptive summaries of the main points of a work, often found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles. Many online databases provide abstracts for the articles indexed in the database. **Annotations** are critical and descriptive summaries that expose the author's point of view, clarity, appropriateness of expression and authority.

Composing the Annotated Bibliography

Locate and record citations to the research items that may contain useful information on your topic. Consider the scope of research and decide what types of sources (books, articles, primary documents, web sites, non-print materials) will be included. Evaluate retrieved sources by reading them and noting your findings and impressions. Once your final group of sources has been selected, give full citation data according to the bibliographic style prescribed by your instructor (i.e., APA, MLA, Chicago, Turabian). Click on *Online Reference Tools* under *Research Links* off the Montante Family Library's Home Page to access *Citation and Style Guides* for citation style examples.

The **annotation should include some or all of the following** (consult your instructor for specifics):
- Explanation of the main purpose and scope of the cited work
- Description of the work's format and content
- Author's background/authority/academic credentials
- Work's intended audience
- Value and significance of the work to the topic under consideration
- Any shortcomings or bias in the work
- Any significant special features of the work (i.e., glossary, appendices, good index)
- Your own brief impression of the work

Example

The following is an example of an annotated bibliographic citation for a journal article in APA style:

Goldschneider, F. K., Waite, L.U., & Witsberger, C. (1986). Nonfamily living and the erosion of traditional family orientations among young adults. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 541-554.

The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by   Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living.

Web Sites

How to Prepare An Annotated Bibliography: **www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/skill28.htm**

Owl at Purdue: **http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_annotatedbib.html**

*Annotated Bibliography: St. Cloud University***: http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/annotated.html**

Writing An Annotated Bibliography: **http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/annotatebib.html**

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