

Writing an Annotated Bibliography

Adapted from: <http://lib.skidmore.edu/library/index.php/li371-annotated-bib>

What Is an Annotated Bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is an organized list of sources (may be any variety of materials, books, documents, videos, articles, web sites, CD-ROMs, etc.) with an accompanying paragraph that describes, explains, and/or evaluates each entry in terms of quality, authority, and relevance.

What Is the Purpose of an Annotated Bibliography?

An annotated bibliography may serve a number of purposes, including but not limited to:

- A review of the literature on a particular subject
- Illustrate the quality of research that you have done
- Provide examples of the types of sources available
- Describe other items on a topic that may be of interest to the reader
- Explore the subject for further research

The annotated bibliography may be selective or comprehensive in its coverage. A selective annotated bibliography includes just those items that are best for the topic while an exhaustive annotated bibliography attempts to identify all that is available on a subject.

Organization of an Annotated Bibliography

The organization of the annotated bibliography, if not prescribed by faculty instructions, may be one of various methods, including but not limited to:

- Alphabetical
- Chronological: either by date of publication or by period of subject matter (century, era, decade, event, year)
- By subtopic
- By format (articles, books, government documents, media, web pages, etc.)
- By language

Annotations vs. Abstracts

Annotations in an annotated bibliography usually perform two functions, describe the source and evaluate the source. The annotation is a concise description of a particular source, including important aspects of content not evident in the title. It enables the researcher to establish the relevance of a specific journal article, book, research report, or government document, etc. and to decide whether to consult the full text of the work. Abstracts, such as those found in various periodical databases or those accompanying scholarly journal articles are usually just descriptive summaries.

Elements of an Annotation

Information found in an annotation may include:

1. qualifications of author(s);

"Based on 20 years of study, William A. Smith, Professor of English at XYZ University...";

2. purpose/scope:

"...sets out to place John Turner in eighteenth century England and show the development of his philosophy in relation to contemporary social mores";

3. audience and level of reading difficulty:

"Smith addresses himself to the scholar, albeit the concluding chapters on capital punishment will be clear to any informed layman";

4. bias or standpoint of author :

"Turner gears his study more to the romantic aspects of the age than the scientific and rational developments";

5. relationship to other works in the field:

"Here Turner departs drastically from A. F. Johnson (Two will not, New York, Riposte Press, 1964) who not only has developed the rational themes of the eighteenth century but is convinced the romantic elements at best are only a skein through the major prose and poetry";

6. findings, results, and conclusions (if available); and

7. format/special features

(e.g., bibliography, glossary, index, survey instruments, testing devices, etc.).

Structure of an Annotation

Length: Generally, annotations constitute one paragraph and are approximately 100 -150 words long, with a goal of concise and explicative annotations

Person: The third person is the standard, though first person may be appropriate for certain types of annotated bibliographies.

Language and Vocabulary: Use the vocabulary of the author, as much as possible, to convey the ideas and conclusions of the author. If you use a quotation excerpted from the work set it within quotation marks. Vary your sentence structure and try to avoid repetitive vacuous phrases in your annotations, such as, "The author states," "This article concerns," or "The purpose of this report is," as well as sentences starting with "It was suggested that," "It was found that," and "It was reported that."

Format - Sentences: Whole sentences are preferable, but single descriptive words, and simple phrases or lists may be acceptable.

Format - Paragraphs: Annotations should be one paragraph long. The paragraph should contain a statement of the work's major thesis, from which the rest of the sentences can develop.

Citation Format

The bibliography portion of the annotated bibliography usually follows one of the standard citation formats, APA, MLA, Chicago, etc. Citation format information is available from the library's [Cite a Source](#) web page. The most complete citation resources remain in print; copies of the APA, MLA, Chicago, Turabian, ASA and ACA style guides are available at the reference desk.

Examples of an Annotated Bibliography Entry

Example 1:

Broude, Norma. *Impressionism: a feminist reading*. New York: Rizzoli, 1991.

In this publication Broude has taken full advantage of her feminist lens to scrutinize modern French science. Her text is accessible and reader-friendly and uses poststructuralism without becoming a slave to its theories. Her systematic examination of the field, particularly in "The Gendering of Art, Science, and Nature in the Nineteenth Century," reveals underlying patterns of gender discrimination inherent in traditional French philosophy, which upholds Descartes' "I think, therefore I am." Her examination of the social relations between art and science compels readers to take a harder more skeptical look at the sexual politics of postmodernism, whose theory seems to be rooted within the French Cartesian tradition. Her book should be required reading for anyone interested in art, the feminine principle, and how it is treated in a male-oriented universe. (*From Feminist Art Criticism; an annotated bibliography*. New York, G.K. Hall, 1993)

Example 2:

Dorival, Bernard. "Ukiyo-e and European Painting." pp. 27-71. In *Dialogue in Art; Japan and the West*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1976.

Known in France around 1860, Ukiyo-e prints had an immediate influence on the vision and the craft of painters. First, Theodore Rousseau and Millet and then Whistler, Manet, and mainly Degas were profoundly affected. Asymmetrical compositions, scenes and landscapes represented from above or below, figures shown in close-up, pale palette, flat areas of color, the replacement of Albertian perspective with the system of opposed diagonals: all these innovations were taken up by the Impressionists, particularly Monet, who learned moreover not to reduce the scene he was painting to the limits of the canvas, and absorbed a pantheistic feeling for nature contrary to traditional Western humanism. Japanese graphic art had a continuing influence on French painting from the Post-Impressionists to the Nabis and the Fauves, as well as on the work of Ensor, Munch, Klimt and others. After the Renaissance rediscovery of ancient art, nothing had so influenced European painting as Japanese prints. (*From Les Fauves; a sourcebook*. Westport, Greenwood Press, 1994)