Annotated Bibliography

Definitions

A bibliography is a list of sources (books, journals, websites, periodicals, etc.) one has used for researching a topic. Bibliographies are sometimes called "references" or "works cited" depending on the style format you are using. A bibliography usually just includes the bibliographic information (i.e., the author, title, publisher, etc.).

An annotation is a summary and/or evaluation.

Therefore, an annotated bibliography includes a summary and/or evaluation of each of the sources. Depending on your project or the assignment, your annotations may do one or more of the following:

- **Summarize**: Some annotations merely summarize the source. What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say? The length of your annotations will determine how detailed your summary is.

- **Assess**: After summarizing a source, it may be helpful to evaluate it. Is it a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Is the information reliable? Is this source biased or objective? What is the goal of this source?

- **Reflect**: Once you've summarized and assessed a source, you need to ask how it fits into your research. Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your argument? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic?

Your annotated bibliography may include some of these, all of these, or even others. If you're doing this for a class, you should get specific guidelines from your instructor.

Format

The format of an annotated bibliography can vary depending upon the assignment, so if you're doing one for a class, it's important to ask for specific guidelines.

Please keep in mind that all your text, including the write up beneath the citation, must be double spaced and indented so that the author's last name is the only text that is flush left.

**The bibliographic information**: Generally, though, the bibliographic information of the source (the title, author, publisher, date, etc.) is written in MLA format.

**The annotations**: The annotations for each source are written in paragraph form. The lengths of the annotations can vary significantly from a couple of sentences to a couple of pages. The length will depend on the purpose. If you're just writing summaries of your sources, the annotations may not be very long. However, if you are writing an extensive analysis of each source, you'll need more space. Again, remember, this information must be double spaced and indented so that the author's last name is the only text that is flush left.

You can focus your annotations for your own needs. A few sentences of general summary followed by several sentences of how you can fit the work into your larger paper or project can serve you well when you go to draft.