Build an Annotated Bibliography
Tutorial Transcript

Research takes shape as you ask questions, search for suggestions, investigate sources, and draw conclusions unique to your readings. An important step is the annotated bibliography, where you use your sources to design a blueprint that will support your main idea. Many times you will create an annotated bibliography before writing a research paper to help decide what sources will work and what still needs to be found. This tutorial will familiarize you with the parts of a bibliographic annotation, how to write an effective annotation, and will give you an opportunity to create annotations for your own sources.

While a bibliography lists the citations for sources you've used in your research, an annotated bibliography lists these citations followed by a brief descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. An annotation is not an abstract. While an abstract provides a summary, an annotation includes a summary while also describing the accuracy, quality, and relevance of a source, and, most importantly, its connection to your argument. Always check with your professors about what information they want included within each annotation, the length of the annotations, and the citation style they'd prefer.

When formatting an annotated bibliography, follow the rules of the chosen citation style.   Each annotation will begin with the source's citation followed by a paragraph of typically 150-200 words. Citations are usually organized in alphabetical order. For more information on citation and formatting, click the Resources tab on the top right.

Begin building your annotated bibliography. In the next several slides, you'll be prompted to answer a series of questions to help describe and evaluate your source. Not all of the questions may relate to your source, so only answer those that are applicable. To get started on your annotation, type or copy and paste the citation for your first source in the box below.

Next, start with the descriptive part of the annotation, where you provide your reader with an overview. Identify both the research question, that is the purpose of the research, and the intended audience. Is the article for a general readership, or is it a cited research piece intended for scholars in a specific academic discipline? If possible, it's very helpful to include information on the author's credentials, especially if they have written extensively on the topic.

Continue with the descriptive part of your annotation by including information about the research. You should describe the author's methodology using the terminology of the appropriate discipline, identifying whether it is a qualitative or quantitative study, a literature review, or the theoretical basis of the argument. In this description you might want to assess how well the author supported their arguments or whether the conclusions drawn seem reasonable. You may also want

to evaluate any bias you perceive in either the author's point of view or in the way data was collected and analyzed.

When you evaluate a source think about how it is unique within the research you've read, and how it will be relevant within the paper you wish to write. When you consider your source, how does it fit in with comparable research? Two important considerations are whether you have a sense that a particular source is important to other scholars in the field, or whether it is challenging a prevalent view in a particular field… Before you're done with your annotation be sure to indicate where it fits in the overall scheme of your paper.

Congratulations, you've completed your annotation!

Click the print button to open up a document with your annotation that can be printed or copy and pasted into a Word document. When you are finished printing or copying and pasting this annotation, you can create another one by clicking the button below.