

Writing Annotated Bibliographies

Annotated bibliographies provide an overview of each of the major books or articles that you are using for your research project. The annotations indicate to your reader that you have read, understood, and evaluated each text within the context of your project. Annotations that simply summarize are not considered successful—your role is to evaluate the text *and* locate it within the context of your field or your specific research.

Guiding Questions for Annotated Bibliographies

- What is the central argument of the text in question?** Try to summarize that argument in a sentence or two. If the source contains a lot of information that is irrelevant to your research project, just focus on the parts that are integral to you.
- What did you learn from this text that may be useful for the specific project that you are working on?** Be sure to explain how or why you believe the information or ideas connect to your project. You may consider a source valuable because it provides you with background information, historical or cultural contextualization, statistical data, specific examples, a worthwhile methodological approach, a meaningful counterargument, and/or a rationale to support your argumentation.
- What parts of the text seem problematic or unhelpful?** Be sure to explain specifically what you considered questionable, and point out other authors whose works might better explain or clarify that problem.
- Did you notice any connections between this text and other texts on your list?** Were there related ideas? Did one text attempt to comment on, critique, or correct another? Did one source build upon another source's research? Is there a link between concepts that you haven't seen mentioned elsewhere?
- Overall, did you think this text was valuable and worthwhile for researchers in your field?** Back up your evaluation with specific references to the text, and offer your assessment of whether other researchers might benefit from reading it.

Organizational Questions for Annotated Bibliographies

- How long should each annotation be?** Generally, you should aim for a paragraph or two.
- How should my annotated entries be organized?** An annotated bibliography takes the same basic format as a regular bibliography or references page. List your sources in alphabetical order, provide complete bibliographic information for each source, and be sure to follow the citation style appropriate for your discipline.
- What kind of audience should my annotated bibliography target?** The annotated bibliography format assumes that you are addressing other people in your academic discipline. Instead of imagining a "general" audience, you would benefit from imagining a group of other researchers who are knowledgeable about your field, but who may not be familiar with the specific topic you are addressing. Your goal is to provide them with enough information about each source so that they will know whether it would be worth their while to read those materials themselves.