

How to Write an Annotated Bibliography

What is an Annotated Bibliography?

- An annotated bibliography is a collected list of research sources with brief annotations that offer ideas about the content and usability of these sources.
- Annotated bibliographies could be used for multiple reasons, but mostly they are used to either share research information with a colleague or as course assignment to aid you in starting your research.

Research Terms

- Here are some terms that you might see when you hear people talk about research (and terms that are NECESSARY to know for our purposes):
 - Primary Research
 - Secondary Research
 - Peer-reviewed

Primary Research

- This is research directly “from the source.”
- Different disciplines will utilize different types of primary research.
- For example,
 - the sciences and social sciences utilize data as a form of primary research.
 - The humanities utilize novels, art, film, and historical documents as primary research.

Secondary Research

- Secondary Research – This is research written about the “source.”
- It’s often easier to understand the distinction between primary and secondary research in context.
 - For the humanities, reading about and writing about the book *Moby Dick* would be primary research. But, reading an article about and utilizing the information from that article to write your own paper about *Moby Dick* would be secondary research.
 - For the sciences, personally collecting data on obsessive compulsive behaviors and writing about your data would be primary research. Reading an article that already parses data and synthesizing that interpretation with your own would be secondary research.

Peer-Reviewed

- Most legitimate journals offer some form of peer-review process. This means that when the journal receives a submission, they send it blindly to multiple experts in the field. These experts independently decide whether or not the submission represents a true value to their field.
- Of course, just because something isn't peer-reviewed doesn't mean that it's contribution is worthless, but when working in an academic environment, it's important to be able to show the people that will be reviewing your work (your professors, journal editors, conference reviewers) that you know the difference between useful and not useful research. Often, making sure that the research you find is peer-reviewed is the best way to do this.

One Caveat

- While those of us working in the humanities will want to exclusively be using primary source material and peer-reviewed secondary research, those of us working the sciences will often want to utilize other sources for valid data.
- Government or Organization data aggregation websites (usually .gov or .org) often have studies that are worthwhile for their data. These sites **WILL BE ACCEPTABLE** for our purposes in this class despite the fact that they are not exclusively from peer-reviewed journals or personal primary research. However, you should run any sources like this by me before including them in your various research projects.

Annotated Bibliography

- Introduction
- Source Citation
- Annotation
 - Summary
 - Evaluation
 - Assessment
- Conclusion

Introduction

- Not all annotated bibliographies require an introduction; however, in the few instances that annotated bibliographies are published by themselves, an introduction is often provided.
- The introduction should bring up the research question and offer some insight into what the researcher is specifically looking for with the research he or she is looking for.

Source Citation

- Use whatever style guide is most appropriate for your discipline. For most of us, however, that will be either MLA, APA, or CSE style guides. You can find good overviews of how to appropriately cite a source in any of these online.
- Note: It's probably not a great idea to use a citation generator. While these can often be correct and "close enough" for your purposes while in college, they can also often be wrong and this could have professional consequences once you're submitting papers for publication.

Annotation

- Summary – This is a summary of your source. What are the author's claims? What are the parts of the author's argument? If you're writing for the sciences, you may want to include summaries of the methods or specifically mention what the author talks about in the discussion.
- Evaluation – This is an evaluation of your source. Where was it published? How well-known is the journal? How well-known is the author? Does his or her methods (scientific or rhetorical) seem academically rigorous?
- Assessment – How is this source personally useful to your argument?

Conclusion

- Like the introduction, most annotated bibliographies don't include a conclusion. Also like with the introduction, the rarely published annotated bibliographies will often include a conclusion that will in some way wrap up the basic research that's presented in the body of the annotated bibliography.