

Annotated Bibliography

Think of an annotated bibliography as a more formal way of taking notes on the sources you gather for your research. It can help you think and learn more deeply about your research topic, show others your research process, or show other researchers an overview of a subject. Because they can be written for different purposes, keep your professor's expectations and instructions in mind while writing yours.

What is an annotated bibliography?

The best way to understand this concept is to look at each word separately. A bibliography is a list of citations for books, websites, articles, and other documents referenced in an essay. An annotation is a description, summary, or evaluation, usually about the length of a paragraph.

What are they used for?

Annotated bibliographies are used to provide more context for why a citation was included. They usually explain the content of a source (what it discusses, why, and how), provide details about its main points or arguments, and reflect on or evaluate whether and how it worked within the essay. Because they provide room for this reflection and evaluation, an annotated bibliography can be helpful for both students and teachers to gain a more critical understanding of the usefulness of the sources that were used.

What type of citation should I use?

This all depends on what your professor requests. Most commonly, they might ask that you cite in MLA or APA format. Some professors are looking for a full rhetorical analysis of that citation, but some might just be looking for an explanation of how a source was generally used. Refer to a grading rubric or guidelines given by your professor for information about what type of citation to use.

Example

Depending on the citation style your professor requests, an annotated bibliography would look something like this (the citation style in the example follows MLA):

Adrienne. "Coeur d'Alene Lake, Problems and Solutions." *Kootenai Environmental Alliance*, 3 April 2013, <http://kealliance.org/2013/04/03/coeur-dalene-lake-problems-and-solutions/>, Accessed 5 April 5, 2018.

In this article, Adrienne discusses the history and current state of Lake Coeur d'Alene, and argues that establishing a native vegetative buffer could greatly improve the conditions of the lake. What I find most interesting in this source is the solutions the author proposes, which are simple and fairly easy to implement, as well as the detailed yet simple way the pollution and current problems of the lake, like stormwater runoff, are explained. I think I could use this source both as I explain the problem and as I suggest ways to communicate solutions to the public.

You can see how the above example functions: first, there is an MLA citation of a source, then the annotation. In the annotation, there is a summary of the source, a few interesting points that the source provides, and finally, a description of how this source might be useful in the paper you might be writing.

Conclusion

An annotated bibliography can be a useful way to compile research and keep track of important topics within each source. As you write yours, remember to summarize the sources material and to make sure to note anything you find interesting or important as you annotate each source. This is your research, so try to follow your own curiosities, questions, and interests!