

## #41) Creating an Annotated Bibliography

Creating an annotated bibliography is a helpful (and sometimes required) step in the process of writing a research paper. After you have narrowed down your focus and come up with a working thesis, it is time to gather information. As you do your research, you will need to **record and evaluate** the sources you find. An annotated bibliography is a formal report of this record and evaluation. As a researcher, you will be able to consult your annotated bibliography to decide which sources to use in your paper. Other researchers will be able to consult your annotated bibliography to learn more about the resources available on your topic.

### Process

When you've narrowed your focus of discussion and come up with a working thesis, find and collect books, journal articles, and other documents that pertain to your thesis. Be sure to **record** all the appropriate bibliographical information for each source (this is the "bibliography" part of the assignment).

In addition to recording the citations, you will need to **evaluate** the sources you find. This process could take some time because you'll need to read and consider your sources. Remember, however, that some of your sources may only have sections that are relevant to your topic: a single chapter in a book, for example, or a single essay in a collection of essays. Because your annotated bibliography is for your specific research, you only need to focus on the material that is relevant to your thesis (this is the "annotation" part of the assignment).

Here are the things you should include in your annotation:

1. Brief summary of the source
2. Evaluation of the author's credibility
3. Discussion of the significance of the material in general
4. Discussion of the significance of the material in terms of your thesis

You may also want to mention the inclusion of data, graphs, reference lists, etc. Remember that the point of the annotation is to explain the usefulness of the source, so refer to the things in the source you think are most helpful for your topic.

### Format

The format for an annotated bibliography depends on the documentation style you will be using in your research paper, typically either the Modern Language Association (MLA) style or the American Psychological Association (APA) style. Check with your instructor to find out which guidelines you should follow.

The back of this sheet has examples of annotated bibliography entries. For more help, these websites might be useful: <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>, <http://www.unf.edu/~alderman/BLISS2/annotatedbibliography.html>.

**For entries in MLA format:**

Allende, Isabel. "Toad's Mouth." Trans. Margaret Sayers Peden. A Hammock beneath the Mangoes:

Stories from Latin America. Ed. Thomas Colchie. New York: Plume, 1992. 83-88. This

story serves as both a primary and secondary source because it is a translation of a folk tale, which can be analyzed as a primary source, and the translator, who holds a PhD in Comparative Literature and was a Fulbright Scholar in Chile, has included helpful footnotes about the origins of the tale and the cultural traditions associated with the tale.

*Notice that the entry follows standard MLA guidelines for Works Cited entries.*

Claus, Santa. How I Painted the Town Red. North Pole: Workshop, 1967. A colorful

autobiography that sheds light on the topic of folk tales and traditions by giving a first-hand account of how this folk tale figure's actions affect the different cultures of the world differently. This source includes photographs and excerpts from letters.

*Notice that both MLA and APA formats will be double-spaced and in alphabetical order. Also notice that the first line of the entry is at the left margin and all following lines in the entry are indented.*

**For entries in APA format:**

Kernis, M. H., Cornell, D. P., Sun, C.-R., Berry, A., & Harlow, T. (1993). There's more to self-esteem

than whether it is high or low: the importance of stability of self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 1190-1204. This article, which describes the findings of a 10-year study of twelve individuals, offers case studies and commentary about the effects of self-esteem on daily activities as well as a description of how self-esteem changes over a period of time. Graphs and statistical data illustrate the findings. This source is particularly useful for discussing the long-term effects of self-esteem.

Holden, Robert. New Landscape Design (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003). The author is a

landscape architect and heads the professional post-graduate program at the University of Greenwich, London. He writes widely in the American and British design press and is also the author of International Landscape Design. This book analyses 39 landscape projects recently built in Europe, Japan and the U.S. Chapter 5 describes ecological diversity projects, which emphasize collections of plants from ecosystems around the world. Most require specialized garden structures. Goals and descriptions of each design plus its location and designer are the content, but critical analysis about the quality of the design and details is not included.

*The annotations should be concise but include important and helpful information.*