

Annotated Bibliography – A How-To Guide



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An annotated bibliography is a list of books, articles, and other documents in bibliographic citation format with the addition of a brief descriptive and evaluative paragraph. The purpose of the annotation is to provide information to the reader, giving impressions about the accuracy, relevancy, and quality of the sources cited.

An annotated bibliography is not the same as an abstract. The information provided in an annotated bibliography is critical and descriptive, providing insight into the author's point of view, method of expression, and authority. It should give enough information for the reader to make a decision as to whether or not to read the complete work. An abstract is a purely descriptive summary.

Annotated Bibliography Types

1. Descriptive/Paraphrase – describes the content of the work without judging it
2. Critical/Commentary – evaluates the usefulness of the work for a particular audience or situation

Steps to Preparing an Annotated Bibliography

1. Research – find citations to likely books, journal articles, and other documents and locate the material
2. Read – examine and review the actual items and make final selections for inclusion
3. Cite – choose the appropriate citation format (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc) for your citations
4. Organize – decide how to present your bibliography (e.g., alphabetical, by subject, etc)
5. Annotate – write a concise annotation summarizing the central premise and scope of the material. Other points may include evaluation of the author's authority, comparison to other works included in your bibliography, or explanation of how this work illuminated your bibliographic topic.

An annotated bibliography should include:

1. Complete bibliographic citation in an approved format (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc)
2. Some or all of the following:
 - a. Information about the authority of the author
 - b. Scope and purpose of the work cited
 - c. Perspective of the article
 - d. Intended audience/level of difficulty
 - e. Relationship to other works in the area of study
 - f. Summary content
3. About 150-300 words

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY SAMPLES OF A JOURNAL ARTICLE IN MLA FORMAT*

Descriptive/Paraphrase

ENDICOTT, ANNABEL. "Pip, Philip and Astrophel: Dickens' Debt to Sidney?" *Dickensian*, 63 (1966), 158-62.

Sidney was the inspiration of Dickens' concept of a gentleman as given in *Great Expectations*. Philip and Estella have parallels with Philip and Stella. Both Philips love married women of higher rank; both have friends who try to dissuade them. The words "great expectations" occur in Sonnet 21. Dickens may have been exploring the idea of the Petrarchan convention; certainly Estella resembles the Petrarchan mistress.

Critical/Commentary

JOHNSON, LEE ANN. "The Relationship of 'The Church Militant' to *The Temple*." *SP* 68:200-206.

Surveys attempts of various modern critics to explain the exact relationship of *The Church Militant* to the total design of *The Temple* and finds all of them unconvincing. Maintains that the content and the formal and stylistic characteristics of *The Church Militant* and especially its positioning in the early folios suggest that it should be considered as a separate entity and not as an organic part of the three-part structure of *The Temple*.

* Harner, James L. *On Compiling an Annotated Bibliography*. 2nd ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2000. Page 26.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Available in the Reference area:

Gribaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 5th ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1999.

Harner, James L. *On Compiling an Annotated Bibliography*. 2nd ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2000.

Miller, R.H. *Handbook of Literary Research*. 2nd ed. Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press, 1995.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001.

Online Resources:

University of Wisconsin-Madison Writer's Handbook
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/AnnotatedBibliography.html>

Memorial University of Newfoundland – Queen Elizabeth II Library
http://www.library.mun.ca/guides/howto/annotated_bibl.php

Cornell University Library
<http://www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/skill28.htm>