ANOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Much like the References or Works Cited section of a research paper, an annotated bibliography is an alphabetically organized list of research sources (usually in APA or MLA format) with a focus on a limited area of study in any discipline. The difference is that the compiler of the annotated bibliography briefly summarizes the purpose, key findings or arguments, and conclusions of each source and often evaluates its relevance or merit. Annotated bibliographies may be part of a larger document, or it may be requested as an individual document by an instructor as a part of the research process.

Annotated bibliographies have four important functions, and any individual annotated bibliography may fulfill one or more of the following roles:

1. Introduce readers, including instructors, to new and important studies
2. Help students develop a thorough understanding of the sources related to their topic
3. Encourage students to consider the usefulness of the chosen sources to their own research and writing work
4. Allow students to assess the connections between sources in a related field

Annotations in the document must include the following elements:

1. Complete MLA or APA citation information
2. An annotation identifying the author and their affiliation, as well as key arguments and analysis related to the chosen source

Most individual annotated bibliography entries are short, sometimes only about 150 words; other entries can be longer, depending on the length and complexity of the source itself. Whatever the case, they tend to avoid excessive detail and focus on one or two points of significance.

How to Compile an Annotated Bibliography

Find Sources and Read Them Critically

After carefully selecting the best sources for your topic, take accurate and specific notes by asking three important questions:

1. What does the source say about the topic? Note the main arguments and supporting evidence.
2. What is the author’s viewpoint or position?
3. How is this source useful? Note its strengths and limitations as a source.
Write

Use your notes as a guide while constructing each annotation by answering the same three questions as above. Then:

1. **Identify** the author’s affiliation and main arguments
2. **Discuss** key supporting arguments or developments in the text
3. **Elaborate** on the strengths and/or weaknesses of the text
4. **Explain** whether or not the text is useful for your work, and why

Revise and Proofread

Polish your draft by ensuring that you consider the following questions:

1. Are all components of each annotation present?
2. Do you have **accurate** bibliographic information, a **brief discussion** of the text, and an **analysis**?
3. Have you represented the sources fairly and with **academic integrity**?
4. Do you use a **consistent tense**?
5. Do you use an **academic tone and style**?

Sample Annotated Bibliography Entries

**Example 1: APA Format**


Johann Nodrav, a biometricist working for an industry financed research institute called Pangalactic Biometrics, in Waterloo, Ontario, applies a series of new algorithms to statistical analyses used for over a decade as standard measures for assessing the incidence of olfactory thrognosis among individuals aged 65 or over. His findings uncover several computational errors in the traditional assessment methods, particularly the statistical pattern tools developed by Marsh and Mallow (2001). His conclusion is that the previously accepted assumption of an excessively high disease incidence in this age demographic is unwarranted and misleading. His approach and methodology appear credible, but until his results are replicated by independent groups, one cannot dismiss bias possibly resulting from industry financing; therefore, this article is of limited use in this research.

1. Bibliographic information
2. Identification of author, affiliation, and main argument
3. Discussion of arguments and/or developments
4. Elaboration of strengths and limitations of work, as well as usefulness to project
Example 2: MLA Format


As professor emeritus at Lompoc Free University in California, Daniel Connor is one of the very few scholars to focus exclusively Margaret Laurence’s short stories instead of her novels, the more common topic of inquiry for critics ². In this study, he coins the term “imagistic density” to describe the Laurence’s selective clustering of images as a way that reinforces thematic and symbolic associations important to plot and character development. Focusing particularly on her beginnings and endings, he reveals how these images act as motifs that lead to what he terms a “subliminal resonance” in the response of readers ³. Though there is clearly some merit in his approach, at times the grouping of images seems more inadvertent than intentional, and his claim that Laurence rivals James Joyce in artistic accomplishment appears exaggerated. Nonetheless, this article is useful in considering Laurence’s choices of imagery ⁴.

¹ Bibliographic information
² Identification of author, affiliation, and main argument
³ Discussion of arguments and/or developments
⁴ Elaboration of strengths and limitations of work, as well as usefulness to project