



# THE DOCUMENTED ESSAY

## Writing an Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is very much like a regular **Works Cited** list, **References** section, or **Bibliography**, except you provide additional information beneath each listing, offering descriptive information on each source. This description, or **annotation**, can range in length from a single sentence to a paragraph of no more than 100 words. The purpose of the annotation is to inform your reader of the content, relevance, accuracy, and/or quality of the sources consulted in your research or cited in your text. The style of the annotations should be concise, clear, and straightforward. Your goal is to inform your reader briefly of the content and importance of your source, **not** to provide an exhaustive plot summary.

The annotation may provide one or more (but not necessarily all) of the following pieces of information:

- a brief general description of the content and focus of the book or article
- a more specific description of the part(s) on which your research focused
- a suggestion of the source's usefulness to your research
- an evaluation of its method, conclusions, or reliability
- a record of your reactions to the source.

### PREPARING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Writing an annotated bibliography involves several skills: library research, textual analysis, and concise summarization.

- Your first step is to select and consult the sources that may contain useful information about your topic. Depending on your assignment, these sources could include books, magazines, journals, newspapers, encyclopedias, websites, films, or any other appropriate medium.
- After consulting your sources and taking notes on the information you will be using, you are ready to write your annotations. Try to determine which of the author's key points were most useful to your research. Perhaps you found her/his entire thesis helpful, or perhaps you used only certain parts or chapters. Remember, you are providing this information to your reader so s/he can reach a better understanding of how you used, or will use, your chosen sources.
- If applicable, you may also want to compare or contrast one source with another or comment on how a particular work influenced your thesis.
- Next you must create a bibliographic listing of your sources using the appropriate documentation style for your discipline. Confirm with your professor which style s/he prefers and consult the RWC's handouts to learn how to list sources correctly.

## SAMPLE LISTINGS

Listings in an annotated bibliography must follow the guidelines for whatever documentation style you are using. If you are writing a paper for an English or other humanities class, and your professor has instructed you to use MLA style, your annotated bibliography will follow the conventions of MLA style with the additional annotation placed beneath each source. The same holds true for APA or Chicago style. The bibliographic information will always follow standard style guidelines, and the annotation will always appear beneath each source.

The following examples provide a succinct summary of a source, indicate how the source was useful to the researcher, and follow appropriate documentation guidelines:

### MLA Documentation Style

**Locke, Thomas F., and Michael D. Newcomb. “Alcohol Involvement and Dysphoria: A Longitudinal Examination of Gender Differences from Late Adolescence to Adulthood.” *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, vol. 15, no. 3, Sept. 2001, pp. 227-36.**

This research examines the relationship between alcoholism and depression among men and women during three stages of life and illuminates the phases during which the two groups display a stronger association between the two behaviors. This article inspired me to focus on comorbid depression and alcoholism in adolescent females, for it suggests that they display the strongest association during adolescence and young adulthood.

### APA Documentation Style

**Bonin, M. F., et al. (2000). Problem drinking behavior in two community-based samples of adults: Influence of gender, coping, loneliness, and depression. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 14, 151-161.**

The research presented in this article investigates the relationship between the variables of gender, coping, and loneliness in problem drinking among young adults. I will use it to identify factors that influence individuals' consumption of alcohol and possible triggers for depression-induced problem drinking.

### Chicago Documentation Style (Notes and Bibliography)

**DePaulo, R. J. *Understanding Depression*. New York: Wiley Press, 2000.**

This book elucidates the prevention, causes, and treatment of depression. I will use it to define behavior that qualifies as clinical depression, professionally referred to as Major Depressive Disorder.