

# Annotated bibliography

## Academic Tip Sheet



### **This academic tip sheet:**

- explains what is meant by an annotated bibliography;
- examines how an annotated bibliography differs from a literature review;
- describes how annotations differ from abstracts;
- looks at the purpose of an annotated bibliography; and
- examines the main features of an annotated bibliography.

### **What is an annotated bibliography?**

A bibliography is an organised list of sources (e.g., books, journal articles, electronic sources, etc.) consulted in the research process. Each item listed in a bibliography includes a citation (i.e., author (if given), title, and publication details of the source).

An annotated bibliography is a bibliography with an additional description or evaluation (i.e., annotation) of each source which helps the reader evaluate whether the work cited is relevant to a specific research topic.

Annotations can be either descriptive or evaluative, or a combination of both. A descriptive annotation summarises the scope and content of a work whereas an evaluative annotation provides critical comment (and may sometimes include critical reflection too).

## How does an annotated bibliography differ from a literature review?

Annotated bibliographies should not be confused with literature reviews. Unlike a literature review, an annotated bibliography is an alphabetical list of sources, with a comment made under each listed item describing what is in that particular text and perhaps evaluating how useful the text is for your assessment. The annotations rarely draw lengthy comparisons.

## How do annotations differ from abstracts?

Abstracts are generally brief statements that present the main points of a paper. They do not include an evaluation of the paper itself.

## What is the purpose of the annotated bibliography?

Each annotated source listed in an annotated bibliography helps the reader to evaluate the relevance and quality of the source; particularly its relevance to the research topic or line of inquiry. Annotated bibliographies are sometimes a required assessment task. You may be asked to compile an annotated bibliography as part of your research for a particular essay or subject.

Even if you are not required to compile such a bibliography, they are an excellent way of keeping track of all your reading and of creating a useful record for future study. A text you read for a first-year assignment may prove useful for a third-year assignment. If you retain the bibliographical details of every source you read and have some short notes about their content and context, you have created a wonderful resource.

Consider developing an annotated bibliography for each unit you study.

## Main features of an annotated bibliography

An annotated bibliography should consist of an alphabetical list of sources, each of which contains:

1. The bibliographical details of the source (author's name, year of publication etc.) given in correct APA end-text referencing format.
2. An annotation is made up of a descriptive and/or evaluative paragraph (generally from 100 to 300 words).

Annotations can be either descriptive or evaluative, or a combination of both. A descriptive annotation summarises the scope and content of a work whereas an evaluative annotation provides critical comment (and may sometimes include critical reflection too).

The annotation should be concise and well written. Annotations may include some or all of the information outlined below.

- The main focus or purpose of the work.
- The intended audience for the work.
- The content of the source – e.g., subjects covered; major arguments supported.
- Special features of the work that were unique, helpful or successful;
- Features that are poor and/or the content that is left out.
- The background and credibility of the author.
- Conclusions or observations reached by the author.
- Conclusions or observations reached by you.
- The usefulness or relevance for your research (or why it did not meet your expectations).

## Examples of annotated sources

### Example 1

Gottlieb, P. D. (1995). The "golden egg" as a natural resource: Toward a normative theory of growth management. *Society and Natural Resources*, 8(5), 49-56.

This article explains the dilemma faced by North American suburbs, which demand both preservation of local amenities (to protect quality of life) and physical development (to expand the tax base). Growth management has been proposed as a policy solution to this dilemma. An analogy is made between this approach and resource economics. The author concludes that the growth management debate raises legitimate issues of sustainability and deficiency.

### Example 2

Roof, J. (2006). Working gender: Fading taxonomies [Electronic version]. *Genders On-line Journal*, 44. Retrieved November 11, 2007, from [http://www.genders.org/g44/g44\\_roof.html](http://www.genders.org/g44/g44_roof.html).

Judith Roof's article takes as a point of departure the proliferation of television programs in which themes of transformation and 'making-over' (of one's house, lifestyle or body) are presented. Roof argues that the ubiquity of these programs (which present work as spectacle, which couple identity and commodities, and which emphasise categories and order) indicates a deeper cultural anxiety about the instability of taxonomies, in particular the gender binary. Gender is the focus of the section of the article that discusses 'make-over' programs in which a subject 'scarred by some gender unintelligibility', in Roof's words, is transformed into a normative ideal of their gender by cosmetic surgery, diet, exercise

regimes, make-up and wardrobe. Interestingly, such programs, which represent 'gender conformity' as both commodity and cure-all, also foreground the 'work' that the normatively gendered body requires to maintain itself. The repetition of these narratives of metamorphosis into the gender norm, she suggests, are a compensatory mechanism, a staving off of the notion of fluid, hybrid and multiple genders, a strident reassertion of the gender binary. Although my research will focus on texts of an entirely different genre and era (and thus the analysis of make-over programs themselves is of little utility to my project) Roof provides a useful theoretical framework for a discussion of fin-de-siecle cultural anxiety about the fluidity of identity.

## Annotated bibliography checklist

- **Have you identified, located and recorded all the books, journals and other sources required?**
- **Have you cited each source in the appropriate referencing style?**
- **Have you written a concise annotation for each source?**
- **Are your sources listed in alphabetical order?**
- **Have you submitted the annotated bibliography in the appropriate format?**

## References

Andersson, B., & Beveridge, A. (2007). *A guide to assessments and skills in SCCA* (2nd ed.). [Booklet]. Perth, WA: Edith Cowan University.

## Acknowledgements

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