

WHAT AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DOES

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An annotated bibliography is a tool researchers use to collect and record information about their sources, but it is more than a static summary. Consider what a well-developed bibliography allows you to **do** with your research. An annotation helps you to

ORGANIZE your sources so that you (or another researcher) can quickly access and review the work you've done.

ARTICULATE THE ARGUMENT of another author. Rather than merely summarizing the content of an article or chapter, an annotation should distill the primary claim or contribution of an author into a paragraph or two.

ASSESS the value or validity of a source. Your annotation should indicate what is most important about an author's argument and also point out any limitations you see.

CONTEXTUALIZE the source in terms of your own argument. In many cases, an annotation will indicate what you find useful about a source and how you intend to apply it to your work.

TRACK THE RESEARCH CONVERSATION that exists in relation to your topic. By identifying the key arguments in each of your sources, you'll begin to see where those sources converge (points of agreement) and diverge (points of disagreement or tension).

Writing the Annotation:

As a framework for writing up your annotations, you might borrow some concepts from Joseph Harris' guide to working with sources, *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*. He suggests that there are three strategies to use when coming to terms with a text:

Define the *project* of the writer in your terms.

More than simply a main idea or thesis, a project suggests something about what the writer is hoping to accomplish in writing a piece. What problems or questions does the author raise, and how does he or she address them?

Note *keywords* or passages in the text.

You may not actually quote from a source in your annotation, but you can think of keywords more broadly in terms of concepts or points of special interest. What does the author tend to emphasize and what approach does he or she take to the topic.

Assess the *uses and limits* of this approach.

You'll also need to consider the strengths or potential limitations of a source in your annotation. In many cases, this will involve indicating why you find the source helpful and how you intend to use it in your own work.