

Annotated Bibliography



An annotated bibliography differs from a basic bibliography in that every entry includes both a citation and annotation or brief set of notes about the source. These notes may include summary or commentary on the purpose, scope, and usefulness of the work as it relates to your own research or the larger scholarly conversation on the topic. While this handout provides key concepts, always tailor your work to your audience and assignment requirements.

Entry Format

An annotated bibliography is usually set up as a bibliography, reference, or works cited page would be. Each entry includes a **citation** of the source, using the bibliographic citation format for your field or assignment (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago). (This example uses APA.) Citations often have a hanging indent and a space setting the citation apart from the **annotation**.

Jefferson, H. D. (2016) *The band played on: Three centuries of American marching music*. New York, NY: Crandall Books.

Jefferson's three-volume work is an extensive collection of the history and development of marching bands in America, from the Civil War to the present. Jefferson is particularly adept at illustrating the cultural and societal shifts that brought change to the formation and musical genre of marching band music. His use of primary sources provides an important resource for further exploration on the topic.

The annotation is not typically indented. Annotations vary in length depending on assignment requirements. However, for undergraduate assignments, annotations are usually only a few lines long.

Annotation Content

There are different types of annotated bibliographies, so make sure you understand which you are writing.

Descriptive annotations only include concise summaries of each work, but **evaluative annotations** provide both summary and commentary. This commentary may include an assessment or evaluation of the work as well context, showing how it relates to a larger project or body of work.

Summary

As you summarize the work, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the purpose and scope of the work? What is the primary claim or point of the piece?
- Which topics are covered? What are the major ideas or arguments?
- If someone were to ask you what this work was about, what would you say?

Evaluation

Evaluating the work means assessing the usefulness and credibility of the source. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the information reliable? Is the author a credible source? Who is the intended audience?
- What are the strengths and/or shortcomings of the work? How biased or objective is the work?
- Is the data sufficient? What is the quality of the evidence or argument?
- What are the goals of this work? Does the author effectively achieve those goals?
- How does it compare with other sources in the bibliography?

Context

Contextualizing each source will help you and other readers understand how each source relates to your own work or the larger discussion on the topic. Ask yourself these questions:

- How helpful was this source to you? How can you use it in your paper?
- Did it make you think differently about your topic? How does it shape your argument or thesis?
- Does it contradict or complement what others have said on the topic?