

# How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography

## WHAT IS AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY?

### ANNOTATIONS VS. ABSTRACTS

### THE PROCESS

### CRITICALLY APPRAISING THE BOOK, ARTICLE, OR DOCUMENT

### CHOOSING THE CORRECT FORMAT FOR THE CITATIONS

### SAMPLE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ENTRY FOR A JOURNAL ARTICLE

Permission to adapt this web site, originally developed by the Reference Department; Instruction, Research, and Information Services (IRIS);Cornell University Library, is gratefully acknowledged.

## WHAT IS AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY?

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) **descriptive and evaluative paragraph**, called the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources on your list.

### ANNOTATIONS VS. ABSTRACTS

Abstracts are the purely descriptive summaries often found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles or in periodical indexes. **Annotations are descriptive and critical; they expose the author's point of view, clarity and appropriateness of expression, and authority.**

### THE PROCESS

Creating an annotated bibliography calls for three main intellectual skills: **concise exposition, briefly expressed analysis, and informed library research.**

First, **locate and record citations to books, periodicals, and documents** that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic. **Briefly examine and review the actual items.**

Then **choose** those **works** that **provide a variety of perspectives** on your topic.

Second, **cite the book, article, or document using the appropriate style.**

Third, write a **brief annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope** of the book or article. Include one or more sentences that (a) **evaluate the authority or background of the author**, (b) **comment on the intended audience**, (c) **compare or contrast this work with another** you have cited, or (d) **explain** how this **work illuminates** your topic.

### CRITICALLY APPRAISING THE BOOK, ARTICLE, OR DOCUMENT

You can begin evaluating a physical information source (a book or an article for instance) even before you have the physical item in hand.

Evaluate a source by first **examining the bibliographic citation.**

The bibliographic citation is the written description of a book, journal article, essay, or some other published material that appears in the Library catalog (OPAC) or index (ProQuest).

Bibliographic citations usually have three main components: **author, title, and publication information.**

These components can help you determine the usefulness of this source for your paper. (In the same way, you can appraise a Web site by examining the home page carefully.)

## CHOOSING THE CORRECT FORMAT FOR THE CITATIONS

Check with your teacher to find out which style is preferred for your class. Online examples for both American Psychological Association (APA) and Modern Language Association (MLA) are available from the [Citations Style Guides](http://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/litc/styleguides.html) <http://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/litc/styleguides.html>

### SAMPLE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ENTRY FOR A JOURNAL ARTICLE

The following example uses the APA format for the journal citation:

**Goldschneider, F. K., Waite, L. J., & Witsberger, C. (1986). Non-family living and the erosion of traditional family orientations among young adults. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 541-554.**

The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that non-family living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of non-family living.

This example uses the MLA format for the journal citation:

**Waite, Linda J., Frances Kobrin Goldscheider, and Christina Witsberger. "Non-family Living and the Erosion of Traditional Family Orientations Among Young Adults." *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 541-554.**

The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that non-family living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of non-family living.

For guidance in critically appraising and analyzing the sources for your bibliography, see [How to Critically Analyze Information Sources](#).

*Rose de Souza (Librarian)*  
*LITC Vanier College August 2005*