

## Annotated Bibliographies

A **bibliography** is a list of sources one has used for researching a topic. A bibliographic entry usually just includes the bibliographic information (i.e., the author, title, publisher, etc.).

However, since the prefix “biblio” means “books,” researchers often use alternate headings to reflect better the different types of sources used in a modern paper (books *plus* online sources, interviews, text messages, etc.). For that reason, bibliographies are now often called "References" or "Work(s) Cited" depending on the style format you are using. **The Modern Language Association (MLA) style manual suggests using “Work(s) Cited” for a heading (MLA 111).**

An **annotation** is a summary and/or evaluation. Therefore, an **annotated bibliography** starts with the bibliographic information *but also includes* a summary and/or evaluation of each of the sources. Depending on your project or the assignment, your annotations may do one or more of the following:

- **Summarize:** Some annotations merely summarize the source. What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say? The length of your annotations will determine how detailed your summary is.
- **Assess:** After summarizing a source, it may be helpful to evaluate it. Is it a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Is the information reliable? Is this source biased or objective? What is the goal of this source?
- **Reflect:** Once you've summarized and assessed a source, you need to ask how it fits into your research. Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your argument? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic?

Your annotated bibliography may include some of these, all of these, or even others. If you're doing this for a class, you should get specific guidelines from your instructor.

Just collecting sources for a bibliography is useful, but when you have to write annotations for each source, you're forced to read each source more carefully. You begin to read more critically instead of just collecting information. At the professional level, annotated bibliographies allow you to see what has been done in the literature and where your own research or scholarship can fit.

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### Works Cited

“Annotated Bibliographies.” Purdue Online Writing Lab, Purdue University, 1995-2017,

owl.english.purdue.edu.

*MLA Handbook*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., The Modern Language Association of America, 2016, p. 102-16.