

## Preparing Annotated Bibliographies

This resource provides general guidelines and specific examples for creating an annotated bibliography. Please consult your instructor or check the detailed directions for your assignment, as they may differ from these general guidelines.

### Definitions:

A *bibliography* (also called *references* in some styles) is a list (usually alphabetical) of sources (e.g., books, journal articles, reviews, papers, dissertations, and website articles) that are relevant and valuable to a researcher exploring a topic. It usually just contains citation information (author(s), year, title, publisher information, etc.). Refer to the appropriate style guide in the Student Success Center for rules and examples of formatting bibliography/reference entries.

An *annotation* contains a short summary describing a source and/or an evaluation of it. Depending on the style, the annotation may directly follow the bibliography entry on the same line or may follow on the next line and may have a block or first-line paragraph indent. Thus, an *annotated bibliography* contains annotations for each of the bibliographic entries. Unless otherwise directed by your assignment, title it **Annotated Bibliography**.

### Length:

The length of each annotation depends on specific assignment directions. It can be a few sentences or as long as 150-200 words. Like an abstract, it should not be more than one paragraph long. It may contain verb phrases with the understanding that the source is the subject, but preferably, it should contain only complete sentences.

### Selecting Sources:

The first step in creating an annotated bibliography is to find relevant sources with valuable information and ideas about your topic. Refer to your assignment for instructions on the specific number and type of source required. Often, you will be required to utilize the GCU Library to locate sources (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books). The GCU Library can be accessed at <http://library.gcu.edu>. Read abstracts of sources to select the most appropriate.

There are a variety of helpful services and tools provided by the GCU Library designed to assist students with locating the best sources for assignments. Popular services include tutorials, live webinars, and subject-specific research guides. Librarians are also available via telephone, email, and chat. The library's contact information and hours are located at <http://library.gcu.edu>.

For those students wishing to compile their source citations in a centralized location with the ability to assist in the creation of bibliography, RefWorks is an excellent option. This is particularly useful for graduate and doctoral students. Information about RefWorks can be found at <http://library.gcu.edu/Reference>. Whenever utilizing a tool that assists with citation creation, always check the citation that is produced by the software for accuracy and proper formatting.

## **Types and Content of Annotations:**

An annotation can be indicative, informative, evaluative, or a combination of the three. Read your assignment directions to determine what type you need. If unclear, ask your instructor.

An *indicative* annotation tells the reader what the source is about, lists topics, and defines the scope. It does not give any data from the source or evaluate it.

An *informative* annotation is a descriptive summary of the source, giving the thesis, data, and conclusions, but it does not evaluate the source.

An *evaluative* annotation is a critical analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, and biases of the source, and why you think it is useful.

An annotation may contain some or all of the following depending on the assignment directions and the content of the source:

- Background of the author(s)
- Conclusions made by the author(s)
- Summary of the content or scope of the text
- Outline of the main argument
- Intended audience
- Research methodology
- Reliability of the text
- Special features of the text that were unique or helpful (charts, glossary, graphs, etc.)
- Relevance or usefulness of the text for your research
- How the text relates to themes or concepts in your course
- Strengths and weaknesses of the text
- Your view or reaction to the text

## **General Guidelines:**

When writing annotations, use the third person narrative voice in the literary present tense (e.g., "The author discusses..." and "This work is..."). Do not use first or second person (i.e., avoid the use of I, me, my, mine, we, our, us, you, and your). Focus annotations on summarizing, analyzing, or evaluating the source, and refrain from quoting the source or other sources within the annotation. To review, the following is a simple list of dos and don'ts for writing annotations:

- Use third person literary present voice.
- Do not use first person (I) or second person (you).
- Focus on summarizing, analyzing, or evaluating the source.
- Do not cite or quote within the annotation.

## **Guidelines for GCU, APA, MLA, and Turabian Annotated Bibliographies**

### **GCU Style:**

Students in lower division (100-200-level) courses, who are required to use GCU style in their writing assignments, will follow the APA Style guidelines and examples for annotated bibliographies.

### **APA Style:**

The 6th edition of the APA Manual does not have any directions or examples for creating an annotated bibliography. However, the 5th edition has an example in section 9.03. Following this example, you would format the bibliographic information with a 0.5-inch hanging indent. Then format the annotation with a block indent of 0.75 inch. Double space within and between entries. Sentence fragments are acceptable but should be used sparingly.

### **MLA Style:**

The MLA Handbook does not have any directions for formatting an annotated bibliography other than requiring double spacing within and between entries. However, it shows an example in which the annotation begins on the same line as the end of the bibliographic information. Sentence fragments are acceptable but should be used sparingly.

### **Turabian Style:**

The guidelines for an annotated bibliography from the Turabian manual specify that full-sentence annotations are placed on a new line with paragraph indentation. Paragraph indentation is a 0.5-inch indent on the first line of the annotation. Single space within entries but add a line space between entries.

## Sample APA Annotated Bibliography

Note: Students in lower division (100-200-level) courses, who are required to use GCU style in their writing assignments, will follow the APA example of an annotated bibliography.

### Annotated Bibliography

Barrett, C. K. (1978). *The Gospel according to St. John: An introduction with commentary and notes on the Greek text*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press.

This commentary contains detailed exegesis of the Greek text that is worth considering regardless of whether one agrees with all of Barrett's conclusions. Author provides a lengthy introduction (146 pages), including discussions on the historical, theological, and linguistic aspects of this book. Barrett is one of the greatest English-language commentary writers of the twentieth century. However, he follows some older views on John's Gospel regarding source and background. Thus, it may be less useful than more modern commentaries, as much critical thought has move beyond it.

Brown, O., & Robinson, J. (2012). Resilience in remarried families. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 42(1), 114-126.

Article reports on a salient research study in which the target was to identify and explore the resiliency factors that enable blended families to adjust and adapt. It involved a total of 35 participants: 19 parents and 16 adults. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the biographical information. Correlation analysis was used to analyze the quantitative data; and content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The research found that family hardiness, problem solving, communication, family time and routines showed a positive correlation for both parties. Common themes between the teen and parents such as spirituality, boundaries, communication,

flexibility and tolerance also had a strong positive correlation between both. The journal is a peer-reviewed journal. Otilia Brown is also the author of other academic journal articles on learning disabilities and ADD. Both of the author's affiliations are with the Department of Psychology, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa. The article contains chart and graphs of the research study performed to aid in comprehension of the study.

Lamott, A. (1995). *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Taking a humorous approach to being a writer, the this book is wry and anecdotal and offer advice on the writing life from plot development to jealousy, from perfectionism to struggling with one's own internal critic. In the process, Lamott includes fun and productive writing exercises. She offers sane advice for those struggling with the anxieties of writing, but her main goal seems to be offering readers a reality check regarding writing, publishing, and struggling with one's imperfections in the process. It's not a dry handbook of writing and/or publishing, but it is indispensable because of its honest perspective, down-to-earth humor, and encouraging approach. Parts of it could easily be included in the curriculum for a writing class. Several chapters in Part 1 address the writing process and would serve to generate discussion on students' own drafting and revising processes. Some writing exercises would also be appropriate for generating classroom writing exercises. Students should find Lamott's style both engaging and enjoyable.

## Sample MLA Style Annotated Bibliography

### Annotated Bibliography

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Brown, Otilia, and Juliet Robinson. "Resilience in Remarried Families." *South African Journal of Psychology* 42.1 (2012): 114-126. Print. Article reports on a salient research study in which the target was to identify and explore the resiliency factors that enable blended families to adjust and adapt. It involved a total of 35 participants: 19 parents and 16 adults. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the biographical information.

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Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995. Print. Taking a humorous approach to being a writer, the this book is wry and anecdotal and offer advice on the writing life from plot development to jealousy, from perfectionism to struggling with one's own internal critic. In the process, Lamott includes fun and productive writing exercises. She offers sane advice for those struggling with the anxieties of writing, but her main goal seems to be offering readers a reality check regarding writing, publishing, and struggling with one's imperfections in the process. It's not a dry handbook of writing and/or publishing, but it is indispensable because of its honest perspective, down-to-earth humor, and encouraging approach. Parts of it could easily be included in the curriculum for a writing class. Several chapters in Part 1 address the writing process and would serve to generate discussion on students' own drafting and revising processes. Some writing exercises would also be appropriate for generating classroom writing exercises. Students should find Lamott's style both engaging and enjoyable.

## Sample Turabian Style Annotated Bibliography

### Annotated Bibliography

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