The Annotated Bibliography

Definition

A **bibliography** is a list of sources (books, journals, magazines, websites, ect.) one has used for researching a topic. A bibliography usually just includes the bibliographic information (author, title, publisher, year).

An **annotation** is a summary and / or evaluation. Therefore, an annotated bibliography includes a summary and / or evaluation of each of the sources.

Purpose

To learn about your topic: Writing an annotated bibliography is an excellent preparation for a research project. 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

To help you formulate a thesis: Every good research paper is an argument. The purpose of research is to state and support a thesis. So a very important part of research is developing a thesis that is debatable, interesting, and current. Writing an annotated bibliography can help you gain a good perspective on what is being said about your topic. By reading and responding to a variety of sources on a topic, you'll start to see what the issues are, what people are arguing about, and you'll then be able to develop your own point of view.

To help other researchers: Your annotation can inform readers of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. Extensive and scholarly annotated bibliographies are sometimes published. They provide a comprehensive overview of everything that has been and is being said about that topic. You may not ever get your annotated bibliography published, but as researcher you might want to look for one that has been published about your topic.

Common Forms of Annotated Bibliographies

Indicative: Defines the scope of the source, lists the significant topics included, and tells what the source is about; different form the informative entry in that the informative entry gives actual information about its source; no attempt to give actual data such as hypotheses, proofs, ect.

Informative: Simply put, a summary of the source; begins with the thesis, then states the main topic or arguments, supporting evidence, and conclusion.

Evaluative: Assesses the source's strengths and weaknesses; states why the source is/is not interesting or helpful; lists what kind of an how much information is given; considers objectivity/bias; evaluates the source's usefulness in and impact on your research.

Combination: Most common type; contains one or two sentences summarizing or describing content and cone or two sentences providing an evaluation.

Format

Generally, the bibliographic information of the source (title, author, publisher, date) is written in either MLA, APA format. The annotations for each source are written in paragraph form. The lengths of the annotations can vary significantly from a couple of sentences to a couple of pages, depending on the purpose and assignment. If you're just writing summaries of your sources, the annotations may not be very long. However, if you are writing an extensive analysis of each source, you'll need more space. In any case, remember to be concise, including only directly significant information and writing in an efficient manner.

Examples

1. Formal Tone / MLA Citation

Emig, Janet. "Writing as a Mode of Learning." The Writing Teacher's Source Book. 2nd ed. Ed. Gary Tate

and Edward P.J. Corbett. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. 85-93.

In this highly influential essay, Emig argues that writing is one of the best tools for learning as it involves the whole brain in all the processes: doing, depicting, and symbolizing (wording). This essay is the corner stone for many WAC and WID initiatives and the pedagogical theory they are based upon. This essay informed my exploration of the feasibility and advisability of implementing a WAC approach in Northwestern College's general education program.

2. Informal Tone / APA Citiation

Sewell, W. (1989). Weaving a program: *Literate programming in WEB*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Sewell explains the code language within these pages including certain lines of code as examples. One useful idea that Sewell uses is to explain characters and how they work in the programming of a Web Page. He also goes through and describes how to make lists and a title section. This will be very useful because all Web Pages have a title section. This author introduces Pascal which I am not sure if I will include in my manual but after I read more about it I can decide whether this will be helpful to future users. This book will not be the basis of my manual but will add some key points, which are described above.