

Annotated Bibliography



What is an annotated bibliography? What should it do?

You may have done a bibliography where you were asked to list several sources that you used for a research project. An annotated bibliography is very similar to that except that each listed source is accompanied by a short summary and evaluation of that source.

In some of your courses, your professors may ask you to write an annotated bibliography. Whether or not it's required, it's a good method of dealing with sources and beginning to write a paper. The purpose of an annotated bibliography is to not only collect research but to summarize and evaluate that research. Doing an annotated bibliography can be beneficial to the writing process in a number of ways:

- It can help you keep track of the sources you read.
- It allows you to summarize and explain the relevance of those sources, so that you don't have to flip back through them to remember the basic points about what you read.
- Finally, we often feel as though we "don't know where to start" when we're given an assignment such as a research paper. An annotated bibliography provides us a place to begin writing—many times, what we write in our annotated bibliographies can be moved directly into the body of our papers.

How can you get started on your annotated bibliography?

Begin your research by familiarizing yourself with the different places you can look for sources and by considering questions that you would like to answer when looking at those sources. And since you will have to write annotations to go along with your citations, take notes that you can look at it when it's time to start compiling your annotated bibliography.

Annotated Bibliography

What are some common features of an annotated bibliography?

For any specific paper assignment, you might want to pick certain information to highlight in your annotated bibliography. The example included on this handout discusses:

- The name and title of the author
- A summary of the source
- The methods used in the source (qualitative research, quantitative research, etc.)
- The major strengths and weaknesses of the source
- Ways that the source relates to other sources in the annotated bibliography
- How this source will help you make your own argument in your paper

What are some basic conventions of an annotated bibliography?

Keep in mind that your instructor may have specific points he or she would like you to touch on in your annotated bibliography. Some instructors may only want a summary while some instructors may have specific criteria that they want you to follow when evaluating your sources. Regardless, have a defined set of criteria can make drafting an annotated bibliography go more smoothly.

Annotated Bibliography

An example of an annotated bibliography with a summary and evaluation.

Trouillot, M. R. (1995). An unthinkable history: The Haitian Revolution as a non-event. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (pp. 70-107). Boston: Beacon Press.

Dr. Michel Rolph-Trouillot was a Professor of Anthropology and Social Sciences at the University of Chicago. In this chapter, Trouillot analyzes the archival silence regarding the Haitian Revolution. He explains the racial perspectives of the West and how they prevented the conceptualization of the revolution. Finally, he indicts historical work, which continues this trend of silence and produces archival power not attainable by non-Western perspectives. This chapter qualitatively analyzes both historical representations of the Haitian revolution and Western philosophy, drawing on historiography and ideological criticism.

His argument is quite strong and actively engages with a plethora of voices on the history of Haiti. Its main weakness for my purposes is that it directly focuses on the West's production of the history of the Haitian revolution. On the other hand, much of its argument is easily relatable to the situation of coloniality/modernity in general. He echoes many of Mignolo's ideas about the West's need to mask the reality of colonialism. The fact that Trouillot points out the hypocrisy of lauding the American Revolution and silencing Haiti also fits nicely with Sale's argument about the authorization of revolution. This work will be valuable to my research in allowing me to analyze the ways in which Melville silences the rebellion on the San Dominick.