**Definitions**

A **bibliography** is a list of sources (books, journals, websites, periodicals, etc.) one has used for researching a topic. Bibliographies are sometimes called "references" or "works cited" depending on the style format you are using. A bibliography usually just includes the bibliographic information (i.e., the author, title, publisher, etc.).

An **annotation**is a summary and/or evaluation.

Therefore, an **annotated bibliography** 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.

MLA Annotated Bibliography Examples

Cook, Sybilla. Instruction Design. New York: Garland, 1986.

This book provides an annotated bibliography of sources concerning instructional patterns for research libraries. Written for an academic audience, the author provides information on how such a bibliography can be used. Although it does not provide information on how to compile an annotated bibliography, the book proves a good source for examples.

Harmon, Robert. “Elements of Bibliography.” American Scholar 65 (1989): 24-36.

Although this article from a scholarly journal does not focus on annotated bibliographies, the author does a superior job of indicating the reason and process of general bibliography. Harmon writes this text for librarians who must focus on detailing books. The bibliography for this text is annotated and provides a good source of examples.

Mitchell, Jason. “PMLA Letter.” 1991. 23 May 1996.

<http:10/28/2008/sunset.backbone.olemiss.edu/jmitchel/plma.htm>.

Mitchell protests the “pretentious gibberish” of modern literary critics in his letter to PMLA. He argues that “Eurojive” is often produced by English professors to show that their status is equal to that of math and science faculty. His sense of humor makes this letter a great read.

Beebe, Maurice. Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to

Joyce.New York: New York University Press, 1964.

This is a fascinating study of the writer's dual identity as artist and as individual. The

source seems good for ideas about objectifying intensely personal experiences.