What is an Annotated Bibliography

An **annotated bibliography** is a brief description and critical summary of a particular work. It enables the writer to review their resources before incorporating them into their research. Annotations may be descriptive, critical, or both. A descriptive annotation "describes" what is discussed in the book or article, while a critical annotation attempts to evaluate or criticize the work from an informed point of view.

Elements of an Annotation Include

1. **a bibliographic citation.**
2. **qualifications of the author(s).**
3. **overview of the thesis, theories, and major ideas**.
4. identifies the **intended audience** (i.e. who the article is intended for).
5. identifies **bias or point of view** of author.
6. comments on the **relationship to other relevant and or current sources**
7. **reports on the findings, results, and conclusions** (if available)
8. notes **special features** (e.g. charts, glossary, illustrations, maps, survey instruments, etc.).

Length, Language, and Format of an Annotation

Length: Annotations vary in length. While some are only a few sentences, others can be very lengthy. Typically annotations do not exceed 150 to 200 words.

Language and Use of Vocabulary: Use the vocabulary of the author as much as possible to convey the ideas and conclusions of the author. In these cases where you decide to include a quotation from the source, place it within quotation marks. Avoid introducing annotations with unnecessary and/or redundant phrases like "The author states," "This article concerns," etc.

Format - Paragraphs: Annotations should be one single paragraph. Avoid writing a paragraph that is nothing more than a series of unconnected sentences summarizing separate ideas, arguments, and conclusions.

A Step-by-Step Approach to Writing Annotations

The following approach to annotating will help you to use your reading time to best advantage:
1. Familiarize yourself with the contents of the book or article. Examining the table of contents, the foreword, and the introduction can be helpful.
2. Read as much of the book or article as is necessary to understand its content.
3. Outline or make notes of the information you think should be incorporated in the annotation.
4. Write a paragraph that covers the contents of the book or article.

Some Examples of Annotations

Atkins, G. P. Latin American in the international political system. New York:
Free Press, 1977.

Atkins, *a political scientist at the U. S. Naval Academy,* surveys *the political, and, to a substantial degree, the economic relations of the Latin American countries among themselves and with the outside world since about 1825.* The book is basically *an upper-level college text.* Following a first chapter providing an analytic framework, most of the rest of the volume is a straightforward presentation of historical developments in nontechnical language. Using a topical approach, Atkins discusses factors conditioning the foreign policies of Latin American nations, policies of important outside states toward the region, the international roles of non-state entities, international cooperation and conflict, balance of power considerations, efforts at integration of Latin American countries, and the region's role in international organizations. *Extensive bibliographical data and comments are included.* The book is about *twice as long as Norman Bailey's Latin American in world politics* (New York, Walker, 1967), and is rather differently structured.

| Qualifications of the author |

| Outline of thesis |

| Intended audience |

| Special Features |

| Comparison to other works in the |

Whimbey, A. Getting ready for the tester: You can learn to raise your IQ score. Psychology Today. 1976, 9(8), 27-29, 84-85.

A training program aimed at increasing a student's score on the Law School Admissions Test [LSAT] and the Graduate Record Exam [GRE] focused on reading comprehension, verbal analogy, and figural reasoning problems. The main tactic was to *have the student think aloud while he carefully examined abstract relationships and to receive immediate feedback on each step of his thinking.* This tactic was based upon researchers' discovery that low-aptitude student perform poorly on IQ tests, because they choose an answer on the basis of a few clues or a guess, rather than by engaging in a step-by-step sequence of deductions. Actual training lasted two hours a day, four days a week, during the months of March through June. *Pre-training program scores of 385 on the LSAT and 750 on the combined GRE climbed to 435 and 895 respectively.* The approach, findings, and conclusions were *remarkably similar to those of Bloom and Broder in Problem-solving processes of college students (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1950).* A short *list of readings* is appended.

| Outline of major topic |

| Major bias or standpoint of author |

| Findings, results, or conclusion. |

| Relationship to other work. |

| Special features. |

Adapted from: Katz, W.A., "Annotations," in Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science (Vol. 1; New York: Marcel Dekker, 1968), pp. 427-428, and ERIC Processing Manual: Section VI. Abstracting/ Annotating. (Bethesda, MD: U.S. Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Processing and Reference Facility, ED 219 087).