**The Annotated Bibliography**

**First, what is an annotation?**An annotation is a brief summary of an article, book, Web site or other type of publication. An annotation should give enough information to make a reader decide whether to read the complete work. In other words, if the reader were exploring the same topic as you, is this material useful and if so, why?

**Types of annotated bibliographies**There are two major types of annotated bibliographies:

1. Descriptive or informative
2. Analytical or critical

**Descriptive or Informative**  
A descriptive or informative annotated bibliography describes or summarizes a source as does an abstract, it describes why the source is useful for researching a particular topic or question. In addition, it describes the author's main arguments and conclusions without evaluating what the author says or concludes.

**Analytical or Critical**  
An analytical or critical annotation summarizes the material and analyzes what is being said. It examines the strengths and weaknesses of what is presented as well as describing the applicability of the author's conclusions to the research being conducted.

**How is an annotation different from an abstract?**While an abstract also summarizes an article, book, Web site or other type of publication, it is purely descriptive. Although annotations can be descriptive, they also include distinctive features about an item. Annotations can be evaluative and critical as we will see when we look at the two major types of annotations.

**What is an annotated bibliography?**An annotated bibliography is an organized list of sources. It differs from a straightforward bibliography in that each reference is followed by a paragraph length annotation, usually 100–200 words in length.

**Depending on the assignment, an annotated bibliography might have different purposes:**

* Provide a literature review on a particular subject
* Help to formulate a thesis on a subject
* Demonstrate the research you have performed on a particular subject
* Provide examples of major sources of information available on a topic
* Describe items that other researchers may find of interest on a topic

### To get started

* **Choose your sources**   
  Before writing your annotated bibliography, you must choose your sources. This involves doing research much like for any other project. Locate records to materials that may apply to your topic.
* **Review the source material**  
  Review the source material and choose the items that provide a wide variety of perspectives on your topic. Article abstracts are helpful in this process.
* **Citation and annotation**When writing your annotation, the complete citation should always come first and the annotation follows. Depending on the type of annotated bibliography you are writing, you will want to include:
  1. The purpose of the work
  2. A summary of its content
  3. For what type of audience the work is written
  4. Its relevance to the topic- that is, how does it work for your argument
  5. Any special or unique features about the material
  6. The strengths, weaknesses or biases in the material

**Annotated bibliographies may be arranged alphabetically or chronologically, check with your instructor to see what he or she prefers.**

Student example:

