
Writing an Annotated Bibliography

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What is an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography (A.B.) takes your list of sources (i.e. the bibliography) and allows you to explain their relationship to your topic or research problem. For the purposes of this assignment, your A.B. should:

- Give a *brief* **summary** of the central argument of the article, book, etc.
- Provide an **analysis or evaluation** of the source--how does it make its argument? What are its strengths or shortcomings?
- **Connect** the source to your topic--how does the author's argument support or further your understanding of your topic?

Why write an annotated bibliography?

While you may not write an annotated bibliography for every assignment, an A.B. is similar to a preliminary *literature review*, which is an important part of most theses and more advanced forms of academic writing.

It allows you to display knowledge of the topic and field of study, as well as to connect your own research to the research of others. It puts your work into the *scholarly conversation*.

For this class, it gives you the opportunity to review relevant literature and to use the process to continue to **focus and refine your topic**.

What belongs in an annotated bibliography?

For this class, we welcome scholarly books, book chapters, journal articles, and reference sources (scholarly encyclopedias or handbooks). If you aren't sure about your sources, just ask!

But what should the sources cover?

- **Context:** You will likely want a source or two that helps you understand the cultural, social, and political context of your topic
- **Concept:** You will want sources that help you analyze concepts and theories you're working with in your project

FAQs

- **How do I get started?** You may have been introduced to a library research guide already. If not, [there are guides available for all subject areas](#).
- **If I'm using a book, do I have to read the whole thing?** No! You can focus on a particular chapter or two, or enough to get the argument of the text. You are reading for how it relates to your topic, which is different from reading for class discussion.
- **How do I cite in the appropriate style?** Check a library guide! Also [ZoteroBib](#) is a great quick tool. [We would also recommend learning to use the Zotero app! Ask Social Science Librarian Brie Gettleson or Science Librarian Carol Howe if you're interested.]
- **What if I have other questions?** Just ask your professor or a librarian!