What is an annotated bibliography?

A bibliography is a list of texts -- books, articles from journals, newspapers, magazines, videos, blog posts, etc. -- that you consult when studying a specific topic. When you include a bibliography at the end of a research paper or product, it may also be called a Works Cited or References page. The information that identifies each text uniquely is called a citation or bibliographic entry.

An annotation is a brief statement that serves to comment on or explain something (Merriam-Webster). In research, an annotation is a comment upon the content, author’s expertise and/or style, as well as the relevance of the given text to the research topic.

An annotated bibliography is a list of sources you are considering or have used in your research. An annotated bibliography includes both a full citation with the brief statement commenting on the source as it relates to your research.

Why are the advantages of creating an annotated bibliography?

Successfully creating an annotated bibliography requires

- a deep understanding of your research topic as expressed in your thesis statement.
- a careful evaluation of each source’s authority and bias. What is the author’s purpose and intent? How does that purpose/intent relate to your work?
- careful reading for meaning of the source.

How do I write an annotated bibliography?

1. Begin with a solid working thesis statement. What is your claim or assertion? What are your controlling ideas? Keep your thesis statement handy at all times.
2. Record a full citation of the source. Capture the citation immediately and completely.
3. Read the text deeply for meaning. Allow time to read each text more than once.
4. Annotate your printout with aspects of your topic for easy reference later.
   a. What is the point of view of the author(s)? What is the author’s perspective on the topic (bias)?
   b. What ideas and details make this text unique among all the other texts?
5. Consider how this text furthers your goal of proving your thesis. What ideas and details will you capture or extract to use as evidence in making your arguments?
6. Keep it short and to the point. Write one to two paragraphs (depending upon your instructor’s directions).
How is an annotation distinct from an abstract?

An abstract is found at the beginning of a scholarly or academic journal article. A well written abstract provides readers with the scope and nature of the article. It highlights the content, the main ideas of the article in brief.

An abstract, written by the article author(s), is useful to the researcher in selecting potential, relevant sources to read.

An annotated bibliography is the researcher’s assessment of the aspects of the article that will be useful in his/her research, proving his/her thesis.