WRITING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

From “Writing Across the Curriculum”, SXU Career Center

Why write an annotated bibliography?

You can discover what your source contains (analysis). You can discover how best to use that information in your paper (organization). You can discover how to restate your topic into a “working” thesis (purpose).

Rules to follow: Take your sources one at a time & answer the questions in COMPLETE SENTENCES.

The first 3 questions: What is the main, or most significant idea of this source? What is the author trying to do (purpose)? Who do you think is the author’s intended audience? (Basically, provide a summary of the source. Three-ish sentences.)

Combine the Answers:

Example: Smith focuses on the dropping illiteracy levels among school children, categorizing socioeconomic levels, racial groups, and parents’ educational background. Aiming at a general audience, Smith attempts to convince his readers that most children do poorly in school because their parents don’t work with them in home study sessions.

The next two questions: What parts of the subject does the source emphasize or de-emphasize? What about this article do you plan to use in your argument? (Explain how you plan to use this info. in your research.) Again, you combine the answers:

Example: The author emphasizes that parents need to be more involved in their children’s education and assumes that these parents have the time, the expertise, and the inclination to do so. This information will be particularly helpful when attempting to demonstrate the effects of parental involvement in a child’s education.

The final three questions: Is there any bias or slant in the source? Are there obvious omissions that seem important to the ideas being discussed? Does the evidence clearly support the author’s main points? (Discuss the credibility of the source.)

The last sentences:

Example: While Smith’s data supports his position, he does not provide citations for all of his statistics. His solutions seem too simplistic and very general. However, his credentials as a Doctor of Sociology validate his broad analysis of parent/child relationships, thus creating a valid source to use when discussing this topic.

Extra Tips: Write SHORT paragraphs. Combine answers where possible. Have 5-8 sentences that accurately describe the information and ideas from each source in your bibliography. Use an MLA type Works Cited page with a paragraph of analysis for each source.

Last Points: Use alphabetical order by last name of author. Double space Heading & Citation. Single space the rest. Leave two spaces between sources.
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Annotated Bibliography
Topic: Effects of parental involvement in a child’s education.


Smith focuses on the dropping illiteracy levels among school children, categorizing socioeconomic levels, racial groups, and parents’ educational background. Aiming at a general audience, Smith attempts to convince his readers that most children do poorly in school because their parents don’t work with them in home study sessions. The author emphasizes that parents need to be more involved in their children’s education and assumes that these parents have the time, the expertise, and the inclination to do so. This information will be particularly helpful when attempting to demonstrate the effects of parental involvement in a child's education. While Smith’s data supports his position, he does not provide citations for all of his statistics. His solutions seem very simplistic and very general. However, his credentials as a Doctor of Sociology validate his broad analysis of parent/child relationships, thus creating a valid source to use when discussing this topic.