

PREPARING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

What it is:

An annotated bibliography provides readers with brief, concise notes or “annotations” about sources, in addition to giving all of the publication information for each source. The length of annotations can vary but they are usually about 100-150 words per source. The publication information is presented in the documentation style the writer is using throughout the paper.

Purpose:

When an annotated bibliography is created as a stand-alone document, it guides researchers to sources on a particular topic.

When an annotated bibliography is attached to a research paper, it provides readers with additional insight into the sources quoted, paraphrased, or referred to in the paper.

A professor might require either a stand-alone annotated bibliography or one that is part of a research paper. In either case, the professor is looking for evidence that you have made responsible and meaningful choices of sources and that you know what your sources say about your topic. If a professor requires you to submit an annotated bibliography early in the process of writing a research paper, he/she is also helping you to determine whether the sources you have selected will meet assignment guidelines, expand your knowledge of the topic, and be useful in developing your paper.

Content:

Content of annotations depends on the purpose to be served by your annotated bibliography. Annotations can:

- provide general information about a source (summarizing its central theme, noting its scope, or coverage of the topic)
- identify its bias or point of view (evaluating the reputation or credentials of the author)
- assess its value (noting its intended audience, comparing or contrasting it with another source you have cited, or explaining what this work adds to critical discussion of your topic)

SAMPLE ANNOTATIONS

- An annotation that provides general information:

Gaines, Donna. Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids. New York: Harper, 1992.

Originally presented as a Ph.D dissertation in Sociology, Gaines combines first person reporting, memoir, and social critique in this ethnography of what she calls "upper poor" ethnic kids in a suburban New Jersey town. Prompted by a rash of teen suicides, Gaines' objective is to study teenage alienation, with a focus on the kids' interest in heavy metal music and Satanism, the sub-culture they have created for themselves, and the responses of their communities, especially programs for "troubled" teens that have emerged in the area's schools and social service agencies.

- An annotation that identifies bias or point of view:

Gaines, Donna. Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids. New York: Harper, 1992.

Originally presented as a Ph.D dissertation in Sociology, Gaines combines first person reporting, memoir, and social critique in this ethnography of what she calls "upper poor" ethnic kids in a suburban New Jersey town. Prompted by a rash of teen suicides, Gaines' won the trust of a group of "troubled" teens and virtually lived with them for most of a year. A former rebellious teen herself, Gaines identifies with their alienation and admires their resilience. She has a cynical view of the rationale and practices of most alternative school programs and related social services, believing they are more intent on insulating the larger society from kids who act out than on helping the kids themselves.

- An annotation that assesses value:

Gaines, Donna. Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead End Kids. New York: Harper, 1992.

Originally presented as a Ph.D dissertation in Sociology, Gaines combines first person reporting, memoir, and social critique in this ethnography of what she calls "upper poor" ethnic kids in a suburban New Jersey town. Prompted by a rash of teen suicides, Gaines' won the trust of a group of "troubled" teens and virtually lived with them for most of a year. Gaines writes hip, hard-hitting prose, making no attempt to mask her sympathy for the alienated teens she is studying. Her attempts to find a basis for their alienation in the social class structure of their communities is weak nor does she include much hard data or analysis on teenage suicide nationally. Although this is not a scholarly treatment of teenage alienation, depression, and suicide, the book provides illuminating portraits of individual kids and the special ed programs that have failed them.