

How to Create Annotated Bibliography

Article by Mistress Melissent Jaqueline la Chanteresse | AKA Mia Reeves

What is an annotated bibliography?

Bibliographies provide publication information for sources so that readers can locate them later. There are several different types of bibliographies. The most common types of bibliographies you will encounter in published works are full and selected bibliographies. A full bibliography lists all the sources cited in the work. A selected bibliography is a shortened bibliography in which the author does not list all the works cited, but instead just the most important ones cited. The CMOS usually recommends a full bibliography so that the reader can find every source used in a text.

The other two types of bibliographies are bibliographic essays and **annotated bibliographies**. These two forms describe the works cited in greater detail and help readers to learn about the sources. A bibliographic essay is a description of sources on a particular topic in essay form. These are generally meant to help researchers find material for research and are commonly used to describe material in special collections and archives. **An annotated bibliography is more formal and provides a full citation for each source followed by a brief paragraph describing the source.**

Students and researchers might create an annotated bibliography during research as a way to help them remember what a particular source they consulted was about so they can use it later while writing their paper.

The basic format of an annotated bibliography is to begin each bibliographic entry with a full citation in Chicago style. Then, you write a short paragraph about the work. You should generally try to aim for under 200 words for each entry. The information in your paragraph should describe your source. It can also evaluate the source, describe its argument and its strengths and weaknesses, and state whether it is helpful for your paper.

What should you include in your annotations?

After you've created a citation for the sources you want to include in your annotated bibliography, you'll need to create an annotation for each source. If you need help formatting your citations, be sure to check out our guide on [Chicago-style citations](#). You should try to keep your annotation short and focused. If you are describing an article, your paragraph will be fairly short. If you are describing a book that will be very important to your argument, you might want to write several paragraphs. If you are unsure of how long your annotations should be, check with your instructor for guidance.

The annotation itself can be descriptive, evaluative, or a mixture of both. A descriptive annotation simply describes your source. It typically summarizes the main ideas and arguments. This type of annotation might be helpful for providing basic information about sources related to your topic.

An evaluative annotation allows you to give your opinion on the source. In this type of annotation, you can evaluate the source and its argument. You can describe the

strengths and weaknesses of the source and also say whether or not you think it might be helpful for your research and how it might be helpful.

How should you format your annotations?

According to the CMOS, the entries of an annotated bibliography are arranged alphabetically by author, just as in a standard Chicago bibliography. You'll begin each entry with a full Chicago citation. The first line of the citation should be flush with the left margin, while all subsequent lines are indented half an inch, including the annotation itself. The citation and annotation should be single spaced. There should be a single blank line between entries.

Here's an example:

Calhoun, Creighton Lee, Jr. *Old Southern Apples: A Comprehensive History and Description of Varieties for Collectors, Growers, and Fruit Enthusiasts*. Rev. ed. White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2010.

This revised edition is an important reference manual for those interested in growing apples, particularly if they are located in the southern part of the United States. The book provides a robust history of apples in the southern United States. It also discusses apple cultivation practices and how they have changed over time, as well as common uses for apples in the past and present. It concludes with an extensive description of over 2,000 extant and extinct apple varieties. For someone interested in heirloom apples, this guide provides helpful information for choosing the best varieties to grow. It will also interest those who are fans of history and unique varieties of fruit.

Bibliography:

The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.
<https://doi.org/10.7208/cmoss17>
<https://www.chegg.com/writing/guides/style-guides/chicago-style-format/annotated-bibliography-format-example-chicago-style/>.