Annotated Bibliographies

What is the purpose of an annotated bibliography?
A bibliography is a documented list—depending on format, this list is sometimes called a “References” or “Works Cited” page—of sources used for research. An annotated bibliography, however, includes not only the list of sources but also a brief summary or evaluation of each. Additionally, annotations may also include thoughts on the credibility of a source and its relevance to the researcher's work.

How do you create an annotated bibliography?
There are two main parts to creating an annotated bibliography: the bibliographic entry and the annotation. Depending on the format (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.), the entry will vary. Nonetheless, the first line of an annotated bibliography is the entry itself. The entries must be alphabetized. There are three main aspects to an annotation: the summary, the evaluation, and the interpretation.

1. **The Summary**: What are the source's main points or thesis? What is the author’s position/argument? Just cover the main points here.
3. **The Interpretation**: How is the work significant to your research? How does it support your argument?

These questions are simply to guide you on what needs to be addressed in the annotation portion of the annotated bibliography: not all questions need to be answered.

Below are examples of annotated bibliography entries in APA and MLA format:

**APA Style**

This article focused on whether drug courts are effective because some drug courts declared participants who had died as successes. It is a longitudinal study, over five years, but consisted of only twenty-five participants, who had been arrested between 1997 and 2001. The researcher hypothesized that drug addicts who underwent the Essex County drug court treatment program would have better life results—criminal records, educational achievements, familial achievements, physical health, jobs held, housing and neighborhood circumstances, and others descriptors—compared to those people who were in the same situation but were imprisoned or in an in-community treatments without been
All the participants were interviewed with the same questions and observed. Although the data is not statistical, it is qualitative and useful. McCoy’s results showed that the participants that completed the drug court program gradually had better life outcomes when they did not recidivate. Many had trouble finding jobs. [According to the writer, the article’s arguments are legitimate in his/her evaluation.] Overall, drug court participants showed their lives were better while in the program, and their lives were harder after it because they were poor and unskilled. The imprisoned participants had the worst life outcomes, having no life outside the prison. However, in-community participants did best out of all three groups. They all found low-level jobs and some even attended college, but their middle socioeconomic status and other factors probably bettered their life outcomes. [This shows how the writer may use the research for his/her work.]

**MLA Style**


Powell’s purpose is to look at John Buchan’s inspirations for his most famous character: Richard Hannay. According to Powell, Hannay was a conglomerate of personality traits and physical features of many of Buchan’s friends. Powell reveals that the main inspiration for Hannay was Edmund Ironside, whose adventures were especially significant in Hannay’s creation. The article also details the growing German influence in South-West Africa by noting such events as the tribal wars of the 1860s and the first deployment of German troops to the area in 1889, which led to increased tensions from British colonialists already in the area. [Notice that the article’s main points are evidently defined by the writer.] Despite being titled “John Buchan’s Richard Hannay,” the article appears to primarily focus on the history of German-British relations in Southern Africa and Ironside’s adventures. So while the work doesn't necessarily show how Ironside and Hannay are related, one can see that the trials and tribulations Hannay experiences aren’t necessarily total fiction and are based, though loosely, on real events. [This part evaluates the article information as valid and/or effective.] Overall, the article is a great starting point for one interested in learning about Buchan’s inspirations or for one interested in German-British relations during the late 19th century in South Africa. However, the work should mostly be used for background information and to trigger ideas, rather than a serious source of information for one who is writing scholarly about Buchan and Hannay. [The writer discusses how the article can be applied to research.]