TIPS ON DOING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

What exactly is an annotated bibliography?

DEFINITIONS:

BIBLIOGRAPHY = list of citations information sources (books, articles, documents, websites or webpages, audio, video).
ANNOTATION = a brief (often about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph the purpose of which is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

EXPLANATION:
An annotated bibliography summarizes the central theme and scope of each source in the list. Each annotation should include:

- CITATION: a complete citation for each work included.
- SUMMARY: a sentence or two summarizing the author’s main point.
- EVALUATION: a) a statement about the type of source (e.g., a scholarly research article, an editorial from a professional magazine, a feature newspaper article, a chapter from a popular book, a U.S. government website); b) a short evaluation of the authority of the author to write about the topic, quality of the source, objectivity, etc.
- YOUR NOTES: Your own thoughts on why this is relevant for you in the context of your research paper, and how you will use this source.

TIPS
Don't confuse abstracts or summaries with annotations.
Abstracts are the purely descriptive summaries often found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles or in periodical indexes.
Annotations are descriptive and critical; they expose the author's point of view, clarity and appropriateness of expression, and authority.
Expert's Sample - Annotation 1


In this editorial from a scholarly journal, Finneran questions why many people on both sides in the debate over the safety of genetically engineered food base their arguments on speculation, rumor, and emotion rather than scientific research. He references an article by Harvard biologist Richard Lewontin. Lewontin discusses an anti-genetic engineering physicist whose arguments are based on Hindu scripture instead of lab results and pro-genetic engineering scientists who advertise "Golden Rice" (a genetically engineered variety of rice rich in beta carotene) as a benefit for victims of malnutrition who lack vitamin A, even though many people suffering from malnutrition are too weak to properly metabolize the beta carotene into vitamin A.

Kevin Finneran is editor-in-chief of Issues in Science and Technology, a policy journal sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the University of Texas at Dallas, making him someone qualified to write about forming opinions on scientific matters.

This editorial serves as a cautionary reminder that sensible decisions on important issues must be grounded in fact and not influenced by vague fears, unrelated beliefs, unwarranted enthusiasm, or knee-jerk emotional reactions. My study will discuss the pro's and con's of genetically modified foods, so I will use this article to better understand the types of arguments used in the debate. This article is also useful to me because it contains several other relevant ideas I can pursue. For example, I will read the article by Lewontin mentioned in this editorial, and look for more information about "golden rice."

Prepared by D. Scharf / New Jersey Instituted of Technology. Partially adapted from work done by the CSUCI Library and adapted from Cal Poly Library Services http://www.lib.calpoly.edu/research/guides/bibliography.html and Florida Gulf Coast University Library http://library.fgcu.edu/Instruction/handouts/writing%20an%20annotated%20bibliography.pdf

D. Scharf / NJIT rev. Jan 2011

In this book, Donaldson examines the state of the mental healthcare facilities from the point of view of a former psychiatric patient who spent considerable time in such an institution. He describes what it feels like to be clinically insane and how he was treated by both doctors and nurses as well as by society. This is a reliable source because the author tells about his experiences based on first-hand experience, but it's possible that to prove his point about the poor treatment of the mentally ill he might exaggerate some of his stories. My topic is mental health illness in the early 20th century and how that ties in to Willy Loman's experiences in *Death of a Salesman*. I will use this source to compare Donaldson to Loman and gauge how the latter must have been dealing with his condition. This source ties in well into my paper since I examine how the mentally ill were treated in this time period and how that affected Willy Loman.

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Statement of topic and how the source will be used in the paper.

It is not enough to say “This source is perfect for my paper because it’s exactly on my topic.” You have to explain why or how it is perfect.