

Annotated Bibliography

Monmouth University Department of English Preparing an Annotated Bibliography

These are general guidelines that apply broadly to annotated bibliographies in the study of English literature. Check with your instructor about any specific additional instructions.

Definition

- The annotated bibliography is a draft list of the sources you expect to use in writing your paper.
 - Your instructor may require a cover page giving an abstract (an overview of what you expect to cover in your paper) in one or more paragraphs.
 - The number of sources to be included in the annotated bibliography will be specified by your instructor.
- For each source, you should provide one to two paragraphs of commentary in which you briefly summarize the article and *explain how the item is relevant* to your topic. Your instructor may also ask you to indicate where or how you have located the article.

Format

- The items in your list should be alphabetized by author's last name and should be listed using MLA style, unless your professor approves the use of APA style or another system of documentation. You should own a copy of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 8th Edition, to use for reference in preparing parenthetical citations and lists of Works Cited.

Sources

- Your sources may include relevant course readings but should consist primarily of **recently written, peer reviewed articles** on the topic.
 - Most of your sources should generally be less than 10 to 20 years old. You would assume that an article about physics from 1934 might be out of date; likewise, scholarship on English literature grows old and is superseded by newer scholarship. If there are classic older articles on your topic that you believe are worth reading, first ask your professor's permission, and then consider comparing and contrasting the older article with your newer findings in your second paragraph.

Research Methods

- In order to locate articles, book chapters, and books, your main sources for bibliographic work in English literature are the Modern Language Association (MLA) Bibliography and JSTOR. Monmouth University's library has these databases on their website. Please note that the MLA Bibliography is only an index: it provides a very comprehensive listing of appropriate articles in your field, with topics and sub-topics carefully and reliably identified, but it does not *always* provide full texts of these articles.
- In order to get full texts, you may need to take an additional step. To begin, if there is a link within the MLA bibliography that says that the full text of the article is available, try clicking it; it may bring you to another database to which Monmouth's library subscribes that has the full text of the article. If not, you may need to seek out a librarian for further help involving Inter-Library Loan. Note: this process can be very slow, so always research early!

- If the database includes both html and .pdf versions of the article, you must access and print the .pdf version: this one is a reproduction of the original print version of the material and will include original pagination as well as accurate citations of any quotations appearing in languages other than English, which are often garbled in html versions of documents. If the database only includes an html version of an article, you'll need to contact your professor and explain the problem. He or she may ask that you print the article and use that pagination or to use paragraph numbers. Always ask before assuming!
- Books should always come from a university library. If you go to your county library, you need to evaluate any books you may find to determine whether they are scholarly in nature. Some clues that they are include
 - the presence of extensive footnotes or endnotes
 - a comprehensive bibliography
 - an academic publisher, such as a university press
 - and an author with academic credentials from a well-respected university.
- While you may use encyclopedias (on line or hard copy) for background information, and while these must be documented, they may not count among your list of sources. Again, always ask your professor about sources you are unsure of including.
- When reading through sources, take note on how they compare and differ from one another. Many professors require that the student is able to create a "conversation" between scholars within his or her annotated bibliography. For example:
 - Regan argues that Prospero is Shakespeare's representation of himself as a playwright. This creates an effective contrast of the article by Simmons, as he states that this reading is not the intention of Shakespeare.