Guidelines for Annotated Bibliographies

What is an annotated bibliography? According to Cornell University’s library site, an annotated bibliography is a list of citations of books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation (from http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm).

Why do an annotated bibliography? To prove that you have engaged in informed library research—you have read and understood the sources you are contemplating using. According to the Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, one of the reasons behind citing sources and compiling a general bibliography is so that you can prove you have done some valid research to back up your claims. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited (from http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/annotated_bibliographies.html).

How do you create an annotated bibliography?

- First, locate books, periodicals, and documents that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic.
- If your topic is current, be sure to use recently published sources
- Read!!!!
- Then choose those works that provide a variety of perspectives on your topic. Ask yourself:
  - Are the sources relevant to your topic?
  - Is the author reputable? Is the publication or publishing company reputable?
  - Does the source present enough evidence for its assertions? Does it show any particular bias?

Once you have chosen the sources that you will use

- Cite the book, article, or document using MLA format. Be very, very careful; you will copy and paste these citations onto your Works Cited page.
- Write a paragraph that describes and evaluates the source.
  - Describe the content and focus of the source
  - Evaluate the authority or background of the author
  - Evaluate the information in the source
  - Comment on the value, effectiveness, and usefulness of the source in terms of both the topic being researched and/or your own research project. How do you think you will use this source in your paper?
The following example of an annotated bibliography entry would be used to support the tentative thesis *Critical life experiences have the power to alter a female’s view of conventional gender roles*.

Waite, Linda J., Frances Kobrin Goldscheider, and Christina Witsberger.  


The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living. Because the authors are researchers from two note-worthy institutions, I can assume their results are valid. Also, the article was published in the periodical *American Sociological Review*, a scholarly journal. I can assume that the article was reviewed before it was published, and therefore, the information has been examined by other knowledgeable people. This source can help me prove that a woman’s experience between the time she leaves home and gets married is critical to her development as an individual by using the data about what happens when a young adult, especially a female, lives away from the family.

(The descriptive annotation above was taken from the Cornell Library website; the evaluative annotation was written by Mrs. Nardone. The paragraph is 209 words long)