



ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Use this sheet to help you:

- understand annotated bibliographies and how to write them

5 minute self test

Before you read the Helpsheet, try to answer the following five questions:

1. What is a bibliography?
2. What is an annotated bibliography?
3. How might you write a descriptive annotated bibliography?
4. How might you write an analytical annotated bibliography?
5. What is the purpose of an annotated bibliography?

Read on to check your answers

Introduction

What is a bibliography?

The word 'bibliography' is derived from the Greek βιβλίο, meaning 'book,' and γράψιμο, meaning 'writing.' So βιβλιογραφία means, literally, 'writing about books.' A bibliography is an alphabetical list of the sources: books, magazines, newspapers, CD-ROMs, Internet, interviews, etc., that you have used to prepare a piece of work.

What is an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography brings us very close to the Greek roots of the English word. Instead of merely listing the sources of your work, as you would in an ordinary bibliography, you write about those sources as well.

Some subjects ask you to prepare an annotated bibliography as a stand-alone assignment. Here are some questions you may have, and the answers.

1. How do I know what to look for?

Most subjects have a set textbook. For example, in 325-209 Human Resource Management, that book is: De Cieri, H., Kramar, R., Noe, R., Hollenbeck, J., Gerhart, B. & Wright, P. (2003). *Human Resource Management in Australia: Strategy, People, Performance*, Sydney: McGraw-Hill.

If you do not possess your own copy, search the catalogue of the University Library. You will discover that the library holds many copies of the book, and that copies may be found at various different branches of the library. The call sign for the De Cieri et al. book is: 658.300994 HUMA.

2. How can the textbook help me?

Every chapter of De Cieri et al. (2003) concludes with a section entitled 'Notes.' These sections list items referred to in the chapter, mainly books and journal articles. When you read the chapter, you will notice that numbers appear as superscript from time to time (e.g., ¹). The corresponding number in the Notes gives a source of the discussion in the text. This helps you in two ways.

1. It tells you what you should read to explore a topic in greater depth; and
2. By scanning the Notes you will see, from the frequency with which particular titles occur, what the key books and journals are for your subject, in this case, Human Resource Management.

3. How do I find good sources?

Use the textbook in the way described above to discover sources relevant to your topic. Use the Notes section to discover, for example, the author and title of a relevant journal article and the name of the journal. Then search the library catalogue to find where copies of the journal are held.

Don't worry if you can find only one or two sources relevant to your topic from the textbook: those one or two, once you've tracked them down, will have bibliographies of their own containing many additional references, and so on.

4. I have all my references: now what?

Read them! Make notes.

What are the main ideas? How does the author support his/her ideas? What kind of evidence does s/he use to justify the argument?

Once you've done this, you must do the hard part. You must think!

Thinking is about making connections between one piece of information and another. For example, you may read that maximum productivity is obtained when the physical structure of the work environment is arranged in a way that allows each employee to perform his/her tasks with the least amount of physical movement. If you are thinking, you will ask yourself whether this is necessarily true. Does all work involve physical movement? Is "movement" synonymous with "effort?" Do all employees wish to minimise their movements in the workplace? What do we mean by "productivity," anyway?

5. Writing your bibliography

If you are not sure how to write a bibliographic entry, consult the **Study and Research Helpsheets - The APA System** or **The Harvard System**. Electronic copies may be downloaded from <http://library.unimelb.edu.au/libraries/bee/helpsheets>

6. Annotating your bibliography

Aim not to exceed 150 words of annotation for each bibliographic entry.

Bibliographic annotations may be purely descriptive, i.e., you summarise each entry only, or they may combine description with critical evaluation.

a. Descriptive annotation

You might begin an entry as follows:

Hammer, M. (1990). Reengineering Work: Don't Automate, Obliterate. *Harvard Business Review*, 68 (4), 104-12.

Hammer argues that many firms are undertaking work activities that are unnecessary, and that saving time and money by automating these activities is missing the opportunities for huge efficiency gains that may be achieved by eliminating ('obliterating') them altogether. The argument is supported by a case study from the automotive industry.

The above sentences clarify the meaning of the title of the article and explain the author's basic thesis. They describe the kind of evidence used by the author to support his contention. If applicable, they would note any secondary or supplementary points he makes.

Reduce each of the author's paragraphs to a single sentence or, better still, a bullet point. This process is of great assistance in extracting the essence of an article.

b. Analytical annotation

An analytical entry for the same work might read:

Hammer, M. (1990). Reengineering Work: Don't Automate, Obliterate. *Harvard Business Review*, 68 (4), 104-12.

Hammer asserts the possibility of huge efficiency gains by eliminating unnecessary work activities through process analysis and re-design. The piece contains much strategic sense (the building of resource-based, excellent capability advantages), and justly emphasises the primacy of 'process.' The author underestimates the socio-technical complexity of multi-dimensional organisational change, however, and gives unfortunate impetus to the phenomenon of downsizing.

The above sentence explains the author's basic thesis and then evaluates it, explaining what the writer found useful in the piece and what the writer felt were the shortcomings of the piece. This helps the reader to determine whether he or she would like to read the article.

(A more substantial analytical assessment of an article is called a Critical Review. See the **Study and Research Helpsheet Critical Reviews**.)

7. What's in; what's out

Each annotation should answer some or all of the following questions:

- What is the main focus or purpose of the work?
- Who is the audience it was written for?
- What is its usefulness or appropriateness to your topic?
- Are there any special features that were unique or helpful?
- What is the author's background and credibility?
- What conclusions does the author draw?
- What observations or conclusions have you made?

Remember, the purpose of an annotated bibliography is to tell your reader something about the works listed: you are writing about books (βιβλιογραφία). Be clear, be concise and if there is an analytical component to your annotations, be fair and honest.