

## Critical annotated bibliographies

### Bibliographies v annotated bibliographies

A bibliography is a list of references used in an assessment task, presented in alphabetical order, listed according to the authors' surnames. Different referencing conventions, eg Harvard, APA or Footnotes, have different style requirements, so check with your teacher / lecturer, or a librarian for guidelines.

An *annotated bibliography* though gives an overview and can also include a critical evaluation of the source. The length may vary a great deal from a couple of lines to a paragraph and these are normally written in full sentences. However you may encounter some annotated bibliographies that use brief and incomplete sentences when word limit and conciseness are particularly crucial.

### Content

People who read annotated bibliographies want to gain from the experience of the person who has already read and used the book. At the minimum, they want a summary of the contents. However, they may also want the bibliography writer's critical evaluation of the book or article.

They may want to know:

- the strengths and weaknesses of the source
- its place in and relationship to the wider field of research
- how it adds to the research of the field
- if the information is sound, logical and well researched
- if it is readable and informative
- if it is broad and balanced
- the intended audience
- the aims and philosophical or theoretical bases of the source.

In short, the reader of an annotated bibliography is likely to be researching a similar topic to that covered by your essay or thesis. They want a quick and effective insight into some of the books you've used and to get an idea of whether they would be useful for their own research.

Therefore the bibliography writer should give a generalized description and broad evaluation of the book, journal or article. They may choose to outline how the resource contributed to the more specific topic of their essay / thesis as well.

## Language & focus

It is important not to fall into discussing or summarizing the information in the book. You are required to outline, in a much broader way, the *type, level or quality* of the information in the book. Think of yourself as the presenter on a book program (on radio or TV). Tell your audience about the book, what it covers and in what way. Avoid talking about the specific subject matter.

## Sample of a critical annotation

Raghuram, S., Garud, R., Wiesenfeld, B., & Gupta, V. (2001). Factors contributing to virtual work adjustment, *Journal of Management*, 27, 383-405.

The article explores the factors that facilitate or hinder employees adjustment from a conventional office based environment to a virtual work environment situated distantly or at home. The authors propose that structural factors (such as work independence and clear evaluation criteria) and relational factors (such as feeling of trust in colleagues and management and a sense of connectedness to the company) are key facilitators. Researchers also explore issues such as age, gender and virtual work experience as moderators to these key indicators. The report is highly readable and there is a logical progression in explaining the rationale of the study design. The results are supported statistically and simple graphical representations distil the important findings. Although the research sample was generally a representative cross-section across the gender divide, job categories and management hierarchy, it may be biased in the fact that only telecommunication industries were selected. Furthermore, all results correlate to measures of the employee's adjustment to virtual work, however these completely rest upon 'self-perceived adjustment'. Whether or not this is a reliable and true measure of their adjustment has not been addressed.

The finding that organizational connectedness was a powerful factor in virtual work adjustment for males in particular, informed the present research on 'Women in IT'. Although a correlation between feeling connected to the company and successful virtual work adjustment still remained, it was much less significant for females. This potentially supports the notion that women are well suited to being the pioneers of the virtual work environment.

*Brief summary  
of content*

*Critical  
evaluation of  
article*

*Critical  
evaluation of  
methodology or  
content*

*Application to  
your own  
research*