

Annotated Bibliographies



THE WRITING CENTER

JUDITH G. GARDNER CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE

The purpose of the reference entries in any bibliography is twofold:

1. To **give credit to the sources** you've drawn from in your studies, and
2. To **direct your reader to the sources** if they want to see the originator of an idea you referenced or find more information.

When it comes to an annotated bibliography, you're adding **a notation describing and evaluating your source**. This notation has purposes that concern you, rather than your reader:

3. To **get to know your sources**, familiarizing yourself with their content, and
4. To **explain what you found useful about the source**, as a reminder to yourself for later when you're using it in writing.

Keeping in mind these goals, let's talk about what goes into writing an annotated bibliography.

I. **Introductory Paragraph, Thesis Statement, or Research Question** •

The entries in your annotated bibliography will all be centered around some theme or idea that you're researching, and keeping a clear idea of this overarching topic will help you stay oriented as you evaluate the usefulness of each source you read.

Most annotated bibliographies will begin with a thesis statement, research question, or introductory paragraph that **outlines the purpose of your research**. Is there a specific question you're answering with your sources? Is there an argument you're using them to prove?

II. **Correctly Formatted Reference Entry Citation** •

Remember that at its core, an annotated bib is a reference page that needs to follow the formatting of whatever citation style you're using. Make sure your entries are in alphabetical order and include all the authors, titles, and publication info that your citation style requires.

III. **Summary of the Source** •

Keep this brief. If you can state the main point of the source in a sentence or two, you've probably understood it well; if you find yourself lost in the details, you may need to spend more time reading. **What is the core idea that this source wanted you to understand?**

IV. **Evaluation of the Source** •

This is the more abstract part of your notation: you'll be evaluating the **quality** and the **usefulness** of each source.

In terms of **quality**: What purpose did the author have in writing this? Who is their audience? Are they biased? Are their conclusions valid or invalid? Do most scholars agree or disagree with their findings?

In terms of **usefulness**: How does this source connect to your topic and your main point? How does it communicate with other sources in your bibliography?

Turn page for **Example!**

Sample Annotated Bibliography (MLA format)

[Introduction:] Ever since the British colonization of New Zealand in the 1840s, a distinct New Zealand dialect of has been in development, along with a fair amount of controversy. Attitudes toward New Zealand English began negative but seem to have recently become more positive. Considering this history, just what are current attitudes toward the New Zealand dialect?

[Reference Entry:] Deverson, Tony. "New Zealand English," in *Book and Print in New Zealand: A Guide to Print Culture in Aotearoa*. Victoria University Press, 1997.

[Summary:] Deverson discusses the way that the New Zealand English dialect is represented in written form. The main distinction of written New Zealand English is in specific New Zealand slang and vocabulary, since the grammatical structure doesn't differ from other dialects of English and the accent can't be represented on paper.

[Evaluation:] Essentially a summary of much of Deverson's research on New Zealand English, this chapter gives a useful overview of how the NZ dialect is represented on paper. And although the New Zealand dialect only shows up in limited ways in writing, this in itself is an important indication of how New Zealand English is perceived, implying that when formality is required, distinct New Zealand English is unacceptable.

Gordon, Elizabeth and Marcia Abell. "'This Objectionable Colonial Dialect': Historical and Contemporary Attitudes to New Zealand Speech," in *New Zealand Ways of Speaking English*, ed. by Allan Bell and Janet Holmes. Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1990, pp. 21-48.

The attitudes toward the New Zealand accent are examined from when the New Zealand dialect first developed in the late 1800s until the 1990s. In the early years there was strong opposition to the New Zealand accent, since it was seen as a bastardization of "proper" British English, but more recently it has not been seen as a marker of low status or laziness. Instead, it is a marker of friendliness and pride amongst New Zealanders.

This research is particularly useful because it analyzes the firsthand opinions of actual New Zealanders, rather than just discussing the concept in the abstract. The history of people's opinions shows some outdated ideas that may still linger in current attitudes.