**Introduction to the Annotated Bibliography**

***What is an Annotated Bibliography?***

An annotated bibliography is basically an MLA-formatted works cited list—a student’s articles, books, cartoons, interviews, etc.—that he/she plans to cite from in the paper. But beyond the works cited list, an annotated bibliography includes a “brief, descriptive, and evaluative paragraph” under each source. The purpose of these paragraphs is to “inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited”(http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/

ref/ research/skill28.htm#what).

***What is the difference between an Annotation and an Abstract?***

Abstracts are short summaries usually found at the beginning of scholarly articles. Annotations provide summary as well, but they are more critical and evaluative. Annotations explain the source/author’s credibility; discuss the purpose, tone, and bias of a source; and provide connections among different sources.

***Why do I need to write an Annotated Bibliography?***

**To learn about your topic**: “Writing an annotated bibliography is excellent preparation for a research project. Just collecting sources for a works cited is useful, but when you have to write annotations for each source, you’re forced to read each source more carefully.” Instead of just looking for quotes for a paper, you must think more about the suitability of each source you are contemplating using (owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01).

**To help you formulate a supportable thesis**: By requiring an annotated bibliography before a paper’s written, teachers are making sure that students have surveyed the topic and its current arguments, so the paper has a strong, debatable thesis. In evaluating your sources, you should make sure your articles will provide for a thesis that is interesting, debatable, and current.

Interesting & supportable: Have you found sources to help showcase your topic and make it sound creative? Have you found a variety of support (stats, graphs, or strong quotes to prove your point; anecdotes or pictures to provide pathos)?

Debatable & unbiased: Do your sources offer pros and cons (the cons being concessions you might use in your paper)? If at least some of your sources don’t provide the opposition’s side, you have likely found biased articles and will probably sound biased in your own paper.

Current & relevant: Are your sources current (esp. important if your topic is in a quickly changing area, such as technology or politics)? Are your articles relevant and credible? Your credibility depends, in large part, on having strong, academic, current sources.

**To present yourself as a critical thinker and credible, responsible researcher**: Creating an annotated bibliography requires critical thinking skills and helps alert you to issues you should know before incorporating your sources into your paper. For example, is there a bias problem? Is the article dated (too old)? Do you have too many short articles and not enough “meat” to write a research paper? Admitting bias and showing how you plan to use your resources sets yourself up as an academic, responsible writer—one worth listening to.

**To survey your sources and figure out what to add or cut:** Perhaps most importantly, your annotated bibliography helps you and your instructor evaluate your sources (Are they academic enough? Are there too many of one type—such as dictionary definitions or news articles? Have you included 1-2 articles from the oppositional view, as required? Are your sources too similar/saying the same thing?). Therefore, the bibliography is a helpful and necessary stepping stone to writing the paper. And often, as a result of writing the annotated bibliography, you may change some of your sources before completing your researched argument paper.

**Annotated Bibliography Guidelines**

1. List at least **9 reliable, scholarly sources,** properly formatted in **MLA style**—including alphabetical order. Use single spacing.

2. Your sources should derive from **at least three different media** (including at least one visual source) and should represent **a range of viewpoints** on the issue.

Examples of different media: scholarly journal, newspaper, magazine, interview, academic webpage, academic film source (documentary)

Examples of visual sources: cartoon, editorial cartoon, picture, chart, graph, visual advertisement

3. Write 1-2 well-developed but concise **paragraphs for each source**. The paragraph(s) should include the following information:

1. **Summary**: Provide an overview of the purpose or points of the source. Tell if it covers the background of the issue or if it provide helpful charts, interviews, definitions, illustrations, etc. (Note: This is a summary. You don’t tell specific facts or details; rather, focus on the broad topic, subtopics, and/or general sense of the source.)
2. **Plan for use:** How do you plan to use this source in your paper? Does it include definitions, charts, or interviews that will be especially helpful? Will it provide concessions for the opposing view? Or rebuttal? Does it provide a picture you will use? Does it provide a strong story that will give you pathos? Does it give you helpful statistics?

Your paragraph(s) may also include the following information:

1. Credibility: Explain the validity of the source and/or provide background of the author’s credentials and experience.
2. Audience/Tone/Bias: Make an informed guess on the audience the writing is geared toward (Is it fellow scientists? Is it for everyday folks? Is it written toward people already aligned with the author or people who view things oppositionally?). Comment on the tone and/or bias. For example, does it feel scholarly? witty? informed? argumentative? angry? Is the author clearly on one side of the issue or the other?
3. Make comparisons/contrasts: Make comparisons between this work and another work you have cited (or other research you have skimmed), particularly if it’s a strong point or a shortcoming of this piece. Is this piece considerably shorter or longer, more scholarly, more biased, more helpful regarding one subtopic of your issue, more difficult to understand, older or newer, less or more applicable, etc.?

Note: The summary and “plan for use” are required for each annotated paragraph. Of the other three categories—credibility, audience/tone/bias, comparisons/contrasts—you are not required to include every single item on every single annotation as long as they are included when applicable. The key is that your paragraphs sound critical, aware, scholarly, etc. A reader should be able to tell that you are informed about your topic and sources and aware of how your sources stand in comparison to each other and to your goal.

4. Your paragraphs should sound very informative but concise. Don’t say something in two sentences that could be said in one. These paragraphs should not sound “fluffy” or repetitive. The tone should be business-like and rather formal. “I” voice should rarely be used, excepting sometimes the “plan for use” section.

The following sites can help you with your MLA documentation:

* http://www.studyguide.org/MLAdocumentation.htm

This site is great in showing most of the modern media citations, such as Powerpoint presentations, websites, and emails.

* http://www.easybib.com/
* http://www.citationmachine.net/

**Sample Annotated Bibliography**

MLA requires double spacing within citations. However, I prefer single space for the annotated bibliography and double-spacing for the Works Cited that comes in with the final paper.

If you are working with books or especially long articles, you may not have read the entire thing before creating your annotations, but you need to have read at least a few pages or enough to get a sense of the piece.

Jane Doe

English 12: B7

Mrs. Craft

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Annotated Bibliography

Research Question: Does a student’s participation in sports, particularly swimming, help or hurt the student’s academic achievements?

Abrahms, Sarah Jane, and Joe Ellis. The Flood: How the Sport of Swimming Has Changed. NY:

Bartlet P, 2004. Print.

This text, written by a former coach and a physical therapist, discusses how—in order to compete at the state-championship level—teams are expected to practice several hours a day. Recent knowledge in sciences has motivated more coaches to utilize weightlifting and cross-training as part of their conditioning programs, leading to an increased time commitment from student athletes. The writers seem critical of the longer hours but mention the payoffs as well. They include some statistical information, based mostly from the 1980s to late 1990s; however, most of their information is anecdotal—from coaches, student swimmers, and parents. I plan to use their background information on the new techniques in conditioning as well as some of their statistics. One of the stories from a swimmer from Ohio State would be good to create pathos and show the positive influence swimming can have on a student’s motivation.

Graham, Perry, and Margaret Lee Kozol. “Teenage Startling Statistics.” The Journal of

Secondary Education 58 (Winter 2000): 764-89. Print.

This article lists information concerning students’ extracurricular activities, test scores, grades, college acceptance, and scholarship rates, etc. Since the article is from a journal, it is likely a credible source, and the formal, business-like tone and focus on data add to that impression. The data is drawn from national surveys and the College Board. Most of the text is concerned with teens dropping out of high school and/or not succeeding in college, which is not relevant to my thesis. The charts and statistics, however, seem applicable, and I plan to use them. The most helpful chart is one that shows graduation rates, GPAs, and extracurricular involvement. Students with extracurricular involvement have higher graduation rates and GPAs than students not involved in extracurricular activities.

Litton, Drew. “Will We Ever Hear Coaches Speak Energetically about Grades and Graduation?”

Cartoon. Author Roy S. Johnson. “Academic Questions for CollegeSports.” ESPN Commentary. 25 Aug. 2010. Web. 11 June 2013. <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/

commentary/news/story?id=5496547>.

The comic shows a coach reviewing film with a couple of football athletes, but instead of pointing to a play, he’s pointing to a football field with a graduation podium. “Goal line” is written under a young man in a cap and gown, with goalposts behind him. I plan to use this comic to show the positive pressure that coaches can provide to their students for grades and graduation. Ironically, the article is about how coaches do not focus on academics enough with their athletes, but since the cartoon shows that a coach can be instrumental in this role, and since many are, I don’t think it would be misleading to use it in this way in my paper. I should, however, concede that not all coaches motivate students to do well academically.

Loose, Dee. Personal interview. 5 Jan. 2006.

Mr. Loose has coached swimming for over thirty years, including four years at the college level and fifteen years at the high school level. He has seven high school state championship titles and nineteen high school regional championships to his credit, as well as three conference championships at the college level. He’s completing a Master’s in Exercise Science. I plan to interview him about the effects of extracurricular involvement on academics, and particularly how sports can both help and hurt students’ classroom work. Since he has required a 3.0 GPA of his student swimmers, I’m confident that he’ll have something to add to this discussion.

McKay, Jefferson, and Hillary Jones. Sports and Studies: Connections and Correlations for

Championship Students. Farmington, NM: Barowski Books, 1997. Print.

The authors of this book, a former track star and a sports journalist, argue that a student’s involvement with sports helps motivate him/her to do well in school. The student athlete learns discipline, goal-setting, and motivational techniques. He/she often also receives pressure/support from the coach to do well in school. The book appears very biased toward sports and almost seems like a motivational book. I have only skimmed two chapters, but, so far, it doesn’t appear very scientific but relies more on a couple of coaches’ opinions and student-athlete success stories. The authors also include a lot of photos of various athletes. The text doesn’t provide as many statistics or studies as some of my other sources, but it could provide some strong quotes and reasoning to go along with the stats that I plan to use in my paper.

St. Rosemary Educational Institution. “Does [sic] Sports Affect Academic Average?”

Schoolworkhelper.net. St. Rosemary Educational Institution, 2013. Web. 11 June 2013.

This article, likely written by a high school or college group of students, shows a survey of 62 students who were asked how much time they spent in sports, and if the students felt that the sports affected their grades. The hypothesis was that such a large time commitment outside of class must negatively impact grades, but the conclusion was that perhaps sports did not affect grades. The study is not the best in that there is nothing to compare the grades to (What are the other students achieving? What did these students achieve before being involved in sports?), and the survey question is not precisely worded. Furthermore, the article is a little sketchy since no author is provided. But I might still use the graph of student responses because students-athletes’ opinions on the sports-academics connection is worthwhile—even if it’s just based on one survey.

Yee, Kiasha. “The Downside of Teen Over-Involvement.” Teen Studies 41:3 (1999): 1120-21.

This article reveals the psychological problems that stress and too many commitments can lead to for teenagers today. There are no credentials given to the author, and the article is very short and doesn’t provide a lot of explanation, so it doesn’t seem as scholarly as some of my other sources. The article does provide a few anecdotes and also a few quotes from doctors that I might use for my concessions.