WRITING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Adapted and revised from Writing Across the Curriculum by Sandra Nagy (via Southern Illinois University at Carbondale)

Why write an annotated bibliography?
- You get to know your subject or topic better because before you write an annotation, you must read it carefully and think about what facts and analysis or opinions it offers you on your research topic.
- In the process of finding and reading sources, you are also focusing your topic better because you are “weeding out” those sources that do not really focus on what you are interested in writing about.

Rules to follow:
Take your sources one at a time.
Answer the questions in complete sentences.
Use present tense.

Three questions to ask as you start to write your annotation:
- What are the main, or most significant ideas of this source?
- What is the author trying to do (purpose)?
- How will this source help you in your research paper?

Combine the Answers:
Example: Smith focuses on the dropping illiteracy levels among school children, categorizing socioeconomic levels, racial groups, and parents’ educational background. Smith attempts to convince his readers that most children do poorly in school because their parents don’t work with them in home study sessions. This article is helpful to me because I can use it to discuss my topic of how student success in school is affected by their parents.

Three more questions:
- Is there any bias or slant in the source? (Does the author have a specific opinion s/he is trying to convince the reader is correct, especially about a controversial topic? Or is the author trying to present information neutrally?)
- Are there obvious omissions that seem important to the ideas being discussed?
- Does the evidence clearly support the author’s main points?

Example: While Smith’s data supports his position, his solutions seem too simplistic and very general. Because he ignores the busy schedules, as well as the attitudes and expectations of some parents, his “just do it” advice doesn’t seem likely to change the situation.

Extra Tips:
Use the author’s last name to refer to the article and use present tense to write the annotation.
Write SHORT paragraphs.
Combine answers (in your sentences) where possible.
Use an MLA type Works Cited page with a paragraph of analysis for each source.

Last Points:
Use alphabetical order.
Double space everything.
Use a “hanging indent” for each entry.