THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

What is an annotation? Annotations are brief descriptions of cited material. They provide the reader with enough relevant information about a book or article to decide whether the actual, full-text material should be examined. Annotations can be any length, but are usually about 50-150 words, depending on the item being described.

Annotations begin with a complete citation, formatted according to a style manual. Some points to address in an annotation:

1. AUTHOR
   Who is the author? What are the author’s credentials, and occupation, background, and/or experience? Is the author qualified to write this book/article?

2. PURPOSE
   What is the purpose for writing this material? Is the purpose stated or implied? Is there a particular message the author wants to convey? Does the author succeed in this?

3. INTENDED AUDIENCE
   Who is the author writing for? Is the work intended for the general public, scholars, or students? How does the author's writing style/vocabulary reflect this?

4. AUTHOR BIAS
   Does the author have a known bias, or can a bias be assumed from the tone or writing style? Does the author base his rationale or research on assumptions? Are the assumptions substantiated, or can they be substantiated?

5. AUTHOR’S SOURCES
   How was information obtained? Is the material based on personal opinion, personal experience, interviews, original research, experiments, and/or statistical analysis? Does the author cite other, respected, current, and relevant sources in this field?
6. AUTHOR’S CONCLUSION
What conclusions does the author draw? Are the conclusions stated or implied? Are the conclusions substantiated? Can the conclusions be justified based on research? Do the conclusions address the stated objective of the material? Are the conclusions skewed by author bias?

7. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER WORKS
How does this material compare with similar studies? Does it agree or contrast with conventional wisdom, established scholarship, or the classic literature? Does the author cite other works which present an opposing viewpoint?

8. ORGANIZATION
Does the material have a logical flow, making it easy to read and find the main points? Does a book have an index and a bibliography? Does an article include an abstract? Are there relevant appendices? Would it be helpful to include charts, maps, or other related material?

Annotation Style
Commonly, annotations are written using verb phrases rather than sentences; the title of the book, or journal article, is understood to be the subject of the phrase.

Examples: "Provides comprehensive overview of the subject."
"Clearly defines the scope of the material."

Your teacher or advisor may expect other questions to be answered in your annotation:
- Why is this work relevant to my course of study?
- How did I find this material?

Be sure you know what is expected of you before you begin the assignment!