Annotated Bibliographies

Presenter: Vanessa van der Ham
Learning Consultant: Postgraduate Centre for Teaching and Learning
V.Vanderham@massey.ac.nz

As an assignment, or as part of an assignment, an annotated bibliography provides an organised list of sources, each of which is followed by an ‘annotation’—a brief note about the source.

Consists of:
- an alphabetical list of the sources used in the research (e.g., books, journals articles), with
- a brief summary of the contents of the source, and
- an indication of the value or relevance of the source for the assignment topic, and sometimes
- a brief critique of the source.

Sample entry 1:

The authors discuss a survey of community language use in Pasifika communities in Manukau City. They conclude that there is evidence of language attrition—a reduction both in the use and the range of community languages. The authors then summarise relevant theories of second language acquisition, focusing on the crucial importance of comprehensible input. They then discuss how children in Pasifika communities in New Zealand might obtain more comprehensible input in the home and school. I intend to use the concept of comprehensible input to evaluate materials available for parents who want to read stories in Tongan to their pre-school children.

How will you use the source in your research?

How is it different from an Abstract?

Abstract
- Generally written by the author of the text
- Provides a descriptive summary of the text

Annotated Bibliography
- Written by someone using the text
- Can be both descriptive and critical

What is the purpose of an Annotated Bibliography in your studies?
1. As an assignment or as part of an assignment, it allows the reader to assess your engagement with the literature in your research field
2. It can be used as a systematic approach to note-taking in your research

What is the purpose of an Annotated Bibliography?
1. As an assignment or as part of an assignment, it allows the reader to assess:
   - whether the sources being used are relevant to the research being undertaken
   - whether the sources reflect current research in the field
   - whether the sources reflect the primary literature on a specific topic
   - whether you are engaging critically with the research
What is the purpose of an Annotated Bibliography?

2. It can be used as part of a systematic approach to note-taking in your research

- Annotating your sources as you read them provides you with a quick reminder of their:
  - content, accuracy, relevance and value for your topic
  - their connection with other sources on the topic
  - do they present an alternative viewpoint?
  - do their findings agree/disagree?

- The brief record and review of all your readings will be enormously helpful, for example:
  - when you’re doing a literature review
  - when you’re writing up your research

(O’Leary, 2004)

Possible annotations

### Descriptive annotations – summarising the source

- briefly describe the content and focus of the text
- identify the thesis/research question/hypothesis of an academic text
- describe the methods (research) used
- describe the results of research
- describe the writer’s main conclusions

### Critical annotations – evaluating the source

- Is it a useful source for your topic?
  - which part/chapter/component?
  - why? How will you use it in your research?
- How does it compare with your other sources on the topic?
  - does it agree/disagree?
  - does it provide a new/different perspective?
  - does it question a prevailing perspective?
- How persuasive is the author’s argument?
  - is the evidence presented in support of it reliable?
  - do you agree with it? Why/why not?

### Sample entry 2:


The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that non-family living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They found their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of non-family living.

(Source: Adapted from Engle, Blumenthal & Cosgrave, 2005)

Thaman argues that there is an inherent contradiction between cultural conservation and ecotourism business: the latter always leads to the erosion of the former. Thaman addresses the importance of indigenous culture, and recognises the gradually increasing phenomenon of cultural alienation. She rejects applying the Western model of ecotourism in the Pacific, and incisively maintains that ecotourism has become a new sell in Pacific Islands, promoted by profits. Consequently, she advocates “ecocultural tourism development” as an alternative form of development. Further, Thaman touches on the issue of gender, and emphasises the role of education in improving people’s consciousness. Like Simmons (1993), Thaman critically examines the crucial problems of ecotourism in developing countries, rather than accepting it as unproblematic. Similar to Scheyvens (1999), Thaman emphasises the importance of local people’s full participation, and social and political empowerment, but in different ways. Also like Scheyvens, Thaman believes that it is possible to promote both development and conservation. Thaman’s proposal of “ecocultural tourism development” is fairly perceptive, constructive, and more radical than Scheyven’s community-based approach. Although Thaman provides incisive views on ecotourism, it is difficult to change people’s perceptions radically, and it is unrealistic for foreign donors to relinquish certain rights and provide aid unconditionally. Moreover, Thaman fails to find any solutions derived from the local community’s own perspective - what these people can do for their own sake, instead of depending on others.

Critical annotations: Be specific

Like Simmons (1993), Thaman critically examines the crucial problems of ecotourism in developing countries, rather than accepting it as unproblematic. Similar to Scheyvens (1999), Thaman emphasises the importance of local people’s full participation, and social and political empowerment, but in different ways. Also like Scheyvens, Thaman believes that it is possible to promote both development and conservation. Thaman’s proposal of “ecocultural tourism development” is fairly perceptive, constructive, and more radical than Scheyven’s community-based approach. Although Thaman provides incisive views on ecotourism, it is difficult to change people’s perceptions radically, and it is unrealistic for foreign donors to relinquish certain rights and provide aid unconditionally. Moreover, Thaman fails to find any solutions derived from the local community’s own perspective - what these people can do for their own sake, instead of depending on others.
Useful links
1. Good site featuring examples of annotations and further links:
   Academic skills and Learning Centre (ASLC), the Australian National University:
   Google: ASLC + Annotated Bibliographies

2. Good site featuring phrases commonly used for describing and critiquing sources:
   Google: manchester university + academic phrasebank

Language for talking about sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>account for</th>
<th>clarify</th>
<th>describe</th>
<th>indicate</th>
<th>question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>analyse</td>
<td>compare</td>
<td>depict</td>
<td>investigate</td>
<td>recognise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>argue</td>
<td>conclude</td>
<td>determine</td>
<td>judge</td>
<td>reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assess</td>
<td>criticise</td>
<td>distinguish</td>
<td>justify</td>
<td>refer to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assert</td>
<td>defend</td>
<td>evaluate</td>
<td>narrate</td>
<td>report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assume</td>
<td>define</td>
<td>emphasise</td>
<td>persuade</td>
<td>review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>claims</td>
<td>demonstrate</td>
<td>examine</td>
<td>propose</td>
<td>suggest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of use:
The evidence presented by the researchers in Chapter 2 provides...
The evidence indicates that...
In this chapter the author identifies and analyses two reasons for the...
The chapter questions the view that...
In this article the author uses a case study to illustrate...
The authors report that...
In Chapters 4 and 5 the writers review the process of ...

References