

Preparing an Annotation

The purpose of an annotation is to describe the cited material. It should provide enough information about the book or article so that you can determine whether you should look at the actual material. Each annotation does not need to address all of the following, but it should simplify the researcher's work by aiding decisionmaking. Annotations can be any length but are usually about 50 to 150 words in length, depending on the item itself. The length should be proportional to the length of the work being described.

Author

Who is the author? What is his/her occupation, position, education, experience, etc.? Is the author qualified (or not) to write the article or book?

Purpose

What is the purpose for writing the article (or book) or doing the research?

Intended audience

For what audience is the author writing? Is it intended for the general public, scholars, policy makers, teachers, professionals, practitioners, etc.? Is this reflected in the author's style of writing?

Author bias

Does the author have a bias or make assumptions upon which the rationale of the article or book rests? What are they?

Information source

What method of obtaining the data or conducting the research was employed by the author? Is the article or book based on personal opinion, experience, interviews, library research, questionnaires, laboratory experiments, standardized personality tests, etc.?

Conclusion justification

What is the conclusion? Does the author satisfactorily justify the conclusion from the research or experience? Why or why not?

Relationship to other works

How does this study compare with similar studies? Is it in tune with or in opposition to conventional wisdom, established scholarship, professional practice, governmental policy, etc.? Are there specific studies, writings, schools of thought, philosophies, etc. with which this one agrees or disagrees and that the reader should be aware of?

Significant attachments

Are there significant attachments such as charts, maps, bibliographies, photos, documents, tests or questionnaires? If not, should there be?

Summary comment

End with a concise summary comment, e.g. "This detailed account provides new information that will be of interest to educated adults as well as scholars."

Sample Annotations

Feltin, M. (1987). *A Woman's Guide to Good Health after 50*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman. Prepared and distributed by the American Association of Retired Persons, this handbook provides a foundation of knowledge, in layperson's terms, regarding older women's health. Feltin explores physiology, emotional health, sexuality, sleep, substance abuse, and the health care system. Helpful diagrams, photographs and data are provided. This guide is one of the few which solely addresses health concerns of older women.

Schmidt, J.M. (1973). *Causes of the Russian Revolution*. New York: Herklon. Schmidt, a Russian history professor at Yale, bases his research on documents smuggled out of the Kremlin. He reveals that a few Germans played a key role in the events leading up to the revolution. The style is heavy and somewhat argumentative, with many footnotes. Some of his conclusions are radically different from those in Mark Johnson's *Why the Red Revolution?* This book reopens questions most scholars had regarded as settled.

Adapted from materials developed by Univ. of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and King's College (PA)