Creating an Annotated Bibliography

**What it is:** Chicago-formatted source citations, accompanied by a summary and/or evaluation of each of the sources.

**What it does** (adapted from Purdue’s OWL site): An annotated bibliography helps you learn about your topic during the research stage, because when you have to write annotations for each source, you're forced to read each source more carefully. You begin to read more critically instead of just collecting information.

An annotated bibliography helps you see what research has already been done, so you have context for your own research, and it helps you develop or refine your thesis. By reading and responding to a variety of sources on a topic, you'll start to see what the issues are, what people are arguing about, and you'll then be able to develop your own point of view.

An annotated bibliography is also invaluable to other historians and historical researchers doing work in your field.

**Details on each of the steps,** as detailed on the Purdue OWL site:

- **Summarize:** What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say?
- **Assess:** After summarizing a source, to evaluate it. Is it a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Is the information reliable? Is this source biased or objective? What is the goal of this source?
- **Reflect:** Once you've summarized and assessed a source, you need to ask how it fits into your research. Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your argument? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic?

**Sample Annotation:**