

T W E N T Y - T H R E E

# Annotating a Bibliography



**W**HEN WE ASSIGN RESEARCH PROJECTS, we often require our students to annotate a bibliography as part of the research process. Instructors do this for a variety of reasons: to ensure that you read sources carefully and critically, summarize useful information about them, and think about how and why you expect to use particular ones. The rhetorical purpose of the annotated bibliography is to inform—and you are part of the audience. Conscientiously done, annotating a bibliography will help you gain a sense of the larger conversation about your topic and think about how your work fits into that conversation.

In a formal annotated bibliography, you **DESCRIBE** each of the sources you expect to consult and state what role each will play in your research. Sometimes you will be asked to **EVALUATE** sources as well—to assess their strengths and weaknesses in one or two sentences.

## Characteristic Features

Annotations should be brief, but they can vary in length from a sentence or two to a few paragraphs. They also vary in terms of style: some are written in complete sentences; others consist of short phrases. And like a works cited or reference page, an annotated bibliography is arranged

in alphabetical order. You'll want to find out exactly what your instructor expects, but most annotated bibliographies include the following features.

**Complete bibliographic information**, following whatever documentation style you'll use in your essay—**MLA**, **APA**, or another style. This information will enable readers to locate your sources—and can also form the basis for your final works cited or references list.

A brief **SUMMARY OR DESCRIPTION** of each work, noting its topic, scope, and **STANCE**. If a source reports on research, the research methods may also be important to summarize. Other details you include will depend on your own goals for your project. Whatever you choose to describe, however, be sure that it represents the source accurately and objectively.

**Evaluative comments**. If you're required to write evaluative annotations, you might consider how **AUTHORITATIVE** the source is, how up-to-date, whether it addresses multiple perspectives, and so on. Consider both its strengths and its limitations.

**Some indication of how each source will inform your research**. Explain how you expect to use each source. Does it present a certain perspective you need to consider? report on important new research? include a thorough bibliography that might alert you to other sources? How does each source relate to the others? How does each source contribute to your understanding of the topic and to your research goals? Or if you find that it isn't helpful to your project, explain why you won't use it.

**A consistent and concise presentation**. Annotations should be presented consistently in all entries: if one is written in complete sentences, they all should be. The amount of information and the way you structure it should also be the same throughout. And that information should be written concisely, summarizing just the main points and key details relevant to your purpose.

Following are two annotated bibliographies, the first descriptive and the second evaluative.

## A Descriptive Annotated Bibliography

Renewable and Sustainable  
Energy in Rural India

SAURABH VAISH



Complete bibliographic  
information for this source,  
following MLA style.

Germany, German Energy Agency. "Renewable Energies."  
Deutsche Energie-Agentur GmbH (dena), [www.dena.de/en/topics/renewable-energy.html](http://www.dena.de/en/topics/renewable-energy.html). Accessed 12 Apr. 2011.

Summarizes and describes  
the source.

The German Energy Agency provides information on energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, and intelligent energy systems. The website contains some useful databases, including ones of energy projects in Germany and of recent publications. It is a useful source of information on the manufacturing and production of alternative energy systems.

Explains how this source  
will inform his project.

Though this site does not provide statistical data and covers only a limited number of projects and publications, it includes links to much useful information. It's a great source of publications and projects in both Germany and Russia, and so it will help me broaden my research beyond the borders of the United States.

SAURABH VAISH, a management and entrepreneurship major at Hofstra University, wrote this descriptive annotated bibliography for a research project on renewable and sustainable energy in rural India. We then adapted two entries to demonstrate evaluative annotations.

Vaish / *Renewable and Sustainable Energy in Rural India*

Moner-Girona, Magda, editor. "A New Scheme for the Promotion of Renewable Energies in Developing Countries: The Renewable Energy Regulated Purchase Tariff." *European Commission Joint Research Centre Publications Repository*, 2008, [www.energy.eu/publications/LDNA23284ENC\\_002.pdf](http://www.energy.eu/publications/LDNA23284ENC_002.pdf). Accessed 12 Apr. 2011.

This report on a study by the PhotoVoltaic Technology Platform discusses how to promote the use of renewable energy in developing countries. The report proposes a new tariff scheme to increase the flow of money where it is most needed, suggests several business models, and estimates the potential success or failure of each. The detailed information it provides about business models, supply-chain setups, and financial calculations will be useful in my analysis, especially in the part of my project that deals with photovoltaic cells.

United States, Energy Information Administration. *Renewable & Alternative Fuels Analysis Reports*. 1998–2010, U.S. Dept. of Energy, [www.eia.gov/renewable/reports.cfm](http://www.eia.gov/renewable/reports.cfm). Accessed 2 Feb. 2012.

This site reports statistical and graphical data on energy production and consumption, including all major alternative energies. It provides access to numerous databases on energy consumption across the world. This website provides most of the statistical data I will need to formulate conclusions about the efficiency of alternative energies. Its data are reliable, current, and easy to understand.

## An Evaluative Annotated Bibliography

Moner-Girona, Magda, editor. "A New Scheme for the Promotion of Renewable Energies in Developing Countries: The Renewable Energy Regulated Purchase Tariff." *European Commission Joint Research Centre Publications Repository*, 2008, [www.energy.eu/publications/LDNA23284ENC\\_002.pdf](http://www.energy.eu/publications/LDNA23284ENC_002.pdf). Accessed 12 Apr. 2011.

This report on a study by the PhotoVoltaic Technology Platform discusses how to promote renewable energy in developing countries. The report proposes a new tariff scheme to increase the flow of money where it is needed, suggests several business models, and estimates the potential success or failure of each.

The detailed information about business models, supply-chain setups, and financial calculations will be useful, especially in the part of my project that deals with photovoltaic cells. One potential drawback is that this report makes premature assumptions: the proposed business plan is probably not implementable for 20 years. Even so, this report contains useful data and models, including graphs and charts, that will support my claims.

Evaluates the source, acknowledging a potential weakness—but explains why it is still useful.

United States, Energy Information Administration. *Renewable & Alternative Fuels Analysis Reports*. 1998–2010, U.S. Dept. of Energy, [www.eia.gov/renewable/reports.cfm](http://www.eia.gov/renewable/reports.cfm). Accessed 2 Feb. 2012.

This website reports statistical and graphical data on energy production and consumption, including all major alternative energies. It provides access to numerous databases on energy consumption across the world.

This site provides most of the statistical data I will need to formulate conclusions about the efficiency of alternative energies. Its data are reliable, current, and easy to understand. I see no potential weakness in this source because the data it presents are non-biased statistics and supporting graphics pertaining to alternative energies. Using such data will allow me to shape my own opinions regarding the research I undertake.