

Annotated Bibliography

Frequently Used In:

Research Papers
Literature Reviews

Evaluating Sources for Research

Annotated Bibliographies are a research tool to summarize, evaluate, and compare sources during research. They feature a bibliographic citation and a corresponding annotation in paragraph form. A good annotated bibliography asks specific questions of each source and informs the researcher about what is already known on a chosen topic.

What kind of source is it?

Primary Sources

Artifacts
Creative Works
First-Hand Accounts
Newspaper Stories
Scientific Studies
Raw Data
Legal Documents
Organizational Records

Primary sources are the raw materials of research with direct observations and creations.

Secondary Sources

Scholarly Books
Review Articles
Biographies
Commentaries

Secondary sources give scholarly commentary and interpretations of primary sources and studies.

Tertiary Sources

Encyclopedias
Dictionaries
Textbooks

Tertiary sources introduce researchers to a topic with a summary of what is known.

What do we need in an annotation?

What is it?

Describe the source: is it an ancient artifact, a work of art, a scientific study?

Who created it?

Identify the author or creator—do they seem like a credible source?

What does it say?

Summarize the hypothesis, thesis, or argument of the source with key findings.

How do they say it?

Determine the methodology and sources of evidence in the source.

How does it relate?

Connect to other sources on the subject. Do they agree? Disagree? Add?

What does it add?

Establish what the source contributes to your research.

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Bibliographic Citation

Bulldog 19

Alice the Elephant: An Annotated Bibliography

Bartlett, A.D. Note to Philip Lutley Sclater. 1885. Personal Correspondence. London Zoological Society Archives.

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What it is →

This handwritten note from Abraham D. Bartlett, the superintendent of London Zoological Gardens, to Philip Lutley Sclater, the Secretary of the London Zoological Society in 1885 regards the potential sale of Alice, the zoo's female African Elephant, to P.T. Barnum. The note is written on the Zoological Society Gardens letterhead and stamped by the Zoological Society's own archivist, noting the dates the note was sent, received, and answered. In short, the note asks Sclater for authorization to sell Alice to Barnum and for what price. While this seems like a perfunctory transaction, Bartlett's choice of words gives some insight into the zoological garden's motivations for the sale.

What it says →

How it relates →

This primary source adds a dimension to the history of Alice which Paul Chamber's *Jumbo: The Greatest Elephant in the World* (2008) and John Sutherland's *Jumbo: The Unauthorized Biography of a Victorian Sensation* (2013) overlooked in favor for explaining why Barnum was eager to purchase Alice in the first place. Further, this note is one of the only insights into Alice's story after Jumbo was sold to Barnum, as the London newspapers ceased writing about her after his departure.

What it adds →

O'Connell, Caitlin. *Elephant Don: The Politics of a Pachyderm Posse*. University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Caitlin O'Connell's *Elephant Don* examines the dynamics of male elephant society within the context of the dominant matriarchal family groups through long-term observation studies in Etosha National Park in Namibia. O'Connell's scholarship on