

HNRS 298-03, -04, -05

RESEARCH & EXHIBITION

Spring 2014

Annotated Bibliography

Week of February 24

As mentioned before, this is what you are really working on, with the search journal only being a stop along the way.

Grow your startup bibliography into an *annotated bibliography*—a collection of everything you find regarding your companion course or area of interest, presented so that (a) readers can locate and read this information for themselves and (b) each item's place in your “research mind palace” is clearly reflected upon and duly recorded.

What to Put In Your Entries

For each entry in your bibliography, record the following information, distinctly labeled:

- **Summary**—This is the traditional annotation: what is this source about? What information is there? What points of interest can you provide about or within the work?
- **Place in its field**—What is the item's role in its discipline? Is it a seminal work? A case study? A reference? Popular, general-audience article?
- **What's missing**—This is where we start thinking differently: what does the item leave out? Many works explicitly say so, in fact: there may be a “Future Work” section or something in the discussion or conclusion. If so, great. If not, then this takes a little more thought. “I don't see anything missing” may sometimes be your honest answer: say it if needed. But say *something*.
- **Where I can contribute**—And finally, our focus: what can you contribute to what this work? How might you be able to follow it up? The key here is *you*—not a doctoral student, not your mentor; *you*. Scale the contribution to where you are now, or at most just a notch above. Thus, “I can't contribute anything” might be your answer—the work might be too advanced, or it may require way more resources than are available.

Size and length are tough to pin down here—you don't want to artificially limit yourself, but we also want to make sure that you put in an appropriate

amount of work. In that spirit, we ask for a minimum of *10 references*. An even mix is recommended: for example, 3 books, 3 scholarly articles, 2 popular-media articles, and 2 blog posts. But this varies by discipline so go with what is appropriate.

Cite in the style of your discipline. Ask your mentor if you're not sure. Or, look at the style that your already-found sources use.

Optional features include: sections for related groups of references; general commentary such as an introduction and conclusion (for the whole bibliography or per section); diagrams and illustrations. If it helps you explore the research possibilities in your area, then it's fair game for inclusion.

Citation Tips

The point of citation is to allow others to find the same information that you saw—for all the styles, formats, conventions, and ceremony behind them, at the end of the day they serve this single practical purpose. Everything else is about making this purpose as reachable as possible.

- Citation styles exist to make it easy for a practitioner to recognize citations and to extract key bits of information. If citations all look the same, then you get used to parsing them.
- Citation management is not the star of the show. The more work you can automate, the better.
- Traditional scholarly work was assumed to be permanent and unchanging once published. The web turned this assumption on its head—one day a page might be there, the next it might be gone (uhhh, “offline”). Thus, for citations of this type, you should record the date of access, and most definitely supply a precise URL.
- Many resources will be available both in some “permanent” form (e.g., published article in a journal or proceedings) and as a web resource. In this case, treat the resource as a permanent one, including its online information (URL, access date) only as a supplement.