

## **Suggestions for McNair Scholars:**

### **How to Construct a Working Annotated Bibliography Record Sheet**

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As you work through your undergraduate education you will read several books and journal articles in your discipline. Most undergraduate students just read what they are required to for a particular class or to write a particular term paper and then do nothing else with the information from the reading. If the student wants to use that information again in the future she/he has to locate the source again and skim it to locate the information. As a McNair Scholar you should begin to think and act like a successful graduate student. In preparation for being successful in graduate school you should begin to create annotated bibliography sheets for each book and/or journal article that you read during your undergraduate education. These sheets may be informative for you once you begin your graduate program and certainly formalizing a procedure where you create such a sheet for every reading will become extremely useful for you as you move through your graduate studies. Although it does take time to create a sheet for something you have read, your annotated bibliography record sheets will save you considerable time in the future as you write reports and term papers.

The length of annotation usually is proportional to the pertinence of the source. At the minimum, there is a brief summary of the source, an examination of its credibility, and a complete bibliographic citation. However your working summaries are not full book reviews. They just highlight the key points that are most pertinent to the project you are working on, for example points related to your current literature review project. You will review your annotated record sheet entries several times as you work through your projects. Each time, they will help you identify the sources you want to return to and reread to get more detailed information on a particular topic.

Set up a common structure that you will use for all sources. This will also make it easier to quickly locate key information. The amount of detail included in each category will vary with each source: most of the working sheets will be between half a page and a maximum of two pages. It is useful to have all the information for each citation (article, book, etc.) on a single sheet of paper. The process of creation of working annotated record sheets forces you to be more discriminating in what you include and it makes it easier to skim the annotations later.

Completing annotated bibliography record sheets for each and every source that you read makes the creation of your research article or report and your final, formal annotated bibliography considerably easier. (For more information about formal annotated bibliographies I suggest Cornell University's Library website: "How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography" <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>)

[\*For those of you who are engaging in literature reviews for the McNair Summer Research Internship: I am assuming that you will find a number of pertinent sources. Literature reviews and doctoral dissertations can have hundreds of citations. However in an eight week research project, I am anticipating you will find at least a dozen solid, applicable sources -- probably closer to 20.]

For each of the published references that you utilize in construction of your working annotated bibliography record sheets you should provide the following information:

### **1. Bibliographic Citation:**

A referenced citation properly formatted according to the guidelines of your specific discipline, for example, for Sociology use ASA style, for Psychology use APA style, etc. Make sure you include a complete bibliographic citation (If from the Internet include: website name, URL and date accessed). It is a waste of your time to have to relocate a source just to finish a citation. Place this citation at the top of the page -- like a header for the annotation. (Tip: If the citation style for your discipline only requires the first initial of the author I strongly advise you to go ahead and record the information containing the entire name of each of the authors while you have access to it and place it into your working annotated bibliography record sheet. It is possible that you may want to write something utilizing a different citation style in the future, for example, a citation style that requires the full first names of the authors. If you capture first names you will never have to go back to relocate the source and you can always reduce the first names to the initials to create your formal annotated bibliographies in for a citation style that merely utilizes initials.)

### **2. Credibility of Source:**

It is important to include one or two sentences that relate to the credibility of the source of the text (publishing house or journal and information about the author). This section primarily focuses on the author(s): the highest degree of education and discipline(s), and his/her/their current institutional affiliation. Sometimes you may wish to also address his/her/their field(s) of expertise if he/she/they are well known for research in that area. (The author's information might be contained in the text, but if it is not, if the person is a faculty member you should be able to retrieve this information from the institutional website or their personal website, or you might access the information via the library reference desk's materials about faculty in the USA.) Also mention the credibility of the publication, for example is the source a: government publication, a peer reviewed journal article, a book from an academic press, a newspaper article, a government or an organizational website, or a self-published web-log (blog) or personal website, etc.

### **3. Summary:**

Include a summary of the text and/or the research findings. Be sure that you include information regarding study dates (if relevant), data, research method(s), and theory (if relevant). It is important to include succinct comments that will quickly identify useful resources (with their locations [page numbers] within each source). The goal is to provide a summary that is easy to skim and will guide you back to appropriate sources as you work on various parts of your projects. An outline or bulleted format can be more efficient to skim than a paragraph format. It is much easier to quickly decide whether or not a particular source has applicable information. Although generally not included in a formal annotated bibliography, you may find it useful to include some comments in your working annotated bibliography record like: "this article is way over my head, but has a good list of definitions and theorems related to ..." "the author does a great job explaining complex ideas, including ...," etc. Some of these personal, qualitative comments can be particularly useful when you are considering returning to the sources in the future.

### **4. Usefulness and Usable Quotations:**

One paragraph that summarizes what this particular reading/text might be useful for and/or how it can be used as a reference in researching a specific topic. It may be helpful here to mention page numbers for particularly strong quotes, for charts and graphs or important data, or to include a particularly useful short quote (with its location [page numbers] within each source) in this section.