Annotated Bibliography:   
  
Locate three sources on one of the topics below. Cite the sources in MLA format and provide annotations of each of the sources, evaluating the credibility and usefulness of the source, according to the checklist in the reading materials for this module.  
  
Topics:

-Why It Is Important to Test Athletes for Performance-Enhancing Drugs

-How Pharmaceuticals Are Marketed to Healthcare Providers

-The Influence of Prince on Contemporary Musicians

If you have another topic you would like to research and find 3 sources, you may ask if your instructor if that is permitted.  
  
Each annotation should be about two to four sentences in length and should include information showing how you evaluated the source for usefulness and a summary of the source's content.

There are examples of Annotated Bibliographies included as attachments to this assignment.  
  
Formatting Guidelines:

Font will be Times New Roman 12 Point  
Text should be double-spaced.  
Margins should be set at one inch.  
Name, Course, Instructor, and Assignment should appear in the top left corner.

Fundamentals of Research Writing

Rabia’s biology professor has assigned a five-page research paper instead of a final exam. Looking at the assignment, Rabia isn’t sure what the professor actually means by “research paper.” After all, she’s had to do some kind of research for every lab report, self-analysis, and reflection paper that she’s written that semester. How is this any different?

In college, instructors can use the term “research” in relationship to writing in several ways. However, “research paper” has a particular meaning in an academic context. Generally, this type of writing summarizes a process that a student has undertaken. A research paper is a writer’s opportunity to become a bit of an expert on a particular topic. Rabia will explain a particular issue that she read about extensively and how that reading guided a reasoning process. It normally entails an evaluation of the materials and sources the writer consulted, and describes how these sources helped shape the writer’s understanding of a particular topic. Research papers written for a scientific audience may also include a section devoted to explaining the writer’s research methodology. This usually appears toward the beginning of the paper and lays out exactly how the writer went about the research process and came to a conclusion. Research papers written for some other types of audiences, like those in the humanities, may not include

a methodologies section. This is an example of how some genre conventions change according to which audience you address.

Students can sometimes struggle to differentiate college-level research papers from the reports they did in high school or earlier. Research writing isn’t concerned simply with providing an overview of existing materials. Instead, it describes those materials and evaluates them in order to answer a question or series of questions surrounding an issue. If Rabia were to write

a report on the book Silent Spring by Rachel Carson, she would tell her readers about the main points in the book. On the other hand, if Rabia were to write a research paper about the same book, she might evaluate how relevant Carson’s points about pesticides are for the contemporary biology community.

Argumentative and Analytical Research Writing

Within a research paper about Carson’s

Silent Spring, Rabia would have a choice about how to craft her essay. First, she should evaluate the assignment to determine whether her professor is looking for a particular kind of research paper. In the absence of firmer guidelines, however, Rabia could write either an argumentative research paper or an analytical research paper.

In an argumentative research paper, Rabia would take a stance on Carson’s book. In the above example, Rabia might argue that Carson’s views are outdated and should no longer be taught in entry-level environmental studies courses. She would craft a thesis statement that would explain this, and then use Carson’s book and a variety of other sources to support that claim.

Alternatively, Rabia might write an analytical research paper. In this type of research writing, Rabia would present an aspect of Carson’s book that she wished to explore and then analyze the way that Carson and others approach this topic.

The paper would not present an argument in the same way that an argumentative research paper does, but it would have an organizing claim (for example, that Carson’s text was equally significant in influencing both biological and

| Introduction to Research Methods environmental studies). This claim wouldn’t necessarily be contentious, or have an opposing side—indeed, it may be impossible to argue that Carson’s text wasn’t significant to those fields. However, the point of Rabia’s paper would be to analyze how it was significant, not to argue that it was or wasn’t.

Source Consulted: Baker, Jack Raymond, et al. “Genre and the Research Paper.”

The Purdue OWL Family of Sites.

The

Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 3 Mar. 2011.

owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/658/02/

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Writer’s Word to the Wise

For many writers, it is easy to get stuck in the research stage of the process. If you really enjoy your topic, you may find that you want to learn as much as possible about it, and this can lead to the research sinkhole where one source leads to the next, which leads to the next, and so forth until you realize you are no longer focused on the topic or the task at hand. Although research is very important, spending too much time and gathering too much information can cut into your writing time. You may find great sources, but if you leave yourself very little time to write about your topic, including even the best sources won’t lead to an effective essay in which you fully share your knowledge and ideas about the topic. Decide in advance how many sources you will be working with. Your instructor may set these parameters for you. If not, set parameters for yourself.

Scheduling Your Research

After you’ve created your research plan, start to schedule your research. This is an important step, particularly for longer papers. Doing this will ensure that you have time to conduct research and go through the steps of the writing process before the assignment deadline. It can also make research easier because knowing that you have to stop researching at a particular point will help you better target sources that are relevant to your topic.

At this stage, the first thing to do is to locate resources (books, articles, relevant primary materials, etc.) before you commit to researching a topic to ensure there is material available. If you have difficulty finding appropriate sources, try using different search terms that are related to your topic. Librarians are trained in how to do this, so if you get stuck, see if you can find a librarian to help you. If you still can’t find appropriate sources, you may want to check with your instructor about your topic and consider alternatives that might be more feasible.

Next, block off time on your calendar for:

1. Work commitments; vacations; travel; social activities; weekends . . . etc.

2. Any deadlines (e.g., final or draft submission deadlines)

Calculate how many weeks/days you have to work on the paper. Then, divide that time to include research (primary/secondary), writing, rewriting, and proofreading.

It doesn’t take long to create a plan and a schedule for your research, and incorporating these steps at the beginning of your process will help you move forward a lot more calmly because you will know the kinds of materials that you’re going to look at, where you’ll find them, and when you’re planning on doing your research.

Chapter 11 | Introduction to Research Methods

You Did It! Well, Almost . . .

Sandra lets out a sigh of relief. She has spent most of the day on the computer looking for academic articles about George

Eliot’s somewhat tumultuous social life and how that may have impacting her writing. She feels pretty confident that she has all the sources she needs to write her essay. Now all that’s left to do is read the sources and start writing.

Many writers experience a sense of relief after they have successfully compiled a collection of sources. It’s hard and often time-consuming work! It is time to switch tasks and begin digging into the sources you’ve found. As you do this, you’ll be able to start clarifying some of the thoughts you have about what kind of a claim you want to make in your research essay.

Sandra is a smart researcher. She knows that she likely will not use all of the sources she has collected. When she looks them over more closely, she may realize that some are not as relevant to her topic as she initially thought they might be.

Additionally, some of her sources may not be credible or appropriate for an academic paper. Taking these variables into account, Sandra decides to find five possible sources, even though she knows she only needs to include three sources in her essay.

Taking It All In

Since Sandra knows she probably won’t use all of the sources she’s collected, it doesn’t make sense for her to take the time to carefully read each one right away. Instead, she will skim each source. She doesn’t need to fully understand every point the author makes at this stage in her process. She simply needs enough information to evaluate whether the source fits her research needs. She zeroes in on a few types of information.

• She checks to see if the text is a reliable source. If it is not, she will put it aside because it doesn’t fit within the parameters of an academic research essay. She asks herself a few questions to determine this.

❍

Where is the source located? Is it published in a reputable journal, book, or educational website? Has it gone through an editorial process?

❍

Who wrote the text? What are the author’s credentials? Is the author an expert in the field?

❍

Does the text follow the conventions of an academic or professional piece of writing? Are there lots of typos or other convention issues?

❍

Did the author use appropriate research methods? Did the author include sources to back up his or her claims?

Did the author provide information on how to find these sources?

Section three of the next chapter goes into detail about how to assess the credibility of sources. You can reference that section as you complete this step.

•

She looks to see if the essay is broken into sections. If it is, she reads the title of each section. This gives her a very basic understanding of the key ideas in the text.

• She reads the first and last sentence of each paragraph. She knows that most academic and other professional writers follow the conventions of introducing an idea in the first sentence of a paragraph and providing a brief summary in the last sentence of a paragraph.

One of Sandra’s sources includes an abstract. An abstract is a summary of an essay that appears before the essay. Abstracts are most commonly used in academic writing, but not every academic essay will have an abstract. If, however, an essay does have an abstract, it will most likely provide you with enough information to determine if the text is relevant to your specific topic. In that case, you do not need to follow the above steps.

Curate Your Collection

As Sandra skimmed her sources, she realized that one of them was not reliable. She put that text aside and concentrated on the remaining four essays. Now that she has a general feel for the information contained in each source, she groups them according to what types of information she thinks she will find in each source. Sandra knows these groupings are likely to change as she starts to read, take notes, and make connections between the sources. She also knows, however, that starting to think about how she might organize sources early on can help her develop a strong structure for her essay as she goes.

Creating an initial sorting system for sources will help her think about how she can make connections between texts and ideas as she reads.

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In addition to the four sources Sandra found while researching, she will also use one of Eliot’s most famous novels,

Middlemarch

, as a primary source. In addition, Sandra has one more primary source—a collection of letters Eliot wrote to various friends while she lived in Germany. She sets these two aside as primary sources. She has three remaining sources, which are all secondary sources: a biographical essay describing Eliot’s relationship with George Lewes and how it impacted her standing in English society and in literary circles, an academic essay that focuses on societal critique in

Middlemarch, and another academic essay that argues that Eliot intentionally and successfully kept her writing separate from her social life.

Sandra suspects that she will use this last essay to address the counterargument to what she thinks will be her main claim. She sets this aside in its own group. Finally, she groups the remaining two texts together, expecting that she will use these to support her potential main claim.

This is the organizational system that makes sense to Sandra, but every writer will have his or her own way of organizing sources. What matters is that you choose a system that makes sense to you. Remember, these groupings are changeable. They just offer a way to begin to approach your research. You may end up regrouping your sources as you read and get a better sense of the argument you want to make, how the sources relate to each other, and how the sources relate to your own ideas.

Sandra decides that she will read her primary sources first, then read her counterargument source, and finally read the two sources she suspects will support her main claim. Like the way in which writers choose to sort their materials, the order in which they choose to work through their research is unique to each writer. Sandra wants to deal with primary sources first because they can offer the most objective view of her topic. She decides to read the counterargument essay next because she wants to use it to help her better think through her own argument. It might point out information she has missed or offer a compelling argument she had not considered. She chooses to read the materials she expects to agree with last so that she can be best able to put them in perspective as texts involved in a much larger discussion. This order makes sense to Sandra, but you may choose to read through your sources in a different order. Again, what matters most is that you find a way of approaching your research that makes sense to you.

Digging In

Sandra is finally ready to start reading her sources. She employs active reading techniques, marking the texts as she reads and taking notes on a separate sheet of paper about how she might incorporate each text into her essay. Luckily, Sandra has already read

Middle march, and since she used active reading techniques while reading the novel, she does not need to reread the entire text. Below are the steps Sandra takes as she reads the other sources. She likes to print sources and mark them with a pen, but you could also follow these steps using the comment function on the computer.

1. Identify and circle the thesis statement. It is the clearest articulation of the main argument or point of the essay. It should appear toward the beginning of the essay. It may be a single sentence, or it may be a few sentences.

2. In a few words, write the main point of each paragraph. As you revisit your sources, this will save you from needing to reread them. You will be able to easily find the information you are looking for.

3. Mark any passages that are confusing. You can come back to these after you have read the rest of the essay. At that point, you may be better able to understand these more difficult passages.

4. Look up any words, events, or important people you are unfamiliar with.

5. Underline or star passages that seem important, especially if you think you might use them in your essay.

6. Make marginal notes about any ideas or questions you have as you read. Try not to edit yourself too much as you do this. What may initially seem like an irrelevant idea could become important later as you read other sources and develop your own claim.

7. Pause after reading each source, and write down a few sentences explaining the main idea of the text, anything that surprised you as you read, any questions that were generated from the reading (especially if they may challenge your proposed claim), and how you think this text might connect with other texts and your own ideas. Some writers keep these notes in a text document, some keep a journal full of this type of information, and others write these summaries and reflections on notecards. Choose which system makes the most sense to you. The point is to make your research easily accessible as you work through your writing process.

As you read, keep in mind that there are three basic ways you can choose to include source material in your essay. You can use a direct quotation. This is best for shorter sections of text in which the idea is very important, as is the wording of that idea. You can also paraphrase information. This means that you use someone else’s ideas but put them into your own words.

This works best for shorter sections of text in which the ideas are important but the wording is not as essential. Finally, you can summarize information. This works best for larger sections of text that contain generally relevant information.

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When paraphrasing and summarizing, it is very important that you use your own words and not the words of the author. The general rule of thumb is that if you include a section from the text that is three words long or longer, it needs to be in quotation marks.

As you begin to think about how your research will fit into your essay, remember that you are the author of your essay. Your words and ideas should take center stage. Your research is meant to help you develop these ideas, and your sources can provide support for them. Another writer’s claims, however, should never upstage your own. This means that the majority of the content of your essay should be focused on your argument. Direct quotations, paraphrases, and summaries should only take up a small part of your essay. They play a supporting role.