

Comparing the Annotated Bibliography to the Literature Review

Annotated bibliographies and literature reviews are both comprehensive collections of relevant sources, but that is where the similarity ends. Their purposes, structures, and components are very different.

	Annotated Bibliography	Literature Review
Purpose	Provides the reader with an ordered list of sources for additional reading. Usually also provides brief explanations of why each source is credible and relevant to the topic.	Provides an overview of a particular topic or problem by summarizing and explaining the most significant sources in the field.
Structure	Sources are separated from each other and are arranged alphabetically, so they will be easy to locate.	Sources are integrated into paragraphs based on the progression of the topical overview, and they may be mentioned more than once.
Components	Each item in the list uses the formal citation style (usually APA, MLA, or Chicago) to cite a single source and includes a short paragraph with a summary explaining its credibility and relevancy.	Uses an introduction to explain the topic, synthesizes sources progressively as the topic is explained through the body, and then concludes by summarizing the overall background presented.

Additional differences:

- In the case of an annotated bibliography, there is a separate paragraph for each source cited. In a literature review, each body paragraph should include several sources, and sources may be repeated as necessary.
- An annotated bibliography examines each source based on its relationship to the topic; a literature review draws together multiple sources to examine where they agree or disagree.
- An annotated bibliography must organize sources alphabetically, but a literature review is likely to use problem/solution, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, classification/division, or process to organize sources.
- An annotated bibliography allows the reader to choose whether to explore the available sources or not on their own while a literature review directs the reader to a particular understanding of the available sources;

The following illustration provides an example of the differences in layout between an annotated bibliography and a literature review. The sources that are arranged alphabetically in the annotated bibliography are integrated throughout the paragraphs of the literature review. The order of sources shown in the literature review is just an example; any appropriate sources can be used wherever they fit.

Annotated Bibliography

(Source A)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

(Source B)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

(Source C)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

(Source D)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

(Source E)
Citation in APA, MLA, or Chicago style (uses a hanging indent).
A brief paragraph summarizing the source and explaining its credibility and relevancy to the topic.

Literature Review

(Introduction)

(Body paragraph 1)

1. Topic sentence explaining the information being presented.
2. Evidence:
 - a. Summary and citation of Source C.
 - b. Summary and citation of Source A.
3. Discussion synthesizing the sources and elaborating on the framework. Transition to the next part of the topic.

(Body paragraph 2)

Topic sentence explaining the information being presented.

Evidence:

- Summary and citation of Source E.
- Summary and citation of Source B.

Discussion synthesizing the sources and elaborating on the framework. Transition to the next part of the topic.

(Body paragraph 1)

Topic sentence explaining the information being presented.

Evidence:

- Summary and citation of Source D.
- Summary and citation of Source C.

Discussion synthesizing the sources and elaborating on the framework. Transition to the conclusion.

(Conclusion)