An annotated bibliography provides specific information about each source you have used. As a researcher, you have become an expert on your topic: you have the ability to explain the content of your sources, assess their usefulness, and share this information with others who may be less familiar with them. Think of your paper as part of a conversation with people interested in the same things you are. It’s kind of like providing a list of good movies for your classmates to watch and then going over the list with them, telling them why this movie is better than that one or why one student in your class might like a particular movie better than another student would. You want to give your audience enough information to understand basically what the movies are about and to make an informed decision about where to spend their money based on their interests.

from The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/annotated-bibliographies/

An entry in an Annotated Bibliography includes:

- the complete MLA or APA citation for the source material (citation style will be chosen by your teacher)
- a description of the main points (focus, thesis) of the work. To be able to include this, you must have read the work!
- A description of the author’s qualifications/credibility, included mention of any detected bias or specific point of view
- a description of the intended audience of the work (Is it scholarly? a news item? a blog post?)
- A description of the work’s relevance to your project/paper
- any special features included in the source (images, maps, graphs, etc.)
- any connection the source may have to other sources you are using (Does it put forth a viewpoint opposite to another source you’ve chosen? Does it include information that backs up another of your sources?)

Sample Entry

In this sample, the student is completing a project on the emergence of Scientology and its popularity among celebrities.


Eggenberger’s article focuses on a list of celebrities who have left the religion Scientology, and their reasons for doing so. Eggenberger is a gossip columnist who contributes to several gossip and celebrity-focused magazines. The article provides some quotes from celebrities explaining why they decided to leave the religion, which may be helpful when looking at the popularity of Scientology over time. One celebrity quote calls the religion a cult, which lends credibility to another article I found in the LA Times about some of the mystery surrounding Scientology.