Annotated bibliography

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Please note that this paper can be used by teaching staff as a teaching resource provided that acknowledgement is given. It can also be used by students as a self-study tool; however, the text cannot be copied and used in students’ assignments. Copyright for the original assignment texts remains with the students who wrote them.

I found this book in the library catalogue by searching 'China' and 'youth'. I chose it because it covers youth in both Mao's era and present day China.

Paul Clark investigates the emergence and elaboration of youth culture in China. Focusing on the critical years of 1968, 1988 and 2008, this book traces the themes of bodies, rhythms and spaces. In his research, Clark examines a wide variety of sources, including magazines written for youth, blogs, films, academic journals, as well as the surveys, interviews, and examples of Chinese researchers. Clark argues that although Chinese youth culture has adapted in many ways over the years, even in Mao's China, young Chinese expressed their unique identity. He also establishes that influences on youth culture have been both local and international.
As a Professor of Chinese at the University of Auckland with almost forty years of personal observation in China, and an expert in Chinese history and film, Clark offers abundant insight into his topic. Because this book investigates the differences and similarities of youth in Mao’s China and now, it is extremely relevant for my research.

Unlike the other sources, this book draws many comparisons between life in Mao’s period and present day China.

One source from the bibliography:


I found this chapter through the University Library Catalogue, with the words China and Leisure, searching sources from 2008 onwards. I chose it because it discusses a fairly modern aspect of life in China.

This chapter provides an overview of consumption and leisure in contemporary China within a historical context, as well as introducing the most common understandings of its key characteristics. It draws from a wide range of written sources in both English and Chinese. Latham concludes that China will continue to develop as the world’s largest consumer society. In addition, he highlights the need for caution in understanding consumption in China, due to the increasing diversification and complexity of these practices.
As a Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology and a member of the Centre of Chinese studies at SOAS, Dr. Latham has a strong background for this topic. A thorough, easy to read overview, this chapter gives specific examples of leisure and consumption in contemporary China. This chapter is extremely relevant to my research, as it documents a fairly recent change in Chinese lives.

Unlike the first two sources, this chapter does not focus on specific subset of people in China, such as youth or peasants, but looks closely at a general trend in contemporary Chinese life.

One source from the bibliography:


Note the use of a transition signal at the beginning of this sentence, which links it to the previous two sources the writer has reviewed.

Note the way the writer strengthens her claim by using the adverb “extremely”.

Here the writer briefly compares this source with the others she has reviewed.

See how the annotation concludes with an example of another useful source found within the bibliography of this source.

Here, the writer justifies why she has chosen this source, by highlighting the expertise of the author in relation to her topic and noting its close link to her own research.
Writing an annotated bibliography

Background to this annotated bibliography
This annotated bibliography was written by a first year undergraduate student as part of her Asian Studies course. The student was required to annotate four different sources and each could be linked to the topic of the essay she planned to write. Therefore, writing the annotated bibliography gave the student a 'head-start' on preparing to write her essay. In this case, she chose to respond to this essay topic: "In what ways are Chinese lives better now than during the Mao period (1949-1978)? Justify your argument with specific examples from the academic literature.” You will see that her annotated bibliography is closely related to this topic. You can also find an annotated version of this essay in write@uni in Section 4:8.

Structure and coherence
As this example illustrates, the annotation of each source must be well-structured.

Structure
You may be given details about the structure as part of the assignment guidelines. If you are, follow these because the structure of an annotated bibliography may vary from course to course. For this assignment, the writer was given very clear and detailed step-by-step guidelines about structure, which she carefully followed. As you can see, both her annotations of sources have the same overall structure:

1. A reference to the book/article/chapter (in bold)
2. A description of how the writer found the source and why she chose it
3. A brief summary of the main argument/thesis of the book/article/chapter
4. A review of the scope of the source (book/article/chapter)
5. A short justification for the selection of this source
6. A brief comparison of the source in relation to the others
7. An example of another relevant source the writer found while searching the bibliography for this source

Coherence
Coherence can be achieved through the use of “transition signals” or "connecting words" that smooth the transition from one idea to another and provide logical links between sentences or other annotations within the annotated bibliography. Such transitional signals include these adverbs: “also”, “in addition”; e.g.,

In addition, he highlights the need for caution in understanding consumption in China ...

An additional way to signal transition is to use a pronoun such as “it”, “this”, and “he”. If you use a pronoun, check that the meaning is clear as it is in the following example where the pronoun “it” is used in the second sentence to mean “this chapter”:

I found this chapter through the University Library Catalogue, with the words China and Leisure, searching sources from 2008 onwards. I chose it because it discusses a fairly modern aspect of life in China.

Otherwise, if the meaning of the pronoun is not clear, it is preferable to repeat the noun or use a synonym or a noun phrase, as shown in the following example where “this topic” is used in reference to "understanding consumption":

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In addition, he highlights the need for caution in understanding consumption in China, due to the increasing diversification and complexity of these practices.

As a Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology ..., Dr. Latham has a strong background for this topic.

Distinctive language features of an annotated bibliography
An annotated bibliography has a number of distinctive language features, which are outlined below:

Specialised vocabulary
One feature of a well-written annotated bibliography is that specialised vocabulary is correctly used. As you can see in the following sentence, the writer has used the widely used acronym “SOAS” for the School of Oriental and Asian Studies, at the University of London:

As a Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology and a member of the Centre of Chinese studies at SOAS, Dr. Latham has a strong background for this topic.

Normally, the first mention of a name would be written in full and then followed by the acronym; i.e., School of Oriental and Asian Studies (SOAS). However, the writer has not put the name in full because it is so well known in the field of Asian Studies.

Clear expression of the writer’s opinion or “voice”
As you can see in this annotated bibliography, it is possible for writers to position themselves and express their opinion through their choice of language. Here, the writer has made strong claims by using an adverb with a very strong meaning (i.e., extremely); e.g.,

This chapter is extremely relevant to my research, as it documents a fairly recent change in Chinese lives.

However, the writer has not made any weak or tentative claims (by using hedging devices such as “perhaps” and “might”). This is because she has deliberately selected sources that are closely related to her essay topic and therefore very relevant to it.

Pronoun usage
The use of pronouns in an annotated bibliography can vary from discipline to discipline so check your assignment guidelines or referencing style to find out the expectations for their use. For this assignment it was appropriate for the writer to use personal pronouns (i.e., I, my). You can see that she uses “I” to personalise her response when explaining where and how she found the book and why she chose it:

I found this book in the library catalogue by searching ‘China’ and ‘youth’. I chose it because it covers youth in both Mao’s era and present day China.

She uses the pronoun “my” when giving the justification for selecting this particular source:

This chapter is extremely relevant to my research, as it documents a fairly recent change in Chinese lives.
Verbs
Writing an excellent annotated bibliography requires the writer to give special attention to tense, aspect, voice and use of modals. Each of these serve a variety of functions in annotated bibliographies. A brief overview of the reasons why different verb forms are used is given below.

Tense
The most frequently used tense in this annotated bibliography is the present tense. Some examples are given below:

Present
(1) Used to introduce the author of the source
As a Professor of Chinese at the University of Auckland …, Clark offers abundant insight into his topic.

(2) Used to compare the source to others
Unlike the other sources, this book draws many comparisons between life in Mao’s period and present day China.

Past
(1) Used to explain where the writer found the source
I found this book in the library catalogue by searching ‘China’ and ‘youth’. I chose it because it covers youth in both Mao’s era and present day China.

(2) Used to explain why the writer chose the book
I chose it because it covers youth in both Mao’s era and present day China.

Aspect
The present perfect, which refers to an action that started in the past and is still of current relevance, is only used once in reference to Clark’s book:

He also establishes that influences on youth culture have been both local and international.

Modal verbs
The only modal verb used is “will”. This modal is used to indicate that there is a definite possibility of something happening:

Latham concludes that China will continue to develop as the world’s largest consumer society.

Voice
The active voice is used throughout the annotated bibliography because it places the focus of the sentence on the doer or performer of the action (“this book”) rather than the receiver of the action (“many comparisons …”); e.g.,

Unlike the other sources, this book draws many comparisons between life in Mao’s period and present day China.

Referencing style
It is also important to use the specified referencing style. In this annotated bibliography, the Chicago referencing style is used. A full reference of the source is given in bold at the beginning and a full reference of another relevant source is given in normal font at the end.