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## Annotated bibliography

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1. Annotated example of an annotated bibliography.
2. Guidelines about writing an annotated bibliography, with an example from an Asian Studies.

#### **Annotation key**

Tentative claims

Strong claims

Transition signals

Specialised vocabulary

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 student who wrote them.

## Annotation key

Tentative claims

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This is the reference to the second source in the student's annotated bibliography. The writer provides a **full reference** to it using the **Chicago Referencing Style**.

**Clark, Paul. Youth culture in China: from Red Guards to Netizens, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.**

Writing an **annotated bibliography** provides writers the opportunity to **summarise and evaluate different sources**. In this case, both sources relate to the essay question the writer intends to answer. Indeed, the task of writing the bibliography will help her gain background knowledge about the topic of the essay she intends to write.

See how the writer begins by **explaining where** and **how** she found the book and **why** she **chose it**. Note that she uses the pronoun 'I'. This helps to personalise her response.

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.

Here, the writer provides an **understanding of the scope** of Clark's book. In particular, she highlights the years in focus, the central themes, the types of sources consulted, the central argument and the overall findings.

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.

See how the writer skilfully **summarises** the focus of the research reported on in the book in the first (or topic) sentence of this paragraph. Note the use of the **author's full name** "Paul Clark" when he is mentioned for the first time. If you have to write an annotated bibliography, check the referencing style you are using to see if it is appropriate to do this.

Note the way in which the writer skilfully develops a **coherent text** by linking the final sentence to the one that precedes it. She does this by: (1) beginning the sentence with the **pronoun** "He" to refer to the author "Clark" and (2) using the **transition signal** "also" to indicate that she is giving an additional related idea.

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Here, the writer **strengthens her claim** by using the adverb "extremely".

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.

Here, to **justify why** the writer selected this text as a source, she highlights the **author's expertise** in relation to her topic and notes how closely the book **aligns** with her own research.

See how the writer briefly **compares this source** in relation to **others**.

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

One source from the bibliography:

Rosen, Stanley. "Contemporary Chinese Youth and the State." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 2 (2009): 359-69.

This annotation concludes with an **example of one useful source** the writer discovered through searching the bibliography of Clark's book.

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This is the reference to the third source in the student's annotated bibliography. The writer provides a **full reference** to it using the **Chicago Referencing Style**.

**Latham, Kevin. "Consumption and Leisure." In *Handbook of Contemporary China*, edited by William S Tay, and Alvin Y So, 441-435. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2012.**

See how the writer explains very simply **why she chose** this source. As with the previous annotation, she uses the **personal pronoun "I"**.

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.

Here, the writer explains **how she found** the source, detailing which **key words** and **time period** she used to limit the scope of her search.

Here, the writer comments on the **scope** of the book chapter, detailing the sources the author consulted, and highlighting the conclusions he drew.

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.

Here, the writer provides a **brief summary** of the content of the book chapter.

Note that unlike the other annotation, the writer only uses the **writer's surname** "Latham" here when he is mentioned for the first time.

Note the use of the **transition signal** "In addition" to link this sentence to the one that precedes it. **This link is strengthened** by the use of the pronoun "he", used in reference to the author, "Latham"

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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.

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.

Note the way the writer **strengthens her claim** by using the adverb "extremely".

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.

**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.

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

One source from the bibliography:

Murphy, Rachel. "Turning peasants into modern Chinese citizens: 'Population quality', discourse, demographic transition and primary education." *The China Quarterly*, 177, 1-20, 2004.  
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/stable/20192302>

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

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# 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.

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## 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.