

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT – EAS 205*

Writing an Annotated Bibliography

Annotated bibliographies are usually used in larger research projects and often help students to gather important and detailed information about a variety of texts such as books, journal articles and even Internet materials. When writing an annotated bibliography, students usually read the texts first, and then write summaries or analyses (depending on the assignment and the purpose for writing the annotated bibliography). Annotated bibliographies are usually written for the following reasons:

- To summarize a lot of texts for a research project
- To help write a doctoral thesis
- As part of a larger research assignment for a professor
- To be published independently as a resource

In the case of this class, the assignment is written to help the student (you) become familiar with the research materials available in East Asian Studies in our library and online.

What is an Annotated Bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is a list of texts. The annotated bibliography contains two parts. This first part lists important information about a text, the author, publisher and date (just like in a standard bibliography). This first portion of the annotated bibliography will usually be in MLA or *Chicago Manual of Style* format.

The second part of an annotated bibliography contains additional information that separates it from a standard bibliography. This additional information is the annotation – the process of adding notes, summary information about the text, and/or an analysis of the text.

Here are several different types of annotations:

- Informative – summarize the main findings or arguments from the source
- Evaluative – evaluate the source, assess its strengths and weaknesses
- Indicative – describe what is included in the source
- Combination – summarize, evaluate, and describe the source

Samples of Annotations

Informative

Dai Kan-Wa jiten 大漢和辭典 (*Great Chinese-Japanese Dictionary*) Compiled by Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次. Tōkyō: Taishūkan shoten 大修館書店 1943 (Vol. 1); 1955-1960 (Vol. 1 revised & Vols. 2-13).

The single-character entries include not only the standard forms of common and uncommon characters, but also Japanese *kokuji* 國字 and an extraordinary number of unusual and abbreviated forms. However slight the variation, the character will be given

* Based on the UAlbany Library websites <http://library.albany.edu/usered/basics/primary.html> and <http://library.albany.edu/usered/dr/restyp.html> and “Writing an Annotated Bibliography” from the High Tech Center of San Diego State University (<http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/dss/bibliography.pdf>)

a separate entry with appropriate cross-references and will be included in the indices of Volume 13, which include a *four-corner index* 四角號碼索引 plus a Japanese *on* index and *kun* index. The arrangement of the single characters is by radical and residual stroke count and for each single-character entry the following information is supplied: a cross-reference number, the *fanqie* pronunciation, the rhyme, the Japanese pronunciation, the Chinese pronunciation (in romanization), the small seal script, the definition of the character, etymological examples, relation to names, and any special usages of the character. Entries are often in both Japanese and (classical) Chinese.

Evaluative

Dai Kan-Wa jiten 大漢和辭典 (*Great Chinese-Japanese Dictionary*) Compiled by Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次. Tōkyō: Taishūkan shoten 大修館書店 1943 (Vol. 1); 1955-1960 (Vol. 1 revised & Vols. 2-13).

A comprehensive dictionary with over 40,000 Chinese characters, this work is an important reference text, if not maddening for many to use. Entries contain much information, but are not always complete. Etymological references are usually to Chinese sources, so that a student of Japanese may have difficulty figuring them out. Indices are based on Japanese pronunciation, which makes them very difficult for a student of Chinese or Korean to work with. The use of the standard Kangxi radical system helps keep the work manageable for all CJK students.

Indicative

Dai Kan-Wa jiten 大漢和辭典 (*Great Chinese-Japanese Dictionary*) Compiled by Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次. Tōkyō: Taishūkan shoten 大修館書店 1943 (Vol. 1); 1955-1960 (Vol. 1 revised & Vols. 2-13).

An encyclopedic dictionary of Chinese characters compiled by a Japanese scholar but with strong ties to Sinology.

Types of sources:

- Books
- Monographs
- Periodicals (journal articles)
- Book reviews
- Internet sources
- Reference materials (dictionaries, encyclopedia, etc.)

BOOKS

Books generally provide in-depth and lengthy coverage on a given subject, but because of the amount of time involved to write and publish, the information is not always up-to-the-minute. This is only a concern if you are researching a topic that requires the most current information available. If you are unsure of the merit of a book, consult a book review published in a professional journal of the given subject area.

MONOGRAPHS

These are books on specific (sometimes very narrow) topics. Most books published by university presses fall into this category. They provide a wealth of detail about their particular topic by more deeply mining the available sources. Because the authors are not obligated to write only for a general audience, these books are a bit more challenging to read. Yet, the reward is a much more sophisticated understanding of the relevant topic.

PERIODICALS

Periodicals are good sources for current information. Periodicals differ from newspapers in that many periodicals are professional journals devoted to a specific field of study, such as *Journal of Asian Studies* or the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. Articles appearing in these journals are much more authoritative than comparative newspaper articles as most have very stringent review processes for submission (peer review). Compared to books, periodical articles tend to focus on a specific aspect of a topic, and are less useful for general overviews or histories of a topic.

BOOK REVIEWS

Book reviews are good indicators of a work's value to a given subject area, especially if you are somewhat unfamiliar with a given field of study. Scholarly journals (anything contained on JSTOR, BAS, or Project Muse) are your best source for book reviews. Another excellent resource for scholarly reviews is H-NET, Humanities and Social Sciences Online (<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/>). More information below.

INTERNET SOURCES

The Internet is a great resource for getting current information on a variety of topics, BUT always consider the source. See below for more information. H-NET at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/> has two sub-lists, H-ASIA and H-JAPAN with book reviews and scholarly discussions.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Usually you wouldn't include reference materials in a bibliography, after all it is expected that you use a dictionary and/or encyclopedia as quick, ready reference, not a main resource. However, the nature of this course calls for including reference materials, such as Morohashi's dictionary, or your bilingual dictionary.

Categories of sources:

There is one distinction that is fundamental to research, that between primary and secondary sources. These are technical terms and if you do not know what they mean, you are likely to produce a weak paper.

Primary Sources

A **primary source** is an *original* document containing firsthand information about a topic. For example, in the case of History primary sources are sources that were produced at the time of the event that you are studying. Although they are often the most important sources you use, that is

not why we call them primary. They are primary because they are the first sources that address the question at hand. For example, if you are studying life in the imperial court during Japan's Heian period, Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book* would be a primary source. Similarly, the writings of Zhu Xi would be primary sources for the study of Neo-Confucian philosophy.

Different fields of study may use different types of primary sources. Common examples of a primary source are:

- Diaries
- Interviews
- Letters
- Photographs
- Works of literature (including translations of literature)

Secondary Sources

A **secondary source** contains commentary on or discussion about a primary source. The most important feature of secondary sources is that they offer an *interpretation* of information gathered from primary sources. The earliest secondary sources rely only on primary sources, but over time new secondary sources must take account of work that has already been done and so they use both primary sources and other secondary sources. Thus, an article on the Heian court might refer to the *Pillow Book* as well as other articles and books on the Heian period.

Your own writing will fall into the second category and should whenever possible integrate primary and other secondary sources. One of the important skills that a student develops is ability to decide which of the available primary and secondary sources are relevant. This, of course, presumes that the student is reading more widely than simply the material ultimately used in the work.

Common examples of a secondary source are:

- Biographies
- Dissertations
- Indexes, Abstracts, Bibliographies (such as BAS and JSTOR)
- Journal Articles (such as from *Journal of Asian Studies*)
- Monographs (will probably seem no different from a book from your perspective)

Students are often tempted to rely on the authority of general textbooks as the basis for their historical writing. This is a HUGE MISTAKE. Despite the prestige and visibility that comes with having authored a textbook, such authors are constrained by the nature of that kind of work and the fact that their audience is new to the subject from delving deeply into any particular topic. Instead they must present the most important events in the history they are surveying and give a general overview of the trajectory of the historical development. Thus, they will rarely present the kind of data and concrete analysis that will be necessary to support an analytical paper. In the vast majority of cases, citing general surveys does little more than demonstrate laziness or procrastination. Do not get excited by titles such as *Modern China: A Survey*, *A History of Korea*, or *Modern Japan: A History*. The professors reading the paper will not be excited either. Having said that, such books (at least the better ones) do have their place. They give a general overview of the topic and help put some of the events and periods in context.

EVALUATING YOUR SOURCES

Any academic writing requires that you carefully evaluate the quality of your sources. The traditional academic publishing industry has developed practices that provide some quality control. A brief digression into these practices may help clarify the issues surrounding source choice.

Briefly, you should keep the following in mind:

- Authority
 - Who is the author?
 - Who published the work?
 - An article published in the *Journal of Asian Studies* about the Communist party in China carries more weight than an article on the same subject published in *Time* or *Newsweek*.
- Scope
 - What is the coverage of the material?
 - How current is the material?
 - An article published in 1940 on the Japanese government will say something entirely different from one published in 1998. You should always check the date of your source, and keep relevant East Asian history in mind.

The most important tradition in academic publishing (i.e., publishing in scholarly journals and university presses) is “peer review.” The editors of these journals and presses take the manuscripts that authors send to them and distribute them to qualified scholars in the relevant field. These scholars then read the manuscript carefully to make sure that the quality is high enough and the material distinctive enough to justify publication. Based on these peer reviews, the editorial board will decide whether or not to publish the work. Although this practice is not flawless (what human system is?), it does provide a reasonable guarantee that the work is not blatantly flawed.

COMMERCIAL PUBLISHING companies do not always conform to the discipline imposed by the peer review process, especially if the authors are not themselves “academics” (i.e., professors). This means that if you use a source published by a company like Random House or Knopf, you must be even more diligent in evaluating the quality of the source.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERNET has greatly facilitated research of all kinds, but it has also introduced many new problems. By far the most important problem is that the internet completely lacks quality control. The amount of garbage that people have put online is staggering. While there are a few sites out there to help sort the jewels from the junk, you are essentially on your own when using the web. This puts a great deal of responsibility on you. Of course, you are always responsible for the work you produce, but if you use an online source that is either wrong or otherwise misleading, you have no one to blame but yourself. Professors will

also not generally be sympathetic when you say, “But I got it off the web!” There are some strategies that you can use to evaluate the quality of internet sources:

1. Look at the site of the webpage. Is it hosted by an academic institution? Is it the homepage of the Harvard-Yenching Library? Is the site maintained by an institute that is associated with the University of California at Berkeley? The commercial domain (.com) is less reliable than the educational(.edu) or government(.gov) domains. Non-for-profit domains (.org) are a mixed bag. (Note: in East Asian URLs there are the following possible permutations: the commercial domain is .co, the educational domain is ac., the government domain is go., and the not-for-profit domain is .or).
2. Look at the author’s credentials. First, does the article have an acknowledged author? If not, be suspicious. If so, what are his or her credentials? Be careful. The author might say he has a Ph.D., but make sure if he is writing on Chinese history that his Ph.D. is not in Mechanical Engineering (unless he is writing on Chinese Mechanical Engineering). Is the author a faculty member at an accredited college or university? Does he or she have a degree from such an institution?
3. Check the date of the article. Is it recent, or did someone simply enter something from the nineteenth century? Is the site regularly updated?
4. Read the article/webpage critically in the light of your other sources. If all of your other sources contradict the work, check its citation notes to evaluate its evidence.

THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

Your annotated bibliography should include the following at a minimum:

1. A thesis, stated succinctly at the top.
2. Either “informative” or “evaluative” entries (one or two “indicative” entries are OK, but keep them to a minimum).
3. A book
4. A journal article (this could include a book review)
5. A reference work
6. A bibliography
7. At least one primary source
8. One or two (NO MORE) internet sources (and a good one—not something your cousin produced!) This DOES NOT include articles downloaded from BAS, JSTOR, or Project Muse.

AT LEAST ONE OF THE ITEMS ABOVE MUST BE IN CJK. For this item, you should include the romanization w/macrons where appropriate AND the characters for the romanization. The general rule is that characters *follow* the romanization for them, with no punctuation between.

Your annotated bibliography should have a MINIMUM of ten sources in it. Be sure to cover the numbered requirements above. Entries should have at least 50 words each, preferably around 100 words each.

Finally, do not forget that entries should be ordered ALPHABETICALLY BY AUTHOR (or by title, if there is no author), NOT simply enumerated in some otherwise random order.