Assignment Sheet: Secondary Research Report

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1. Background

In your Research Proposal, you included a preliminary list of potential sources. These sources were to reflect the "conversation" surrounding the question or problem you identify to research. By now, you should have reviewed the potential sources and found others to add to your research. This Secondary Research Report helps bring order to the chaos by organizing your sources, your findings, and your thinking on the problem or question you are researching.

2. Annotated Bibliography

2.1. **Purpose.** You should have realized at some point that keeping track of the sources you are finding— and particularly what those sources are saying—quickly becomes overwhelming as you add more sources to your list. This is where an annotated bibliography comes in: it helps you organize your sources and keep track of your learning and your responses to everything you read. Conveniently, it also shows a curious instructor what you have learned from the conversation you have observed.

2.2. **Procedure.** You have created bibliographies and Works Cited pages countless times. This assignment adds on to the traditional source list by including 200–300-word annotations (think *summaries with a purpose*) after each entry on the list. The annotations summarize the source, evaluate how the source relates to your research topic, and note any significant contributions to your ongoing thinking. Several sample Annotated Bibliographies are available on Webcourses to give you a sense of the tone, length, organization, and purpose.

In short, your job is to use as few words as possible to provide as much information as possible about each source you have used, explaining its relevance to your research. To that end, perform these steps for writing your entries (see Figure 1 for an example):

(1) Create your correctly formatted list of **at least fifteen sources**. This is far easier said than done, so be sure to allow plenty of time to complete it. Repeat each step below for every item on your list.

(2) Explain the type and topic of each source, plus the qualifications of the author.

(3) Describe the research methods used (if any). Summarize the main claims of the source. Include as much detail as needed to make the annotation a useful resource for you to refer back to. Direct quotations of particularly useful information are always appropriate; be sure to note page numbers.

(4) Resist the urge to bs. It will not help your research, and your instructor does not want to read it.

(5) Clarify how the source is connected to your research.

(6) Critically evaluate the claims and credibility of each author. If you believe the author is biased, or if you think the data (or their interpretation) are flawed, explain why.

> In this scholarly journal article, John Jones, a researcher at Johns Hopkins University, evaluates approaches to reading incentives. Jones surveyed 400 high school students and concluded that A and B types of incentives are not as useful as C types of incentives. This article is of relevance to my research project in its definitions of motivation and incentives and in its findings about specific incentive programs. Jones argues that Pizza Hut's BookIt program is the only successful reading incentive program. However, his claim is suspect because he is a shareholder in Pizza Hut stock.

FIGURE 1. Sample structure (not formatting or length) of an annotation.

2.3. **Evaluation.** Because this list of sources shows the progress you have made so far in your research and shows that you can select relevant and focused sources, you will primarily be evaluated on the quality of your selected sources. Sources that are not on-topic or that seem to be whatever you found the night before deadline will severely limit the thinking you can do and connections you can make as you explore your question or problem. You must also show your ability to read critically and succinctly summarize each source. Finally, your citation formatting needs to consistently follow the expectations of whichever style you are using. Evaluation guidelines are outlined in Table 1. Use these guidelines when conducting peer-review of others' work—these are the same standards your instructor will use for final grading.

TABLE 1. Evaluation of Annotated Bibliography

	CITATION STYLE	SUMMARY	EVALUATION	RELEVANCE
Excellent	Citations expertly formatted, clear, and meticulous	Sources summarized clearly, succinctly, & thoroughly; evident distinct contribution of each source	Evaluation of sources makes clear which sources are rigorous and trusted and include clear reasons for that judgment	Sources shown to be related to the research question and process; each source has a use and a purpose
Adequate	Citations generally accurate; effective formatting	Summaries accurately reflect the contribution of each source to the existing conversation	Evaluation of sources is justified w/ rationale or discussion of approach taken by each source	States how each source will be used to continue the research process
Poor	Citations lacking, sloppy, or inaccurate	Summaries come from source abstracts, show you didn't read the source, or otherwise fail to convey meaningful content of sources	Evaluations are shallow, flippant, or baseless; argument presented in sources not considered meritous	Relevance of each source is claimed based on topic alone, rather than future uses

3. Framing Synthesis

3.1. **Purpose.** The Framing Synthesis takes the individual documents from your bibliography, combines them into a cohesive whole, and demonstrates how they work together to shape or direct the question or problem you are pursuing. In this part of your Secondary Research Report, you should emphasize showing relationships among the sources you found and connecting them to the major issue at stake. Ultimately, this synthesis will show what you have learned through your research and what you suspect the final resolution may look like.

3.2. **Procedure.** In this analysis, you are presenting your understanding of the current state of the "conversation" you found while creating your annotated bibliography. **Synthesize** the various sources, rather than summarize them; you summarized in your annotations. If certain sources stand out in your mind as being more important than others, be sure that comes across in your synthesis. As you write, consider the following questions as suggestions to expand your thinking:

- What connections did you find among the sources you chose?
- Where do the disagreements come from, and who are the loudest speakers?
- What are the main findings from among the contributors?
- What have you learned that has changed or expanded the question/problem you are researching?
- How close do these sources come to answering the question **or** addressing the problem?

Note: While your Framing Synthesis can only be written *after* you create your Annotated Bibliography, it should appear *before* the list of sources in your submitted document. The synthesis will probably take about 500 words to do its job well.

3.3. **Evaluation.** This component of your analysis exists to show how well you can connect the sources you have found and relate them to the topic you are researching. Evaluation will emphasize depth and thoroughness of thinking, specifically in terms of your ability to synthesize the sources into a coherent conversation. Specific details regarding assessment are in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation of Framing Synthesis

	Depth & Progress	Synthesis	Relevance & Connections
Excellent	Competent & deliberate thinking on problem/question	Researcher naturally & fluently integrates disagreeing sources into one explanation	Sources shown to speak cohesively and directly to research topic
Adequate	Problem/question clearly defined; choppy discussion	Clear explanation of viewpoints; lacks smooth integration	Sources shown to relate to topic, perhaps indirectly or disjointedly
Poor	Author uncomfortable or unfamiliar with research topic	Source perspectives neither connected nor set in opposition	Sources not tied together as having one conversation; soloists, not a chorus