DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 219 087 IR 050 070

AUTHOR Brandhorst, Ted, Ed.
TITLE Abstracting/Annotating. ERIC Processing Manual, Section VI.
INSTITUTION Educational Resources Information Center (ED/NIE), Washington, DC.; ERIC Processing and Reference Facility, Bethesda, Md.; ORI, Inc., Bethesda, Md. Information Systems Div.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Sep 80
CONTRACT 400-81-0003
NOTE 28p.; Loose-leaf, updated continuously. One module of the ERIC Processing Manual (IR 050 065).
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC Processing and Reference Facility, 4833 Rugby Ave., Bethesda, MD 20814 ($3.75).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Abstracting; Databases; Information Retrieval; Information Storage; Library Technical Processes; *Technical Writing
IDENTIFIERS *ERIC

ABSTRACT

Rules and guidelines are provided for the preparation of abstracts and annotations for documents and journal articles entering the ERIC database. Various types of abstracts are defined, including the Informative, Indicative, and mixed Informative-Indicative. Advice is given on how to select the abstract type appropriate for the particular document. The content of a good abstract is covered under such headings as Subject Matter, Purposes, Author's Viewpoint, Intended Audience, Relationship to Other Works, Intended Use, Special Features, Results or Findings. Detailed rules are provided for the composition of an abstract, covering such topics as Length, Voice, Tense, Abbreviations and Acronyms, Lists, Numbers, etc. Certain kinds of documents present special abstracting problems and these are treated under the following headings: Reports (Research and Technical); Speeches/Presentations; Curriculum Guides; Program Descriptions; Textbooks; Bibliographies; Multiple-Author Works; Tests. Journal article annotations are distinguished from document abstracts and the special rules covering annotations are described. (TB)

ERIC®

PROCESSING MANUAL

Rules and Guidelines for the Acquisition, Selection, and Technical Processing of Documents and Journal Articles by the Various Components of the ERIC Network

SECTION 6: ABSTRACTING/ANNOTATING

September 1980

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER

National Institute of Education
U.S. Department of Education

SECTION VI: ABSTRACTING/ANNOTATING

ABSTRACTING/ANNOTATING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Summary of Significant Rules	VI- 1
VI. ABSTRACTING/ANNOTATING	VI- 3
A. Definition and Function of an Abstract	VI- 3
1. Informative Abstract	VI- 3
2. Indicative Abstract	VI- 5
3. Informative-Indicative Abstract	VI- 8
B. Selection of Abstract Type	VI- 9
1. Informative Abstract	VI-10
2. Indicative Abstract	VI-10
3. Informative/Indicative Abstract	VI-10
C. Content and Emphases of an Abstract	VI-10
1. Subject Matter, Scope, and Purpose of Document	VI-11
2. Publication/Document Type	VI-11
3. Author's Viewpoint/Bias	VI-11
4. Intended Audience	VI-11
5. Relationship to Other Works	VI-11
6. Intended Use	VI-11
7. Special Features	VI-12
8. Results or Findings	VI-12
D. Audience for the Abstract	
E. Rules and Authorities for Writing Abstracts	VI-12
1. Style	
a. General Rules and Authorities	VI-12
b. Specific Rules	VI-13
(1) Length	VI-13
(2) Format	VI-13
(a) Paragraphs	VI-13
(b) Sentences	VI-13
(3) Language and Vocabulary	VI-15
(4) Voice	VI-15
(5) Tense	VI-16
(6) Abbreviations and Acronyms	VI-16

	PAGE
(7) Lists	VI-16
(8) Numbers, Measurement, Time, etc.	VI-16
(9) Abstractor Identification	VI-17
2. Specific Kinds of Documents	VI-17
a. Reports (Research and Technical)	VI-17
b. Speeches/Presentations	VI-18
c. Curriculum Guides/Teacher Guides	VI-18
d. Program Descriptions/Administrative Reports	VI-18
e. Textbook/Instructional Materials	VI-19
f. Bibliographies/Directories	VI-19
g. Multiple-Author Works (e.g., Conference Proceedings)	VI-19
h. Tests/Measurement Materials	VI-20
F. Definition and Function of an Annotation	VI-20
G. General Approach to Annotating	VI-20
H. Rules for Writing Annotations	VI-21
1. Length	VI-21
2. Format	VI-21
3. Language and Vocabulary	VI-22
4. Examples of Annotation	VI-22

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		PAGE
FIGURE VI- 1:	Informative Abstract of a Program Report	VI- 4
FIGURE VI- 2:	Informative Abstract Written from the Author's Viewpoint	VI- 4
FIGURE VI- 3:	Informative Abstract Maintaining the Order of the Argument of the Original Document	VI- 5
FIGURE VI- 4:	Indicative Abstract of a Bibliography	VI- 6
FIGURE VI- 5:	Indicative Abstract Maintaining Relative Emphases of Original Document	VI- 6&7
Figure VI- 6:	Indicative Abstract of Document Involving Statistical Tables and Their Interpretation	VI- 7
Figure VI- 7:	Sample of an Informative/Indicative Abstract	VI- 8&9
Figure VI- 8:	Guides, Authorities, and Standards Covering Abstracts and Writing Style	VI-14
Figure VI- 9:	Abstractor Identification Examples	VI-17
Figure VI-10:	Annotation for Non-Informative Title	VI-22

ABSTRACTING/ANNOTATING

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT RULES

1. An abstract must be written (or extracted) for *all* documents announced in RIE. An annotation must be written for all articles announced in CIJE that do not have expository titles, and is highly recommended for all other articles.

2. All abstracts and annotations must be in the English language.

3. Abstracts should be of the *informative* type whenever possible. Certain documents, because of their organization (e.g., conference proceedings, textbooks, etc.) or topic (e.g., compilations of laws, bibliographies, etc.), are not amenable to this approach and require *indicative* abstracts. Annotations, because of their restricted length, are usually indicative. Mixed informative/indicative abstracts may also be appropriate, but care must be taken to make it clear at all times whether the viewpoint being expressed is that of the author or the abstractor.

4. Abstracts should be restricted in length to one paragraph of approximately 200 words. Annotations should be restricted in length to 50 words.

5. The conventional and accepted rules for good writing and good abstracting practice and style should be followed, e.g.:

   a. Brevity and clarity are essential.

   b. Abstracts (but not annotations) should have the same relative emphases as the document.

   c. Abbreviations should not be used.

   d. Acronyms should be accompanied by the spelled-out version.

   e. Repetition of the title, or other information already contained in the descriptive cataloging, should be avoided.

   f. The abstractor should remain objective and avoid introducing personal prejudices.

   g. Evaluative language, comparisons of companies or commercial products, and derogatory comments concerning any person or organization should not be included unless they are clearly identified as the author's.

   h. The distinction between author statements and abstractor statements should always be clear.

   i. Abstracts should be written in complete sentences. Annotations may employ telegraphic sentences.

VI. ABSTRACTING/ANNOTATING

A. Definition and Function of an Abstract

An abstract is an abbreviated representation of a document, without added interpretation or criticism. An abstractor must take a larger work, find its essence, and represent it concisely and accurately, without injecting the abstractor's personal biases. The minimum requirement of every abstract is a statement of the subject and scope of the document, giving sufficient information to enable users to decide if the original document is suited for their needs.

Dictionaries tend to equate an abstract with a summary, synopsis, digest, condensation, or precis. One authority defines it as a "*...terse presentation in (as far as possible) the author's own language, of all the points made, in the same order as in the original piece of primary documentary information.*"

The ERIC system uses two distinct types of abstracts, i.e., *informative* and *indicative*, and, on occasion, a combination of the two. These types of abstracts are described below.

1. Informative Abstract

An *informative* abstract is a condensed version of the essential ideas of a document. It contains a statement, from the viewpoint of the author, of the thesis, development or proof, and conclusions. In short, it states what the document actually says. The abstractor should not editorialize, include personal opinions, or otherwise intrude, either explicitly or implicitly. The major and minor points presented by the author should be presented in the abstract with the same emphases as in the document, so that the author's thoughts may be accurately represented. In order to accomplish this, the abstractor must read as much of the document as is necessary to understand its subject content. Illustrative examples are provided below.

The following abstract is of a program report. It was written as an informative abstract in order to give the reader the maximum amount of information about the program. This is a readable, useful statement providing the essence of the report.

> The 1979 Summer Youth Employment Program, sponsored by the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona, included 596 youngsters, of whom 377 belonged to the Neighborhood Youth Corps, 130 were economically disadvantaged, and 48 were American Indian students employed by the base. A wide range of government, industrial,
>
> *...Continued...*

and educational institutions supported this vocational development program by providing funds, practicum counselors, vocational counselors, school buses, and other services. The work experience proved highly successful, due to the encouragement of the work-coordinators and counselors and the use of such techniques as resource speakers, peer tutoring, a refresher course in typing, and drug education instruction. Special education students were included in this program, which was evaluated by means of questionnaires for supervisors. (AA)

FIGURE VI-1: INFORMATIVE ABSTRACT OF A PROGRAM REPORT

The following abstract of a paper is faithful to the author's point of view. To write "*The author says...*" at the beginning of the abstract would add nothing to it (except to make a reader think that any abstract without those words in it was not quite faithful to the author) and to insert those three words in the middle of the abstract would surely confuse a reader.

Negative preconceptions about the disadvantaged often hinder the effectiveness of teachers and administrators in schools in culturally depressed areas. Most disadvantaged children are not special discipline problems, nor are they hostile or unresponsive. They and their parents have high, even unrealistic, educational aspirations. Teachers should encourage in the children the self-discipline which leads to academic success, which, in turn, would break the self-fulfilling prophecies of failure. (AA)

FIGURE VI-2: INFORMATIVE ABSTRACT WRITTEN FROM THE AUTHOR'S VIEWPOINT

The following abstract is an example of a coherent, unified paragraph showing clearly the order of the argument. Transitional words help the reader to follow the line of development.

> The teacher and the school system serve as the key mediators in the acculturation of students from deviant subcultures. However, the teacher's commitment to the ethic of work and competition, to a future-oriented value system, and to the concept of a father-dominated nuclear family structure often tends to alienate teacher from student. As a result, many Indian and East Harlem children, whose culture is different from that of the teacher, may never acquire the tools for full acculturation. Alienation between student and teacher may be further reinforced by the child's concept of the teacher as a success in a hostile culture and by the teacher's materialistic motivation for choosing a profession. Moreover, the educator's opportunity for a personal, individual evaluation of students is often limited by administrative prescriptions. Several important steps in teacher education can assure a more successful cultural bridge between student and school personnel. The staff should understand and accept the presence of alien subcultures in their school and initiate measures for parent cooperation and student participation in programs for developing skills and raising the aspiration level. Teachers should also exhibit flexibility in recognizing and rewarding evidences of nonverbal achievement. (AA)

FIGURE VI-3: INFORMATIVE ABSTRACT MAINTAINING THE ORDER OF THE ARGUMENT OF THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

2. Indicative Abstract

An *indicative* abstract is a description of or guide to the content and format of the document, written from the viewpoint of an informed but impartial and objective reader. The indicative abstract reports broadly what is discussed or included in the document, in what manner the information is presented, and, if necessary, to whom the document is addressed. The abstractor may obtain sufficient information to write an indicative abstract by examining the Table of Contents, Foreword, Introduction, Summary, etc., or by scanning the text. Illustrative examples are provided below.

The following abstract of a bibliography gives the reader all the information needed about the content of the document. Such words as "*emphasis on*" and "*the major portion*" suggest the document's proportions and therefore its potential usefulness.

> Eight hundred and nine books and articles published between 1885 and 1967 are listed in this bibliography for students of applied German linguistics at the graduate and undergraduate levels and teachers of German in high schools and colleges. Though emphasis is on applied linguistics, some publications on linguistic theory are included. The major portion of the bibliography is devoted to works on morphology and syntax, and there are sections on general language and linguistics, phonetics and phonemics, prosodic features and juncture, linguistics and the teaching of foreign languages, and language changes in German since 1945, especially in the increased use of English words. The entries are cross-referenced and some are annotated for clarification of content. An author index and a list of the abbreviations used for titles of scholarly journals are also provided. (AA)

FIGURE VI-4: INDICATIVE ABSTRACT OF A BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following abstract of a report on a summer institute illustrates how an indicative abstract may be used to reflect the same *emphasis* as the original. Although there are enumerations and lists, every sentence does not begin or end with "*...is included,*" and there is no monotony of sentence structure.

> The narrative portion of this report describes a specially designed summer institute for state foreign language supervisors held at Indiana University. It summarizes activities undertaken in the six principal areas of the curriculum: (1) statistics; (2) experimental design and research; (3) linguistics; (4) supervision and curriculum development; (5) psychology and professional resources; and (6) instruction in French, German, and Spanish. The report also
>
> *...Continued...*

presents the results of the evaluation made by participants at the conclusion of the institute. The information contained in the appendixes, amounting to more than one-half of the report, includes the forms used in conducting the institute, a directory of participants and staff, the schedule of special events, the institute calendar, lecture outlines, student and faculty evaluation questionnaires, bibliographies, and a list of the materials available to participants. (AA)

FIGURE VI-5: INDICATIVE ABSTRACT MAINTAINING RELATIVE EMPHASES OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

The following abstract is of an article that contained *tables and interpretation of statistical data.* It is a readable abstract, which not only emphasizes the main idea, but also gives supporting information.

A Modern Language Association (MLA) statistical survey presents tables showing the number of students studying French, Spanish, German, or Latin in domestic secondary schools during each school year from 1958-59 to 1964-65, the percentage studying each language in relation to the total high school population, and the percentage studying Latin in relation to the total foreign language enrollment. The data reveal a continuous decline in the study of Latin in high schools, as compared with the study of the other three languages, and point to, among other things, a lack of understanding among students, educators, and parents of the cultural value of classical studies for the English-speaking student. The kind of nationwide "public relations" program that the MLA launched in 1952 (to promote modern foreign language study) is recommended on behalf of classical language study. (AA)

FIGURE VI-6: INDICATIVE ABSTRACT OF DOCUMENT INVOLVING STATISTICAL TABLES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

3. Informative-Indicative Abstract

Ideally, an abstract should be either *informative* or *indicative*. Switching back and forth within one abstract, from a direct transmission of the author's ideas, to the style of an indicative abstract and the point of view of the abstractor, can confuse the user. It is not always possible to achieve this ideal, however. The structure of certain documents may require a mix of the two styles. ANSI Standard Z39.14 states this principle as follows:

> *"A combined informative-indicative abstract must often be prepared when limitations on the length of the abstract and the style of the document make it necessary to confine informative statements to the primary elements of the document and to relegate other aspects to indicative statements."*

This same standard recommends making abstracts "...*as informative as is permitted by the type and style of the document.*" If a mixed informative-indicative abstract is written, the reader must never be unsure as to whether the viewpoint of the words being read is that of the author or that of the abstractor.

The abstract which follows describes the basis for the document, and its specific recommendations, without getting excessively involved in the validity study made or technical criticism of that study. This is an appropriate mix of substantive and indicative information:

> A national survey of occupational opportunities, wage rates, establishment practices, education plans, and supplementary benefits in bituminous coal mining revealed that production and related workers averaged $6.94 an hour in January 1976, up 110% since the 1967 survey. Over the same period the hourly earnings index rose by 84% for private nonagricultural workers. Reflecting primarily a series of single pay rates, each covering a large group of job classifications, the coal industry continued to have one of the lowest relative dispersion factors of worker earnings among industries studied. Of the 128,390 workers covered by the 1976 survey (virtually all men), underground-mine workers constituted three-fourths of the work force and surface workers constituted one-fourth. About eight in every ten workers were employed in mines having collective bargaining agreements with the United Mine Workers, whose recent agreement covers March 1978 through March 1981. Following the narrative summary, the major portion of the
>
> *...Continued...*

report consists of data tables on: (1) underground mines; and (2) surface mines. Tables under each section cover total earnings, work schedules, shift differential practices, educational benefits, paid holidays, vacations, health insurance, retirement plans, occupational averages by size of mine, and occupational earnings by state or region. Appendixes describe the survey methodology and forty specific mining occupations. (AA)

FIGURE VI-7: SAMPLE OF AN INFORMATIVE/INDICATIVE ABSTRACT

When it is necessary, in an otherwise informative abstract, to note the document's tables, figures, extensive references, or appendixes, the abstractor may often achieve the desired separation of styles by placing this information at the end of the abstract. (For other techniques, see the *ERIC Abstracting/Indexing Workbook*.)

In summary, the informative abstract does what the indicative cannot. It shows the meaningful, coherent relationship between the author's ideas and arguments. As a result, it distinguishes between major and minor information in a document and between this document and others on the same subject. For these reasons, and because it summarizes the content of a document rather than merely giving a generalized account, the informative approach has more utility to the user than other approaches and should be preferred. *Informative abstracts should be used for the majority of documents.* The indicative approach should be used only in those cases where a document cannot be properly abstracted using solely the informative style.

Although two "pure" types of abstracts can be distinguished, the abstractor should, in all practicality, realize that in describing a document's content in an indicative abstract, some information about substance is also being conveyed. Similarly, an informative abstract may in the normal course include some information bordering on the "Table of Contents."

B. Selection of Abstract Type

The decision to write an informative, indicative, or mixed abstract depends upon the format or structure of the document and the author's organization of the information. The abstractor's reading time will be used to best advantage if this decision is made early. An abstractor should therefore start by examining the document to determine what kind of abstract is required. The following questions might be asked:

- What is the type of document in hand?
- What kind of abstract would be most helpful to the user?
- Is there too much material to be covered in an informative abstract?
- Will the author's abstract, if any, suffice, or must it be augmented?

1. Informative Abstract

A document with a developed thesis that can be summarized accurately usually requires an informative abstract. Many of the documents in the ERIC data base are of this type, e.g.:

- Research Reports;
- Speeches/Presentations;
- Dissertations.

2. Indicative Abstract

The content of some documents may be varied, broad, or designed for reference purposes. Attempts to summarize such documents may distort their content and thereby mislead the user. An indicative abstract is preferable in such cases. The following types of documents usually require indicative abstracts:

- Bibliographies;
- Conference Proceedings;
- Reviews of Research.

3. Informative/Indicative Abstract

If a document has many tables, graphs, charts, attachments, appendices, etc., along with substantive text, it may be appropriate to write a mixed abstract. The following types of documents often have such characteristics:

- Textbooks;
- Curriculum Guides or Teacher Guides;
- Administrative or Program Reports.

C. Content and Emphases of an Abstract

An abstract should be *weighted* in the same proportions and with the same emphases as the document. (Weighting simply means that an abstract should reflect the author's major and minor points as they were expressed in the document. If an abstract glosses over or deletes an important point and highlights a minor point, the abstract is improperly weighted.)

Properly weighting the abstract can be accomplished by transmitting accurately, clearly, and completely the essential information in a document. The reader should never be unsure as to the content of a document and must be able to find in the *document* the full corresponding information mentioned in the *abstract*.

Although by its nature abstracting is a process of selection, the abstractor must remain objective and must be faithful to the content of the document. Particular personal or professional prejudices should never be introduced, either explicitly or implicitly. Evaluations, unless they

are the author's, should never be part of the abstract. An abstractor should consider the following categories of information when writing an abstract, though no one abstract is likely to include information in all categories.

1. Subject Matter, Scope, and Purpose of Document

   Whenever possible, this should be a summary or condensation of the actual subject matter substance of the work, rather than a mere description or listing of its contents.

2. Publication/Document Type

   Indicate in the abstract the general form or organization of the work, e.g., whether it is a collection of essays, literature review, humorous piece written with tongue-in-cheek, in-depth analysis, expose, eyewitness account, commission/committee report, research report, case study, or report of a controlled experiment.

   NOTE: This information, essential for a stand-alone abstract, is also coded systematically into the Publication Type cataloging field.

3. Author's Viewpoint/Bias

   What is the author's viewpoint (i.e., anthropological, sociological, or psychological)? Is one theme or approach emphasized over all others?

4. Intended Audience

   Is the work oriented toward the theoretician, practitioner, student, parent, teacher, administrator, or researcher? Is a specific grade level or education level indicated for curriculum material presented?

5. Relationship to Other Works (When Stated by Work in Hand)

   Is the work new, claimed as a breakthrough, or does it parallel other work? Do the conclusions reached or methods used contradict other prior work or is it directly inspired by prior work?

   NOTE: However, if referring only to specific related accessions, use the NOTE field.

6. Intended Use

   Does the work contain materials intended for specific application, e.g., a curriculum supplement, classroom exercises, etc.?

7. Special Features

Does the work include a large bibliography, glossary, or classification scheme? Do the illustrations include color plates or maps? Is there an index? Are survey instruments or testing devices included? Is the work part of a related series?

NOTE: Some of this information may be covered adequately by the cataloging; some may require elaboration in indicative portions of the abstract.

8. Results or Findings

Were there any formal conclusions, results, findings, or recommendations reached by the work that should be covered?

D. Audience for the Abstract

The users of the ERIC system are most frequently professionals (teachers, researchers, and administrators) from many different areas of specialization in the field of education. There is, however, a large audience of potential users (new teachers, graduate students, librarians, information center personnel), or people who have only a related interest in the field (but still want to be informed), who may not be familiar with the technical jargon of a particular subject matter area. Therefore, *each abstract should be written in a comprehensible style.*

No abstract, then, should be so narrow in outlook, or use language so indigenous to one particular field, that it cannot be read with some understanding by all the users of the system. (Author abstracts will, of course, tend more than abstracts supplied by others to reflect the language and style of the original document.) Documents written in highly technical language (not emulated by the abstract) may require some indication of this fact in the abstract. Yet the abstractor should assume that the readers share a basic core of knowledge (most readers will know much more, of course); therefore, an abstract should not dwell unnecessarily on background information or on commonplace ideas. Lastly, *an abstractor should always remember that the abstract is being written for a user who has not seen the document.*

E. Rules and Authorities for Writing Abstracts

1. Style

a. General Rules and Authorities

Brevity, succinctness, and clarity are essential characteristics of a well-written abstract. Brevity is achieved by writing the most compact and concise abstract possible. Do not ramble. Too many words may indicate that the abstract is including details not directly significant, instead of concentrating on the principle ideas and facts. Avoid the unnecessary. Information already apparent from the title should not ordinarily be repeated directly or paraphrased, though exceptions to this rule will arise.

Clarity in style is achieved by following scrupulously the accepted rules for good writing. Rules about the mechanics of style (punctuation, spelling, capitalization, numerals, etc.) are covered well in the *GPO Style Manual*. For rules about grammar, the *Harbrace College Handbook* is a valuable reference. Useful sources of information about style and writing standards are listed in Figure VI-8.

b. Specific Rules

(1) Length

Abstracts ordinarily are limited to approximately 200 words. Within this limitation, there is no preferred length for an abstract, because the appropriate length is determined by the content of the document.

(2) Format

(a) Paragraphs

An abstract is always one paragraph long. The accepted rules about paragraph writing must be followed, especially those concerning coherence and unity. A coherent paragraph contains connected sentences, each following the other in logical order. An abstractor can avoid writing a paragraph that is nothing more than a series of sentences, each one summarizing a separate topic in the document, by intelligent use of transitional words and phrases.

A paragraph should have a *topic sentence*, some central statement of the document's major thesis, from which the rest of the sentences can develop. (This is especially important in an *informative* abstract.) Generally, the topic sentence is the first sentence of the abstract, and because it occupies this strategic position, it should be as full and accurate a statement as possible of the hypothesis, what was studied or researched and why, the methodology employed, and the study population.

(b) Sentences

Sentence length should vary as much as possible to avoid the unpleasant effect of a series of short, choppy sentences. Be terse, not telegraphic. Use complete sentences, omitting neither verbs nor conjunctions. Avoid the overlong, complex sentence in which the abstractor piles up clauses and phrases, especially qualifiers and modifiers, in an attempt to include as much as possible in one sentence. Every sentence should have high information density and, without being cryptic, convey a maximum amount of information in a minimum number of words.

American National Standards Institute. *Writing Abstracts.* 1979. (Z39.14-1979).

Collison, Robert. *Abstracts and Abstracting Services.* Santa Barbara, California. American Bibliographic Center/Clio Press. 1971.

Ebbitt, Wilma and David. *Writer's Guide and Index to English.* Glenview, Illinois. Scott Foresman. 1978.

Eckersley-Johnson, Anna L., Editor. *Webster's Secretarial Handbook.* Springfield, Massachusetts. G. & C. Merriam Co. 1976.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading. *Author's Guide and Style Manual.* Bloomington, Indiana. 1970. (ED 042 935).

Follett, Wilson. *Modern American Usage.* New York. Hill and Wang. 1979.

Gunning, Robert. *The Technique of Clear Writing.* New York. McGraw-Hill. 1968.

Hodges, John C. and Whitten, Mary E., Editors. *Harbrace College Handbook.* New York. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich. 1977.

Jones, Walter Paul. *Writing Scientific Papers and Reports.* Dubuque, Iowa. W. C. Brown. 1976.

Nicholson, Margaret. *Practical Style Guide for Authors and Editors.* New York. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. 1980.

Perrin, Porter G. *Reference Handbook of Grammar and Usage.* New York. William Merrill. 1972.

Strunk, William, and White, E. G. *The Elements of Style.* New York. Macmillan. 1979.

U. S. Government Printing Office. *GPO Style Manual.* Washington, D. C. 1973.

University of Chicago Press. *A Manual of Style.* 1974.

Weil, Ben H. "Standards for Writing Abstracts." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science,* v. 21, no. 5 September-October 1970. p. 351-357.

Weil, Ben H. "Technical Abstracting Fundamentals: II, Writing Principles and Practices." *Journal of Chemical Documentation,* v. 3, no. 3. 1963. p. 125-132.

FIGURE VI-8: GUIDES, AUTHORITIES, AND STANDARDS COVERING ABSTRACTS AND WRITING STYLE

(3) Language and Vocabulary

To best convey the flavor of the original document and to facilitate retrieval based on natural text, incorporate key words from the document into the abstract (especially if they are repeated often). Avoid direct quotations, however, for they usually do not carry enough information to be excerpted. However, single words or short phrases should be quoted if the author has coined a new phrase that is seminal to the study and if failure to call attention to it would be misleading. New or technical terms should be defined briefly. Also, polemical, controversial, or exceptionally suggestive words may be placed within quotation marks. The abstractor should avoid beginning with phrases such as:

- This report...
- The purpose of this report (or document) is...

Also, the abstractor should avoid the monotonous repetition of sentences starting with:

- It was suggested that...
- It was found that...
- It was reported that...

or ending with such ineffective phrases as:

- ...are discussed.
- ...are given.

However, passive voice constructions may be justified and even unavoidable when writing indicative abstracts. (See below under "Voice.")

(4) Voice

The *active* voice emphasizes the *doer* of the action, e.g., *"The abstractor read the document."*

The *passive* voice emphasizes the *receiver* of the action, e.g., *"The document was read by the abstractor."*

Use the *active* voice whenever possible in an *informative* abstract because it allows for direct expression when summarizing the content of the document and usually requires less space than the passive voice.

Use the *passive* voice in an *indicative* abstract to describe and to highlight the process of creating the document. Passive constructions, such as the following, should appear primarily in an indicative abstract:

- ...are included...
- ...are discussed...
- ...is presented...
- ...are reviewed...

(5) Tense

The tense of the document can suggest the tense of the abstract. The present tense is proper for an indicative abstract, e.g., "...*are* listed...," instead of "...*were* listed...." Strive for tense consistency throughout the abstract.

(6) Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviations should be avoided and acronyms kept to a minimum. If a long phrase with a recognized acronym is used more than once, it may be spelled out the first time it appears in the abstract and the acronym used thereafter. At the time of initial use, the acronym should be placed in parentheses following the term (e.g., Mobilization for Youth (MFY)). This is not necessary, however, if both spelled out version and acronym appear in the title, in which case the acronym may be used by itself throughout the abstract. If it is necessary, because of space limitations, to abbreviate, it is permissible to use the common "shorthand" of the field, e.g.:

- SES for Socioeconomic Status;
- IQ for Intelligence Quotient.

(7) Lists

When it is necessary to list a series of items in the abstract, use the following format:

"The following conclusions were drawn: (1) xxxxx; (2) xxxxx; and (3) xxxxx."

Parallel phraseology or sentence structure is recommended to facilitate comprehension.

(8) Numbers, Measurement, Time, etc.

Follow the rules in the *GPO Style Manual*, Section 12 on "Numerals." These rules are too extensive to summarize here, but some major points are:

- Arabic numerals are generally preferable to Roman numerals;
- A figure is used for a single number of 10 or more, with the exception of the first word of the sentence;

- Units of measurement and time are expressed in figures;
- The comma is used in a number containing four or more digits.

(9) Abstractor Identification

Each abstract should carry a designation as to its preparer. This identification should be in parentheses at the end of the abstract. The initials of the abstractor should be written without periods, e.g.:

ABSTRACTOR	EXAMPLE
The abstract was written entirely by the abstractor. Use abstractor initials.	(AS)
The abstract was written entirely by the author and was used unchanged.	(Author)
The abstractor revised an author abstract. Both should be credited.	(Author/GDC)
Abstract was obtained from an external service, e.g., the National Technical Information Service.	(NTIS) or (NTIS/AS)

FIGURE VI-9: ABSTRACTOR IDENTIFICATION EXAMPLES

2. Specific Kinds of Documents

The point has already been made that different types of documents require different types of abstracts. Even when dealing with the same type of abstract, however, it may be necessary to vary the approach in order to accommodate different kinds of documents. The following guidelines provide specific advice for some of the more common types of documents.

a. Reports (Research and Technical)

These usually require informative abstracts, which should contain:

- objectives and hypotheses of the research;
- methodology, summarized succinctly, including perhaps subjects, variables, controls, conditions, and tests;

- findings and conclusions (emphasized);
- *specific* implications and/or recommendations for further research.

If limitations to the study are mentioned, they should be included. Background information should be used only if necessary to explain the objectives. A description of unusual or extensive appendices may be included at the end of the abstract.

b. Speeches/Presentations

These reports usually require informative abstracts which should contain:

- background information only if necessary;
- statement of premise or thesis;
- development of ideas or arguments with proofs and major supporting facts;
- conclusions.

c. Curriculum Guides/Teacher Guides

These usually require indicative abstracts, which should contain:

- subject area and grade level of the curricular material;
- specific objectives of the course;
- particularly interesting methods used;
- supplementary activities and materials suggested.

d. Program Descriptions/Administrative Reports

Because of the large amount of narrative detail, these usually require indicative abstracts, which should contain:

- objectives of the program and identification of the target population;
- types of special teachers and other personnel and total numbers of classes or students involved;
- means or suggested means used to carry out the program;
- special methods used to overcome problems;
- up-to-date progress of the program with any anticipated changes in plans, or, if the program has been completed, a statement of the program's effectiveness.

e. Textbook/Instructional Materials

These usually require indicative abstracts, which should contain:

- objectives of the text, including target student population;
- description of the general nature of the subject matter;
- special methods used in meeting objectives, including notation of illustrations and accompanying activities.

Recounting specific textual material is not necessary, unless doing so will explain methods used in achieving objectives. Tests or measurement/evaluation instruments, accompanying a report as supporting documentation, may be analyzed out as a separate accession (see Section on "Analytics."). The ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation may be consulted if there are questions relating to such material.

f. Bibliographies/Directories

These usually require indicative abstracts, which should contain:

- subjects included;
- reference to annotations, if any;
- dates of materials (earliest to latest);
- types of materials listed;
- potential users or target audience;
- number of entries (approximate, if necessary).

g. Multiple-Author Works (e.g., Conference Proceedings)

Depending on the number of papers included and space limitations, these usually require indicative abstracts, which should contain:

- statement of the subject and scope of the collection;
- narrative-type table of contents, indicating titles and authors.

If there are too many articles to list, distinguish broad subject areas and group the articles.

If a document contains a large number of important papers, Clearinghouse personnel may decide to assign separate accession numbers to items they wish to be handled separately, and write informative abstracts. The resume for the overall document should indicate the processing level of the entire document.

Each resume for papers or sections separately analyzed should be entered at Level III, with a reference to the accession number of the parent item. (See Section on "Analytics.")

h. Tests/Measurement Materials.

These usually require indicative abstracts, which should contain:

- purpose and objective of the test;
- forms and levels of the test, including length and whether verbal or non-verbal;
- identification of the group to be tested, including grades, ages, etc.
- description of the testing, scoring, and grading methods to be observed, including time limits, whether individually or group administered, qualifications needed to administer, special equipment needed, etc.
- normative data and any information concerning reliability, validity, and test development.

F. Definition and Function of an Annotation

An annotation is a succinct explanation or description of a particular work. Although closely related to an abstract, an annotation is considerably briefer and therefore usually characterizes rather than summarizes.

In the ERIC system, annotations of no more than 50 words are prepared for journal articles (EJ Accession Series) announced in *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE). The purpose of an annotation is to explain and indicate important facets of content not evident from the Title, Descriptors, or Identifiers and to thereby facilitate the user's search of the periodical literature.

G. General Approach to Annotating

Annotations are recommended for CIJE citations. If the scope of an article is adequately expressed by the title, bibliographic citation, and accompanying Descriptors or Identifiers, an annotation is not required. If, however, the normal entry fails to convey subject content or an important feature or aspect of the substance of an article, an annotation should be added. *If in doubt, always supply an annotation.* The true meaning and utility of an article may be lost because of a clever title (e.g., "Climb the Ladder" or "Send No Box Tops") or a highly technical title (e.g., "The Saint-Cloud Method: What It Can and Cannot Achieve" or "Tandhoff's Disease in a Scottish Family"). When this situation occurs, an annotation must be added.

Either informative or indicative annotations are permissible. However, the brevity of the annotation form presupposes that most annotations will be of the indicative type. An indicative annotation is written from the point of view of an informed and objective third person and describes the content, format, or use of an article. In contrast, an informative annotation presents an objective summary of the author's own ideas, or one or more of the conclusions presented. Because of its size limitations, an annotation of this type will generally not present in condensed form a summary of the article itself. In other words, though the same general approach for developing a concise representation of a document holds true for annotating as well as for abstracting, an annotation, unlike an abstract, doesn't have to be weighted in the same proportions and with the same emphasis as the original article. Lengthy informative annotations should not be used.

As with an indicative abstract, an annotation should avoid evaluative language (particularly negative evaluations) introducing personal or professional prejudices. However, useful "guiding" statements can be used, such as the following:

- "Written for the non-specialist";
- "Designed to be helpful to the practicing English teacher";
- "Attempts a clear explanation of a complex topic."

H. Rules for Writing Annotations

Unless otherwise stated below, the rules that pertain to abstracts also apply to annotations.

1. Length

Annotations should not exceed 50 words. Most annotations will generally be between 30 and 50 words in length; however, there is no fixed lower limit. Author- or editor-provided annotations to articles may be used and re-written to conform to the 50-word limitation, if necessary.

2. Format

Annotations should be only one paragraph long. Whole sentences are preferable, but more telegraphic sentences (than would be used in abstracts) are acceptable. Single descriptive words, simple phrases, or lists may also be used. Since annotations are not necessarily written in full sentences, some of the mechanics of style described in the *GPO Style Manual*, and other authorities, do not pertain.

3. Language and Vocabulary

Since an annotation is basically an attempt to improve on an uninformative title, the annotation should avoid repeating specific terms contained in the Title or Descriptors. In other words, use the annotation to bring in fresh information, rather than to repeat information already available in the entry. This is not a strict prohibition, as circumstances will sometimes necessitate that a term be repeated. If special or unusual words appear in the title, the annotation can be used to explain them. Unlike an abstract, an annotation may be composed of a quotation excerpted from the article (and punctuated as such).

4. Example of Annotation

Title: *Homeplace: Experiencing a National Historic Landmark*

> Undergraduates and gifted elementary students collaborated on a study of the architecture and lifestyle associated with Homeplace, an 18th century French Colonial home. The activities culminated in a multimedia exhibit at a local art gallery. (AA)

FIGURE VI-10: ANNOTATION FOR NON-INFORMATIVE TITLE

POSTSCRIPT

The following quotations were assembled by Robert Collison and appear at various places in his book Abstracts and Abstracting Services. They are repeated here, with attribution, for the insight they can provide into the art of abstracting.

Since no one has ever defined a good abstract, the future of abstracting, professional or amateur, seems assured.

L. VANBY

Abstracts were, of course, strongly opposed by those who felt that if God had intended them to publish abstracts they would not have published full papers in the first place.

DEREK DE SOLLA PRICE

Abstracts provide the capability to concentrate within a single publication knowledge that is recorded in a multitude of research papers and technical reports.

IRVING M. KLEMPNER

The abstract was described as a method devised several centuries ago to cope with excessive publication. It is no longer able to cope . . . .

MARY L. TOMPKINS

The intent of an abstract is to present the skeletal structure of the original and report the crucial findings or new processes the author presents.

SOCIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS: User's guide

The quality of abstracts depends largely on the ability of the abstractor to understand the significance of the paper being covered.

E J. CRANE

Abstracts rarely give the exact information the reader wants to know.

MARIAN P. ANDERSON

The automatic abstracts derivable by present techniques require human editing to achieve adequate communicability.

SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The production of an abstract journal seems to be a continuing fight against error.

CHARLES L. BERNIER