

The `biblatex-abs-annotate` package

Annotated bibliographies with abstracts and user annotations

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Abstract

`biblatex-abs-annotate` is a lightweight `biblatex` supplement that renders an *abstract* and a user-supplied *annotation* beneath each entry in a bibliography. Both are standard `biblatex` fields (`abstract` and `annotation/annotate`)—no custom entry types are required. The package works on top of any `biblatex` style by patching the standard bibliography drivers.

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1 Introduction

An *annotated bibliography* is a bibliography in which each reference is followed by a short description—typically an abstract, a critical note, or both. `biblatex-abs-annotate` adds this capability to `biblatex` without replacing your chosen citation style. It reads two optional fields per entry:

- `abstract` — the journal-supplied abstract, often already present in Zotero or Mendeley exports.
 - `annotation` — your own note on the source (`annotate` is accepted as a synonym).
- Either field may be omitted; an entry with neither renders as an ordinary citation.

2 Installation

The package is available on CTAN and is included in TeX Live and MikTeX. If it is not already installed, you can fetch it with your distribution’s package manager:

```
# TeX Live
tlmgr install biblatex-abs-annotate

# MikTeX picks it up on demand at first use.
```

3 Basic usage

Load biblatex in the usual way, then add biblatex-abs-annotate afterwards:

```
\documentclass{article}
\usepackage[style=authoryear]{biblatex}
\usepackage{biblatex-abs-annotate}
\addbibresource{refs.bib}

\begin{document}
\nocite{*}
\printbibliography
\end{document}
```

A sample .bib entry:

```
@article{smith2024,
  author    = {Smith, Jane},
  title     = {Rural Election Administration Challenges},
  journal   = {Journal of Elections},
  year      = {2024},
  volume    = {34},
  pages     = {112--138},
  abstract  = {Examines logistics and staffing in rural precincts.},
  annotation = {Key paper for the adaptive informality framework.}
}
```

4 Package options

Options are passed as key–value pairs when loading the package:

```
\usepackage[abstract=true, annotation=true, labels=true]{biblatex-abs-annotate}
```

Option	Default	Effect
abstract	true	Show abstract blocks.
annotation	true	Show annotation blocks.
labels	true	Show “Abstract:” / “Annotation:” headers.

5 Customization

All visual aspects are controlled by redefinable commands and lengths. Override them after loading `biblatex-abs-annotate`:

Labels

```
\renewcommand{\abAnnotateAbstractLabel}{Summary}
\renewcommand{\abAnnotateAnnotationLabel}{Notes}
```

Fonts

```
\renewcommand{\abAnnotateAbstractFont}{\small\itshape}
\renewcommand{\abAnnotateAnnotationFont}{\small}
\renewcommand{\abAnnotateLabelFont}{\small\bfseries}
```

Indentation and spacing

```
\setlength{\abAnnotateAbstractIndent}{1.5em}
\setlength{\abAnnotateAnnotationIndent}{1.5em}
\setlength{\abAnnotateBlockSkip}{0.5ex}
\setlength{\abAnnotateInterSkip}{0.3ex}
```

6 How it works

`biblatex` renders each entry type (`article`, `book`, etc.) via a corresponding *bibliography driver*. `biblatex-abs-annotate` uses the `xpatch` package to inject two `biblatex` macros—`ab-annotate/abstract` and `ab-annotate/annotation`—into each driver immediately before the closing `finentry` macro. The macros consult the `abstract` and `annotation` fields on the current entry and emit an indented block if the field is populated.

Because the injection happens at driver level, the surrounding citation formatting is whatever your chosen `biblatex` style produces. `biblatex-abs-annotate` has been tested with `authoryear`, `apa`, `chicago-authordate`, and `numeric` styles; custom styles work as long as they use the standard driver names.

7 Compatibility

- Requires `biblatex` with the `biber` backend (not `bibtex`). `natbib` is not supported.
- Depends on `xpatch`, `changepage`, and `kvoptions`—all standard in TeX Live and MikTeX.
- Patches the 16 standard `biblatex` drivers. If a custom style renames drivers, the patch is silently skipped for that driver and the entry renders without annotations.

8 Related formats

`biblatex-abs-annotate` is the `biblatex` component of `ab-annotate`, a cross-format toolchain sharing the same `.bib` conventions:

- A Typst package (`@preview/ab-annotate`) providing the same annotated-bibliography behavior inside Typst documents.

- A Quarto extension (`cwimpy/ab-annotate`) that renders annotated bibliographies to PDF, HTML, Word, and Typst from a single `.qmd`.
The shared repository is <https://github.com/cwimpy/ab-annotate>.

9 License

`biblatex-abs-annotate` is distributed under the LaTeX Project Public License, version 1.3c. See the accompanying LICENSE file or <https://www.latex-project.org/lppl.txt>.

10 Version history

- 0.1.1 — 2026-04-19** Renamed package from `ab-annotate` to `biblatex-abs-annotate` per CTAN naming guidance.
- 0.1.0 — 2026-04-14** Initial release (as `ab-annotate`; not distributed on CTAN).