

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT PEOPLE*

The library has a variety of biographical sources in print, and much information is available online through library databases and websites. The sources you may have to consult will be determined by the type of information needed and by the individual characteristics of your subject, such as:

1. **Nationality**
2. **Time period in which the individual lived**
3. **Profession**
4. **Fame (very famous or known only in a particular field of activity)**

If you know absolutely nothing about the person you are researching, use one of the sources listed below in the Section I to identify the person by nationality, time period, and profession. Then go to the sources listed in Sections II and III. If you need only brief information, one of the sources listed in Section II may be adequate. However, for more complete information, use one or more of the sources listed in Section III.

Locating reliable biographical information on the Internet is addressed at the end of this guide.

The list below provides a sampling of the sources available in the library. If you need assistance with them, or if they do not meet your need, please consult a reference librarian.

I. FOR IDENTIFICATION

Print **Biography and Genealogy Master Index**. 2nd ed. 1980. 8 vols., plus 5-year cumulative supplements.

This alphabetical index of persons both living and deceased is international in scope and covers every field of endeavor. Entries after each name are to reference works in which a biography of the individual appears.

R **Webster's Biographical Dictionary**. 1971.

920

W391M3 Contains brief information about individuals from all places and periods before 1971.

Encyclopedias. (check index volume first)

Some are more useful than others for biographies, e.g. **Encyclopedia Americana** is particularly strong in American biographies.

Note: The general encyclopedias are shelved near the Lanes' Lane entrance to the library. Subject specific encyclopedias are shelved in the reference collection with other reference books in that particular discipline.

II. FOR BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

The following sources give abbreviated information covering date and place of birth, marital status, number of children (if any), current address, current position, positions held in the past, membership in societies, and selected publications.

Living Persons (or those who have been prominent during the 20th century)

R
925
Am35A **American Men and Women of Science.** 22nd ed. 8 vols. 2005.
Gives brief data on persons in both the physical and behavioral sciences.

R
920
W62 **Who's Who.** Annual.
Gives brief data on prominent living British citizens as well as some of other nationalities.

R
920.73
W621 **Who's Who in America.** Annual.
Gives brief data on prominent living Americans.

Deceased Persons

R
920
W621 **Who Was Who.** 3 vols. 1897 to 1950.
Gives brief data on British citizens who are no longer living.

R
920.73
W62 **Who Was Who in America.** 1897 to date.
Gives brief data on Americans who are no longer living.

III. FOR LONGER NARRATIVE OR DISCUSSION

Living Persons

R
928
C767C **Contemporary Authors.** 1962 to date.
Provides an up-to-date source of biographical information on current authors in many fields and from many countries. Sketches give personal facts, career, writings, works in progress, sidelights, and occasional biographical sources.

R
920
C936 **Current Biography.** 1940 to date.
Includes an average of 300-350 biographies annually of persons of various nationalities, professions, and occupations, who are currently prominent in their particular fields. Also contains obituaries at the time of death for individuals featured in previous issues. For best results, use the index at the back of the most recent volume to find complete information.

Print **New York Times Index.** 1851 to date.

Indexes data on well-known persons living during the period covered. All information printed in *The New York Times* from 1851 to 2005 is available in full text in the Historical New York Times database. Recent years (from the mid-1970s) are also available in full-text format in Lexis-Nexis Academic.

Deceased Persons

R **Dictionary of American Biography (DAB)**. 11 volumes, plus supplements.

920.073

D561

Includes more than 13,600 biographies of Americans no longer living who have made a significant contribution to American life.

R **Dictionary of National Biography**. 63 volumes, plus supplements.

920.042

D561

Contains articles by specialists, and excellent bibliography. Gives detailed biographies of important inhabitants of the British Isles and its colonies whose deaths preceded publication date of **DNB**. Important names are treated at great length, minor names more briefly. All articles are generally reliable and scholarly.

R **Notable American Women**. 4 volumes, 1971-1980.

920.073

J232N

Includes biographical sketches of women who died before 1976 and who made a distinctive contribution to American life. Also includes some women who were not citizens, but who lived a number of years in the United States and engaged in important activity during that time.

Print **New York Times Index**. 1851 to date.

If you know the date of death, you may look for the person's obituary, which will contain the major events and accomplishments in the individual's life. All information printed in *The New York Times* from 1851 to 2003 is available in full text in the Historical New York Times database. Recent years (from the mid-1970s) are also available in full-text on Lexis-Nexis.

INTERNET SOURCES

Biographical information is available on the Internet, but care must be taken to be sure that the information is reliable. See **Study Guide #26** for guidelines on evaluating the reliability and accuracy of information found on the Web, or speak with a reference librarian.

The following Internet sites may be helpful:

Biography.com – <http://www.biography.com>

InfoPlease Biography - <http://www.infoplease.com/people.html>

LibrarySpot - <http://www.libraryspot.com/biographies/>

Need more information?

Links to additional Internet resources are provided on the library's website. To access them, go to the library's website at www.kings.edu/academics/library.htm, and click on Internet Resources. Select Reference: Basic Sources for Quick Information. You will find the links under Biographies.

If you would like an entire book about an individual, be sure to search the library's Online Catalog. If you have difficulty with finding the information you need, please speak with a reference librarian.

*Adapted from materials developed by the Undergraduate Library, the University of Texas - Austin.

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