



Long Beach City College
LAC Library
<http://lib.lbcc.edu>

Selected Sources of Information for
BIOGRAPHY

This guide is designed to help students begin their research for biographical information at the LAC Library and on the World Wide Web. There are several books written about people. To find these books, start your search with the on-line catalog. Remember, when you are looking for information about a person, the person is the subject. If you need further assistance, please consult a librarian at the Reference Desk.

FIND BOOKS TO CHECK OUT

The Library's online catalog, called *Voyager*, indexes books, pamphlets, and other material by subject, author, title, keyword, and call number. Voyager is accessible at: <http://voyager.lbcc.edu>. Enter your search term, then select the type of search from the pull-down menu. Sample searches:

Subject searches:

Biography
Religious biography

Heroes biography
Asian American women biography

You may also find biographical information by searching the on-line catalog under **occupational category**. Add the word "biography" at the end of the occupation as in the following examples:

Architects United States biography
Sports biography

Women artists biography
Political activists United States biography

If you require more in-depth information on an eminent person, you may locate books about this person on the on-line catalog. Search for information about someone using the **subject** search method. Enter the last name, then the first name as in the examples below:

Chavez, Cesar
Gandhi, Mahatma

Mandela, Nelson
Lincoln, Abraham

Keyword searches:

Use quotes to search a phrase:

"American women writers"
"Hispanic American biography"

Use + to mark required terms:

+women +painters +biography
+renaissance +artists +biography

Titles searches:

For a list of all the titles that begin with Who's Who, type: Who's Who

REFERENCE BOOKS

A few examples of reference books to consult for biographical information are discussed in this handout.

Biographical directories provide name, profession, vital statistics, family data, education, listings of writings, religion, address, hobbies, awards, etc.

International Who's Who - Ref CT 120 .I5 – Provides biographical information to world notables.

International Who's Who in Education - Ref LA 2301 .I57 - Provides entries on world's leading educators. It contains representations from many countries and covers all levels of education.

Who's Who of American Women - Ref CT 3260 .W5 – Provides biographical dictionary of American women, although world notables are also included.

Who Was Who In America - Ref E 176 .W64 - This source contains entries only for dead people who have made significant contributions.

Biographical indexes identify articles and books that contain biographical information. These include:

In Black and White: A Guide to Magazine Articles, Newspaper Articles and Books Concerning More Than 15,000 Black Individuals and Groups - Ref E185.96 I6 1980 - The entries are compiled from various sources including, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, books and the catalogs of libraries with extensive black history collection.

Biography and Genealogy Master Index - Ref Z5305 U5 B56

This is a comprehensive index to thousands of biographical sketches in over 3000 volumes and editions of current and retrospective reference books, covering both contemporary and historical figures.

Biography Index - Ref Z5301 B5 - ***Biography Index*** is a cumulative index to biographical material found in books and periodicals. This index is updated quarterly.

Biographical dictionaries - A biographical dictionary is a good starting point for a brief biographical information or for selecting a person of interest. A few titles are discussed below.

American National Biography - Ref CT213 .A68 1999 - Scholarly essays by experts, often several pages long, make up this multi-volume set. It is considered the most authoritative and famous of all American biographical sources.

Dictionary of American Biography - Ref E176 C73 – In order to be included in this series, one must have lived in the United States and must have made a significant contribution to American life.

Dictionary of American Negro Biography - Ref E 185.96 .D53 1982 - This title provides information on blacks from all walks of life who lived prior to 1970. References to manuscript collections, obituaries, and so on are part of the entry.

Dictionary of Literary Biography - Ref PS243 .A54 – Entries in this series are career biographies.

Dictionary of National Biography - Ref DA 28 .D4 (+ Supplements) – This reference source includes substantive articles on persons from various countries that have made a contribution to Great Britain. Living persons are not included in this work.

Dictionary of Scientific Biography - Ref Q141 .D5 - This reference source provides information on the history of science (biology, physics, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy and earth sciences) by focusing on the professional lives of scientists. Coverage is from classical to modern times. Living persons are not included in this work.

Great Lives from History series American Series - Ref CT 214 .G74 - The biographical entries in this title include one's contributions and significance.

Specialized Biographical Sources - These are sources to consult for specific ethnic or occupational groups.

New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians - Ref ML 100 .N48

Notable Hispanic American Women - Ref E184 .S75 N68

African American writers - Ref PS153.N5 A344 2001

Notable Black American women: book III - Ref E185.96 .N68 2003

Notable Asian Women - Ref E184 .O6 N67

Gay & Lesbian Biography - HQ75.2 .G39 1997

The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States - Ref KF8742.A35 O93

Other Biographical Sources

Current Biography - Ref CT 100 .C8 - Provides fact-filled information on individuals. This source also includes obituaries and references for further readings.

Bloodletters and Badmen: A Narrative Encyclopedia of American Criminals from the Pilgrims to the Present - Ref HV 6789 .N3 - Provides information about criminals with "known and proven records ... whose convictions and crimes were never in doubt."

New York Times Biographical Service - Ref CT 120 N45 – Reprints of stories and obituaries from the New York Times.

FIND MAGAZINE, JOURNAL AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES:

The library subscribes to several online databases, which provide indexing, abstracts and access to articles as well as information from reference books and other publications. Passwords allowing off-campus access to the Library's subscribed online databases are available at the Library's Reference Desk.

Some useful databases to try first include:

- **Biography Resource Center + The Complete Marquis Who's Who** - This database combines award-winning biographies from respected Gale Group sources. ***Biography Resource Center*** also includes full-text articles from hundreds of periodicals. Search for people based on one or more personal facts such as birth and death year, nationality, ethnicity, occupation or gender, or combine criteria to create a highly-targeted custom search. With the ***Complete Marquis Who's Who(R)***, find quick reference information on an additional 900,000 people.
- **Proquest** [Magazine, journal and newspaper articles]
- **CQ Researcher** [Reports on current and controversial topics]
- **Opposing Viewpoints** [Argumentative or persuasive articles and books on current and controversial topics]
- **FACTS.com** [Issues and Controversies database]
- **Newsbank** [News articles on current issues]
- **SIRS** [Social Issues Researcher]

To search most online databases, enter a word, words, and/or specific phrase. You may also use quotes to indicate a phrase, and the Boolean operators AND, OR, NOT. For example:

"civil war" AND "women biography"
holocaust AND survivors AND biography

Check in the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* set (the five big red books on the stand), dictionaries, thesauri and subject-related books for the right words to use.

FIND WEB SITES:

Use a search engine such as Google (<http://www.google.com>) when you know the exact terms or names of your topic.

- Enter two or more related words, each with a + in front of it to specify your search.
- Search for phrases by putting double quotes around two or more words, for example:
+holocaust +biography
"civil war" +biography

Put an asterisk * after the root word to find plurals or other words beginning with the root.

Use subject directories such as Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>) or Internet indexes such as Librarian's Index to the Internet (<http://www.ii.org>) for browsing or when you are not sure of the terms or names. Indexes lead you from the general subject to the specific sub-topic.

Librarians' Index to the Internet at <http://www.ii.org> is a subject directory of librarian-selected Internet resources.

Internet Resources on the library's homepage at <http://lib.lbcc.edu/liblink2.html> is a topical guide with links to web sites for research, including *Hot Topics*.

Most Internet resources are not subjected to peer-review or to rigorous evaluation process; students are advised to evaluate Internet resources before using them. The following Internet evaluation guidelines were compiled by Elizabeth E. Kirk of the Sheridan Libraries of the John Hopkins University and accessible at: <http://www.library.jhu.edu/elp/useit/evaluate/>

Web sites related to biography

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

This is the online destination of A&E's popular, award-winning documentary series that offer short biographies of famous people, ranging from actors and actresses to political leaders and historical persons.

Lives, the Biography Resource - <http://amillionlives.com/>

The largest guide to posthumous biography sites on the Web, it does not include biographies of people who are still living.

CITATION OF SOURCES

A research paper usually includes a *Works-cited* list according to specific documentation style such as MLA (Modern Language Association) or APA (American Psychological Association). The printed copies of these guides to documentation are available at the Library Reference desk. Guidelines are also available online at these Web sites:

APA style: http://campusgw.library.cornell.edu/newhelp/res_strategy/citing/apa.html

MLA style: http://campusgw.library.cornell.edu/newhelp/res_strategy/citing/mla.htm

The MLA Bibliography composer <http://www.noodletools.com/noodlebib/index.html>