Biographical Information

To find information about a person’s life (biography) you need to know the following:

- living or dead?
- approximate birth/death dates
- nationality
- gender
- profession

If the person is famous enough, much of this information can be found in basic encyclopedias.

You can find biographies of many famous people by using the library’s online catalog. To find information about a person, search them as a subject using a search like this “Chopin, Kate”. Or you can search for biographies by keyword/word or phrase search like this “Kate Chopin and biography”.

General Resources

Biography Index (1946 to 2009)  
Indexes books and magazine or journal articles covering biography.

Biography Resource Center  
Electronic Resource
Provides full-text information in 250,000 biographies for 185,000 individuals, both current and historical. Includes full-text articles from 250 periodicals and Marquis Who’s Who. Available on Watson Library’s unified workstations.

Current Biography (1940 to 2009)  
CT 100 C8 REF
Contains biographical articles on famous people. Each article ends with a list of additional resources.
Resources on Famous Americans

*American National Biography* (24 vols.)
CT 213 A68 1999 REF

*Dictionary of American Biography* (DAB)
E 176.D 5632 REF

*Who’s Who Among African Americans*
E 185.96 W52 REF

*Who Was Who in America 1607 to present*
E 663 W54 REF

*Who’s Who in America*
E 663 W56 REF

Non-American Famous People

*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB—British biographies)
DA 28 095 2004 REF

*Penguin International Dictionary of Contemporary Biography: From 1900 to the Present*
CT 103 V39 2001 REF

Resources by Gender

*Northeastern Dictionary of Women’s Biography*
CT 3202 N67 1999 REF

*Notable Black American Men*
E 185.86 N68 1999 REF

*Notable Black American Women*
E 185.96 N68 1992 REF

*Webster’s Dictionary of American Women*
HQ 1412 W433 1996 REF

*Who’s Who of American Women*
E 176 W647 REF

Resources by Profession or Occupation

*American Men and Women of Science*
Q 141 A474 REF

*American Women in Science: 1950 to the Present*
Q 141 B254 1998 REF

*American Nursing: A Biographical Dictionary*
RT 34 A44 1988 REF

*Baker’s Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*
ML 105 B16 1992 REF

*Biographical Dictionary of Modern American Educators*
LA 2311 O55 1997 REF

*Cambridge Dictionary of Scientists*
Q141 C128 2002 REF

*Columbia Dictionary of Political Biography*
D 108 C65 1991 REF

*Contemporary Authors*
PN 771 C6 REF

*Directory of American Scholars*
LA 2311 C32 REF

*Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Athletes*
GV697 A1 M355 2001 REF

*Scribner Encyclopedia of American Lives Sports Figures*
GV697 A1 S42 2002 REF