

Instructional Manual for Researchers and Writers
(2nd edition, revised 2015)

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Contact information	3
Part 1: Writing for the <i>DACB</i>	4
Submission Requirements	5
General Guidelines for Writers	6
Required Format and Style	7
Creating a Bibliography	12
Quick Formatting Guide	18
Writing a Good Biography	20
Plagiarism: Resources for Identifying and Avoiding Plagiarism	23
Part 2: Resources for Research, Writing, and Teaching	27
Resources for Doing Oral History Research	28
Worksheets and Forms	31
The Challenges of Biography Writing:	
Article: “The Limits of Biography”	38
Article: “The Craft of Writing Religious Biography”	39

Introduction

The initial seed for this booklet was the document entitled “General Guidelines for Researchers and Writers” that has served as a basis for biography writing from the beginning of the project. The first edition of the *Instructional Manual for Researchers and Writers* was created in 2004, inspired by the efforts of Kehinde Olabimtan, who was the *DACB* liaison coordinator at the Akrofi Christaller Center in Akropong, Ghana. At that time he was working hard to train students to write biographies for the *Dictionary* and had developed a short document to guide students in their writing. That document was the seed for a larger booklet that was developed to offer more resources for institutions and individuals interested in participating in the work and vision of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*.

This 2015 revised version contains a few new resources but continues to be a work in process. Those of us actively involved in the work of the *DACB*—Editors, Advisors, Project Director, and Project Manager—remain eager to provide the most relevant and helpful tools for researchers and writers doing the real work of documenting African Christian history on the ground, in Africa. Therefore, suggestions for additions and revisions are always welcome.

We hope and pray this booklet will be a useful tool in the great work of memorializing the work of all the men and women who labored to spread the gospel in Africa.

Michèle Sigg
Project Manager
April 2015

Contact Information

U.S. Office: Boston University, Boston, Mass.

Dr. Jonathan J. Bonk, Project Director
Research Professor of Mission
Mrs. Michèle Sigg, Project Manager
Dictionary of African Christian Biography

Center for Global Christianity and Mission (CGCM)
Boston University School of Theology
745 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215, USA

Email: DACB@BU.edu

See the DACB page on the CGCM Website: [DACB at CGCM](#)

West Africa

Philip Laryea, Office Coordinator
Dictionary of African Christian Biography, West Africa
Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research
P.O. Box 76
Akropong-Akuapem, GHANA
Tel. 011-23-32-755-5718
Email: tlaye@yahoo.co.uk

Nigeria

Dr. Protus Kemdirim, Regional Coordinator
Dictionary of African Christian Biography, Nigeria
University of Religious Studies, University of Port Harcourt
PMB 5323
Port Harcourt, NIGERIA
Email: kempro54@yahoo.com

Southern Africa

Dr. Jurie Van Wyk, Regional Coordinator
Dictionary of African Christian Biography, Southern and Eastern Africa
P.O. Box 125
Colesberg 9795, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel./Fax No. 27 (0)51 7530422
Mobile 27 (0)72 4272934
Email: jurievanwyk@mweb.co.za

Francophone Africa

Fohle Lygunda Li-M, Regional Coordinator
Dictionary of African Christian Biography, Francophone Africa
International Leadership University
PO Box 2330 Bujumbura, BURUNDI
Email: flygunda@yahoo.fr
www.iluburundi-ftm.org

Part 1: Writing for the DACB

Submission Requirements

Including Choice of Biographical Subjects

General Guidelines for Writers

Quick Formatting Guide

Writing a Good Biography

Creating a Bibliography

Plagiarism: Resources for Identifying and Avoiding Plagiarism

Submission Requirements

The *Dictionary of African Christian Biography (DACB)* is a reference work available for general readers, scholars, and students on the Web (www.dacb.org), also available on USB drive or CD-ROM. The stories should be precise (providing specific dates and other facts) and concise (concentrating on what is important). The focus will be on a particular person's accomplishments, legacy, and historical significance in the development of African Christianity. Pejorative language, hagiography, and polemic are to be avoided. Articles should not follow the strict catalog format common in many biographical directories, where the focus is on listing all academic degrees, positions held, awards received, and so forth. Our aim with this dictionary is to encourage discursive and well-written biography that illumines the life and work of those who have played an important role in African Christian history. Each article should be accompanied by a brief bibliography and the names of oral information sources (e.g., persons interviewed). *A minimum of two sources is required for acceptance.*

Choice of Biographical Subjects

As you choose biographical subjects for your research, please take into account the following:

1. The *DACB* accepts multiple biographies of the same individual but *only on the condition* that the proposed article gives significant new material and insight. Therefore it is important to consult the *DACB* either online or at a *DACB* participating institution, to evaluate the content that we already have on the Web site.
2. Your subjects need not be confined to professional clerics, missionaries, or theologians, but might include laypersons from various walks of life whose stories are essential to an understanding of the church in Africa.
3. General suggested length: no longer than 3,000 words and no shorter than 500 words.
4. As the intent and purpose of the *DACB* is to record the history of African Christianity, we ask that you focus on writing the stories of **deceased** subjects.
5. It is currently the policy of *DACB* NOT to publish the stories of living subjects. Stories of living subjects will be kept on file in the *DACB* office for future use.

General Guidelines for Researchers and Writers

In preparing a biography for the dictionary, please include information on as many of the following categories as possible.

1. Given name(s) of the person. As necessary, provide explanations of these names.
 - Baptismal names
 - Kinship names
 - Nicknames
2. Family names. In cases where there is more than one spouse, list the children under the appropriate mother or father.
 - Father
 - Mother
 - Wife/Wives
 - Husband/Husbands
 - Children
 - Grandchildren
3. Ethno-linguistic group and kinship group
4. Life story
 - Date or approximate date of birth
 - Place of birth: village, city, province, nation
 - Unusual circumstances associated with birth
 - Formative experiences, such as illnesses, personal misfortunes, tragedies, and visions
 - Education, degrees and diplomas (including dates)
 - Conversion (including date, if applicable)
 - Calling and/or ordination to ministry (including date, if applicable)
 - Date, place, and circumstances of death
5. Nationality/citizenship
6. Languages, including first, second, third, fourth, fifth, etc.
7. Church affiliation
 - Roman Catholic
 - Orthodox; Coptic
 - Protestant (Conciliar, Evangelical, Anabaptist)
 - Independent (African-initiated, Spiritual, Pentecostal/charismatic)
8. Names, locations, and descriptions of churches begun or served by the subject
9. Ministry details: Where? How long? What happened? Short term and long term impact?
Please provide detailed information wherever possible, including anecdotes, stories, and hearsay.
10. Continuing influence and significance of the person
11. Publications, reports, writings, letters, musical compositions, artistic contributions by the person
12. Sources of information about the person

Unpublished Sources

Eyewitness accounts (give names and addresses of narrators who are or were eyewitnesses; include details of their relationship to the person)

Other oral and anecdotal accounts (give names and addresses of narrators whenever possible, and include details of their relationship to the person)

Published Sources

Include full bibliographic data whenever possible:

- Author of a book, book title, location, publisher, year of publication
- Author of chapter within a book, title of the chapter, title of the book, name of the editor of the book, full publication data
- Author of article in periodical, title of article, periodical name, volume and number of periodical, date of periodical, page numbers of article

13. Other pertinent information

For proper credit to be given to you as a contributor, please include:

- Your name and address
- Name and address of the church with which you are affiliated
- Name and address of affiliated educational institution or mission agency (the participating institution)
- Name(s) of individual(s) chiefly responsible for researching the story of each subject
- Name and position of the person supervising the research
- Date on which the story was submitted

Required Formatting and Style

Because of the vast scope of the *DACB*, the stories must conform as closely as possible to the same style and format for consistency and clarity. The *DACB* follows the most recent edition of *Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, and the *Chicago Manual of Style* on matters of style and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* for correct spelling (if more than one spelling is given, use the first one). We will follow the most current version of *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* for spelling and word breaks.

As we have little budget for translation, we need to receive your text in English or French. Contact us at dacb@bu.edu about submitting biographies in Portuguese or Swahili.

Your text must be typewritten. Send your files as an email attachment to Michèle Sigg, Project Manager, at dacb@bu.edu.

Paragraphs should not be indented and, as in this present text, you should use one extra space between paragraphs. The text should only be left-justified (as in this present text).

Contributor's Signature

Following the text of your article, at the bottom left-hand corner, one line below the end of the text and before the bibliography, please type your name exactly as you wish it to appear in print. Authors who are members of Catholic religious societies are requested to include the initials for their society after their name (e.g., Joseph M. Jones, OFM). Each article in the *DACB* will be signed.

Be sure to keep a copy of your work.

Opening Format

At the top of the first page, flush left, type the following heading in bold:

Subject's names in full
Dates*
Church affiliation
Country or countries of ministry

*Examples of how dates should be noted:

1855 to 1920 (dates known)
c. 1855 to 1920 (exact birth date unknown)
b. 1855 (only birth date known)
d. c. 1920 (only approximate death date known)
19th century (no specific dates)

Biographies should begin—with no paragraph indentation—with the subject's full name in an introductory sentence briefly citing the major points of the subject's life. If a subject was commonly known by his or her initial(s) rather than by given name(s), the rest of the name following the initial should be in parentheses.

Example: **E(li) Stanley Jones**.

Examples:

Prophetess Alice Lenshina Mulenga Mubisha was the founder of a powerful African independent church movement at the time of *Zambian independence*. Beginning as an anti-witchcraft movement, it clashed with the new government when it rejected secular authority.

Janani Luwum, an Anglican archbishop and martyr, was an implacable foe of Idi Amin who had him murdered.

Given names not normally used should be in parentheses. Titles and degrees (Saint, Bishop, Professor, M.D., etc.) and initials for Catholic religious societies (SJ, SVD, etc.) can be with the name of the subject or mentioned separately in the text.

Where the stories of a husband and wife are told in a single article, their dates should be listed in the order of their names on the date line. The wife's maiden name may be placed in parentheses.

Example: **Keller, Marion and Otto**
1889 to 1953 and 1888 to 1942

Day and month of birth or death are not required except to indicate dates of commemoration (e.g., a saint's day).

Spelling of Geographical Names

Writers will employ the most current edition of *Webster's New Geographical Dictionary* in an effort to standardize the spelling of place names. Where old names for places are historically accurate but no longer current, please include reference to present-day names. Here are two examples:

... converted at the mission in Leopoldville (present-day Kinshasa) ...
... the capital of Zaïre (now Democratic Republic of the Congo)...

Hyphenate names of persons and places where they are compound (e.g., Adu-Gyamfi; Akropong-Akuapem), and indicate traditional areas, geographical areas, and administrative districts as appropriate (e.g., Kwahu Traditional Area, not just Kwahu; Akwapem Ridge or Akwapem North District, not just Akwapem). Avoid using multiple names of towns without indicating the relationship between them. Double-check dates and other facts; editors don't check facts.

Endnotes, not Footnotes

Use endnotes, not footnotes in your article. *Do not* use the footnote/endnote and numbering feature in your word-processing program. Instead, manually insert endnotes in the text by putting endnote numbers in square brackets [] and simply use numbers (no brackets) for the notes themselves. Please also include a bibliography of the sources quoted in the endnotes.

Example of endnote: 1. See Davis, p. 34.

Abbreviations

Due to the vast scope of the *DACB* and the diversity of subjects to be included, avoid abbreviating names of denominations except when used multiple times within the same article. Insofar as it is possible, indicate the relationship of smaller, lesser-known denominations to the larger ones.

Do not use periods in abbreviations of names of organizations or countries, e.g., YMCA, WCC, SVD (exceptions: U.S. and U.S.A.). Other abbreviations will have a period (St., Dr.) in both singular and plural forms (ed., eds.).

Put a space between initials in personal names (M. M. Thomas, not M.M. Thomas), but not in M.D., WCC, or SVD.

Avoid abbreviations of place names, such as NYC for New York City. Spell out the names of states in the text. In endnotes and bibliographies, use traditional abbreviations for states in the United States, not two-letter postal codes.

Other Considerations

a. *Foreign words and expressions*

If you must use unfamiliar words or expressions, please provide an English translation immediately following in parentheses. Example: *omnia vincit amor* (love conquers all).

b. Subheadings

Make subheadings stylistically consistent. Keep subheadings to one line.

c. Numbers

Spell out whole numbers one through ninety-nine, but use figures for larger numbers, percentages (6 percent—note that “percent” is spelled out as one word), page numbers, and some exact measurements (5 1/2 feet). If similar numbers both large and small occur in a single paragraph or section, use figures for all of them (the group consisted of 29 women and 103 men).

Some other examples: 1890s (no apostrophe); 1871–1875 (*not* 1871–75); 25 million people, \$3.5 million, 4,000 (comma with ordinary number).

d. Dates

In the text, use the style: December 13, 1987, *not* 13 December 1987. Spell out the months.

e. Punctuation

Use the series comma for three or more items in a series. Example: The basket held bananas, mangoes, and papayas.

Use double quotation marks, single within double. Example: He said, “God appeared to me and said, ‘Go, serve my people in that land.’”

Periods and commas belong inside quotation marks; colons and semicolons fall outside quotation marks.

There should usually be no ellipsis at the beginning or end of a quotation.

f. Capitalization and Italics

Titles of positions, even quite long or important ones, should be lowercase (example: the director of internal affairs, the president) unless followed by the name of a particular person (example: Secretary Akyeamong, President Kuffuor). Likewise, full titles of organizations are capitalized (example: Ghana Commercial Bank) but not the shortened form (example: the bank).

Italicize titles of books and journals. Do not underline or italicize for emphasis.

g. Warning: Use of copyrighted material

Never present another author’s work as your own by incorporating his or her material without using quotation marks. Use direct quotation only if it adds significant dimension to your article, and cite your source appropriately in the endnotes. Do not submit a précis of another work. Consult as many resources as are relevant to your story. At the end of your story, list in alphabetical order the full bibliographical information on all your sources using Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*. (See the appendix on page 26 and the “General Guidelines” section beginning on page 3.)

Preparing and submitting your story

a. *File format*

Please submit an electronic version of your article either through your liaison coordinator or directly to the project manager (dacb@bu.edu). We prefer to receive files prepared in recent versions of MS Word for PC. Macintosh versions of Word are also acceptable. If you are submitting more than one story, each one should be in a separate electronic file. Use the first six or so letters of the story title to name your file. The edited version of your story may be referred back to you for further clarification if necessary.

Responsibility for Accuracy

Authors are responsible for accuracy of names, dates, statistics, quotations, and accent marks. *Liaison coordinators, supervisors, and participating institutions will have the final responsibility of verifying the historicity and accuracy of all information in the articles.*

Always keep back-up electronic and hard copies of your files.

Editorial Procedures

Each manuscript will be reviewed and edited for style and content by the editors. If the editors have no substantive questions about content, the manuscript will be approved for publication. If the editors request substantive changes or additions, the manuscript will be returned to the original writer for revision.

Creating a Bibliography or Source List

Bibliography

The bibliography should point readers to key sources of information. It should mention books or major articles to which the interested reader could turn for further information about the subject.

Items to include in the bibliography:

1. Autobiographies, if any, with date, if not already mentioned in the text.
2. Titles and dates of selected major published works by the subject not mentioned in the text.
3. The best available biographies, book-length critical studies, and doctoral dissertations on the subject, if they exist, with dates.
4. Major articles about the subject if no book-length biographies exist.
5. A Festschrift for the subject, if any, with date.
6. Any known collection of the subject's letters, papers, and diaries.
7. Identities (names, affiliation) of oral sources (e.g., interviews—see examples below).

Bibliographic Style

For books, only the author's name, the book title, and the place and date of publication are needed. Give the original copyright date, followed by the most recent date of publication known to you, and indicate if the book is a 2nd, 3rd, revised or enlarged edition. In the case of journal articles, include the volume, year, and page numbers. Italicize book and journal names and abbreviations, or underline them if you are not able to italicize.

For oral sources, indicate the name(s) of narrator(s) and place(s) and date(s) of interview(s). Cross-check information with other oral or written sources that may be available.

After the text of the article, one line below the author's signature, type "Bibliography:" on a new line, flush left. Then begin the bibliography on a new line flush left.

Alphabetize items according to the last name of the author. **Do not indent** the runover lines of each reference (see examples below). Please refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style* for a consistent bibliographic style.

For multiple entries by one author, a hyphen (-) repeated eight times should take the place of the author's name in the second (and subsequent) entries.

The first time you cite a source, the note should include publishing information for the work cited as well as the page number on which the passage being quoted may be found. For example:

1. Peter Burchard, *One Gallant Rush: Robert Gould Shaw and His Brave Black Regiment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 85.

For subsequent references to a source you have already cited, give only the author's last name, followed by a comma and the page or pages cited. For example:

4. Burchard, 31.

If you cite more than one work by the same author, include a short form of the titles in subsequent citations. A short form of the title of a book is underlined or italicized; a short form of the title of an article is put in quotation marks.

8. Burchard, *One Gallant Rush*, 31.

10. Burchard, "Civil War," 9.

NOTE: The *Chicago Manual of Style* no longer requires the use of "ibid." to refer to the work cited in the previous note. The Latin abbreviations "op. cit." and "loc. cit." are also no longer used.

Forms for Note (Citation) and Bibliographical References

Book, one author

Note form:

Daniel A. Weiss, *Oedipus in Nottingham: D. H. Lawrence* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 62.

Bibliography form:

Weiss, Daniel A. *Oedipus in Nottingham: D. H. Lawrence*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962.

Book, two authors

Note form:

Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Strange,
Victorian Poetry and Poetics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 27.

Bibliography form:

Houghton, Walter E., and G. Robert Strange.
Victorian Poetry and Poetics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959.

Book, three or more authors, and book in a series

Note form:

Jaroslav Pelikan and others, *Religion and the University*, York University Invitation Lecture Series (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 109.

Bibliography form:

Pelikan, Jaroslav, M. G. Ross, W. G. Pollard, M. N. Eisendrath, C. Moeller, and A. Wittenberg. *Religion and the University*. York University Invitation Lecture Series. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964.

Book, no author given

Note form:

New Life Options: The Working Women's Resource Book (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 42.

Bibliography form:

New Life Options: The Working Women's Resource Book. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.

Institution, association, or the like, as "author"

Note form:

American Library Association, *ALA Handbook of Organization and 1995/1996 Membership Directory* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1995), 586.

Bibliography form:

American Library Association. *ALA Handbook of Organization and 1995/1996 Membership Directory*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1995.

Editor or compiler as "author"

Note form:

J. N. D. Anderson, ed., *The World's Religions* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1950), 143.

Bibliography form:

Anderson, J. N. D., ed. *The World's Religions*. London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1950.

Edition other than the first

Note form:

William R. Shepherd, *Historical Atlas*, 8th ed. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1956), 62.

Bibliography form:

Shepherd, William R. *Historical Atlas*, 8th ed. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1956.

Reprint edition

Note form:

Gunnar Myrdal, *Population: A Problem for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1956), 9.

Bibliography form:

Myrdal, Gunnar. *Population: A Problem for Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940. Reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1956.

Component part by one author in a work by another

Note form:

Paul Tillich, "Being and Love," in *Moral Principles of Action*, ed. Ruth N. Anshen (New York: Harper and Bros., 1952), 663.

Bibliography form:

Tillich, Paul. "Being and Love." In *Moral Principles of Action*, ed. Ruth N. Anshen, 661–72. New York: Harper and Bros., 1952.

One volume from a multivolume work

Note form:

Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 2, *A.D. 1500–A.D. 1975* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1975).

Bibliography form:

Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of Christianity*. Vol. 2, *A.D. 1500—A.D. 1975*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1975.

Electronic document from the Internet

Note form:

William J. Mitchell, *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), http://www.mitpress.mit.edu:80/City_of_Bits/Pulling_Glass/inex.html (accessed September 29, 1995).

Bibliography form:

Mitchell, William J. *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995. Http://www.mitpress.mit.edu:80/City_of_Bits/Pulling_Glass/inex.html (accessed September 29, 1995).

Encyclopedia, unsigned article

Note form:

Collier's Encyclopedia, 1994 ed., s.v. "Mindoro."

Well-known reference books are generally not listed in bibliographies.

Encyclopedia, signed article

Note form:

C. Hugh Holman, "Romanticism," in *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1988 ed.

Well-known reference books are generally not listed in bibliographies.

Interview (unpublished) by writer of paper or article

Note form:

Nancy D. Morganis, interview by author, July 16, 1996, Fall River, Mass., tape recording.

Bibliography form:

Morganis, Nancy D. Interview by author, July 16, 1996, Fall River, Mass. Tape recording.

Newspaper article

Note form:

"Profile of Marriott Corp.," *New York Times*, January 21, 1990, sec. 3, p. 5.

Bibliography form:

"Profile of Marriott Corp." *New York Times*, January 21, 1990, sec. 3, p. 5.

Article in a journal or magazine published monthly

Note form:

Robert Sommer, "The Personality of Vegetables: Botanical Metaphors for Human Characteristics," *Journal of Personality* 56, no. 4 (December 1988): 670.

Bibliography form:

Sommer, Robert. "The Personality of Vegetables: Botanical Metaphors for Human Characteristics." *Journal of Personality* 56, no. 4 (December 1988): 665–83.

Article in a magazine published weekly (or of general interest)

Note form:

Robin Knight, "Poland's Feud in the Family," *U.S. News and World Report*, September 10, 1990, 52.

Bibliography form:

Knight, Robin. "Poland's Feud in the Family." *U.S. News and World Report*, September 10, 1990, 52–53, 56.

Thesis or dissertation

Note form:

O. C. Phillips, Jr., "The Influence of Ovid on Lucan's *Bellum Civile*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1962), 14.

Bibliography form:

Phillips, O. C., Jr. "The Influence of Ovid on Lucan's *Bellum Civile*." Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1962.

Supplementary sources for this section:

Chicago Documentation Style, <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/history/footnotes.html> (accessed July 10, 2003).

Clement C. Maxwell Library, "Turabian Style: Sample Footnotes and Bibliographic Entries," 6th ed., <http://www.bridgew.edu/Library/turabian.htm> (accessed August 6, 2003).

"Documentation Guide—Turabian," <http://juno.concordia.ca/faqs/turabian.html> (accessed August 6, 2003).

"Exchange: Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research—Style Requirements."

Maxine C. Hairston, *Successful Writing*, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998).

"Instructions for Contributors," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, edited and adapted by Michèle Sigg.

Quick Guide to Formatting a *DACB* Biography

When submitting a biography for publication on the *DACB* Web site, your article should include four major parts:

- 1) the heading,
- 2) the body of the article followed by the author's full name,
- 3) the notes and/or sources, and
- 4) the author's brief biographical paragraph.

1) The **heading** should be in bold (but not all CAPS) on four separate lines:

Instructions	Example
Last name (family name), first names Birth date to death date Church affiliation Country	Boyejo, James Abayomi 1928 to 2011 Foursquare Gospel Church Nigeria

2) The **body** of the article should be **single spaced** with **no indentation for paragraphs** and **one space between paragraphs**. At the end, skip one line and add the author's full name.

Example
<p>In the USA, the United Kingdom, and other parts of the world where the ministry work took him to, Boyejo (fondly referred to as Papa Foursquare), worked with churches as a guest speaker in conferences and seminars, sharing with them his wealth of experience in ministry, church matters, and the Word. In the midst of these new experiences in 2003, the enemy struck. He lost his first born, Ayodele. However, the Lord gave him the fortitude to bear this great loss. Like David, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God and continued doing exploits for Him.</p> <p>He remained active in one way or another within the church, both in Nigeria and abroad, travelling from the USA to Nigeria when necessary. He fell ill in the USA and was flown back to Nigeria for medical attention by the leadership of the Foursquare Gospel Church in Nigeria. As it pleased the Lord however, he died peacefully on the morning of Friday, June 17, 2011 at the age of eighty-three. He is survived by wife, children, and grandchildren. [1]</p> <p>Michael Adeleke Ogunewu</p>

3) Note numbers should be added in the text **not** with superscript but by putting the number in square brackets. See example at end of article above. Ex: [1]. The notes section should be numbered using 1,2,3, etc. Use any style for your notes and bibliography but be consistent. Do not use a hanging indent or any indentation for the bibliography.

Example of a Notes / Bibliography section:
<p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These difficulties are not uncommon in the region. 2. His sister's account provided more detail that I did not include here. <p>Bibliography:</p> <p>Kayanga, Samuel E. and Andrew Wheeler. <i>But God Is Not Defeated, Celebrating the Centenary of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan 1899 – 1999</i>. Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999.</p> <p>Smith, Mary, sister. Interview by author. Juba, South Sudan. July 13, 2013.</p>

4) The author's biography should contain a very brief description of yourself (pastor, student, instructor, other?), any institution you are affiliated with (if you are a student or a lecturer), your church or mission

agency (if you are a pastor or missionary) and, if pertinent, your relationship to the subject (example: if you are the daughter of the person whose biography you have written).

Example

This article, submitted in April 2012, was researched and written by Babatomiwa Moses Owojaiye, a Pastor-teacher serving with the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Nigeria while a PhD student in World Christianity at Africa International University, Nairobi, Kenya.

Suggestions for Writing a Good Biography¹

Preparing for the research

a. *Choosing subjects*

After prospective writers and researchers have been introduced to the project, the next step is to choose the subjects on which biographies are to be written. Any individuals who are deemed to have made a significant contribution to the African church at a local, regional, national, or denominational level, whether they are missionaries, clergy, or laypeople, are eligible. Other sources for names of potential subjects include:

- 1) *The “Potential Subjects” pages on the DACB Website* (on the “Resources for Writers” page) contain lists of subjects, organized by country, with a few basic facts about them and some bibliographic references.
- 2) *Printed materials of all kinds*, including church and mission archives, church histories, mission histories, denominational histories, doctoral and masters’ theses, and in-house denominational and mission society magazines, as well as existing reference tools and biographical dictionaries, can be culled with a view to discovering the names of key African Christians.
- 3) *The present leaders of church denominations, missions, and outreach agencies* will also be able to identify potential subjects. In addition, elderly church members will often remember the stories of outstanding Christian leaders whose stories will be all but lost once those elders have died and the oral memory has faded.

Structuring the Biography

Give your story a “pyramid” structure. Your paragraphs should have a logical progression—chronological or otherwise—and correspond to the thrust of your subject’s contribution to the life of the church in his or her context. Keep your audience in mind at all times. Avoid jargon, platitudes, generalities, banter, in-group jokes, esoteric allusions, unnecessary opinions, unattributed quotations, and digressions. Avoid wordiness. Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly and make every word count.

When in doubt, define a term or identify a person. This is not the place to put forward novel theories or enter into esoteric academic debates. If there is a serious difference of scholarly opinion on a subject, present all sides fairly. Avoid hagiography (an idolizing biography), polemic, and unsubstantiated or damaging information. Write with sensitivity and ensure the integrity of your story.

Do not send autobiographies. Do not forward the curriculum vitae of prospective characters you want to have included in the dictionary. Do not write for a person who is writing your own story. Be certain that the person whose story you are writing has made significant and identifiable impact on the life of the African church. Ecclesiastical positions do not automatically qualify persons for inclusion in the database. Look, in particular, for the unsung heroes who have made an impact.

Suggestions for writing

a. *Hints on how to write a good biographical account for the DACB*

¹ This section was developed by 2010-2011 Project Luke Fellow Dr. Kehinde Olabimtan, former liaison coordinator for the DACB at the Akrofi-Christaller Center, Akropong, Ghana.

In *Successful Writing*, 4th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998 [pp. 7–15]), Maxine Hairston identifies seven elements in effective writing. These are:

- 1) Good writing is *significant* because it says something worthwhile.
- 2) It is *clear* in that the readers for whom it is written can understand it.
- 3) It is *unified* because its various parts hold together.
- 4) It is *economical* because it does not waste the time of its readers with unnecessary words.
- 5) It is written in *grammatically acceptable English* and with correct spelling.

These are the basic requirements for good writing. But a good text will achieve excellence when it also has the following characteristics:

- 6) It has *vigor* because it invokes the senses of the reader.
- 7) It carries the *authentic voice* of the writer because the reader can sense the presence of the writer.

To summarize: Good writing has focus and is coherent, with a logical flow of ideas and information. These qualities are particularly desirable when writing biographical accounts. They help to unify different aspects of a personality that would otherwise appear arbitrary and conflicting. When these qualities (i.e., focus, coherence, and logical flow) are enhanced with the correct use of grammar, communication becomes simple and clear. This, in turn, helps to sustain the interest of readers.

b. Some specific ways to achieve an interesting story for the DACB

- 1) Decide which aspects of your subject's story you wish to develop. It helps you to keep a focus.
- 2) Choose only those pieces of information that add value to your story. While many issues may relate to your subject, you should include only that which is relevant to your focus, which, in this case, is the subject's specific contributions to the life of the church in your community. Exercising good judgment in this matter is crucial to the success of your composition.
- 3) Make an outline that will help you weave together details of the story into a logical pattern of thought with the progression of exposition, climax, and ending. This is particularly useful if you have not been doing creative writing.
- 4) In the article, clearly describe the environment in which your subject grew up and how it influenced him or her. This acknowledges that people are the products of their environment. Situating them in the context of their times and social environment is like an artist adding a background to a painted object: it adds depth and enhances form.
- 5) Be objective. Do not allow your biases to get in the way of your story and cloud your readers' understanding of your subject's life. It does not matter whether the biases are positive or negative. Modesty is a virtue in telling the story of someone else's life.
- 6) Review your drafts several times to ensure that there is no conflict in the message you are communicating to your readers. Dated events and their sequence are particularly important. Your story should, as much as it is possible, be self-explanatory and without any ambiguity. You will not be there when the biographies are being consulted.

- 7) A good article should have a list of sources for interested readers who wish to do further research. This is the purpose of a bibliography. The richer your list of sources, the more value you add to your story.

NB: The *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* is an academic research project, so tune your mind to all the requirements of stimulating academic research. There is no perfect story, no account that cannot be improved. You only need to cultivate the skills for doing research and enhance them with good writing skills, which also develop with conscious efforts to learn how to write. This project may be a way for you to begin that process.

Plagiarism: Resources for Identifying and Avoiding Plagiarism

What is plagiarism?²

In academic writing, it is considered plagiarism to draw any idea or any language from someone else without adequately crediting that source in your paper. It doesn't matter whether the source is a published author, another student, a Web site without clear authorship, a Web site that sells academic papers, or any other person: Taking credit for anyone else's work is stealing, and it is unacceptable in all academic situations, whether you do it intentionally or by accident. The kind of source you use, or the absence of an author linked to that source, does not change the fact that you always need to cite your sources.

While it may seem obvious that copying someone else's words verbatim and submitting them in a paper with your name on it is plagiarism, other types of plagiarism may be less familiar to you. These more subtle forms of plagiarism are actually more common, and you should make sure you understand all of them, as well as how to avoid them by conducting your research and writing carefully and responsibly.

Types of plagiarism

Verbatim (word-for-word) plagiarism

If you copy language word for word from another source and use that language in your paper, you are plagiarizing *verbatim*. Even if you write down your own ideas in your own words and place them around text that you've drawn directly from a source, you *must* give credit to the author of the source material, either by placing the source material in quotation marks and providing a clear citation, or by paraphrasing the source material and providing a clear citation.

Mosaic plagiarism

If you copy bits and pieces from a source (or several sources), changing a few words here and there without either adequately paraphrasing or quoting directly, the result is *mosaic plagiarism*. Even if you don't intend to copy the source, you may end up committing this type of plagiarism as a result of careless note-taking and confusion over where your source's ideas end and your own ideas begin. You may think that you've paraphrased sufficiently, or quoted relevant passages, but if you haven't taken careful notes along the way, or if you've cut and pasted from your sources, you can lose track of the boundaries between your own ideas and those of your sources. It's not enough to have good intentions and to cite some of the material you use. You are responsible for making clear distinctions between your ideas and the ideas of the scholars who have informed your work. If you keep track of the ideas that come from your sources and have a clear understanding of how your own ideas differ from those ideas, and you follow the correct citation style, you will avoid mosaic plagiarism.

Inadequate paraphrase

When you paraphrase, your task is to distill the source's ideas in your own words. It's not enough to change a few words here and there and leave the rest; instead, you must completely restate the ideas in the passage in your own words. If your own language is too close to the original, then you are plagiarizing, even if you do provide a citation.

² This material (up to 'The Apt Text') is taken from *The Harvard Guide to Using Sources*, http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page342054#a_icb_pagecontent732741_quotation

In order to make sure that you are using your own words, it's a good idea to put away the source material while you write your paraphrase of it. This way, you will force yourself to distill the point you think the author is making and articulate it in a new way. Once you have done this, you should look back at the original and make sure that you have not used the same words or sentence structure. If you do want to use some of the author's words for emphasis or clarity, you must put those words in quotation marks and provide a citation.

Uncited paraphrase

When you use your own language to describe someone else's idea, that idea still belongs to the author of the original material. Therefore, it's not enough to paraphrase the source material responsibly; you also need to cite the source, even if you have changed the wording significantly. As with quoting, when you paraphrase you are offering your reader a glimpse of someone else's work on your chosen topic, and you should also provide enough information for your reader to trace that work back to its original form. The rule of thumb here is simple: Whenever you use ideas that you did not think up yourself, you need to give credit to the source in which you found them, whether you quote directly from that material or provide a responsible paraphrase.

Uncited quotation

When you put source material in quotation marks in your essay, you are telling your reader that you have drawn that material from somewhere else. But it's not enough to indicate that the material in quotation marks is not the product of your own thinking or experimentation: You must also credit the author of that material and provide a trail for your reader to follow back to the original document. This way, your reader will know who did the original work and will also be able to go back and consult that work if he or she is interested in learning more about the topic. Citations should always go directly after quotations.

The “Apt” Text³

This is the almost casual slipping in of a particularly apt term which one has come across in reading and which so admirably expresses one's opinion that one is tempted to make it personal property.

Suggestions for How to Avoid Plagiarizing⁴

Keep track of your sources; print electronic sources

While it's easy enough to keep a stack of books or journal articles on your desk where you can easily refer back to them, it's just as important to keep track of electronic sources. When you save a PDF of a journal article, make sure you put it into a folder on your computer where you'll be able to find it. When you consult a Web site, log the Web address in a separate document from the paper you're writing so that you'll be able to return to the Web site and cite it correctly. You should also print the relevant pages from any Web sites you use, making sure you note the complete URL and the date on which you printed the material. Because electronic sources aren't stable and Web pages can be deleted without notice, beware of directing your readers to sources that might have disappeared. Check when the Web site you're using was last updated and update the URLs as you work and once again right before you submit your essay. If an electronic source disappears before you submit your work, you will need to decide whether or not to keep the source in your paper. If you have printed the source and can turn it in with your paper, you should do so. If you have not

³ The “Apt Text” material is taken from H. Martin and R. Ohmann's *The Logic and Rhetoric of Exposition*, revised edition, (Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

⁴ The material in the “Suggestions” section is taken and adapted from *The Harvard Guide to Using Sources*, <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page342057>, accessed March 21, 2015.

printed the source, you should consult your instructor /supervisor about whether or not to use that source in your paper.

Keep sources in correct context

Whenever you consult a source, you should make sure you understand the context, both of the ideas within a source and of the source itself. You should also be careful to consider the context in which a source was written. For example, a book of essays published by an organization with a political bias might not present an issue with adequate complexity for your project.

The question of context can be more complicated when you're working with Internet sources than with print sources because you may see one Web page as separate from an entire Web site and use or interpret that page without fully understanding or representing its context. For example, a definition of "communism" taken from a Web site with a particular political agenda might provide one interpretation of the meaning of the word—but if you neglect to mention the context for that definition you might use it as though it's unbiased when it isn't. Likewise, some Internet searches will take you to a URL that's just one Web page within a larger Web site; be sure to investigate and take notes on the context of the information you're citing.

Plan ahead

Research can often turn out to be more time-consuming than you anticipate. Budget enough time to search for sources, to take notes, and to think about how to use the sources in your essay. Moments of carelessness are more common when you leave your essay until the last minute and are tired or stressed. Honest mistakes can lead to charges of plagiarism just as dishonesty can; be careful when note-taking and when incorporating ideas and language from electronic sources so you always know what language and ideas are yours and what belongs to a source.

Don't cut and paste: File and label your sources

Never cut and paste information from an electronic source straight into your own essay, and never type verbatim sentences from a print source straight into your essay. Instead, open a separate document on your computer for each source so you can file research information carefully. When you type or cut and paste into that document, make sure to include the full citation information for the print source or the full URL and the date you copied the page(s). For Web sources, make sure to cite the page from which you're taking information, which may not necessarily be the home page of the site you're using. Use logical and precise names for the files you create, and add citation information and dates. This allows you to retrieve the files easily, deters you from accidentally deleting files, and helps you keep a log of the order in which your research was conducted. It's a good idea to add a note to each file that describes how you might use the information in that file. Remember: you're entering a conversation with your sources, and accurate file names and notes can help you understand and engage that conversation. And, of course, always remember to back up your files.

Keep your own writing and your sources separate

Work with either the printed copy of your source(s) or (in the case of online sources), the copy you pasted into a separate document—not the online version—as you draft your essay. This precaution not only decreases the risk of plagiarism but also enables you to annotate your sources in various ways that will help you understand and use them most effectively in your essay.

Keep your notes and your draft separate

Be careful to keep your research notes separate from your actual draft at all stages of your writing process. This will ensure that you don't cut language from a source and paste it into your paper without proper attribution. If you work from your notes, you're more likely to keep track of the boundaries between your own ideas and those in a source.

Paraphrase carefully in your notes; acknowledge your sources explicitly when paraphrasing

When you want to paraphrase material, it's a good idea first to paste the actual quotation into your notes (not directly into your draft) and then to paraphrase it (still in your notes). Putting the information in your own words will help you make sure that you've thought about what the source is saying and that you have a good reason for using it in your paper. Remember to use some form of notation in your notes to indicate what you've paraphrased and mention the author's name within the material you paraphrase. You should also include all citation information in your notes.

When you decide to use paraphrased material in your essay, make sure that you avoid gradually rewording the paraphrased material from draft to draft until you lose sight of the fact that it's still a paraphrase. Also, avoid excessive paraphrasing in which your essay simply strings together a series of paraphrases. When the ideas taken from your sources start to blend in deceptively with your own thinking, you will have a more difficult time maintaining the boundaries between your ideas and those drawn from sources. Finally, whenever you paraphrase, make sure you indicate, at each logical progression, that the ideas are taken from an authored source.

Don't save your citations for later

Never paraphrase or quote from a source without immediately adding a citation. You should add citations in your notes, in your response papers, in your drafts, and in your revisions. Without them, it's too easy to lose track of where you got a quotation or an idea and to end up inadvertently taking credit for material that's not your own.

Quote your sources properly

Always use quotation marks for directly quoted material, even for short phrases and key terms.

Keep a source trail

As you write and revise your essay, make sure that you keep track of your sources in your notes and in each successive draft of your essay. You should begin this process early, even before you start writing your draft. Even after you've handed in your essay, keep all of your research notes and drafts. You ought to be able to reconstruct the path you took from your sources to your notes and from your notes to your drafts and revision. These careful records and clear boundaries between your writing and your sources will help you avoid plagiarism. And if you are called upon to explain your process to your instructor, you'll be able to retrace the path you took when thinking, researching, and writing, from the essay you submitted back through your drafts and to your sources.

Part 2: Resources for Research, Writing, and Teaching

Resources for Doing Oral History Research: Abridged Workshop Curriculum in Oral History Techniques

This section contains guidelines for designing and carrying out an oral history project to collect information for *DACB* stories.

The materials in this section have been adapted from “Doing Oral History: Helping Christians Tell Their Own Stories,” a course curriculum developed by Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest, who has graciously allowed us to reprint them in this booklet.

The Challenges of Biography Writing: Part 1

“Why Biography? The Strengths, Limitations and Inevitability of Biography”

By Dr. Jonathan Bonk

The Challenges of Biography Writing: Part 2

“The Craft of Writing Religious Biography”

By Dr. Dana Robert

Abridged Workshop Curriculum in Oral History Techniques⁵

Step One: Planning

Your goal: To write about the life, ministry, and vision of a Christian leader (hereafter called “the subject”) who played an important role in the founding and development of the African church.

Your preparation: How are you prepared to do the research and to write a story on the particular subject you have chosen? Your preparations must take the following elements into consideration.

1. Preliminary research and written sources of information

Are there archives where the subject is mentioned? Did he/she leave diaries, letters, written sermons, articles, books? It is important that you thoroughly research all possible sources of information about the subject and that you familiarize yourself with them. This preliminary research will help you clarify themes and topics to explore with each narrator and help you to tailor your list of questions.

2. List of persons to interview

Make your list as complete as possible. Different perspectives will yield a more complete portrait of your subject, especially if there was any controversy or persecution during his/her life and ministry.

3. Location(s)

Where will you need to go to conduct your oral interviews? Did your subject live and minister in one or several places? Will you have to go where your narrators live, or are they willing to come and meet with you at another location?

4. Time line(s)

a) How much time are you going to need for the project? When is the best time to conduct interviews with your narrators? Things to consider: rainy / dry season, harvest season, academic year, time allowance for travel, means of transportation. b) What is the timeline of the period you want to write on?

5. Finances

Try to keep your costs as low as possible. Seek creative funding sources through the denomination in which your subject ministered or your own academic institution.

6. Categories / themes / ideas / areas or periods of ministry

List the categories, themes, and ideas you want to explore related to your subject, or specific areas or periods of ministry you want to focus on.

7. Questionnaire

Based on the “Guidelines for Researchers and Writers Template for Writing a Biography,” prepare a questionnaire for your narrators.

⁵ Most of the material in this section is adapted from “Doing Oral History: Helping Christians Tell Their Own Stories,” course curriculum developed by Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest. The *DACB* is grateful to Dr. Wiest for the use of his materials.

Step Two: The Interview— Oral History Project Checklist for Interviewing

1. Before the interview

Contact the narrator, making certain that he or she fully understands the project.

Acquaint yourself with the general background of the narrator. If possible, arrange a pre-interview visit so that you and the narrator may become personally acquainted.

Prepare a list of topics for discussion.

Thoroughly check out equipment prior to the interview. An interview should not be an on-the-job training session.

Make certain you have all the materials you need before departing for the interview: recorder, external microphone, adapters for two-pronged outlets, fresh batteries, tapes, pencils, pads, and release forms.

Make certain you are interviewing in a room that will minimize external noise.

2. During the interview

Make certain the recorder is recording. Identify yourself, the narrator, the date and place, and the purpose of the project, and ask the narrator to agree to the project.

During the interview, jot down proper nouns and other words with questionable spellings.

Conclude the interview by again naming the interviewer, the narrator, and the purpose of the project.

3. After the interview

Be sure to ask the narrator about spelling and other questions which you may have concerning the interview.

Have the narrator sign the release form.

When you return home or to the office, make a list of proper nouns and other words and aspects of the interview which you think may be useful to future indexers and transcribers.

Send a thank you note to the narrator.⁶

4. Conducting a good interview⁷

a. What *not* to do:

⁶ The material in step 2, parts 1, 2, and 3, is adapted from *Talking About Connecticut: Oral History in the Nutmeg State*.

⁷ Material in step 2, part 4 is adapted from Derek Reimer, *Voices: A Guide to Oral History* (Victoria, BC: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1984).

- Do not force your beliefs or opinions on the narrator.
- Do not force responses to sensitive questions.
- Do not ask leading questions or closed questions (see examples in the charts below.).
- Do not draw attention to the recorder.
- Do not make a lot of noise.
- Do not argue with the narrator.
- Do not make the interview very long so you and the narrator get very tired.
- Do not dominate the interview by giving long answers to questions the narrator asks you.

b. Choice of questions: leading vs. neutral questions

LEADING QUESTIONS	NEUTRAL QUESTIONS
You must have been happy on election night.	How did you feel on election night?
You didn't like Mr. X, did you?	Tell me about Mr. X.
What do you think of Mr. Jones's outrageous behavior?	What did Mr. Jones do then?

c. Choice of questions: closed vs. open-ended questions

CLOSED QUESTIONS	OPEN-ENDED OR EVOCATIVE QUESTIONS
Where were your parents born?	What did your parents tell you about their lives?
Did your family have gatherings?	Describe your family gatherings.
What holidays did your family celebrate?	How were holidays celebrated in your family?
Was religion important to your family?	Tell me about religious observances in your family.
Did you and your friends play games as children?	Describe some games you played as a child.
When did you finish school?	How did your formal education end?
Were you in the service during World War II?	Tell me about your life during World War II.
Did you get a job after the war?	Tell me what you did after you got out of the service.
Did you like your job?	Describe how you felt about your job.

Step Three: Transcribing and Keeping Records

Transcribe your interviews for easy reference. Make sure to properly identify your recording with the names of the interviewer and narrator, and the place and date of the interview. Do the same with the copy of the transcript of the interview.

If you have multiple interviews, record them separately so that they are easier to retrieve.

For each separate biographical subject, keep a log of the interviews you have made, with the names of the interviewer and narrator, the occupation of the narrator, his/her relation to the subject, and the place and date of the interview.

Oral History Worksheet and Forms

We suggest that you reproduce the information contained on the following pages in separate documents which can then be reproduced multiple times for all your interviews.

Guidelines for Writers: Template for Collecting Biographical Information

Biography Writing: Outline and Organizing Template

Document: Use of Notes and Sources

Oral History Project release forms are to be signed by narrator and interviewer. The release forms are reproduced following a model made for the Maryknoll Society History Program.

**Guidelines for Researchers and Writers:
Template for Collecting Basic Biographical Information**

1. Given name(s) of Person. As necessary, provide explanations of these names.	
Baptismal names	
Kinship names	
Nicknames	
2. Family names. If there is more than one spouse, list the children under the appropriate mother or father.	
Ethno-linguistic group	
Kinship group	
Father	
Mother	
Wife/Wives	
Husband/Husbands	
Children	
Grandchildren	
3. Life Story	
Date or approximate date of birth	
Place of birth: village, city, province, nation	
Unusual circumstances associated with birth	
Formative experiences, such as illnesses, personal misfortunes, tragedies, visions, etc.	
Education, degrees (including dates)	
Conversion (including date, if applicable)	
Calling and/or ordination to ministry (including date)	
Date or approximate date, place,	

and circumstances of death	
4. Nationality / citizenship:	
5. Languages, including first, second, third, fourth, fifth, etc.:	
6. Church affiliation (Roman Catholic; Orthodox; Coptic ; Protestant (Conciliar, Evangelical, Anabaptist); Independent (African initiated, Spiritual, Pentecostal / charismatic):	
7. Names, locations, and descriptions of churches begun or served by the Subject	
(Dates / Time frame)	(Locations)
8. Ministry details: Where? How long? What happened? Short term and long term impact? (Please provide detailed information wherever possible, including anecdotes, stories, and hearsay)	
(Dates / Time frame)	(Events, impact, stories, anecdotes)
9. Continuing influence and significance of the Subject:	
10. Publications, reports, writings, letters, musical compositions, artistic contributions by the Subject, including title, date, and publisher, if possible:	
(Title)	(Place of publication, publisher, date)
11. Sources of information about the Subject	
Unpublished : Eyewitness accounts (give names and addresses of storytellers who are or were eyewitnesses; include details of their relationship to the Subject) Oral and anecdotal (give names and addresses of storytellers wherever possible, and include details of their relationship to the Subject)	

<p>Published (include full bibliographic data wherever possible: book title, author, publisher, year of publication; title of chapter within a book, author of the chapter, title of the book, name of the editor of the book, full publication data; title of article in periodical, author of article, periodical title, date of periodical, page numbers of article, place of publication.)</p>	
<p>12. Other pertinent information:</p>	

Writing a DACB Biography: Outlining and Organizing TEMPLATE

1) Heading: Fill in the heading of your story as it should appear according to the *DACB* format.

Name:
Dates:
Church:
Country:

2) Outlining your Biography: Using your “Template for Collecting Basic Biographical Information,” organize the information into the outline of a biography.

Summary sentence (one or two aspects of the subject’s life and ministry that capture his Christian witness):

Part 1:

Part 2:

Part 3:

Conclusion / Summary of spiritual legacy:

Use of Notes and Sources

Here are some helpful examples of how notes are used in a biography to clarify meaning and to contain the non-essential information that is helpful to readers interested in doing further research.

Example of Note Used in <i>DACB</i> Story	Reason for note
1. He himself and others used either the name Paulo Pera or Paul Pera (without the "o" at the end of Paul). In his short autobiography (see note 4) he called himself Paul Pera, the name which is also written on his tombstone in Vunde.	<i>Further clarification of information in text of particular interest to researchers, less interesting for the lay readers.</i>
2. Autobiography in two parts, written 1926/1927 in Kiswahili: Berlin State Library - Prussian Cultural Heritage, Oriental Department, Hs. or. 9966, 2. Here Paul Pera explains, that Mwamribwa was his nickname meaning mtu aliyelishwa chakula na mchuzi mwingi in Swahili--that is, "a person who was fed with food containing a lot of sauce." Translation by the author.	<i>Reference where information can be found Further explanation and clarification of particular data in the text. Putting the information here lightens up the story to give it a better flow.</i>
3. Autobiography, Hs. or. 9966 and 9967.	<i>Reference for a quote in the text.</i>
4. August Krämer lived and worked in Tanga from 1890 to 1895; in 1896 he passed away while staying at a health resort in Egypt.	<i>Additional information on a secondary character named in the story.</i>
5. "Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft für Deutsch-Ostafrik" (EMDOA), sometimes referred to as Berlin III; in 1920 it was renamed the Bethel Mission.	<i>Historical information on a church mentioned in the text. This information is not central to the biography.</i>
6. Schutzgebiet: euphemism for colony, mostly translated as protectorate, but sometimes as protected area.	<i>Translation and explanation of term used in the text.</i>
7. January 29, Archives and Museum Foundation Wuppertal, M 184, 055.	<i>Source of information (in this case a date).</i>

Three Examples of Interview Agreement Forms

A. Interviewer Agreement

This tape (or tapes) and the accompanying transcripts are the result of one or more voluntary interviews conducted by _____ with _____

Any reader of the transcript should bear in mind that s/he is reading a transcript of our spoken words, and that the tape, not the transcript, is the primary document.

I hereby permit the Maryknoll Society History Program and all researchers approved of or associated with the Society History Program full use if this interview and full use of all other materials I donate to the Program.

Signature of Interviewer Date

Signature of Narrator Date

B. Interview Agreement

Date: _____

I, _____, give permission for my interview with _____ to be used by individuals engaged in writing the History of the Maryknoll Mission Community in Brazil. I further permit these materials to be donated to the Maryknoll Society History Program of the Center for Mission Research and Study and the Maryknoll Archives in order for my thoughts and ideas to be available to future researchers.

Signature of Narrator Date

C. Narrator Agreement *(To be used only in the event of a restriction)*

I, _____, make the following contributions to the Maryknoll Society Program, and through it, to the Maryknoll Mission Archives, and wish to place the following restrictions on the interview materials:

Signature of Narrator Date

Acknowledgement

The Maryknoll Society History Program gratefully acknowledges the above contributions to the Program.

Signature of Research Director Date

The Challenges of Biography Writing: Part 1

Why Biography? The Strengths, Limitations and Inevitability of Biography By Dr. Jonathan Bonk

Research Professor of Mission, Boston University
Director, *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*

“We are always coming up with the emphatic facts of history in our private experience, and verifying them here. All history becomes subjective; in other words, there is properly no history; only biography.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Although biography is neither the definitive nor an entirely reliable window into the past, without biography there could be no human history. “Histories” or “herstories” are the highly selective, sometimes haphazard, frequently idiosyncratic collections of memories assembled and arranged to make sense of a person’s or a people’s place in time and space. To entitle any historical narrative using the definite article is presumptuous at best, and dangerous at worst. No history can claim to be more than a history, rather than the history, of anyone, any people, or any event.

Where does biography fit into the picture? Without biography, Judaism and Christianity would have no sacred texts. For biographies—one might characterize them as character silhouettes, shadows, outlines, or sometimes vivid word images—lie at the core of the Biblical narrative. The story begins with God, and continues through patchy accounts of human beings claiming special affinity to their creator. These named-and-remembered fellow mortals are sometimes deeply flawed, occasionally singular, but usually utterly ordinary. Snippets of their life stories seemed to bygone chroniclers to be somehow worth remembering and recounting: Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Abraham, Sarah, Lot, Hagar, Ishmael, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Laban, Esau, Leah, Rachel, Dinah, Joseph, Judah, Tamar, Potiphar’s wife, Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh, Miriam, Jethro, Joshua, Rahab, Achan, Deborah, Gideon, Samson, Delilah, Ruth, Naomi, kings, prophets, disciples, apostles, and so on it goes.

Without these biographies there could be no Jewish or Christian scriptures, no way to trace God’s active interest in the human predicament. It is through such biographies that we subsequent generations of leaders and followers have been able to graft our own ordinariness into the grander story of God’s engagement in human time, life and circumstance.

The *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* makes no pretense to being a definitive history of anyone. It is a growing smattering of biographical stories, recalled and recounted by men and women with their own limiting perspectives, biases, insights, and opportunities. A number of its subjects have generated multiple biographies, each reflecting an author’s unique vantage point, not unlike the accounts of Jesus’ life provided by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the Christian gospels.

Without such biographies, coming generations of African church historians and their readers will be hard pressed to locate authentically African voices in the uniquely African story of Christianity across the continent. So while acknowledging that even the best biographies are mere glimpses “through a glass darkly”, without a biographical foundation, more comprehensive church histories will be largely irrelevant, unrecognizable to those about whom and for whom they are ostensibly written.

Shared memory ensures the self-conscious continuity of a family, a religion, or a people and is a staple of both formal and informal education in all societies and nation states. “A people,” poet laureate Robert Pinsky reminded readers, “is defined and unified not by blood but by shared memory.... Deciding to remember, and what to remember, is how we decide who we are.”

The Challenges of Biography Writing: Part 2

The Craft of Writing Religious Biography

By Dr. Dana Robert

Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Mission, Boston University; Director, Center for Global Christianity and Mission

My interest in religious biography extends to my undergraduate days at Louisiana State University, when in the 1970s I wrote an honors' thesis on Daniel Berrigan and the Catholic left. I still remember the thrill of wading through years of the New York Times and documenting each draft card burning and anti-war protest, of reading Berrigan's prize-winning poetry from the 1950s, of hunting down his essays and articles, and ordering all his books through interlibrary loan. As I constructed my pioneer biography—that I now in hindsight realize I should have published—I came to know the late 1940s until the mid-1970s from inside the world of an Irish-American Jesuit activist. As a young public school student from southern Louisiana, I learned all about life in a Catholic seminary, about places I had never been like New York City and Block Island. I experienced the birth of revolutionary theology in Latin America, the first anti-Vietnam protests, the angst over civil disobedience and incarceration in Danbury prison. Living the 1960s through the eyes of Daniel Berrigan meant that I, too, began reading books by Thomas Merton, and holding political discussions with William Stringfellow, and pouring blood on draft files in Catonsville, Maryland.

What drew me to write about Daniel Berrigan when I was 20 years old, is the same thing that has drawn me to interview numerous church workers in Zimbabwe and missionaries, to write three dozen entries for the Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions, and two biographies of Arthur T. Pierson. More than any other genre, biography allows me to get inside the relationship between religious beliefs and the activities of life. Biography tests the relationship between faith and action. It bridges intellectual and social history by demonstrating how ideas grow and change in the context of a particular life, and how life circumstances shape beliefs. Before scholars began talking about "lived religion," religious biography exemplified it.

My attraction to religious biography therefore flows from the chief question that drew me into religious history, namely, what is the relationship between beliefs in ultimate reality, and human action.

Since the idea of religious biography is composed of two elements, religion and biography, let me consider each of these in turn and then reflect on how together they are greater than the sum of their parts. First religion. To write a biography of a self-consciously religious person means accepting that religious belief is an independent variable, not reducible to class, race, gender, or social location. Although all these non-theological factors must compose an interpretive framework in a classic "life and times" biography, basic respect for the person means that we cannot reduce everything to factors of social location. After all, most human beings experience themselves as self-conscious actors—if not as subjects of their own history, then at least as persons who make choices with the hand of cards they have been dealt. Real people may experience oppression, but they do not think of their own faith as reducible to race, class, gender, or social location. The craft of religious biography therefore requires a basic respect for the subject's integrity. Respect for his or her integrity includes taking religious belief seriously and not dismissing it as a form of false consciousness. Only if we take religious world views seriously can we enter into the worlds of women and of persons in oral cultures, not to mention the worlds of theologians and ministers and presidents of the United States.

The benefit of a respectful approach is that it allows the biographer to enter the world view of persons quite dissimilar from herself. I've had people ask me how I as a southern Methodist woman have been able to portray with such understanding the viewpoint of a New York Yankee Presbyterian premillennial dispensationalist male like A.T. Pierson. Because I respected him as an autonomous human being, I sought to understand and to portray Pierson's theological formulations as logical and making sense, given his context. Being an outsider to his religious viewpoint was beneficial, since I carried no baggage about dispensationalism either for or against it. Once I understood Pierson's religious worldview from a position of sympathy, I could understand why he made decisions against his own self-interest, such as being re-baptized, an action for which he lost his livelihood and was defrocked as a Presbyterian minister.

And this is another reason why the religion part of religious biography is so fascinating: Religious belief can explain why people act against their own obvious immediate self-interests. I think this factor is why I am

so interested in the biographies of missionaries. Was it really in her own self-interest for Baptist Sarah Comstock in Burma around 1840, to send away all of her children for education in the United States, knowing she might never see them again? Was it really in Simon Kimbangu's self-interest to break the law and preach the gospel for six months, and then be imprisoned by the Belgians for thirty years without ever being permitted to see his family? Was it really in Daniel Berrigan's self-interest to be imprisoned for opposing the war in Vietnam?

The attraction of studying individual religious motivation is that it so often leads to the heroic—of people living beyond the limitations of their human nature. And the heroic is interesting precisely because it constantly skirts on the edge of the tragic. Living according to principle can lead to death and destruction, just as easily to success and glory. For scholars, the religion part of religious biography, with its stress on exploring human decisions based on belief in ultimate truths, is what makes people interesting subjects. For believers, at a popular level, the heroic/tragic potential of Christian belief has long made the hagiographic form of religious biography a classic aid to Christian piety. Although I hope that my biographies are not hagiographies, I do wish them to respect persons of faith.

Now to the second part of the equation: biography. To my mind one of the greatest benefits of biography in the study of religion is that it avoids the pitfalls of over-systematization. We historians, with the benefits of hindsight, tend to read later trends back into the historical record and then systematize them in such a way that confirms current configurations—for example the idea that evangelicals are social conservatives, or that Darwinists and modernists are social progressives. Biography, with its respect for the human person, shows how beliefs develop gradually and in context, and in combination with other ideas that to later generations seem incompatible. The biographer must be careful not to jump ahead and to read foregone conclusions into a life in process. When we read snippets of a person's work in a book or journal, we tend to put that person into a box that supports our scholarly conclusions. But when we read his or her work in the context of a life, we better see competing and even inconsistent trends. One example I dealt with in my biography of A.T. Pierson was the assumption that late nineteenth-century premillennial dispensationalism by definition was so concerned with the Second Coming of Jesus that evangelism crowded out concerns for the poor and for social justice. Yet in 1893, A.T. Pierson gave one speech on how the poor were being ground down by rich capitalism and another speech that connected the idea of the kingdom of God with the premillennial Second Coming of Christ. These speeches were delivered a week apart. What historical systematizers would normally keep separate cohere in the life of one person. The biographical approach to the development of late nineteenth century evangelicalism shows how premillennial eschatology did in fact co-exist with social concern for the urban lower classes. To give another example from 1893-- Historians and especially theologians in retrospect assume that the Parliament of Religions was a visionary effort by far-seeing liberals who were eager to promote religious pluralism. Yet the organizer of the proceedings of the Parliament of Religions, the Rev. J. H. Barrows, pastor of 1st Presbyterian Church in Chicago, was also giving speeches to groups of Christian Endeavorers in which he referred to himself as a very conservative old-fashioned Presbyterian.

If the purpose of the historian is to keep the theologian honest, then perhaps one of the roles of the biographer is to keep the historian honest. We simply cannot systematize a person's life because there are too many cross currents and ideas in different stages of development, being expressed during different life stages. For example, what a person thinks about spirituality at age 25 is far different from what he might be thinking at age 75. Changes in intellectual emphasis might signify a change in life stage more than a deliberate repudiation of earlier priorities. The words of Emerson apply well to the craft of writing religious biography: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines."

Finally, my closing words about the relationship between religion and biography: the combination of these two is so interesting because it is naturally accessible. Theological ideas clothed in a real life are more easily understood than when they are naked. History itself is more enjoyable when seen as a succession of real people's lives intersecting with events they cannot ultimately control. My teacher Edmund Morgan tried to teach us something he learned from his teacher Samuel Eliot Morrison—seeking to write in an accessible manner is one of the most important goals of the historian. Biography is a good way to make religious ideas accessible.

The hardest thing about writing a religious biography is the inevitable death of the subject. Just like our own death, we know it is coming, but we dread turning that last page.

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