

# PRO-002 Writing an authoritative biography

## Number/Unique ID

PRO-002

## Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance for writing a biography for the authority record in the Records Creator database in rediscovery.

## Scope

DCA Staff  
Casual Employees  
Interns

## Policy/Procedure Statement

For information on creating authority records see [DAT-036 Records Context Authority Records Policy Information](#)

## General principles

Biographical history notes establish a context from which to understand the person who created the collection.

## Biographical abstract

An abstract is used to summarize the biography,  
The abstract should include, at minimum, the following information:

- Current or last known name (DACS 10.15)
- Life dates in parentheses
- Association with Tufts (if applicable)

## Complete biographical history

In writing the biographical sketch of an individual creator of a collection, follow the following format:

1. In the first paragraph, begin with:
  - a. Individual's name
  - b. Life dates in parentheses
  - c. Association with Tufts (if applicable). If the person has had a long association, choose the most important role or roles that he or she has played.
2. In the second paragraph, give more general life information, including the following, if available:
  - a. Full name, titles, married name(s), alias(es), pseudonym(s), and common or popular name(s) of persons. (DACS 10.16)
  - b. Birth date and location (DACS 10.18 and 10.19)
  - c. Death date and location (DACS 10.18 and 10.19)
  - d. Education (DACS 10.20)
  - e. Occupation, Life and Activities (DACS 10.21)
  - f. Other work experience and important relationships (DACS 10.22)
  - g. Professional achievements (DACS 10.22 and 10.24)
  - h. Family information (DACS 10.17)
  - i. Other significant information (DACS 10.24)
3. This information should be written in narrative form, in rough chronological order.
4. If applicable, provide any extra information about his or her association with Tufts, e.g. anecdotes, trivia, etc.
5. Conclude the narrative with a statement on the individual's death. If applicable, list any Tufts memorials associated with the individual, for example, buildings or rooms that have been named for him or her.

6. Cite your sources at the end of the biography and in the sources field

## Example of a brief biographical note:

MS006: T.J. Anderson, papers

T. J. Anderson (1928- ) is a professor emeritus in the Department of Music.

## Example of a complete biographical note:

MS007: John A. Holmes, papers

John Albert Holmes Jr. (1904-1962) was born in Somerville, Massachusetts, on January 6, 1904 to John Holmes, Sr., an engineer, and Mary (Murdock) Holmes. After attending Somerville public schools, John Holmes entered Tufts College in the fall of 1925. John Cousens, president of Tufts University, heard Holmes read the class poem at his high school graduation, and, impressed with the young poet, took Holmes under his wing during Holmes' student years at Tufts. Holmes received his Bachelor's degree in 1929 and throughout the following year attended graduate courses at Harvard while serving as an assistant in English at Tufts.

Holmes began his teaching career at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, where he served as an Instructor of English during the years 1930-32. He later returned to Somerville and Tufts, joining the faculty of the Department of English as an Instructor in 1934. At Tufts, he advanced through the ranks of assistant and associate to a full professorship in 1960. He was honored with an honorary doctorate by the University in 1962.

Holmes achieved notable success as a poet and author during his lifetime. He published seven collections of poetry: *Address to the Living* (1937), *Fair Warning* (1939), *Map of My Country* (1943), *Along the Row* (1944), *The Double Root* (1950), *The Symbols* (1955), and *The Fortune Teller* (1961). His work appeared in numerous publications from literary journals to daily newspapers. Holmes wrote two books about the writing of poetry, *The Poet's Work* (1939) and *Writing Poetry* (1960), in addition to many essays and book reviews. Holmes was also an avid letter-writer, and had active correspondence with family, friends, and other poets. Letter-writing was part of his daily writing routine, and served as a warm-up of sorts for the work of writing verse.

Holmes devoted considerable effort to fostering the development of young and budding poets with whom he came into contact. In addition to teaching poetry and creative writing at Tufts, he taught poetry workshops at the Boston Center for Adult Education, and directed or participated in writers workshops at Tufts University, the University of New Hampshire at Durham, and the Chautauqua Writer's conference. Holmes also hosted an informal poetry circle among other Boston-area poets in the 1950s, a group which included May Sarton, Anne Sexton, and others. This group met regularly at Holmes' residence in Medford to read and comment on each other's work.

In 1933, Holmes married his first wife, Sara Frances Ludlow, with whom he had one son, John Ludlow Holmes. After his first wife's death, he married Doris Kirk in 1948 and had another son, Evan Kirk Holmes and daughter, Margaret Nash Holmes. Holmes died June 22, 1962 following a long illness in Boston, Massachusetts.

## Approval

Digital Collections and Archives

## Approval Date

2011-05-26

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## Effective Date

2008-03-11

## Responsibility

Archivist for Collections and Reference  
Records Archivist

## Review

In accordance with yearly schedule or as needed.

## Publishing

[DCA Policies and Procedures](#) wiki

## Keywords

See Labels.