Editing Biographies in Wikipedia (including Biographies of Living Persons)

Biographies present a particular difficulty for Wikipedia since it is absolutely essential to ensure the quality of the sources and information for people's lives. There are also significant issues that arise with biographies of living persons since these people are still around to be affected by false or misleading information about them. Often, these people might themselves edit (or pay someone to edit) their own wikipedia pages leading to WP:COI and WP:PROMO issues.

If you are working on a bio, here is some information to help you.

Policy Pages

BLP Policy Page

WP:MOS/Biography

Major Issues

1) Appropriate focus, style, and tone

Often, bios, especially BLPs, have issues with original research and inappropriate tone, including information that might be considered fancruft.

Example: Lois Lowry (before and after)
   i)   Here, the student combined two sections about her personal life, removed a lot of irrelevant and/or unsourced information, and took out a section on trivia.

Example: Isadora Duncan (before)
   ii)   See the "Work" section here to examine samples of inappropriate style and tone for Wiki that you may encounter in Bio pages.
        (1) "Feeling unhappy and unappreciated in America, Duncan moved to London in 1898."
        (2) "...said to have posed for the photographer Eadweard Muybridge…" (seems out of place where it is in the article.
        (3) "...but historians believe her financial situation at the time drove her…" (weasel words!)

2) How should a bio be structured?

It is not always clear what should go into a bio or how it should be organized. You have to think about what information is relevant and satisfies the general criteria for notability.

Example: Lead Belly (Before + After)
  i)   Here, the student reorganized the actual "biography" section into more sensible and useful sections.

3) Not getting distracted: especially for historical figures

A lot can potentially go into a bio, especially for historical figures. Sometimes you'll see information not directly of relevance sneak into such articles. This is often the result of too much subject matter expertise on a previous writer's behalf, so addressing this problem should be followed up on the talk page.

Example: Erik the Red (before and after)
  i)   In addition to general organizational issues (note the difference in the ToCs in the before and after), this article had excessive information about people related to Erik the Red, rather than the historical figure himself.

4) Appropriately highlighting Information particular to a person's life

Related to the last point, you often have figures who have become or are significant for a particular reason. Is this highlighted sufficiently in the article and organized in the most sensible way? This is often where you'll find the most deviation from the general standard of Bio articles.

Example: Leto (Before + After)
  i)   Here the student created sections for "Origins", "Worship", and "Art" that are particular to articles about mythical figures. They modeled this off of a "Good Article" in that article genre.