



BIOGRAPHY: SOME THINGS THEY DON'T TELL YOU ...

Biography Workshop

National Centre of Biography (ANU)
11am - 12:30 pm, Thursday 17 June

In Person

Seminar Room 5.72
Level 5, RSSS Building

Zoom Option

Meeting ID: 849 0058 9945
Password: 630803



This talk will be in two parts. Drawing on my own experience as a biographer, I'd like to go through some of the pitfalls of researching and writing biography, and offer some suggestions about dealing with them. Firstly, there's choice of subject, which can be fraught. What happens if you discover during your research that you don't actually like the person you're writing about? And one of the major frustrations is the finding of dead ends in your research. You discover something about a significant event in your subject's life – and then the trail goes cold. What do you do? Speculate, admit that there is a problem, pretend there isn't? And then, even if your subject is dead, he or she is likely to have remaining family members: dealing with them can be difficult.

Then I'd like to discuss what it's like to move from writing lives of other people to describing your own. Writing memoir presents its own set of challenges: how much do you really want your readers to know about you?

Jacqueline Kent has written biographies of highly influential book editor Beatrice Davis, musician and social activist Hephzibah Menuhin, Julia Gillard, and pioneering suffragist Vida Goldstein. Her biography of Davis won the National Biography Award in 2002, and her recent memoir, *Beyond Words: A Year with Kenneth Cook* (2019), was shortlisted for that award in 2020. She is currently researching the lives and work of radical twentieth-century Australian women writers