

How to Research a City

“How do I get information about a city?” The answer to this question is complex. In recent years, much information has been published about countries and people groups, but not as much about urban areas. Many of the resources on urban studies deal with the concept of globalization, and statistics are presented on the process of “urbanization” around the world, but information on specific cities is sometimes hard to locate. There are resources that can be helpful, however.

There are some general encyclopedias and guides to urban areas (see attached bibliography), but often these deal only with the megacities or capitols of countries.

ENCYCLOPEDIAS on Cities and Urban Areas

Encyclopedia of Urban Cultures: Cities and Cultures Around the World, edited by Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember. Danbury, CT: Grolier, 2002. This 4-volume set was published under the auspices of the Human Relations Area Files at Yale University. It contains both thematic essays on major issues in urban culture, as well as 240 profiles of cities around the world.

Encyclopedia of World Cities, edited by Immanuel Ness. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999. This encyclopedia examines 132 of the world’s leading cities and provides information on several basic topics for each one, such as location, history, size, governmental structure, as well as some socioeconomic information about the residents.

Cities of the World, 6th edition. Detroit: Gale, 2002. This 4-volume set is a compilation of current information on cultural, geographic, and political conditions in the countries and cities of six continents, based on the U.S. Department of State’s “Post Reports.”

The Cities Book: A Journey Through the Best Cities in the World. Melbourne: Lonely Planet, 2006. This is a 1-volume collection of information on 200 cities throughout the world. Each entry includes some basic information about the city, including a brief description of its ethnic makeup, but also tries to point what it is unique and defining about that particular one.

Cities of the Middle East and North Africa: A Historical Encyclopedia, edited by Michael R.T. Dumper and Bruce E. Stanley. Santa Barbara, CA: 2007. Contains chapters on over 100 significant cities in this region.

OTHER BOOKS ON CITIES

To find additional books on individual cities, you can search library catalogs under the name of each city, or you can try the following subject terms:

Cities and towns – [country]

Urban missions

City missions – [Region]

A representative bibliography of books on urban areas and urban missions is attached at the end of this document.

INTERNET RESOURCES

One of the best ways to research cities and urban areas is to use the Internet. Much helpful information about a city can be found this way, including information from:

--The local Chamber of Commerce, or its equivalent. Cities are often trying to attract business and industry, so they will list information about their city and their people.

--Large companies who are trying to attract business or to recruit employees

--Diaspora groups trying to stay in communication with their home culture

--Travel agencies

--Researchers, professors and students (this type of information can frequently be found by searching "Google Scholar")

Note: Internet addresses (URLs) change frequently. If any of these links do not work, just search for the name of the resource, e.g. "Joshua Project."

Google: www.google.com There is a tremendous amount of information available on the Internet on people groups. Using the right "search engine" can help you locate this information in the most efficient manner. Google is a very useful search engine for accessing Internet resources. Helpful hints for making the best use of it include:

--Use the "Advanced Search" screen for searching for general sources. You can enter all of the alternate names for a city in the field called "with at least one of the words," and Google will search for all of them. Or, if you wish to look for information about a particular people group within a city, you can enter the name of the people and the city in the field that says "all these words."

--Use "Google Scholar" to find research articles and papers. Sometimes the documents are not available fulltext online (or there may be a charge for them.) However, your local library can probably help you to locate copies.

Commission Stories: <http://www.commissionstories.com/> This link takes you to the online version of the IMB's publication *Commission Stories*. There are a number of articles here on cities. Additional information can be accessed by clicking on the link "Archives."

Amazon: www.amazon.com This is one of the world's largest online bookstores. A new feature allows you to search the entire text of many books.

WorldCat: www.worldcat.org This is the public version of the OCLC WorldCat database, a combined catalog of libraries from around the world. It can be searched by title, author and subject. One extremely useful feature is that, after you have selected a title you are interested in, you can enter your location information (city or zip code) and the system will tell you which libraries in your area own the item.

DATABASES

Please check with your local public or academic library for the availability of databases that could be useful in people group research. Some helpful ones are:

Dissertation Abstracts, University Microfilms, ProQuest. Available through many online services, this database provides information on dissertations from most of the major U.S. universities, and many British and European institutions.

ATLA Religion Database, Chicago, IL: American Theological Library Association. This database is available online as well as in print. It includes citations to journal articles, chapters in books, essays and dissertations going back to the 1940s, and is searchable by city name.

FirstSearch, OCLC, Inc. This resource consists of several databases, including WorldCat, a combined listing of thousands of library catalogs. WorldCat is very helpful in locating books that your local library may not own, but that could be borrowed through "interlibrary loan." There are many other databases that can be accessed through FirstSearch, depending on the subscription package chosen by each library.

Dialog, ProQuest. This is actually a group of several hundred separate databases that share common searching protocols. The subjects covered range from history and anthropology to business and technical/scientific areas. There are both full-text and citation databases included, and each one has its own pricing structure.

LexisNexis, a division of Reed-Elsevier. This is one of many full-text news databases available. It can be helpful in obtaining current articles about people groups or cities from newspapers, magazines and wire services.

Representative Bibliography of Books on Urban Missions

Home groups for urban cultures : biblical small group ministry on five continents

Neumann, Mikel, 1939-

Pasadena, Calif. : William Carey Library ; Wheaton, IL : Billy Graham Center, c1999.

Models, mentors, and messages : blueprints of urban ministry

Rochester, Rene.

Grand Rapids, MI : Zondervan Youth Specialties, c2009.

City signals : principles and practices for ministering in today's global communities : leader kit [kit]

Bakke, Raymond J., 1938-

Smith, Brad, 1959-

Birmingham, Ala. : New Hope Publishers, c2008.

Street signs : a new direction in urban ministry

Bakke, Raymond J., 1938-

Sharpe, Jon, 1950-

Birmingham, AL : New Hope Publishers, c2006.

A theology as big as the city

Bakke, Raymond J., 1938-
Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, c1997.

The urban Christian : effective ministry in today's urban world

Bakke, Raymond J., 1938-
Downers Grove, IL : InterVarsity Press, c1987.

Urban ministry in a new millennium

Claerbaut, David.
Waynesboro, GA : Authentic Media ; Federal Way, WA : World Vision, c2005.

Urban ministry : the kingdom, the city, & the people of God

Conn, Harvie M.
Ortiz, Manuel, 1938-
Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, c2001.

Urban Christianity and global order : theological resources for an urban future

Davey, Andrew.
Peabody, Mass. : Hendrickson Publishers, c2002.

Globalization and its effects on urban ministry in the 21st century

Baker, Susan S., 1945-
Pasadena, Calif. : William Carey Library, c2009.

God so loves the city : seeking a theology for urban mission

Engen, Charles Edward van.
Tiersma, Jude.
Monrovia, CA : MARC, c1994.

Cities : missions' new frontier

Greenway, Roger S.
Monsma, Timothy M., 1933-
Grand Rapids, Mich. : Baker Books, c2000.

A heart for the community : new models for urban and suburban ministry

Fuder, John.
Castellanos, Noel.
Chicago : Moody Publishers, c2009.

Urban ministry : an introduction

Peters, Ronald Edward.
Nashville, TN : Abingdon Press, c2007.

Planting and growing urban churches : from dream to reality

Conn, Harvie M.
Grand Rapids, Mich. : Baker Books, c1997.

City signals : principles and practices for ministering in today's global communities

Smith, Brad, 1959-
Birmingham, Ala. : New Hope Publishers, c2008.

Discovering your city : bringing light to the task of community transformation

Waymire, Bob.

Townsend, Carl, 1938-

Etna, Calif. : LIGHT International, c2000.

Communicating Christ in Asian cities : urban issues in Buddhist contexts

De Neui, Paul H.

Pasadena, Calif. : William Carey Library, c2009.

Urban ministry in Asia : cities : the exploding mission field

Ro, Bong Rin.

Taiwan : Asia Theological Association, c1989.

Spiritual leadership in the global city

Pier, Mac, 1958-

Birmingham, AL : New Hope Publishers, c2008.

What about the slums? : connecting the gospel with underprivileged families.

[Columbia, S.C.] : BNB Publications, c2006.

China's unreached cities : volume 1, a prayer guide for 52 of China's least evangelized cities

Hattaway, Paul, 1968-

Chiang Mai, Thailand : Asian Minorities Outreach, c1999.

China's unreached cities : volume 2, a prayer guide for 50 of China's least evangelized cities

Hattaway, Paul, 1968-

Chiang Mai, Thailand : Asia Harvest, c2003.

China urban : ethnographies of contemporary culture

Chen, Nancy N.

Durham, [N.C.] : Duke University Press, 2001.

Migration, mujercitas, and medicine men : living in urban Mexico

Napolitano, Valentina.

Berkeley : University of California Press, c2002.

A floating city of peasants : the great migration in contemporary China

Luyn, Floris-Jan van.

New York : New Press, c2008.

Planet of slums

Davis, Mike, 1946-

London ; New York : Verso, 2006.

The new urban sociology

Gottdiener, Mark.

Hutchison, Ray.

Boulder, Colo. : Westview Press, c2006.

Shadow cities : a billion squatters, a new urban world

Neuwirth, Robert.

New York : Routledge, 2005.

State of the world's cities 2008-2009 : harmonious cities.

London ; Sterling, VA : Earthscan ; Nairobi, Kenya : UN-HABITAT, 2008.

In the Chinese city : perspectives on the transmutations of an empire.

Paris : Cite de l'architecture et du patrimoine ; Barcelona : Barcelona Centre for Contemporary Culture ;
New York : Actar
Publications, [2008]

The Philippines : mobilities, identities, globalization

Tyner, James A., 1966-
New York : Routledge, 2009.