Wikipedia Community Policies and Experiential Epistemology:

Critical Information Literacy, Social Justice, and Inclusive Practices
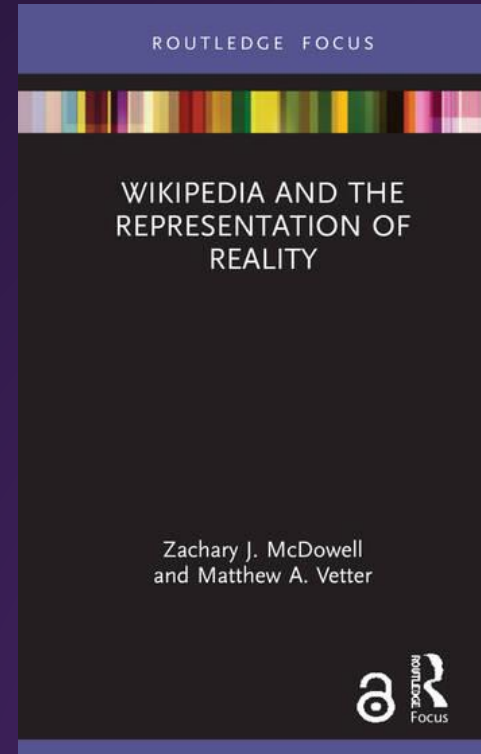
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Available as open access ebook,
Wikipedia and the Representation of
Reality

Presentation Agenda

- The Information Literacy Crisis
- A Framework for Information Literacy
  - Wikipedia Policies as Experiential Learning
  - Open Educational Practices (OEP) for Information Literacy
- Editing as Social Justice - Combating Systemic Biases
- Dangers of the Wikipedia Detour

McDowell ZJ, Vetter MA. Wikipedia as Open Educational Practice: Experiential Learning, Critical Information Literacy, and Social Justice. Social Media + Society. January 2022. doi:10.1177/20563051221078224

The Information Literacy Crisis

RICHARD COOKE   BUSINESS   FEB 17, 2020 6:00 AM

Wikipedia Is the Last Best Place on the Internet

People used to think the crowdsourced encyclopedia represented all that was wrong with the web. Now it's a beacon of so much that's right.

OUTLOOK

Conspiracy videos? Fake news? Enter Wikipedia, the 'good cop' of the Internet

Perspective by Noam Cohen
Noam Cohen, author of "The Know-It-Alls: The Rise of Silicon Valley as a Political Powerhouse and Social Wrecking Ball," writes about how digital technologies are changing society.

Wikipedia Handles Fake News With Humans, Not Algorithms

By Jon Brooks   Dec 22, 2016

Social Media + Society
Volume 6, Issue 3, July 2020
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https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120937309

SAGE journals

Article

It Takes a Village to Combat a Fake News Army: Wikipedia's Community and Policies for Information Literacy

Zachary J. McDowell [1] and Matthew A. Vetter [2]

Social Media + Society
Volume 8, Issue 1, January
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https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221078224

Article

Wikipedia as Open Educational Practice: Experiential Learning, Critical Information Literacy, and Social Justice

Zachary J. McDowell [1] and Matthew A. Vetter [2]

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

ELSEVIER   Computers and Composition 52 (2019) 53–64

Computers and Composition
www.elsevier.com/locate/compcom

From Opportunities to Outcomes: The Wikipedia-Based Writing Assignment

Matthew A. Vetter [a,*], Zachary J. McDowell [b], Mahala Stewart [c]

Fast Capitalism
Volume 19 · Issue 1 · 2022

Fast "Truths" and Slow Knowledge; Oracular Answers and Wikipedia's Epistemology

Zachary J. McDowell and Matthew A. Vetter

4

Bridging research and practice

ACRL Information Literacy Framework

Knowledge equity

Wikipedia-based educational practices

Qualitative data related to student experience

Libraries and info literacy research

Student Learning Outcomes using Wikipedia-based assignments
Fall 2016 Research Report

June 2017

Prepared for the Wiki Education Foundation

CC BY SA

Meta analysis of 3 studies:

McDowell, Vetter, & Stewart, 2019 (n=1627, n=97)
Vetter, 2014 (n=16)
Vetter, 2013 (n=17)

5

Basics of learning Wikipedia

Funnel stage	Description
EVALUATE	Learn to evaluate and look for gaps
SELECT	Choose an article or topic
RESEARCH	Identify reliable sources
ANNOTATE	Summarize, annotate, and synthesize sources
DRAFT	Draft planned edits in WP style (NPOV)
EDIT	Publish and interact with feedback from other editors

Six Frames for Information Literacy

Article

Wikipedia as Open Educational Practice: Experiential Learning, Critical Information Literacy, and Social Justice

Zachary J. McDowell [1] and Matthew A. Vetter [2]

Six Frames for Information Literacy

1

Authority Is Constructed & Contextual

Students recognize the complex system of authority that scaffolds Wikipedia and how to interact with it, which instills in them the understanding of the interplay of authority and the context of that authority within given information systems.

*I didn't know anything about what happened behind the curtains of Wikipedia . . . I didn't know, again, **there's a huge discussion, it gets reviewed by your peers, other people, Wikipedia, and everyone else**. I thought it was you click on edit and you just say whatever you want and somehow you submit it and that was it.*

Six Frames for Information Literacy

2
Information Creation as a Process

Because learners are actively constructing information within a specific norm-governed community, the Wikipedia-based assignment provides opportunities to understand both (1) how an assessment of information should look toward process and product and (2) how their processes contribute to the overall legitimacy of the information at hand.

[Wikipedia] allows us to see the dynamic process that is writing, and demystifies the processes behind the writing. Before Wikipedia we were never able to see the whole process from start to finish. We were only able to see the finished product, the ink on the pages that had been printed only after several edits and revisions . . . *Now, with Wikipedia we can look back to an article's poor first draft all the way to its much more robust and meaty current state.*

Six Frames for Information Literacy

3
Information Has Value

The Framework is particularly applicable when it mentions that "experts understand that value may be wielded by powerful interests in ways that marginalize certain voices" (p. 16), as Wikipedia learners often come into direct conflict with systemic biases and learn how information representations have created knowledge gaps that need addressing.

It's not random, the information that's missing from Wikipedia. It's a history of the knowledge of the events that have been documented and historicized in the world, and that's what's on Wikipedia right now. *I feel like there's a process of trying to diversify that information.*

Six Frames for Information Literacy

4

Research as Inquiry

Students working through this complex process become especially aware of how sources are compiled and synthesized to create new information (because they themselves have recently gone through the process).

It makes me more aware of articles or something, whatever I'm reading or am exposed to, their sources. It makes me, taking things with a grain of salt more, because then if something I write can be read and seen by a lot of people, then probably someone has done that too, to whatever I'm reading

Six Frames for Information Literacy

5
Scholarship as Conversation

The authorship of a Wikipedia article is not "simply" the summary of that conversation, but also includes participation in conversations about the topic and how it should be covered.

In addition to citations, **students can experience "scholarship as conversation" by viewing the talk tab on any Wikipedia page**... **The yellow information box at the top of the page may identify the rules of the Wikipedia community, the level and class of the article, and the affiliated WikiProjects**, if any. **The talk page can be used to discuss the academic writing process** with students, as it models peer-review comments and a discussion around scope and content.

-Dowell & Bridges, 2019

Six Frames for Information Literacy

6
Searching as Strategic Exploration

The Framework recognizes that "searching for information is often nonlinear and iterative, requiring the evaluation of a range of information sources and the mental flexibility to pursue alternate avenues as new understanding develops" while also acknowledging how "searching identifies both possible relevant sources as well as the means to access those sources" (p. 22).

As with all research, **the contributor needs to "understand that first attempts at searching do not always produce adequate results".** The practice of finding reputable sources is a skill needed for lifelong learning, and when learners share the resources they have found by editing and writing Wikipedia articles, **it turns them into participants in the iterative lifelong learning process.**

-Dowell & Bridges, 2019

Editing as Social Justice work

- Student demographics already more diverse than Wikipedia

- New editors can address marginalized topics and articles

- Instructors and students *motivated* by opportunities to address social justice (Xing and Vetter, 2020)

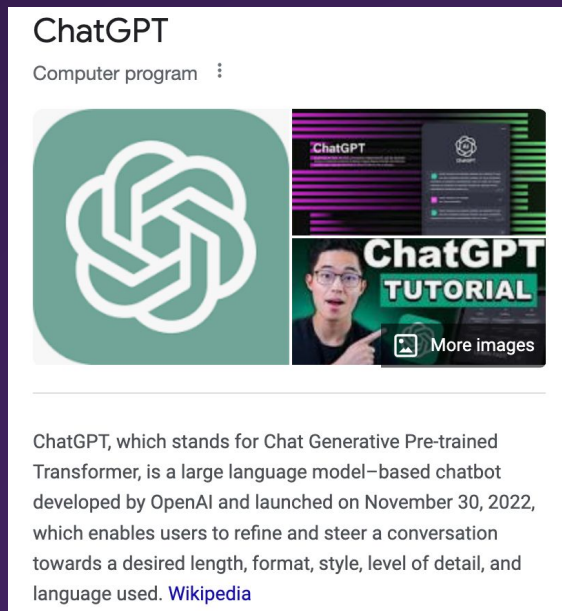- Opportunity for conversations on knowledge equity

Addressing Systemic Biases

❏ Recognize that Verifiability is a double edged sword (McDowell & Vetter 2021)

❏ Interrogate policies like as NPOV (Menking & Rosenberg, 2021; Kwok, 2020)

❏ Make room for knowledge equity activists (eg: AfroCrowd and Whose Knowledge)

❏ Recognizing and leveraging Wikipedia's dynamism for policy change and knowledge activism (Vetter, 2020)

Wikipedia Detours

- Google Knowledge Graph
- Integration of AI-powered apps in Google Search (Bard)
- Generative AI apps like ChatGPT
- The popularity of short-form video platforms (TikTok, Insta)
- Integration of LLM-powered chatbots in social media (SnapChat)

An Infobox displayed in Google Search eliminates the need to access Wikipedia

ChatGPT
Computer program ⋮

ChatGPT, which stands for Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer, is a large language model–based chatbot developed by OpenAI and launched on November 30, 2022, which enables users to refine and steer a conversation towards a desired length, format, style, level of detail, and language used. Wikipedia

Jemielniak, Darius., & Aleksandra Przegalińska, A. (2020). Collaborative society. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

WIKIPEDIA'S GREATEST POTENTIAL IS CHANGE (BECAUSE PEOPLE, NOT TECH)

It remains the Last Best Place on the Internet

— THANKS!

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