CHAPTER 11

BIBLIOWIKIS: THE VOLUNTEER-DRIVEN, CATALAN CASE STUDY OF LIBRARIES AS HOTSPOTS FOR NEW WIKIPEDIANS AND HIGH-QUALITY SOURCES

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Abstract

The Catalan Wikipedia (Viquipèdia) is a successful free-knowledge platform with a strong community of editors that has significantly contributed to the normalization of this minoritized language on the Internet. In 2012, the NGO Amical Wikimedia and the Public Library Service of the Catalan Ministry of Culture launched #Bibliowikis, an initiative that has involved several hundreds of librarians and public libraries in the improvement of this version of the online encyclopedia. This unique, successful model was presented to the United Nations Educational,

Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and has been highlighted as a case study by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). The project involves the so-called *Amical-way*, in which scaffolded training, long-term self-management, and the geographically available Wikipedian volunteers constitute the three fundamental working pillars. #Bibliowikis' success has experienced different levels of applicability and regularity over the Catalan-speaking territories, especially in the Land of Valencia and Andorra, and may be endangered by global online dynamics, loss of the volunteering principles, and prioritization of economic resources in the fast-changing Wikimedia environment. However, #Bibliowikis' characteristics are fully aligned with those of Open Access, thus it is easily combined with academia and the public knowledge transfer at universities. Its robust ethical discourse on social contribution, negligible infrastructure, and linguistic heritage protection has allowed #Bibliowikis to be feasible and easily implemented in the increasing context of teleworking and the need for social digitization of bibliographic repositories.

Keywords

Introduction: Catalan Language, Wikipedia, Geography, and Public Libraries

The Catalan language is a Western Romance language spoken by approximately 10 million people (Plataforma per la llengua, 2020). Its natural linguistic domain comprises four European states, but it is not a dominant language in most of the regions where it is naturally spoken: Spain (autonomous communities of Catalonia, Land of Valencia, Balearic Islands, Aragón, and Murcia), France (department of *Pyrénées-Orientales*, known as Northern Catalonia), Andorra, and Italy (in the Sardinian city of Alghero). Catalan shares its original territory with strong, state-supported languages such as Spanish, French, and Italian. The territorial fragmentation of Catalan has resulted in different denominations, levels of protection, and officiality depending on the region (Hawkey, 2018; Miller & Miller, 1996). In addition, the

use of Catalan has been forbidden several times throughout history—most recently in Spain during the Franco dictatorship (Vallverdú, 1984). Catalan is a threatened language that needs active promotions in order to keep its usage alive and foster generational transmission.

In this linguistic context, *Viquipèdia* (Catalan Wikipedia, 2020), the Catalan-language edition of Wikipedia, was the second Wikipedia edition in a language other than English (Hinojo, 2016). It was the third to be created, in March 2001—just after the German edition. By 2020, it was ranked as the twentieth language by number of articles and had an active community of about 1,500 monthly editors. Since it was launched, both Wikipedia and the rest of Wikimedia projects have been proven as a major tool to foster Catalan normalization on the Internet and for a proper digital arrangement of ascertainable knowledge in this language (Dengra i Grau, 2018; Rius, 2019).

Amical Wikimedia is the nonprofit organization that promotes freely accessible Catalan culture and knowledge through the values and engagement of individuals and organizations in *Viquipèdia* (Amical Wikimedia, 2020; Amical Wikimedia, Qui som, 2020). It has conducted several projects to achieve Wikipedia's mission, including the #Bibliowikis project. Since 2012 Amical Wikimedia has been involved with nearly 500 public, academic, and special libraries located within the Catalan-speaking areas (Proffitt, 2018).

This chapter aims to further explain the origin, ethical conception, linguistic and territorial context, strengths, and weaknesses of the #Bibliowikis case study that has been an initiative to bring librarians into Catalan Wikipedia editing and online free knowledge participation in this language. In addition, this chapter provides applicable examples, some strategies that allow it to bond with academia, and discusses future possibilities, threats, and fate in a quickly changing digital and socioeconomic world.

The Start of #Bibliowikis in Catalonia's Public Libraries

In 2011, the relationship between Catalan Wikipedia and the librarianship ecosystem (also applicable to the educational sphere) was fraught with distrust. Professional librarians, who had been trained to thoroughly search

Figure 1 Sticker motif implemented during the first years after #Bibliowikis was launched. It served as a cohesive symbol among the participating libraries and engaged the interest of the public libraries' users in Catalan Wikipedia-related activities. (From left to right: Amical Wikimedia-Servei de Biblioteques de Catalunya, CC-BY-SA 3.0; Francesc Fort, CC-BY-SA 4.0; Àlex Hinojo, CC-BY 3.0).

traditional reference tools and other proven sources of information, did not see Wikipedia as an ally but rather as an intruder not to be trusted. That's why the first big step in 2011, and the real trigger toward a better relationship, was the scaffolded training designed by Amical Wikimedia along with the Public Library Service of the Catalan Ministry of Culture (Proffitt, 2018), led at that time by Carme Fenoll i Clarabuch.

The first step of this project made it possible for the vast majority of librarians in the Catalan network of public libraries to learn, in detail, about the values of Catalan Wikipedia—its editing criteria and the existing GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) projects. This educational partnership, between Amical Wikipedia and public libraries in Catalonia, took place mainly between 2012 and 2013. Afterward, follow-up training was conducted with more engaged and experienced librarians (Proffitt, 2018). Later on, an annual motif was created to bring together the actions of the nearly 400 public libraries involved and the international annual campaign, #1Lib1Ref (in Catalan, #1Bib1Ref), was also folded into the #Bibliowikis activities with great success.

Wikipedia's Benefits and Opportunities for Catalan Librarians

What does an eighteen-year-old, computer-savvy Wikipedian working from home have in common with a local librarian? The

passion to share information and help citizens. When this symbiosis was recognized by Catalan Wikipedians and librarians, the initial mistrust started to fall. Librarians learned about a cohesive, online meritocracy of volunteer work that complemented the librarian ethos. On the flipside, Wikipedians learned about the commitment and dedication of librarians, the scope of bibliographic collections pending digitization, and the different timelines, needs, and characteristics of public institutions. Moreover, the issue of gender bias in Wikipedia acquired more significance. In the Catalan-language context, 80 percent of librarians are women while approximately 85 percent of Wikipedians are men (Roqueta, 2014). Reducing gender bias in Wikipedia became one of the biggest challenges of this case study.

What is more, as a minoritized language (Hawkey, 2018; May, 2013), editing the Catalan Wikipedia allows librarians to reinforce their role of promoting language diversity, especially in the case of Libraries specializing in local or heritage collections. It becomes an opportunity to normalize and digitalize the content of knowledge compendiums in this language, as well as to make visible and add value in the network on resources that can be found in their libraries. In areas with low usage of Catalan, #Bibliowikis can serve librarians as a tool to linguistically engage their users and provide them with sources that would not be consulted in other circumstances.

The Catalan Model of Librarians' Involvement: A Volunteer-Driven Philosophy

Amical Wikimedia, as a nonprofit organization of about 120 volunteers, counts some of the most active Catalan Wikipedians among its members (Amical Wikimedia, 2020). Hence, the dual role of Amical Wikipedia's volunteers, both *in-wiki* and *off-wiki*, becomes the best asset for the outreach of the organization and the free encyclopedia. Volunteers connect and engage with institutions (i.e., libraries for this topic) by introducing them to the values of Wikipedia. In addition, they transfer knowledge by mentoring

beginners, providing technical support, and giving general guidance for the development of events. Finally, these volunteers (as experienced Wikipedians) are already part of the day-to-day mechanisms and community debates within the Wikimedia projects. Therefore, the integration of new users, data, and subprojects on the local levels is seen as natural and tiered growth, and not as external meddling outside of an already existing community (Meta-Wiki, 2014; Wikimedia Outreach, 2017).

From 2012 to mid-2020, the structure and functional core of the organization, the so-called *Amical-way*, relied on a collaboration between a project director and its more than 100 volunteers. This single employee was selected from the Catalan Wikipedian community, based on their past participation as an Amical volunteer. A small commission of the most involved volunteers ensured a professional and rigorous follow-up and direction of the employee's tasks. This way, a horizontal bond was ensured between the employee, external Wikipedia editors, internal Amical members, external institutions, and individual librarians (Meta-Wiki, 2014). Nonetheless, the philosophy of the organization has always been to promote an endpoint of self-sustainability and scaffolded training among its members and institutions. In the beginning of a project, volunteers and institutions are provided with guidelines and a regionally available volunteer who serves as a truly human support; then there is a progressive decrease in support until the beginners have become competent, and eventually trainers are released to focus on other projects (Fenoll, 2016; Meta-Wiki, 2014; Proffitt, 2018; Wikimedia Outreach, 2017).

Scaling the Project: Deployment of the #Bibliowikis to Other Catalan–Speaking Areas

Amical Wikimedia has been able, with partial success, to expand the #Bibliowikis impact outside of Catalonia and implement it in other Catalan-speaking territories. The most significant deployment has been in the Land of Valencia and Andorra. Also, there has been sporadic activity in Northern Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. The

leading figure for those initial expansions was Àlex Hinojo Sánchez, who was Amical Wikimedia's project director from 2012 to 2018, with the support of local volunteers and the development of targeted and integrated events like the annual gathering of participant libraries, *Trobada de Bibliowikis*, which was held in 2016 (Núvol, 2016).

The start of #Bibliowikis in the Land of Valencia started with a relationship between Amical Wikimedia and Valencian Museum of Ethnology in 2016 (Pons et al., 2019). Later that year, the first Wikipedian-in-residence (WiR) began to volunteer in the library of the Valencian Museum of Ethnology (Pons et al., 2019). Here, the #Bibliowikis program was adapted to integrate it into GLAM outcomes. In this case, the library acted as a gateway to the museum. During this stable collaboration, documents and multimedia were uploaded to Wikimedia projects and several editing contests and edit-a-thons were held, such as the *Wiki Loves Falles* contest to upload popular, cultural content to Wikimedia Commons (Pons et al., 2019). In this case, the #Bibliowikis approach favored the adoption of the same discourse and engagement by another Wikimedia affiliate, Wikimedia España, which boosted the trust of the already involved librarians and increased the linguistic outreach of the ongoing activities.

Although Valencian public libraries have never hosted a consolidated #Bibliowikis project like the one in Catalonia, this hybrid GLAM-library partnership with Amical has resulted in other specific and individual activities hosted in various locations, with only one regular annual edit-a-thon in the library of L'Eliana (Gascó Comeche, 2017, 2020), but this particular event has evolved toward a self-sustained activity (Gascó Comeche, 2020). To revert the standstill and increase the number of involved libraries, the Official College of Librarians and Documentalists of the Land of Valencia (COBDCV) signed formal agreements in late 2019 with Amical Wikimedia and Wikimedia España that aim to collaborate, train, and raise the awareness of Valencian chartered professionals toward Wikimedia projects and activities such as #1Lib1Ref.

Similarly, the implementation of #Bibliowikis in the micro-country of Andorra has been irregular, although mostly successful. Two events

were pivotal to the Andorran librarians' confidence in the project. First, the first-ever Catalan and non-English Wikipedia article, "Àbac," was created in Andorra (Fernández, 2019; Hinojo, 2016). Second, Andorra became the first country in the world to have all of its heritage monuments photographed and uploaded to Wikipedia thanks to Amical Wikimedia volunteers' tenacity within the *Wiki Loves Monuments* global initiative (Govern d'Andorra, 2011; Hinojo, 2016). As #Bibliowikis grew in importance in Catalonia, the National Library of Andorra took the lead in 2013 when they had the Public Library of the Government of Andorra contribute by adding articles and organizing their first edit-a-thon (Hinojo, 2016). Although Andorra libraries have seen successful with wikiprojects, other governmental GLAM and university wikiprojects hosted in the country did not fully incorporate librarians in subsequent years. However, in early 2019, the National Library significantly increased its activity once again and provided bibliographic sources and editing mentorship to high school students (Diari d'Andorra, 2019). Differently from Catalonia and the Land of Valencia, though, and given the circumstance of unknown or insufficiently active Catalan editors in the country, the help for this new kick-off was initially provided on-site by an Amical volunteer from Catalonia, but progressively switched to online support. Despite their lower activity, as compared to other #Bibliowikis and the impediments derived from the Andorran Copyright Law (no "Freedom of Panorama"), they keep regular and self-managed additions and activities (e.g. #1Lib1Ref) to promote new content and draw in new Wikipedians (Blasco, 2020; Fernández, 2019; Hinojo, 2016).

Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Uncertainties of the Catalan Model

In one decade, the #Bibliowikis project has demonstrated its ability to become a tool of reference and introduction to open knowledge to the public. Library involvement has also boosted this format and the librarian-Wikipedian tandem has come to stay. Its discourse, ease, cost (free), and applicability have allowed the project to become an international case of study. It has been endorsed by Europeana

Foundation as an opportunity to further engage GLAM and heritage initiatives (Hinojo, 2013), by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) for public libraries (Fenoll, 2016), and was presented at the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Parreño Mont, 2017). Additionally, #Bibliowikis' impact and recognition was a crucial push for the final recognition from the Wikimedia Foundation of Amical Wikimedia as the first, worldwide official affiliate that was not framed in the boundaries of a state but rather in the defense of a language (Ara, 2013). One year after, Amical received the National Prize of Culture 2014 by the Catalan Government (Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana, 2015).

The proper visualization of a volunteer workforce joined with public entities, such as libraries, allowed #Bibliowikis to scale up. Even in the case of less institutional support and volunteering impact, good results, such as QR codes for two-dimensional items uploaded to Wikimedia Commons, were shared by the Valencian #Bibliowikis in national conferences hosted by the Spanish Federation of Societies of Archivist, Librarians, Documentalist, and Museology (FESABID) (Pons et al., 2019)—proving the social and academic influence of different asymmetric, but valid scalings. In all cases, Wikipedia edits and multimedia uploads contributed to facilitate the understanding and development of Open Access public policies and, therefore, allowed them to be the seed of change.

However, the *Amical-way* has some weaknesses and uncertainties in relation to libraries. Unlike other Amical Wikimedia initiatives, #Bibliowikis has no financial cost, except for the travel or basic expenses of its volunteers (Meta-Wiki, 2014). Thus, its weaknesses do not depend on the monetary basis but on the volunteering commitment and discursive self-development, as well as on librarians and their regulatory bodies to maintain a self-sustained scaffolded training and engagement. A loss of the top-down institutional support and outreach, which happened in Catalonia in 2017 with the sudden change of the Head of Public Libraries (Martínez, 2017), can result in a mid- or a long-term impact decrease of the project. In fact, a loss of volunteering activity has consequently decreased follow-up meetings, libraries

involved, and a break of the "librarians train librarians" institutionally agreed-upon activities in the Catalan #Bibliowikis in the latest stages.

#Bibliowikis' robustness currently relies on the adoption of a discourse by the active volunteers, librarians, and the gained recognition. However, there is much uncertainty about its future linked to the transmission of these values by all stakeholders. Organizational priorities and tasks managed by Amical volunteers have been limited due to the community size and a small, internal core of very active members who assume most of the workload (Meta-Wiki, 2014). In future crisis environments, librarians may increase their workload and diminish their availability for activism. In this way, #Bibliowikis' life may be endangered despite its prestige. Finally, the future success of these and other projects is constrained by two factors. One of them is the lack of generational renewal of new Wikipedians with the same sharing principles and volunteering enthusiasm that has been observed in the Catalan community (Hinojo, 2020). Some of its members have become inactive without conducting prior experience transfer to newcomers, while some of the latter have not shown enough interest to keep up with successful initiatives. The second one is the sum of wrong global tendencies affecting the Wikimedia Foundation and some Wikimedia affiliates. Staff members and economical resources are becoming the key limiting factors of their goals instead of Wikipedia's natural ecosystem: volunteers (Hinojo, 2020). This drifting influence has strongly affected some Wikimedia affiliates including Amical, therefore triggering profound ethical and governance disagreements that endanger its continuity. In other territories, external agents without close bonds to the Wikipedian communities are opening the gate to contractual librarian projects (Bañares, 2018; Martinsen, 2019). Profitability might become the trend and eventually displace charitable ideas such as the ones represented by #Bibliowikis.

The Nexus between #Bibliowikis and Academic Libraries

Catalan university libraries have become a nexus of both #Bibliowikis and #Eduwiki (educational) programs. University repositories play

a key role within Wikipedia: they provide access to sources and can assess the impact of Creative Commons licensing in public knowledge transfer from higher educational institutions to the general public (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Comissió d'Accés Obert, 2020). Academic libraries possess deep expertise in Open Access research and education. Hence, they incorporate their skills on best practices on how to promote open knowledge values and its transfer to classrooms, research groups, and administrative communities, and consequently in academic outreach. As a result of this commitment, some Catalan universities, such as the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), have updated their institutional policies to enrich horizontal transmission of knowledge with licensing conditions suitable for Wikipedia (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2012).

As previously mentioned, the figure of a university librarian who is engaged with the Wikimedia values (and, in general, with the free knowledge movement) is of great value as it normalizes the still reluctant bond with the academic community. In the Catalan context, small- and large-scale projects have been developed, and are intended to promote Wikipedia's academic impact. Examples of these combined systems, in which University libraries take the lead, are the creation of the *Honoris Causa* biographies; online librarian trainings during the COVID-19 pandemic; release of archive images to Commons; and ORCID links to Wikidata of admissible personnel at the Autonomous University of Barcelona's (UAB) (Allué & Casaldàliga, 2018); and the *Viquidones* permanent space edition at the Pompeu Fabra University (UPF) (Dengra i Grau, 2020; Martija, 2019). Other activities have involved edit-a-thons and scoring wikiprojects for students jointly promoted by librarians and professors at the Catalonia College of Music (ESMUC) (Catalunya Ràdio, 2020) or the above-mentioned support and mentoring to high schools by the National Library of Andorra (Diari d'Andorra, 2019).

In the same regard, librarians have contributed to official, long-term agreements between Amical Wikimedia and UAB or with the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) in order to promote workshops, training, conferences, open-access engagement, and #eduwiki projects

with students and professors led by volunteers. Some social researchers aligned with the *Amical-way* have integrated acquired knowledge in Catalan #Eduwiki and #Bibliowikis projects by preparing help manuals and ethical guides on editing Wikipedia in bachelor's theses (Castells, 2020), highly skilled academic research, or regular teaching (Aibar, 2016; Lerga Felip & Aibar Puentes, 2015).

Different educational initiatives promoted by academic libraries have been carried out that link open teaching and Wikipedia. University libraries have lines of work related to supporting the development of open, online teaching materials. For this reason, some events related to open education have been carried out, such as the *Open Education Weeks* (Solé, 2020). Under the title "Open Educational Resources: Sharing to Educate," UAB hosted a working day dedicated to deal with open educational initiatives in the framework of Wikimedia programs with participation of librarians, teaching staff, and Wikipedians (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Servei de Biblioteques, 2020). University librarians are an example of transition toward a prioritization of digital environments. In this context and amid the experience of COVID-19, initiatives with added value and reduced face-to-face public services, such as #Bibliowikis, can play a big role in the pursuit of common goals with little physical interaction. In all educational levels, a reformulation of didactic approaches is proposed with the addition of new enjoyable distance learning environments and embedding technologies for new generations (Rapanta et al., 2020).

Conclusion

The main difficulty faced by librarians editing Wikipedia has been the lack of time and the impossibility of naturally integrating editing into their daily routine—librarians necessarily prioritize ordering and face-to-face reference service at the counter. The successful philosophy of #Bibliowikis has relied on the values of volunteering, overturn, and scaffolded training, which are evolving asymmetrically among both librarians and Wikipedians in a changing sociodigital and Wikimedia environment. Despite this, #Bibliowikis has shown its success by

playing a big role in responding to an awakening community pride to work on similar information projects regardless of age, academic knowledge, gender, location, and even social distancing. In addition, it has united librarians across different library types. #Bibliowikis, given its free, pliable, and volunteer-driven structure, can be a model for library systems outside of Catalan-speaking areas. Librarians should consider it a priority to include open education and free knowledge goals, which are fostered by projects such as #Bibliowikis.

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