

Grounding NPOV pillar in post-censored information ecology

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Description: When embarking on the path to becoming a Wikipedia contributor, understanding and adhering to the core principles of this endeavor are essential. In the efforts made for the past 4 years, together with Wikimedians of Romania and Moldova (WRM), to train librarians to become contributors for Wikipedia, the neutrality principle was the one that met the most resistance and proved hardest to win the participants over. More than 50 librarians have been editing and improving more than 150 articles but without fully adhering to the neutrality point of view (NPOV).

This proposal aims at identifying causes of this situation, providing solutions for it by contributing to better training options for future Wikipedia editors about NPOV.

The objectives set are:

- O1. Create the research design.
- O2. Apply the research design and produce research results.
- O3. Create and deploy updated training materials related to NPOV.
- O4. Produce and disseminate a policy brief addressed to GLAM institutions, schools and universities where to propose curricular adaptations for ensuring adherence to NPOV.
- O5. Administrative work and final report.

The project has a number of activities that will be described below as I detail the objectives.

O1. Create the research design

The exploratory study at the center of this project is focused on the research question (CRQ):
What determines the ability of information professionals to adhere to NPOV in post-totalitarian societies?

The secondary research questions proposed:

RQ1. What determines success/failure in adhering to the NPOV, among those who succeed/fail to do so?

RQ2. How does professional training and practices related to information sharing influence the ability of librarians in Romania to contribute to Wikipedia?

RQ3. How can we adapt and improve the existing training and education curricula about NPOV for better results in Romanian Wikipedia?

The research design will contribute to having a strong exploratory study and a solid ground for inquiry.

The following activities will be undertaken to ensure the success of Objective 1:

O1.A1. Analyzing NPOV existing materials in Romanian (including their editing history) to identify experienced editors and methods used.

O1.A2. Conducting a literature review of how Wikipedia projects in various languages are adapting NPOV principle

O1.A3. Designing the described discussing it with the advisors & team members.

O2. Apply the research design and produce research results

For this objective, the designed research steps will be applied in consecutive phases which will inform each-other.

O2.A1 Discussion with experienced editors.

This activity will comprise semi-structured interviews with at least 5 experienced Wikipedia Romania admins and editors to identify NPOV-related issues in the community.

O2.A2. Discussion with editors - librarians.

This activity will consist of semi-structured interviews with at least 7 librarians who are already editing on Wikipedia Romania to get their perspective on NPOV requirements.

O2.A3. A focus group with identified contributors who adhere to NPOV in their practice.

This focus group will bring together at least 7 editors from Wikipedia Romania with strong experience and practice in NPOV compliance.

O2.A4. Analyzing the interviews and looking for common patterns & practices.

This activity is focused on identifying the patterns and shared practices within the Wikipedia Romania community that come out of the interviews and the focus group. Documenting this process will include ways in which the patterns observed are already addressed by existing materials and what needs to be better documented, discussed and disseminated.

O2.A5 Writing and publishing a paper on the lessons learned.

We will create a project page on MetaWiki:Research and update it regularly. The exploratory study will be submitted to a journal and presented in at least 3 online conferences/panels. (1 related to Wikimedia Research, 1 for Wikimedia CEE, and 1 for the international library community).

O3. Create and deploy updated training materials related to NPOV.

The third research question (RQ3) is focused on identifying ways to improve the NPOV training for new editors. Once the research phase is done the results will be used under the coordination of an adult education consultant to develop one training on NPOV for new editors.

O3.A1. Design an updated training related to NPOV on editing Wikipedia pages and pilot it with at least 15 new editors (librarians).

O3.A2. Organize the training with updated NPOV training materials.

O3.A3. Write a report on the new training and its impact.

O4. Produce a policy brief addressed to GLAM institutions, schools and universities where to propose curricular adaptations for ensuring adherence to NPOV.

Learning about both NPOV and Wikipedia is not part of the curricula in formal education or in education programs in GLAM institutions. The learnings from this project will be adapted into a format of policies and promoted to stakeholders from the education context.

O5. Administrative work and final report.

Outputs

Here are the expected outputs of the proposed research, grouped and itemized for each objective.

O1. - 1 research plan and section of literature review written for the article and final report.

O2.

1 finalized Research report .

1 article written and sent for publication.

1 list of suggestions to incorporate in training.

O3

1 training prepared - materials of the training will be freely available.

1 training delivered to 15 new editors (librarians) using the new training on NPOV.

1 report on the new training and its impact - that will be used to promote the training within and outside the Wikipedia community.

O4 - 1 policy paper discussing the importance of learning about NPOV in formal education and public institutions.

O5 - Periodical reports and updates on the project page and Final report.

Timeline for the objectives in this project can be found on a special sheet in the Revised budget form.

New Wikipedia contributors coming from GLAM institutions can bring quality content and information, digital skills and experience in supporting free access. The NPOV requirements are, however, roadblocks that need to be opened.

The findings from this project will help better address NPOV when presented to the Romanian speaking public and will provide practical and culturally grounded examples to ease the process of becoming a good editor. Sharing the findings with the GLAM and LIS community will assure a better understanding of how contributing to open knowledge can happen in institutions that went through severe control of information. The new design training will be piloted with 15 librarians and the conclusion of this training will be used to update its content.

The project will contribute to ensuring knowledge equity through encouraging valuable contributions. The participants in the training will be of (mostly) women new contributors from rural communities.

The curricula and policy brief created will be shared with trainers from GLAM institutions and schools in Romania in order to encourage participation and empower people with knowledge to open it up and consider contributing to a more open culture within the Romanian speaking communities.

Budget: 10,000-19,999

Budget Description: Salary or stipend & benefits 10.000USD
Software as a service 1000USD
Open access publishing costs 1000USD
Institutional overhead (up to 15% of total budget requested) 2000USD
Training costs (design, materials and delivery of trainings) 2500USD
Travel costs for interviews 800USD
Translations and editing 2700 USD
Out of which, own contribution - 2000USD

Impact: New Wikipedia contributors coming from GLAM institutions can bring quality content&information, digital skills and experience in supporting free access. The NPOV requirements are, however, roadblocks that need to be opened.

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Dissemination: We will create a project page on MetaWiki:Research and update it regularly. The exploratory study will be submitted to a journal and presented in at least 3 conferences(1 related to Wikimedia Research, 1 for Wikimedia CEE, and 1 for the international library community).

The new design training will be piloted with 15 librarians and the conclusion of this training will be used to update its content. Curricula & policy brief will be shared with trainers from GLAM institutions&schools in Romania.

Past Contributions: Analysing the services provided by public librarians from Romania during the last decades of the communist regime was the topic of my PhD dissertation. I then began documenting and explaining the specific ways in which the prolonged information control of the communist regime altered the information ecology of our society. Public libraries were the free sources of information before Wikipedia and understanding the ways in which they contribute to the development of Wikimedia projects is a recent interest that I have been exploring with WRM. We presented this at 2021 Wikimania&WikimediaCEE.

The Fagaras Research Institute runs a platform that aims at popularising research and engaging communities in generating and co-creating knowledge.

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(https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Friendly_space_policies) and Universal Code of Conduct (https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Universal_Code_of_Conduct). Lastly, if funded, I ensure that any output of my research complies with the WMF Open Access Policy (https://foundation.wikimedia.org/wiki/Open_access_policy).

Budget Stage II: 19225USD