



A major initiative of the Women's Caucus of the American Academy of Religion
and the Society of Biblical Literature
Supported by Atla (The America Theological Library Association) and the Parliament of
World Religions

Bridging the Divide Between the Academy and Wikipedia

Defining the Divide

A Separation Between

- ...academic skills/norms and the skills it take to be a Wikipedian
- ...the achievements of women in religion, including academics, and their representation on Wikipedia and Wikidata
- ...academic's perceptions of reliability on Wikipedia and the actuality of Wikipedia's reliability

Bridging and Describing the Divide

A Preview

- Figuring out what it takes to be a WikiProject and a Wikipedian
- Data, sources, the 1000+ Women in Religion List and the challenge of improving representation
- A feminist's struggle with Wikipedia's norms

Examples of the Divide: Leaders in the Academy

- [American Academy of Religion Presidents](#)
 - 92 names listed
 - 28 women presidents since 1927
 - 17 of these women have English wikipedia article, compared to 24 men
 - Only 2 of 10 women who held post prior to 1980 has a page
 - Gap is not only missing bios but also lack of quality articles
 - Wide range of quality, many are stub or start
 - only 1 in C-Class: Wendy Doniger
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wendy_Doniger

Examples of the Divide: Scholars and Experts

Miranda Shaw, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Richmond School of Arts and Science. Author of *Buddhist Goddesses of India*, and *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*.

- She is cited as a source in [Women in Buddhism](#) page, but has no entry.

[Letty Russell](#), feminist scholar of Christianity; author of classic texts in feminist theology; faculty member at Yale for 28 years, one of the first women ordained in Presbyterian Church USA

- Her entry was nominated for speedy deletion in 2013
- Her entry was taken mainly from her obituary, and still not rewritten
- The talk page reflects the debate on her notability

Examples of the Divide: Cis and Trans Women Activists

- [Zainah Anwar](#), Malaysian, head of Sisters in Islam -“needs sources”
- [Zarizana Aziz](#), Human Rights Lawyer from Malaysia
- [Fahima Hashim](#) – Director, Salmah Women’s Resource Centre in [Khartoum](#), Sudan
- [All India Dalit Women's Forum](#)
- [Juliana Taimorazy](#) -Iraqi Christian, founder of Iraqi Christian Relief Council - stub
- [The Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart](#), professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University, and faith work director for the National LGBTQ Task Force
- [Be'sha Blondin](#), Indigenous Healer, Canada, interfaith leader
- [Parivash Rohani](#), Baha’i humanitarian and community leader
- [Palbinder Kaur Shergill](#), first turbaned woman Sikh to be appointed judge in Canada - mentioned on page for [Sikh feminism](#)

Intersectionality and the Divide

- In some fields, information is woefully out of date with current scholarship in the academy. This is particularly true when intersectionality is at play: race, class, sexuality, as well as gender
- Ex: [Womanist Theology](#)
 - [Womanism](#) entry includes section on spirituality but not religion; does not link to Womanist Theology
 - Womanist Theology page has tags for “more citations needed” and reliable sources
 - [Delores Williams](#), whose book *Sisters in the Wilderness* is now a classic in the field, has an entry tagged with “needs additional citations.”

Some Successes to Build Upon

- Feminist Portal's work on women in society, includes overview articles about women in various world religions
 - Ex: [Women in Islam](#), [Women in Buddhism](#)
- [List of Jewish American activists](#)
- [Megan Rohrer](#), the first openly transgender minister in ELCA
- [Abby Stein](#), the first openly transgender woman rabbi

How can we address the divide?

From the [Gender bias on Wikipedia](#) page:

“In February 2018, in the Pipeline of Online Participation Inequalities, Shaw and Hargittai concluded from their studies that to solve the problems of participation inequality including gender bias requires a broader focus on subjects other than inequality.^[28] They recommended a focus on encouraging participants of all educational backgrounds, skill levels, and age groups will help Wikipedia to improve. They recommended further that informing more women that Wikipedia is free to edit and open to everyone is critical in eliminating gender bias.”

The 1000 (+) Women in Religion Project Jumping Blindly into the Divide

Becoming a WikiProject and Wikipedians

- A History/Herstory
- The List – The Heart of the Project
- Figuring out how Wikipedia Works
- The Problem of Secondary Sources
- Lessons Learned

A Herstory -- Beginnings

- A major project of the 2018 Parliament of World Religions
- Started by small group of Wikipedia novices
- Achievements at the 2018 Parliament



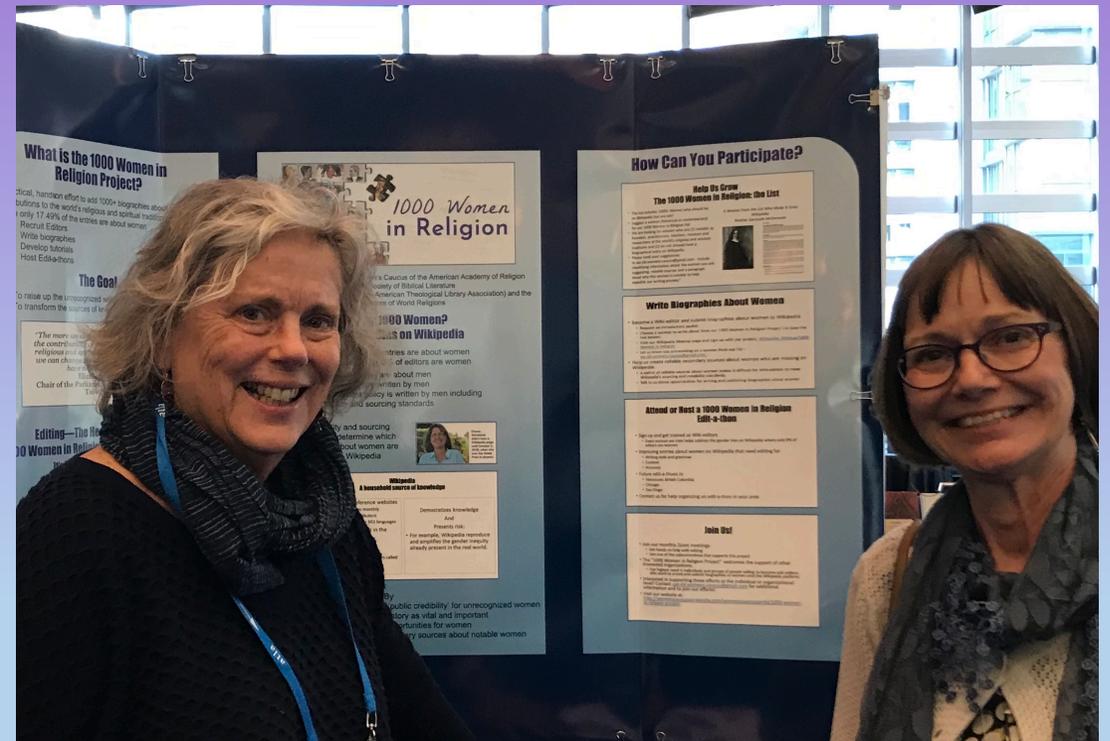
A Herstory – Finding a home and support

- Reconvening under the auspices of the Women’s Caucus of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature
- Supported by Atla – the American Theological Library Association



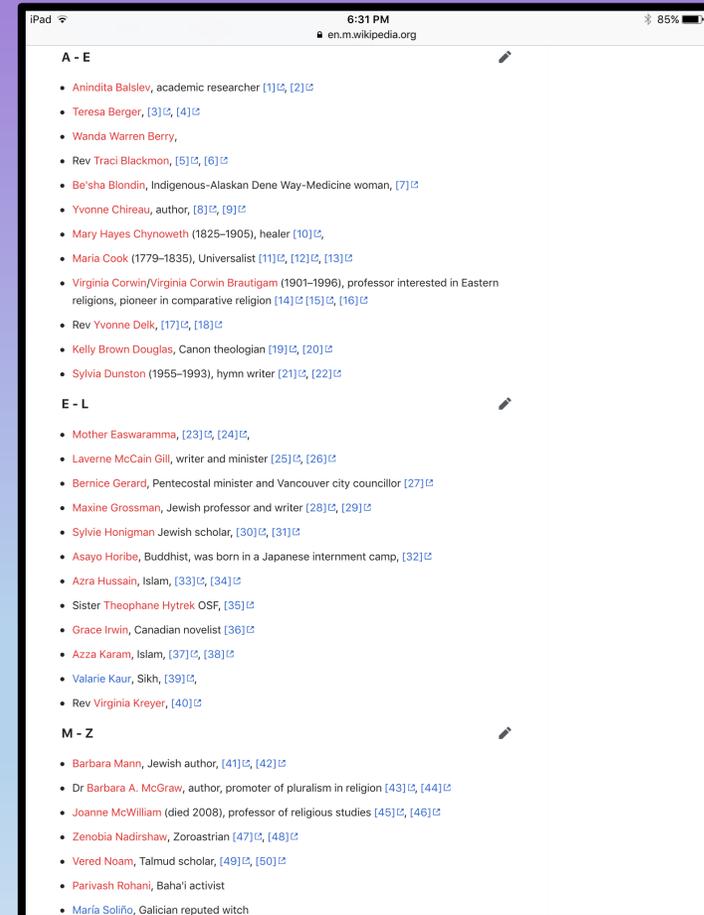
A Herstory – The Project takes shape

- The List
- Edit-a-thons
- New biographies



The List – The Heart of the Project

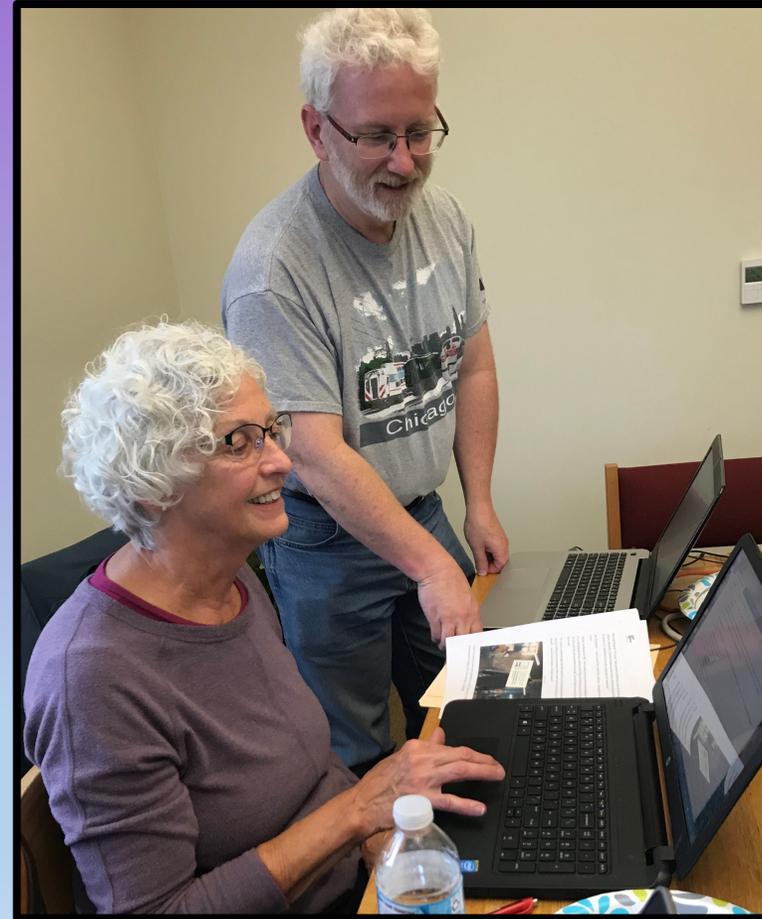
- Gender bias reproduced on Wikipedia
- Creating and maintaining the List
- The challenge of diversity



Figuring Out How Wikipedia Works!

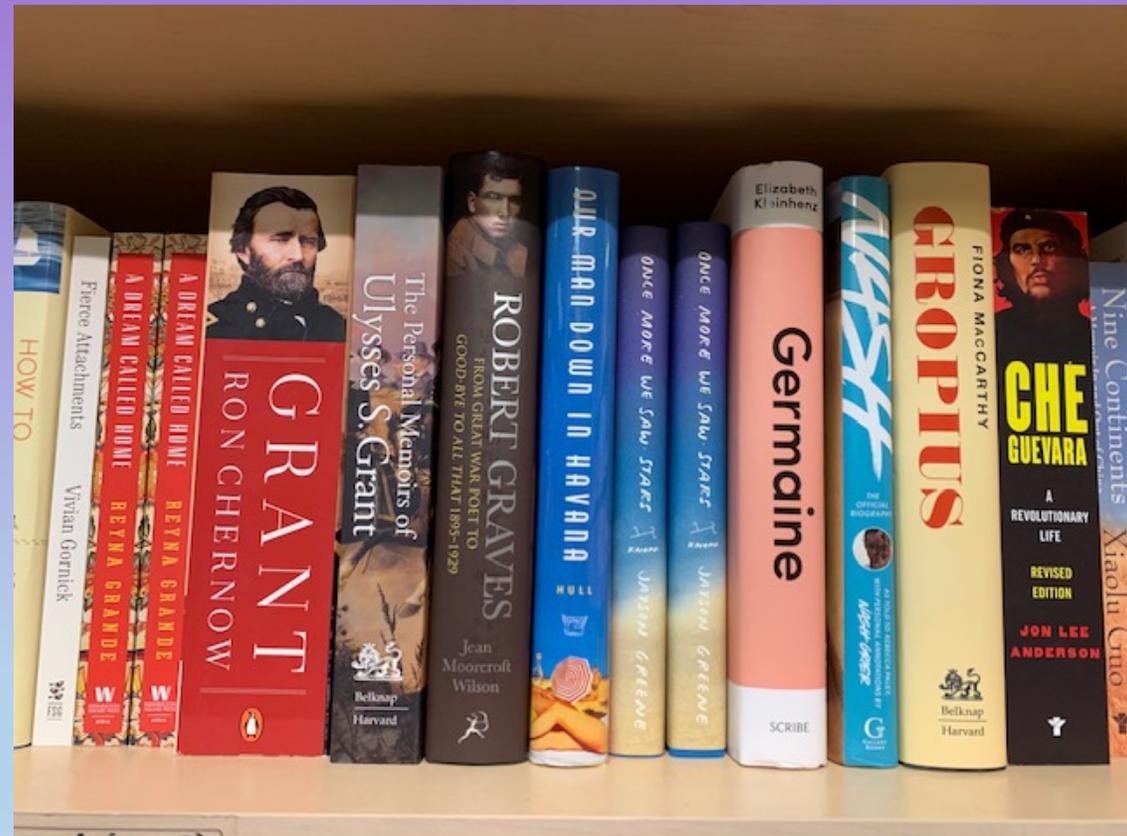
The hard lesson of figuring out the difference between writing for the Academy and editing on Wikipedia.

- Tutorials are not enough
- Good writing skills are not enough
- Connecting with academics
- Opportunities for engagement and personal connection



The Problem of Secondary Sources

- We need biographies about women
- Practical efforts
 - Conference panels
 - Monograph Series



Lessons Learned

- Starting a WikiProject
 - Establishing relationships with Wikipedia mentors
 - Networking with supportive corporate partners
- Recruiting editors
 - Making the project relevant to academic concerns
 - As a teaching tool
 - Use of their published works as a citation source for Wikipedia
 - Adding notable academics to edit-a-thon worklists+
 - Alignment with social concerns
 - Repeated opportunities for engagement
 - Personal relationships are important

How Might Librarians Assist?



Clifford B.
Anderson

Associate University Librarian
Vanderbilt University



Biography

Clifford B. Anderson is Associate University Librarian for Research and Digital Initiatives at the [Vanderbilt University Library](#). He holds a secondary appointment as Professor of [Religious Studies](#) in the College of Arts & Science at Vanderbilt University and is affiliated faculty in the [Comparative Media Analysis and Practice](#) Joint-Ph.D. program. He is also an Adjunct Professor of Computer Science in the [Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science](#) in the Vanderbilt University School of Engineering.

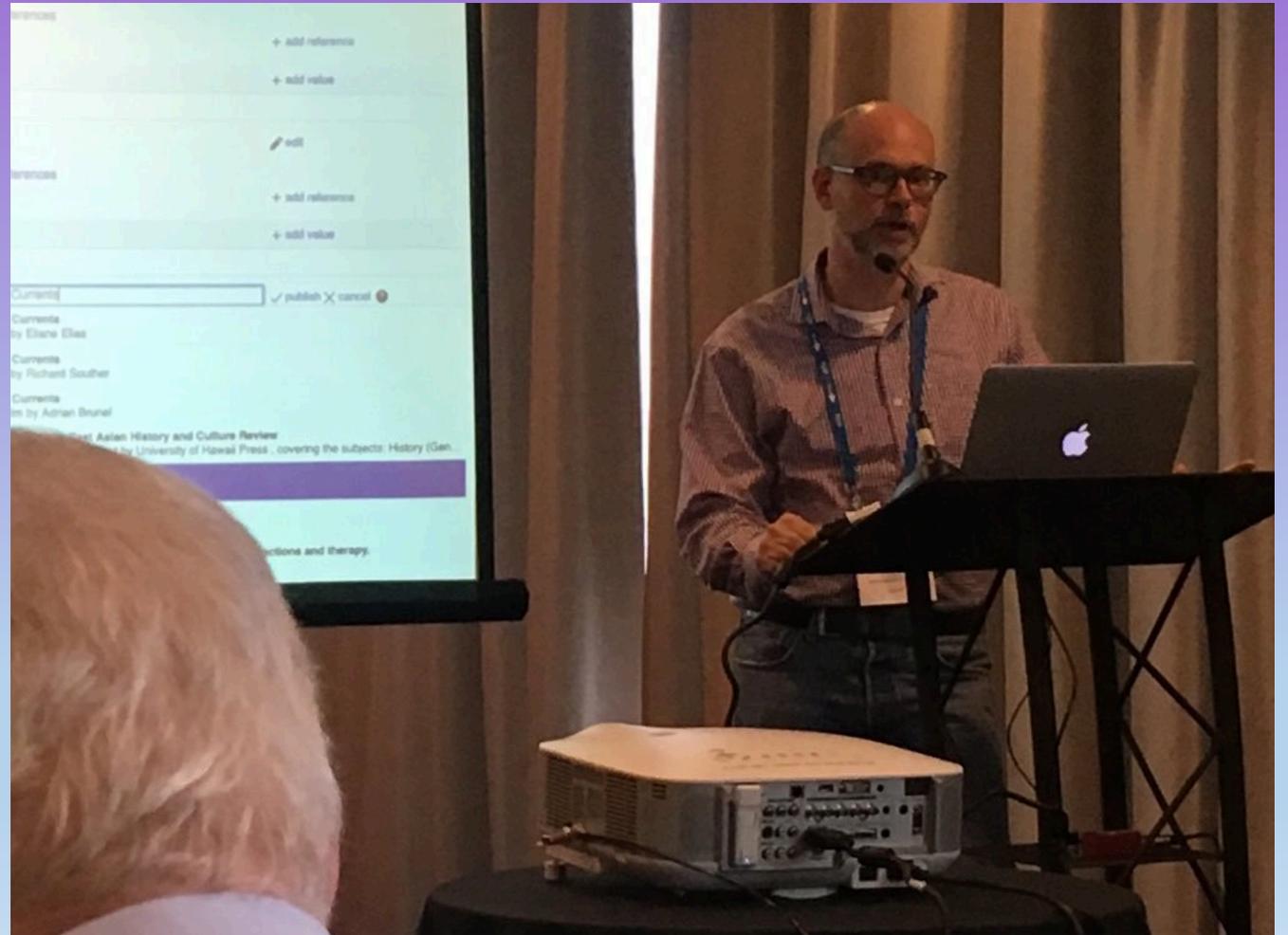
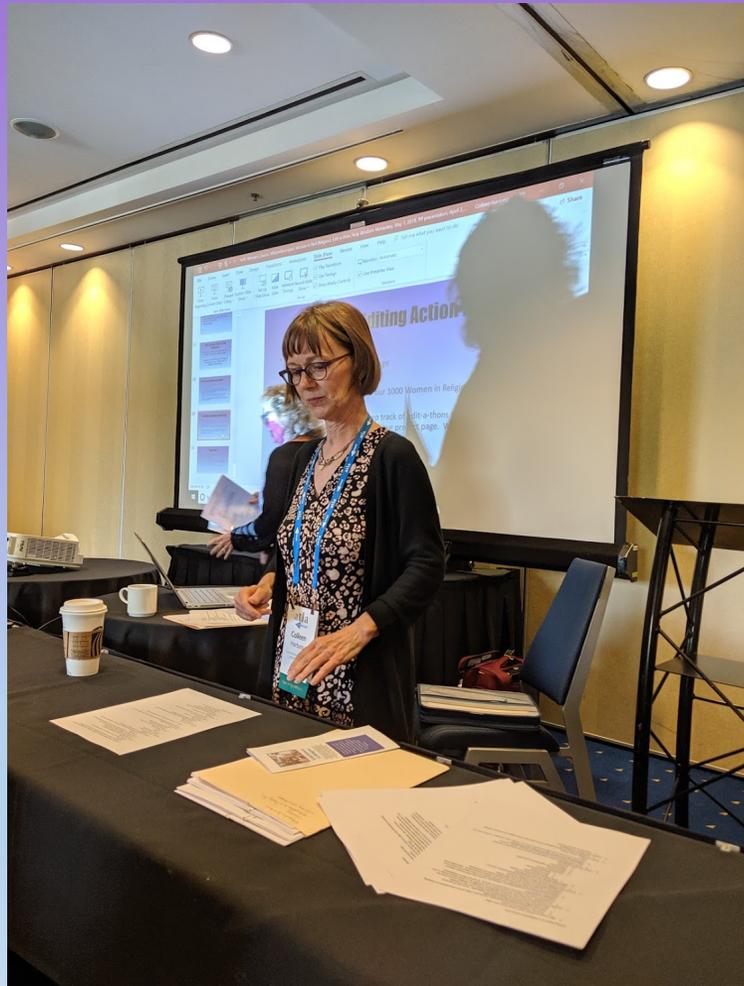
Interests

- Academic Librarianship
- Computational Thinking
- Digital Humanities
- Theological Studies

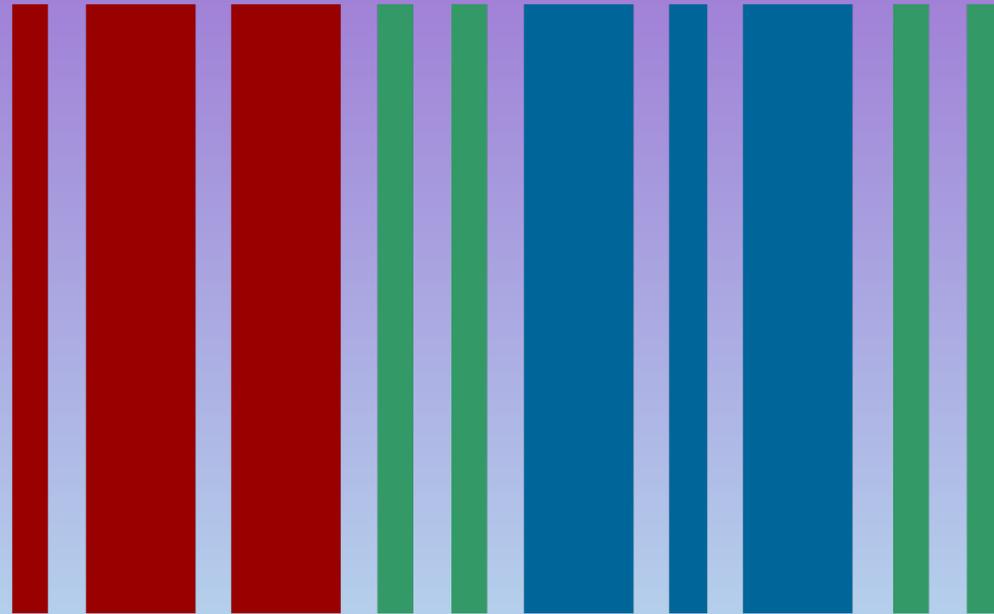
Education

-  M.S. in Library and Information Science, 2012
Pratt Institute
-  Ph.D. in Systematic Theology, 2005
Princeton Theological Seminary
-  Th.M. in Theology, 1996
Princeton Theological Seminary
-  M.Div., 1995
Harvard Divinity School
-  A.B. in Philosophy, 1992
Kenyon College

Meeting the Project Leaders



A Role for Wikidata?



WIKIDATA

The List(s) of 1000 Women in Religion

Crowd-sourced list [\[edit \]](#)

See also

- [List of Catholic female saints](#)
- [List of British saints, including many women and girls](#)

A - E [\[edit \]](#)

- [Anindita Balslev](#), academic researcher [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)
- [Teresa Berger](#), [\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)
- [Wanda Warren Berry](#), [\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)
- [Rev Traci Blackmon](#), [\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)
- [Be'sha Blondin](#), Indigenous-Alaskan Dene Way-Medicine woman, [\[7\]](#)[\[8\]](#)
- [Yvonne Chireau](#), author, [\[8\]](#)[\[9\]](#)[\[10\]](#)
- [Mary Hayes Chynoweth](#) (1825–1905), healer [\[10\]](#)[\[11\]](#)
- [Maria Cook](#) (1779–1835), Universalist [\[11\]](#)[\[12\]](#)[\[13\]](#)[\[14\]](#)
- [Virginia Corwin/Virginia Corwin Brautigam](#) (1901–1996), professor interested in Eastern religions, pioneer in comparative religion [\[14\]](#)[\[15\]](#)[\[16\]](#)[\[17\]](#)
- [Rev Yvonne Delk](#), [\[17\]](#)[\[18\]](#)[\[19\]](#)
- [Kelly Brown Douglas](#), Canon theologian [\[19\]](#)[\[20\]](#)[\[21\]](#)
- [Sylvia Dunston](#) (1955–1993), hymn writer [\[21\]](#)[\[22\]](#)[\[23\]](#)

Crowd-sourced list [\[edit \]](#)

See also

- [List of Catholic female saints](#)
- [List of British saints, including many women and girls](#)

A - E [\[edit \]](#)

- [Anindita Balslev](#), academic researcher [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)
- [Teresa Berger](#), [\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)
- [Wanda Warren Berry](#), [\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)
- [Rev Traci Blackmon](#), [\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)
- [Be'sha Blondin](#), Indigenous-Alaskan Dene Way-Medicine woman, [\[7\]](#)[\[8\]](#)
- [Yvonne Chireau](#), author, [\[8\]](#)[\[9\]](#)[\[10\]](#)
- [Mary Hayes Chynoweth](#) (1825–1905), healer [\[10\]](#)[\[11\]](#)
- [Maria Cook](#) (1779–1835), Universalist [\[11\]](#)[\[12\]](#)[\[13\]](#)[\[14\]](#)
- [Virginia Corwin/Virginia Corwin Brautigam](#) (1901–1996), professor interested in Eastern religions, pioneer in comparative religion [\[14\]](#)[\[15\]](#)[\[16\]](#)[\[17\]](#)
- [Rev Yvonne Delk](#), [\[17\]](#)[\[18\]](#)[\[19\]](#)
- [Kelly Brown Douglas](#), Canon theologian [\[19\]](#)[\[20\]](#)[\[21\]](#)
- [Sylvia Dunston](#) (1955–1993), hymn writer [\[21\]](#)[\[22\]](#)[\[23\]](#)

Focus List

on focus list of Wikimedia
project



1000 Women in Religion

 edit

▼ 0 references

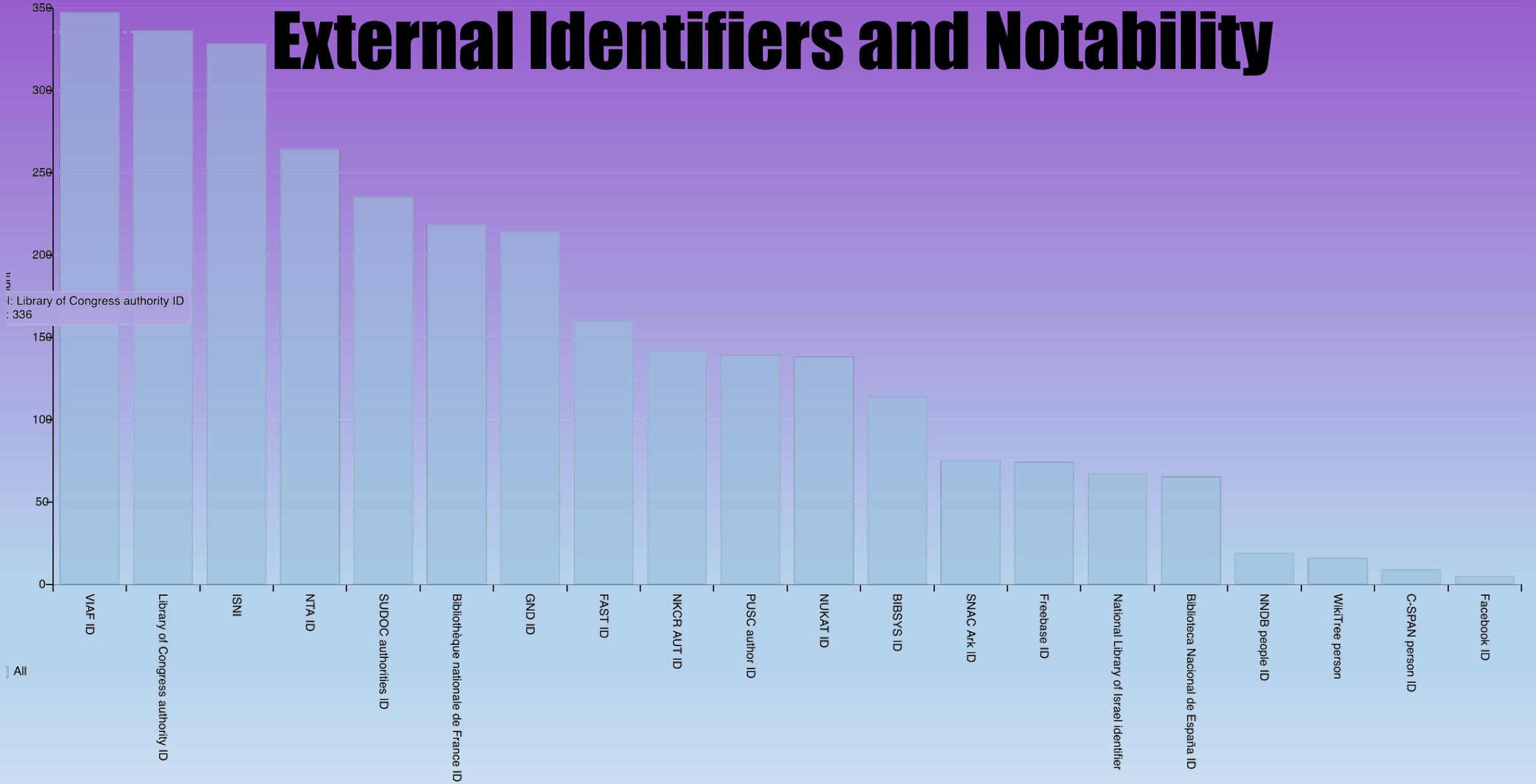
+ add reference

+ add value

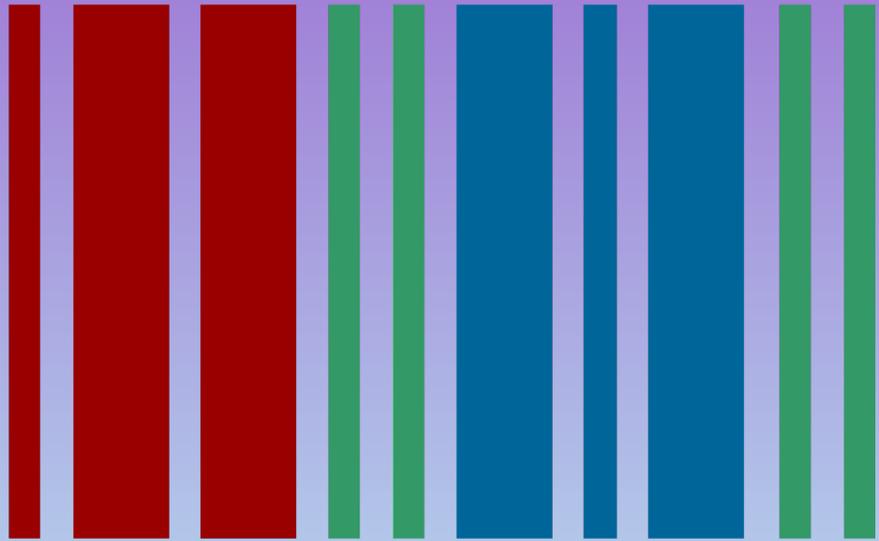
Women in Blue and Red

Elsie McKee		American academic	United States of America	1951		academic
Maria-Cristina Pitassi		Italian historian and philosopher	Italy	1954-05-24		historian philosopher
Barbara Newman		American literary critic	United States of America	1953		literary critic historian
Ilaria Ramelli		Italian historian, author and academic	Italy	1973		historian writer professeur des universités
Anna Abulafia		British academic	United Kingdom	1952		historian
Maria Pilar Aquino		Mexican catholic feminist theologian	Mexico			theologian
Irena Backus		Swiss-british historian (1950–2019) ♀	Switzerland United Kingdom	1950-04-10	2019-06-13	historian
Kristin De Troyer		Austrian theologian (*1963) ♀	Austria	1963-05-26		theologian
Angelika Berlejung		German theologian and university teacher	Germany	1961		theologian docent university teacher
Luise Schottroff		German theologian	Germany	1934-04-11	2015-02-08	theologian non-fiction writer university teacher
Ulrike Link-Wieczorek		German theologian	Germany	1955-02-20		theologian university teacher

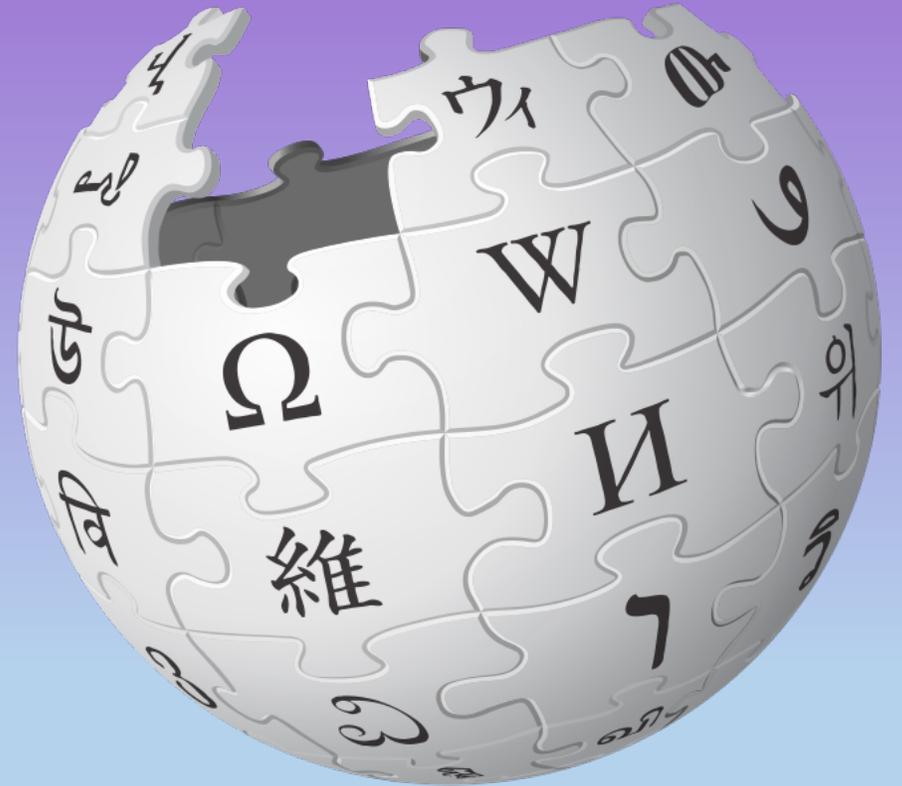
External Identifiers and Notability



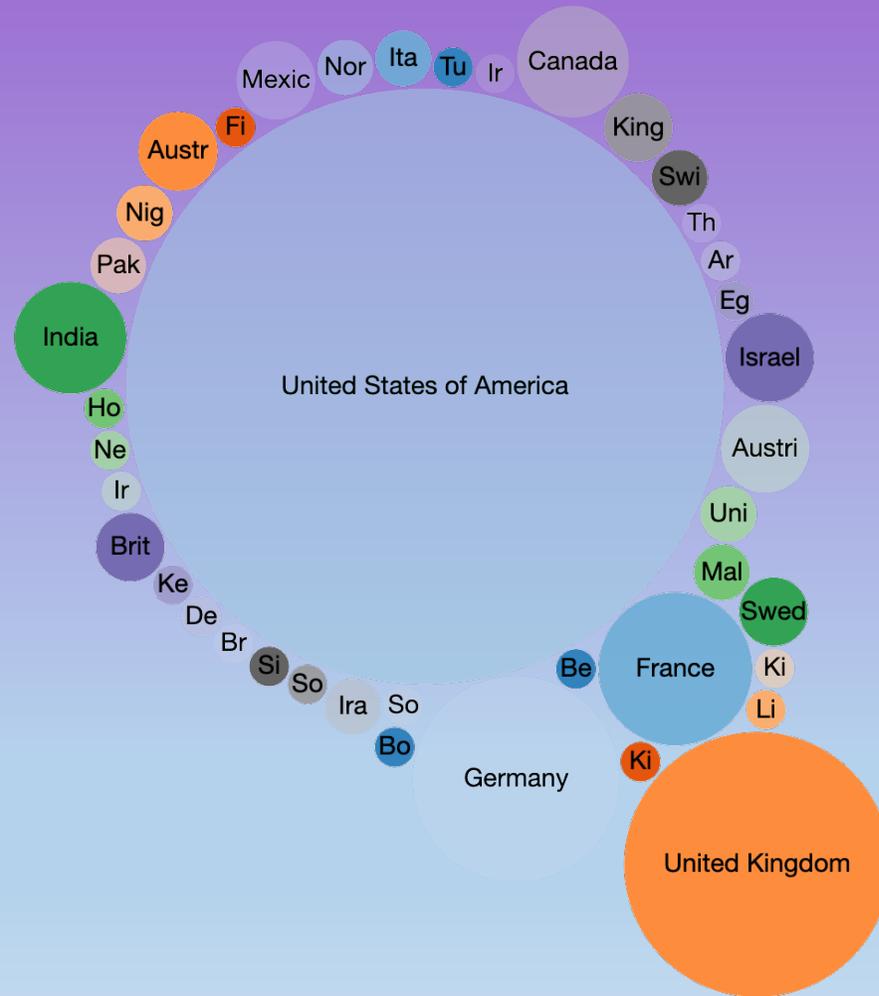
Training and Editathons



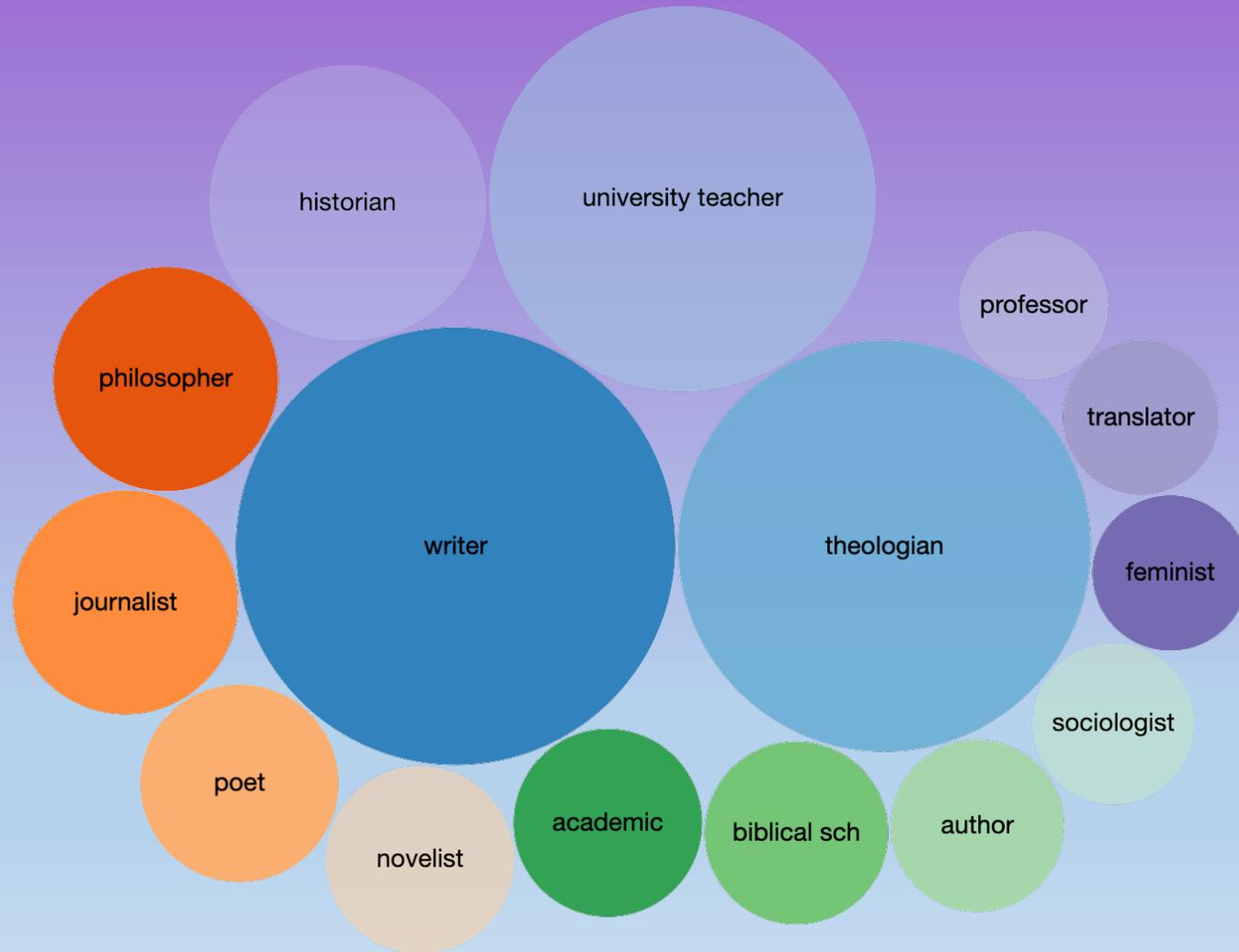
WIKIDATA



Future Steps to Avoid Bias



Occupations



A Feminist Learns to Edit Wikipedia

- Coming to Awareness- there's a lot of work to do!
- Finding my way as a feminist editor:
 - Wrestling with Sources
 - Wrestling with Notability
 - Wrestling with POV and the wider Wikipedia community

Wresting with Bias in Sources

What if the sources are biased?

- Women aren't what we "expect" religious leaders to look like, so often, they get overlooked. Gender disparity in interviews, news coverage, in depth reporting
- In history, women's names are often omitted - look at the Bible! - so we don't have secondary resources to find out more about their lives
- If we can't do original research, and no one else has, how do we find out more about women's contributions that have been overlooked?

Some Solutions:

- Access to lesser known sources - academic journals, historic newspapers, books in the field of women in religion
- Generate new reliable sources writing women's biographies
- Encourage our religious organizations to include history on their websites AND INCLUDE the names of women in their reporting

Wrestling with Bias in Notability

- Notability can be argued for women who had traditional roles (prayerful, saintly, caring for others, martyrs) and are celebrated in their religion
 - Mother Teresa, Kadjiya, etc
- Notability can be claimed for women who were “first” - ie: first woman ordained, or first woman to lead an organization.
- How do we evaluate women who are breaking new ground in academia? How do we recognize the women from non-Western settings who are creating new scholarship that challenges the traditional canon?
- How do we define notability when feminist models of leadership might differ from traditional hierarchical, patriarchal models? Ie: women who organize, network, partner with others?
- How do we argue for notability for activists , both lay and ordained leaders, like the speakers at the Parliament of the World’s Religions?

Wrestling with Bias in POV issues

- As a feminist, I get frustrated with the frequent tagging of articles by other editors over POV when I think something is stated objectively.
 - Is stating that women have been oppressed an opinion, or fact?
- Womanist, mujerista, Global South, queer scholarship has challenged “objective” academic work as upholding the “status quo”, including white feminism.
 - Ex: Audre Lourde, “The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House”
- If academics that are writing from the margins are not seen as authoritative, because they don't have access to the academy, or are not in mainstream academic fields or are marginalized, how do we bring those views into the conversation in Wikipedia in a way that they get respected and not deleted?
- What voices are not at the table in Wikipedia? Can I represent those voices faithfully as a white feminist? How can we get a wider network of people trained and empowered to write themselves?
- In an open platform, we have to get used to the fact that we don't “own” the written entries. Others can edit, argue, delete, and challenge. How do we respond to changes we don't agree with?
- Writing in a global platform like Wikipedia means that other people will not have same assumptions as we have within our fields. We take certain things for granted. As a feminist, do I have to go “back” and re-fight all this ground again? Do I have the energy for that?
- One barrier then is getting involved in the wider Wikipedia community - learning norms, learning the ways of communication, places where these conversations are being held. How do we provide support for people wrestling with these issues within the Wiki community?

Growing the Project: Next Steps

- Bios! - Getting more biographies written
- Photos! Uploading to Wikicommons
- Books! Getting more entries about women's published work into wikidata and wikipedia
- Words! Getting more entries on WikiQuote
- Diversity! seeking out diverse editors to bring their knowledge and perspective to the project
- Training! Doing more edit-a-thons and helping empower more editors

What we need!!!

- Active committee members
- Technological experts
- Wiki-editors working on the list (on Wikipedia and Wikidata)
- Edit-a-thon facilitators
- Funding to reach beyond US borders

Join Us!

- Join our monthly Zoom meetings
 - Get hands on help with editing
 - Join one of the subcommittees that supports this project
- Edit and write biographies and entries for Wikipedia and Wikidata
- Visit the Women's Caucus website at <http://womenscaucusaar.wixsite.com/womenscaucusaarsbl/1000-women-in-religion-project>.
- Visit Wikipedia:WikiProject 1000 Women in Religion https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_1000_Women_in_Religion
- Interested in supporting these efforts at the individual or organizational level? Contact aar.sbl.womens.caucus@gmail.com for additional information and to join our efforts! Or contact one of us after the presentation!

Questions

