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Opportunities of edit-a-thons in higher education

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What does “edit-a-thon” mean?

A short introduction



What does “edit-a-thon” mean?

Edit-a-thon is an event where some editors of online communities edit and improve a specific topic or type of content

The term coined from a combination of “edit” and “marathon”, first used around 2011

The common goal of Wikipedia edit-a-thons is to create new articles and improve existing ones in a specific topic

Edit-a-thons are usually open to all, newcomer and experienced editors as well



How does an edit-a-thon look like?

An Art+Feminism edit-a-thon at the Royal Armoury in Stockholm, 2017



Credit: Jens Mohr, CC BY-SA 3.0

Edit-a-thons and higher education



Wikipedia in higher education

Mixed attitudes: some teachers support, others tolerate or even forbid its usage

Even if it forbidden, students use for their studies (for learning, finding citations, writing submissions, etc.)

Sometimes it is not clear for everyone what Wikipedia is (a tertiary, not a secondary source)



Competence and skill development opportunities

Studies found that editing Wikipedia helps students to

- improve their research and information processing skills, critical text analysis
- motivates and stimulates their creativity
- develop a tone and style of expression appropriate to their target audience

Huge text corpus, applicable to translator and interpreter classes

Wikipedia requires you to be able to interpret your knowledge to non-experts



The uncertain future of student assignments

Seminar papers and other academic products written by university students are typically never utilized outside of the given courses

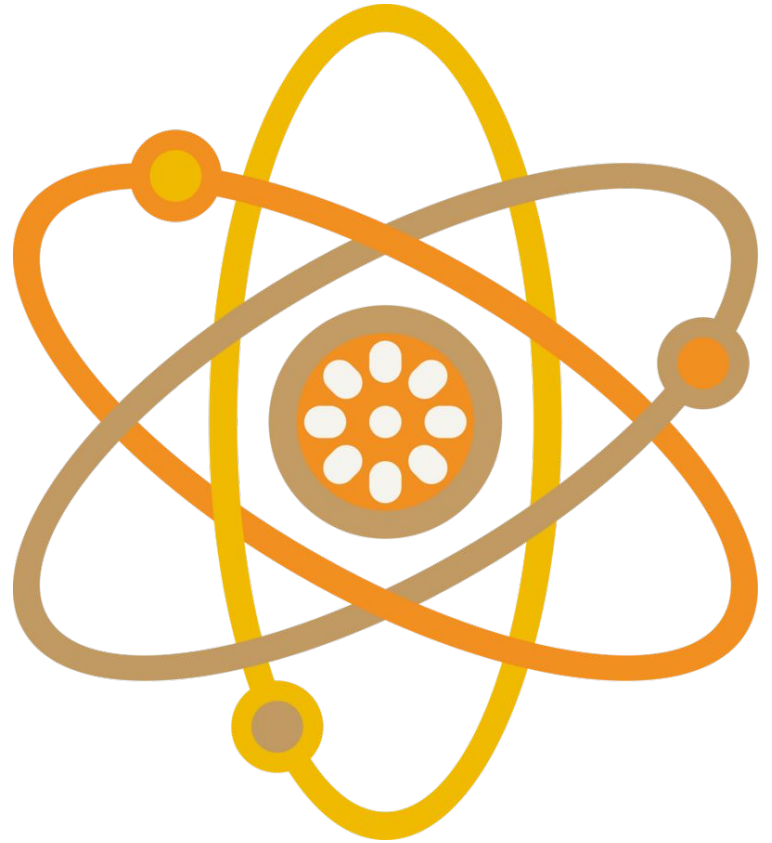
Assignments are intended to teach the students how to research, write, reason and cite in an academically acceptable way

A less motivated student takes less effort to finish an assignment, acquiring less key competences and skill – often using forbidden methods (e.g. assistance, ChatGPT)



A working model

Introduction of the Hungarian
Shakespeare edit-a-thon



The Hungarian Shakespeare edit-a-thon

Organised annually since 2014 for the students of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University (Budapest, HU)

Goal: to disseminate students' mandatory submissions on Wikipedia

Part of the curriculum: "Academic Communication" course for English studies MA students

The students do their research on pre-agreed subjects without Wikipedia articles and publish them at the end of the semester



Challenges

Finding suitable topics without Wikipedia articles but related to the curriculum

Communicating the requirements and the goal of the unusual assignment to the students

Initiating cooperation with experienced Wikipedians, inviting them to the edit-a-thon



Outreach potentials

An edit-a-thon holds good promotional value for the organiser and the host as well

The number of the reader outreach is retrievable via the Pageviews Analysis tool

The students can see the direct impact of their work – the 43 articles created on the Hungarian Wikipedia since 2014 have more than 333k unique views





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Thank you for attention!

Any questions?

Contact me!
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