

Bringing Wiki(p/m)edians into the Conversation at Libraries

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Introduction.

For hundreds of years libraries were the world's primary provider of knowledge and information, and while libraries continue to provide vital services, the landscape in which they operate has changed dramatically. One of the most dramatic components of this changing landscape, is the advance in digital access to research materials and alternative public entry points, like Wikipedia, have created challenges for strategy. To some, Wikipedia might seem like a librarian's nemesis however there is, in fact, a growing collaboration emerging between Wikipedia and the library community: libraries and Wikipedia are increasingly working together towards their common goal of providing free and open knowledge to all.¹

Many of the skills that make a good librarian effective in reaching their patrons, overlap with the skills of the most effective Wikipedia contributors: an interest and understanding of quality research materials; an interest in effective citation and attribution of those research materials; and clear public communication. Moreover, Wikipedia's "sum of all human knowledge" mission also closely aligns with the service-focused goals of the library profession, where patron access to the best public knowledge drives both activities.

The big difference between the two communities is in their degree of formal responsibility: librarians are trained professionals working in institutions with public charges to create information access, while Wikipedians are (for the most part) volunteers, whose interests aligns with their hobbies and values. But the closeness of the goals, skills and interest of Wikimedians and librarians, means that, often, finding the common ground for collaboration is not only a possibility, but actually quite easy. Yet, finding the right people to collaborate with on this broad, and frankly neverending, mission is an important first step to effective collaboration.

In this chapter, we are going to explore who the Wikimedia community is, and how to find the right allies in that community. Wikimedia related initiatives work best when coalitions of different types of contributors; professionals and volunteers, experienced Wikimedians and local knowledge enthusiasts, come together to enhance public access to knowledge.

Finding your allies in the Wikimedia Movement

¹ As is best evidenced by the Opportunity papers produced by IFLA are listed at IFLA. "Presenting the IFLA Wikipedia Opportunities Papers." (International Federation of Library Associations, 17 January 2017). www.ifla.org/node/11131

When you participate in Wikipedia and other Wikimedia platforms, such as Wikimedia Commons, Wikidata or Wikisource, it's important to understand that these platforms operate as part of a vast and complex social movement. When approaching Wikimedia, it is important to account for a rarely understood, and fundamental premise for Wikipedia and its contributor community: there is very little formal hierarchy or structure, and the many different segments of the community have different forms of power and varying levels of influence over the projects. Many activities and projects within Wikimedia communities are entirely volunteer led, some of those volunteers may be working with support or funding from the Wikimedia Foundation or local Wikimedia chapters, and even others are working on projects developed by other stakeholder groups, such as education institutions, research communities or cultural heritage organizations -- the last of which is the focus of this chapter.

Wikipedia's barriers for participation are fairly low: in most parts of the community, almost anyone can contribute to the content pages, discuss content policies and even contribute patches to the software; many of these spaces have checks and balances on this openness, such as the software itself, which has a number of community and Wikimedia Foundation-controlled review mechanisms, or the mechanism for controversial topics and high visibility spaces, like the front page of Wikipedia, to be blocked from editing except by more experienced editors or elected administrators.²

The low barrier to entry means that every month nearly 20,000 new accounts register on Wikimedia projects, and English Wikipedia alone has 130-140,000 accounts making at least one edit per month. In this context, even the formal organizations that support the Wikimedia community, such as the Wikimedia Foundation who controls the trademarks and servers that keep the websites operating, have almost no control of the governance, editorial practices or decision making that creates the content on Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons, Wikidata, and other Wikimedia projects -- except for defining the terms of use for participation and a privacy policy.³ This governance power is distributed across the volunteer community through broad principles and practices of contributor-consensus, neutrality and verifiability.⁴

² To find protected pages, look for various coloured locks in the right top-hand corner of a page. By clicking on the lock, you can learn which of nearly a dozen criteria and protection strategies are being used on that page, as part of the "Page Protection Policy": . Typically these are high profile pages (the main page for example), or high profile content prone to vandalism or debate (the Palestine-Israel conflict, the pages of recent U.S. Presidents), or pages highly visible to prank-prone high school students (music or movie stars, subjects taught in school, etc)). To learn about the protection policy, see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Protection_policy

³ In part this is a legal defensive mechanism, that protects Wikipedia and the formal organizations behind hosting the content under internet liability laws like Digital Millennium Copyright Act, and in part this is historical artefact from the open-internet philosophy that attracted contributors to the projects.

⁴ The core values for Wikipedia are often described in the 5 pillars of Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five_pillars. However, in practice, other values tend to take even more precedence expanding on the pillar "Wikipedia is free content that anyone can use, edit, and

If the power rests with the community, who is that volunteer community?⁵ Every month, 75-80,000 individual Wikimedia accounts contribute 5+ edits to one of nearly 280 language Wikipedias or other Wikimedia projects, also available in a number of other languages. English Wikipedia, the most voluminous of these projects, includes about 30,000 of these contributors each month. That seems like a quite large number, but in practice five contributions to Wikipedia is actually a rather casual participation in the project: most likely these are contributions to content pages, and those contributors have very little participation in the actual community processes that govern the projects.

To find the folks most invested in the broad maintenance of the projects, we need to look at different numbers: folks who contribute 100+ edits per month, which includes about 14,000 people per month across the Wikimedia projects. On English Wikipedia, still the biggest highly active community, this includes about 3,500 individuals during any given month. For a top 10 website, this is actually a rather small community with relationships and community dynamics that have evolved over the 16 years of Wikipedia's existence. This long history means that this relatively small community has its own practices, cultural expectations and social problems of similar complexity to those that emerge whenever you ask groups of human beings to contribute time to an ideological effort. Moreover, multiple studies have found the community to be not very diverse when examining specific cross-sections, including less than 20% of contributors identifying as female -- so lack of diversity complicates these broader social issues.⁶

distribute" to include other forms of "openness" and "freeness". Additionally, the community has been placing increased importance on references and attribution for knowledge as a check on both plagiarism and copyright violations, and a defensive mechanism against critics of the quality of Wikimedia content (see Stinson's discussion in this talk:Wikimania Esino Lario. "File:Wikimania 2016 - Verifiability of Wikipedia by Alex Stinson.webm" Wikimania 2016. https://wikimania2016.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wikimania_2016_-_Verifiability_of_Wikipedia_by_Alex_Stinson.webm).

⁵ To find out more about these statistics, see <https://stats.wikimedia.org/> .

⁶ See the chapters elsewhere in the book about the gaps in certain parts of the Wikipedia community and its knowledge. Moreover, like other radically open communities on the internet, openness for participation also provides an open opportunity for abuse, which is currently a targeted focus of research and investment by the Wikimedia Foundation (see for example, Wulczyn, Ellery. Et. al. "Algorithms and insults: Scaling up our understanding of harassment on Wikipedia." Wikimedia Foundation Blog, February 07, 2017 <https://blog.wikimedia.org/2017/02/07/scaling-understanding-of-harassment/>). Part of what can contribute to bad experience on Wikimedia projects: new contributors to Wikimedia projects often have a hard time distinguishing between experienced participants who speak for the Wikimedia community, and these participants who do not have the reputation or experience to represent the community's processes, yet declare the work of new contributor bad (or act inappropriately for a welcoming community of practice). Working with allies or advocates for your project who can build more new-contributor friendly pathways to participation and act as interpreters of the community, strengthens whatever programs you provides.

With all of this social activity online, Wikipedia could be described as a social network of sorts: for example, different parts of the Wikimedia movement have developed offline or in-person methods of working together. Sometimes this takes the form of informal meetup groups, where folks get together for beers, coffee, editing activities or photo scavenger hunts. Increasingly this organization happens in the form of more formal working groups focused on outreach and participation campaigns, and community organizations formally recognized by the Wikimedia Foundation as representatives of a local community, called affiliates.

Though participating as an individual in the Wikimedia Community has a low threshold for entry, doing more than common content contributions necessitates a certain kind of organization and relationship between contributors. For formal organizations, such as libraries, wanting to not just contribute small amounts of content, but to take advantage of and participate in the Wikimedia community, navigating the community and culture of the Wikimedia projects can be complicated. Working with affiliates or at least finding an individual Wikimedia contributor to help interface with other experienced volunteers lowers the barrier for participation in the community, allowing the Wikimedia-experienced partner to provide community expertise while the organizational partner brings their knowledge and network.

Historically communities of Wikipedia editors have grown up organically and independently, with little intentional cohesion. However there are increasing efforts, around the world, to grow local editing communities around specific interest groups, volunteer groups, and educational initiative into more formal organizations, called “affiliates”. Wikimedia affiliates principally come in two major types: user groups and chapters.⁷ Both of these organization types function as conduits for building relationships between local volunteer communities and potential partners and collaborators, including libraries.

In certain parts of the world, Wikimedia communities have formed relatively strong Wikimedia affiliates, called chapters, which are non-profit organizations -- many of which are in Europe -- who represent the aims of the Wikimedia Foundation, Wikimedia projects, and the local Wikimedia community, and frequently have small professional staffs that provide different kinds and levels of support to the local communities. Many of these organizations have formed in response to the need for formal support of partnership with educational or heritage organizations, but they also provide other kinds of support for those communities, from organizing events to

⁷ Though there is also a “thematic group” option -- non-profits without a geographical scope, but rather a thematic scope. However, there is only one such organization in the world (Amical Wikimedia in Catalonia). For more information about the structure of each of these movement organization models and their governance structure, see https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_movement_affiliates/Models

supporting communications, from outreach or lobbying to providing funds used by local volunteer organizers.⁸

In parts of the world with less overlap of culture, language, country and geography, or in countries like the United States, Australia and Canada, where the contributors to one project might be spread across very wide distance, regional communities, national affiliates or chapters have less cohesion or influence, or where the volunteer community doesn't have organizational capacity, another solution is needed. Instead, there are often small meetup groups, or the slightly more formal "user group" -- an informal organization recognized as gathering for developing specific activities in a scope and eligible for small grants and other support from the Wikimedia Foundation.⁹

However, many Wikimedia/pedia contributors are not aware of these organizations, or are satisfied contributing to Wikipedia or another Wikimedia project as an individual volunteer independent of these organizations.¹⁰ Wikipedia editors are as diverse as the encyclopedia; they edit and may or may not have any interest in collaborating on projects beyond the interests that originally brought them to the projects -- for example, a subject area, or addressing specific grammatical errors. Therefore libraries wishing to engage with Wikipedia contributors should not necessarily turn to the most active online editors, as they may have no desire to be part of formal projects or take on any additional responsibility.

For library organizations who want to get involved in Wikimedia projects, reaching out to one of these organized affiliates is frequently the best course of action: they often have technical experience organizing events or projects in their region, and can find the right resources to provide guidance and training to cultural professionals.¹¹ But if you can't find a local affiliate, we recommend trying several tactics:

⁸ For more description of the chapters, see https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_chapters

⁹ For more description of the user groups, see https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_user_groups

¹⁰ At the time of writing, the Wikimedia Foundation is in the process of developing a movement wide strategic direction -- one of the likely results of this more cohesive direction, will be a clearer inspiration and objectives of this network of formal organizations in the Wikimedia movement -- making it easier for contributors and heritage professional to identify if their needs can be met by movement organizations. For more information about the direction see: https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Strategy/Wikimedia_movement/2017

¹¹ To find your local affiliate, we recommend starting at the portal at https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_movement_affiliates . Some communities have designated particular contacts for GLAMs, this list (not as well maintained) can be found at: https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Contact_us

- First, search to find if local editors or contributors have hosted meetups via the Meetup listing page.¹² Organizers or participants of meetups can often also host events with local partners.
- Reach out through social media channels and/or other networks asking for someone who has Wikimedia experience. Though having someone locally available is often a good start, you may not find someone local who is also interested in supporting outreach or programmatic activities -- increasingly library communities have at least one or two library professionals in their own network, who have run Wikipedia editathons or Wikipedia education assignments. Sometimes best support will come from aligned professionals.
- Reaching out to the closest affiliate in your language context and ask them to help you find a more local Wikimedian. They will likely use several tactics for searching out community members:
 - Local Wikimedia chapters often have a directory of trained or experienced volunteers who are capable of effectively training new editors -- even in nearby regions outside their scope.
 - The part of the Wikimedia community that does outreach is relatively well connected, as a social network, so they may know someone in your region through an unconventional method.
 - Using categories and user templates to find active users who either self identify as being from a particular region, or participate in editing topics relevant to your context.¹³
 - If you are organizing an event or gathering, you can solicit a Geonotice, which places a banner on the Watchlist of people who sign in within your geographic area without exposing their location to the message sender.¹⁴

In most parts of the world, these requests will find someone who can connect you to contributors in your local context. If you don't find these networks responsive, there are an increasing number of Facebook groups and mailing lists that can connect you with the larger network working at the intersection of cultural heritage (GLAM - Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) and the

¹² Find meetup listings for English-focused projects at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Meetup>

¹³ Though this information is very public, most of it is going to be out of date, since it has accrued over the last 16 years of the community. To find Wikimedians who identify in your geography, check out: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Wikipedians_by_location . To find Wikimedians active in a geographically focused editing Project, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Geographical_WikiProjects . Also, you may be able to find editors by looking at the history of articles relevant to your local context.

¹⁴ The Instructions for Geonotices can be found at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Geonotice>

Wikimedia Community, including a Wikipedia + Libraries Group, that can help you find fellow librarians or supporters who can work with you remotely.¹⁵

Creating Wikimedians in Your Community

Once you define the Wikimedia activity that you want to pursue, whether it's an editathon or upload of open access content, or if you want to create a regular editing group to focus on a particular topic, it's important to bring volunteer capacity to the projects.¹⁶

Wikimedia's culture of bold volunteerism with a very low barrier to entry, means that Wikimedia volunteers often have a range of motivations, capacities and organizational skills that may or may not meet the needs of more formal institutions. Additionally, Wikimedia volunteers may invest a large amount of energy in projects in which they find a passion or connection with the needs of other communities--but like all projects of passion, that enthusiasm can wane, or you might find that your local Wikimedians don't want to focus on the topics you are interested in. So what do you do then?

The best approach is to develop new interest in Wikimedia contributions from other volunteer communities in your local context, who can attend local events. Typically these new contributors can come from hobbyists or volunteers already associated with your organization or similar heritage organizations. Local community groups may offer some of the best allies: for example, local history societies (the city of Swansea in South Wales has over 100 active historical societies) and social, charitable and educational groups of all sorts. There is also a growing number of individuals prepared to volunteer at libraries and other cultural institutions. These communities frequently are interested in communicating knowledge in your context, many of whom publish their own journals, newsletters and books. For librarians looking to increase engagement with local communities, Wikipedia offers a ready built platform, in multiple languages, where local communities can work with their local libraries to improve Wikipedia content relating to their interests or expertise.

Case Study: Catalan language Wikipedia has a relatively limited geography where they can expect to find volunteers for the project: in Catalan speaking Spain and France. By

¹⁵ For the active communication channels, see the listing at https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Mailing_lists

¹⁶ For an overview of various models of projects pursued by previous GLAM contributors, see https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Model_projects

collaborating with the Public Library Network in Catalonia, the Catalan community has involved over 200 libraries in their Bibliowikis initiative.¹⁷ The model for the collaboration is a simple one: librarians run programs that involve the local public and those librarians train other librarians on developing that kind of programming in their own context. Program models include basic Wikipedia editing workshops, and a number of activities that promote local history and culture, such as photo-scavenger hunts and local book clubs writing about local authors and regional history. Amical Wikimedia (the Catalan-language Wikimedia Affiliate) provides very little support to get the libraries started in activities: documentation and trying to find a regionally available volunteer for the librarians to collaborate with. Once the activities start at a local library, they typically develop other local volunteers who can help support and provide energy for local projects.

Unlike already-committed Wikimedians, who will frequently show up to events just because it's Wikimedia-related, we have found that involving a broader volunteer community works best with thematic focuses. These focuses offer simpler communication strategies (i.e., “filling a gap on Wikipedia”) and elicit better public interest than offering “learn about Wikipedia” programs.¹⁸ These themes can fit closely the institutional objectives of the GLAM hosting the activities:

- Many institutions host what's called a “backstage pass” where they highlight an important topic in their collection as the theme-- such initiatives allow volunteers and staff to share in the professional activities of the organization and rare parts of their collection;
- These themes might fit into the outreach programming goals of your institution -- the Catalan Public Library network collaboration includes frequent book club or local author editing events, which focus on highlight literary culture that is also subject to public library programming; or,
- The topic might be more political and draw from an activist or knowledge community interested in public understanding of that topic -- for example the Art+Feminism events are hosted by GLAMs around the world, and draw large numbers of women editors into the community because of the broad call for “feminist” participation in the projects.

Picking one of these tactics can excite an existing community and provides a motivating draw for volunteers to be engaged in the project and therefore with the library's collections. Moreover,

¹⁷For the program page, see <https://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viquiprojecte:Bibliowikis> . A broader case study can be found at:

https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Case_studies/Catalonia's_Network_of_Public_Libraries

¹⁸ Broad illiteracy about how Wikipedia works, leads to a general lack of knowledge about what it means to “learn how to contribute to Wikipedia”. Additionally, these kinds of overbroad calls tend to solicit people who want to use Wikipedia for cross purposes with the general knowledge interest of Wikimedia and libraries, such as folks interested in promoting businesses or who want profiles of friend on Wikipedia, leading to conflicts of interest and challenges with other Wikimedia policies.

thematic or project focused communications provide platforms for highlighting the importance of institutional work in that field to local media.

Online programs for the Wikimedia community can also draw participation and collaboration with contributors outside of the geographical scope of the organization, especially on topics of broader interest than local history and culture. Typically, contribution campaigns focus on a theme or topic that the institutions offers digital collections on, and require a fair amount of online Wikimedia community skills. For example, the National Archive of the Republic of Macedonia runs a multilingual competition for contributing content related to parts of its collections that it has uploaded to Wikimedia Commons; a similar strategy that has also been adopted by the Bulgarian Archives State Agency.¹⁹ Working closely with existing Wikimedia communities or online networks to find the right topics that will excite or engage volunteers, helps ensure that these kinds of projects succeed.

Case study: Wicipop - an initiative funded by the Welsh Government and managed by the Wikimedian in Residence at the National Library of Wales used a blend of online and offline activities to achieve the project's goal of creating 500 new Welsh language Wikipedia articles about Welsh pop music in three months. Three themed public editathon events were held, which drew new and experienced editors into the same physical space in order to create new content. Events like these are great for publicity and several of the events attracted interest from the local media. The project also targeted active editors online by establishing a project landing page on Wikipedia itself. This led to a substantial contribution from experienced Wikipedians that the National Library of Wales hadn't previously engaged. A social media campaign also led to local publishers releasing content on an open licence which editors could then reuse on Wikipedia -- contributing to a broader cycle of increased public access to knowledge.²⁰

Planning for new contributors

Engaging new volunteers with Wikipedia and Wikimedia projects has its challenges. Some first time editors lack the confidence to publish on such a visible and far reaching platform as

¹⁹ See the second iteration of this contest at: https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/DARM_Challenge_2 and the documentation of the Bulgarian Challenge at: https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Newsletter/October_2016/Contents/Bulgaria_report .

²⁰ See the Wicipop project final report at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Jason.nlw/Wicipop_Project

Wikipedia. Others struggle with the technical aspects of editing. Perhaps, the biggest challenge, however, is retention of editors following an initial training session or Edit-a-thon event.²¹

The main challenge when introducing new volunteers to Wikimedia projects is frequently apprehension or lack of confidence: Wikipedia is a large website, seen as an almost venerable institution, and its often misunderstood by the public; contributing to that large and mysterious project can be intimidating or simply unmotivating. Having a champion on hand to lend confidence to new contributors, helps speed through interpreting the project's nuances and feedback systems. For example, its very useful to have someone with Wikipedia experience in new-contributor events to serve as interpreters. When more seasoned Wikipedia volunteers have first interactions with new editors, sometimes they are rather abrupt or less than welcoming. Having a human on hand to explain what a template means, or how to figure out if the critique of the new editor's work is valid, provides in-person opportunities for modeling the community/social dynamic of developing content.

If you are planning on hosting an event to edit Wikipedia, it is also useful to make contact with a few experienced Wikipedians via their Wikipedia profiles; if you can get hold of editors with admin rights that's even better. These editors will then be aware that a group of new editors is being trained and can offer appropriate online support -- such as patrolling new content to ensure that it won't solicit poor responses from other editors.

In order to address these and other issues of building sustainable communities of local editors, most projects needs at least one champion. Such champions come in many guises, from enthusiastic outreach staff within libraries and proactive local community leaders to Wikimedian's in Residence and online Wikimedia volunteers. As the Wikimedia community has grown and become more effective at outreach, we have found that it's less important for these champions to fully understand Wikimedia projects, but more important is for them to have strong

²¹ A 2015 report from the Wikimedia Foundation shows that this number could be as low 5% at six months. See the report at https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:Evaluation/Evaluation_reports/2015/Editathons/Outputs . As the report notes, this does not represent all events -- only ones described through WMF grant reporting-- and our measuring strategies for generating these numbers may be inaccurate. We do have some evidence that sustained community activities have better retention results: in the Czech Republic, the public library did a training activity with senior citizens which used regular weekly trainings to get a 50% retention rate at three months: Dostál, Vojtěch. "Senior citizens learn to edit Wikipedia in the Czech Republic." Wikimedia Blog, January 12, 2015. <https://blog.wikimedia.org/2015/01/12/czech-senior-citizens-learn-to-edit/> . Librarians and other knowledge professionals also have higher retention rates, often returning to Wikimedia contributions after long periods of time to host events and do information literacy work alongside contribution. A number of projects since 2015, have shown continuous ability to bring repeated attention and participation from large communities, including Art+Feminism, Black Lunch Table and Afrocrowd in New York City, and #1lib1ref.

teaching skills so that they can explain interactions to new contributors and for them to be able to tap a network of supporters with deeper Wikimedia knowledge.

Protip: Initially Wikipedia editors had to have a basic grasp of Wiki Markup²² in order to contribute. In recent years, Wikipedia has introduced a new “Visual Editor” which modernises the process to act more like a word processor or contributing to a content management system like Wordpress. The introduction of this tool, since late 2012, has drastically cut training times and made Wikipedia editing accessible to a far wider audience. Those teaching new contributors how to edit Wikipedia can start volunteers in the Visual Editor, while providing a brief introduction to the wiki source code.

Another important component of maintaining volunteer communities is providing tangible feedback and demonstration of the impact of volunteer work. Wikipedia and its sister platforms provide a global environment for a hugely varied corpus of information, data and media. Because of this reach and scope, some volunteers will find motivation from seeing the instant fruits of their labor, in the shape of new or improved Wikimedia content. However, providing sustained morale building throughout the programming, helps strengthen that initial value.

There are a number of tactics for sustaining morale, that overlap closely with good library programming: for example, coordinating press and social media communications with volunteer activities, that highlights the value of individual volunteer work, or providing small benefits to participants in the events, like free refreshments or a “backstage” tour of your institution, which reward volunteers for participation with tangible benefits. Your local user group or Wikimedia chapter may also have a budget for merchandise such as badges, pens, stickers and t-shirts which they can distribute for free, and these are usually well received by volunteers. Innovating on different kinds of motivation and moral support, and sharing what works helps develop best practices for public knowledge projects more generally. For example, at West Virginia University, the Wikipedian in Residence is partnering with sororities to give sorority members service credit for their participation in Wikimedia activities in collaboration with the library and educators.

Case study: Many libraries co-ordinate small teams of volunteers who wish to work with them. At the National Library of Wales volunteers who wish to work with the institution are all offered the chance to work with Wikipedia and in March 2017 fifteen volunteers were

²² **Wiki markup**, also known as *wikitext* or *wikicode*, consists of the syntax and keywords used by the MediaWiki software to format a page. In addition to wiki markup, some HTML elements are also allowed for presentation formatting

working regularly on improving Wikipedia content. Tasks are tailored to every individual's needs and interests. The Library holds an annual awards ceremony to recognise the achievements of its volunteers and offers free parking and refreshments to all members of the team. The scheme has been so successful that there is often a waiting list to volunteer.

Getting the right support: integrating Wikimedia champions into the library

As we described in the last section, you can bring lots of different types of people into an organization to work on Wikimedia projects. However, codifying the role of staff or volunteer advocates for these collaborations within your organization, can greatly strengthen the effectiveness of projects: rather than having one off editing events or data donations, if your champions have formal roles, they can develop a more strategic and integrated plan. This integration allows these champions to work more closely with library staff, the Wikimedia community and other volunteers to identify common objectives and implement mutually beneficial programmes. Moreover, this allows for the library administration to recognize the work and its place within the organization. Integrating champions into your library and formalizing their roles also places faith in them as individuals and this can motivate them to stay engaged with project for longer. This is particularly true when working with unpaid champions who are often young graduates looking for work experience to bolster their CV.

Staff champions

The first obvious, and relatively cost effective, way to integrate Wikimedia projects into the strategy of a GLAM is to formalize the role of staff for organizing activities and working on Wikimedia project within the course of their work. Staff can allocate a certain amount of their work hours to work on Wikimedia projects, typically with a broader public access or outreach mission in mind. However, if the addition of Wikimedia is a side project (or just a tactic within someone's job), there are risks: the main one being, that it's hard to get broad support across hierarchical organizations without some sort of strategic investment in Wikimedia contribution as an organization.

Two major tactics have been used by GLAMs in identifying the role for existing staff members who contribute to Wikimedia:

- At the US National Archive and Records Administration, the social media and digital innovation offices supported an informal Wikipedia editing guideline that is similar to the other social media use guidelines.²³

²³ For the NARA guidelines see

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/National_Archives_and_Records_Administration/Guidelines

- At the State Library of New South Wales in Australia, a staff committee created a formal policy on staff integrating Wikimedia projects into organizational workflows.²⁴

The first tactic, a more informal one, gives permission for staff, whereas the second, which required a longer more formal process, has been very effective at not only giving permission, but providing the rationale for integrating Wikimedia work into the organizational priorities -- and does so with a more inclusive organizational strategic buy-in. Generally, either mechanism, either a team strategically explaining the alignment of the work with broader organizational priorities or a cross-organizational recognition of the strategic priority, allows staff who act as Wikimedia Champions to justify appropriate Wikimedia programming and roles within their jobs.

Within many organizations that don't formalize the strategic interest in Wikimedia projects, staff end up taking Wikimedia collaborations on as "volunteers" beyond their staff roles. In the face of the undervaluation of cultural heritage work more generally, expecting staff to do this work as an "extra" to their existing jobs leads to uneven focus, and in the long term, contributes to the underrecognition of something that is fundamental to organizational missions: a strategy for broader public access to collections and specialized knowledge. Many heritage organizations are not ready to invest large amounts of staff time to developing a case for or test of Wikimedia contribution tactics as part of a broader public-access strategy. Instead, many organizations will build another role into their staff, with either volunteers or term-based staff.

Wiki(p/m)edians in Residence

The most well described and common way of creating this "empowered champion" role in the Wikimedia community is the "Wiki(m/p)edian in Residence" (WIR) . A WIR is tasked with integrating a strategy for Wikimedia projects and broader OpenGLAM into the workflows and practice of a cultural institution. Their role is not to edit Wikipedia on behalf of the institution (a common misconception), but rather to focus on projects that grow the understanding, skills and capacity of the organization to successfully engage with Wikimedia projects and to improve their broader strategy for open, public engagement with institutional content.

This role usually includes a number of sub-activities, such as creating a free-licensing/open access policy for digital heritage assets, training staff in Wikimedia editing or open-licensing, organizing events, editathons or other contribution activities which utilize institutional expertise, or facilitating the donation of media to Wikimedia Commons. Typically these residencies last at least six months, though some have been shorter; most organizations find that they need at least a

²⁴ For the SLNSW guidelines, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/State_Library_of_New_South_Wales#State_Library_of_New_South_Wales_Staff_guidelines_for_editing_Wikipedia

year of a residency to fully integrate organizational capacity with a broader “public-access through Wikimedia” strategy -- a handful of these roles have extended to semi-permanent or permanent roles, as it has been at the US National Archives and Records Administration.

The Wikipedian in Residence idea was first developed and tested at the British Museum by an experienced Australian Wikipedian named Liam Wyatt in 2010. Wyatt, who held the residency as a volunteer for a month, was able to demonstrate how enriching Wikipedia content relating to the museum’s collections increased the number of linkbacks to the Museum’s website and led to an increase in community engagement activities.²⁵ Since then residencies have been hosted by well over a hundred institutions within a number of different language and cultural contexts and structural arrangements.²⁶

Early iterations of WIR roles were entirely unpaid (building on the idea that a “Wikimedian” is a volunteer, who can be “in residence” at an institution); in the last 4-5 years, many of these WIR roles have at least some sort of compensation, acknowledging that an extended residency at a GLAM institution requires a certain caliber of organizer who should not have to sacrifice their well-being or career development in order to volunteer. Moreover, while the work of a normal Wikipedian might be seen as fun volunteerism (developing content on a topic of personal interest), the work of a WIR frequently requires participating in organizational development and dynamics -- which is clearly not in the scope of full or part time volunteer work. Compensation is usually in the form of a short term contract, funded through either an outreach-focused budget, external grant or existing residency/fellowship/practicum/internship programs for early professionals. That being said, small or under-resourced institutions may be able to build a close relationship with a Wikimedian or other volunteer willing to do a “Wikipedian in Residence” role without this much investment or it might be appropriate for a coalition of institutions to resource a Wikipedian in Residence -- as happened at the York Museums Trust or METRO library association in New York.²⁷

Early WIR roles were recruited almost exclusively from experienced Wikimedia Community members, who had a deep understanding of the social dynamics of different Wikimedia projects. However, this has changed with the proliferation of different Wikimedia outreach programs, which in turn has allowed Wikimedia communities to gain experience in developing relationships with institutions, resulting in better documentation of activities which is accessible to professionals. Moreover, the deeply engaged online community only has so many volunteers

²⁵ British Museum Wikipedia project page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/British_Museum

²⁶ For an incomplete list, see https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikipedian_in_Residence

²⁷ See the program page for York at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/YMT> and a reflection on the METRO role on the Wikimedia Blog: Dorothy Howard. “On Consortium-Based Wikipedian in Residence Positions.” Wikimedia Blog, November 15, 2013. <https://blog.wikimedia.org/2013/11/15/wikipedian-in-residence/>

both capable of setting aside their careers for temporary employment and with the right skills for effective program development at partner organizations. Instead, hiring individuals with moderate-to-little Wikimedia experience, but with demonstrated energy, experience and alignment with digital communities alongside outreach and project management skills has proven effective in a number of situations.

When supported by a broader community of Wikimedians through an affiliate or network, it's even possible to develop effective programs with someone with no Wikimedia experience: for example, West Virginia University Libraries hired Kelly Doyle, a community organizer and educator, who had no previous experience working with the Wikimedia community. Her ability to organize effective events, learn and teach about the social components of the Wikimedia community, and ability to innovate on existing project models, has allowed a much wider variety of impact types around their focus of “gender equity”.

Outcomes from WIR range widely, based on the organizational strategies, project pursued, and capacity within the organization to prioritize resources and open-license content for use in the partnership. But documented outcomes and descriptions of the experience by host institution staff, tend to be very strong, resulting in: positive organizational culture changes, theoretical public impact (through visibility of topics of importance to the institution) and tangible metrics in terms of large pageviews of new content created on Wikipedia and media uploaded to Wikimedia projects, as well as an increase in referrals from Wikimedia websites to institutional resources.²⁸

Residencies can be described as successful based on just tangible metrics and impacts. However evaluating and implementing the WIR model in isolation often struggles to leave any lasting institutional impact on Wikimedia’s projects and mission once the residency ends. Meaningful strategic impact, particularly in larger GLAM’s, can take a very long time and may meet with resistance from staff with conflicting priorities and targets. In order to aid a lasting Wikimedia collaboration, the WIR must work closely with the institution to build a sustainable model for engagement. This might involve establishing a volunteer community under the management of permanent library staff who acts as the champion after the residency, securing policy change within the timescale of the residency, expanding written job descriptions to include Wikimedia related duties or building content release or donation into digitisation workflows.

²⁸ The most thorough evaluation of this has been by Wikimedia United Kingdom, who did a review of their program in 2014: Chris McKenna and Daria Cybulska. “Wikimedian in Residence Programme Review.” Wikimedia UK, 22 July 2014. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wikimedian_in_Residence_Programme_Review_-_WMUK_2014.pdf. Though the report has some learnings specific to Wikimedia Organizations within the Wikimedia Community, the examination showed that overall impact from institutional perspective, has been positive.

Wikipedia Visiting Scholars

Wikipedian in Residence roles are high risk/high reward roles for institutions: they cost a fair amount of money, in terms of the role itself and supervising the role, but it ensures that someone in the staff has the energy and time to integrate Wikimedia, either through its projects or at the least its values of openness and public access, into the organizational strategy. However, when an organization isn't ready for that kind of strategic commitment, it's still worth designating an advocate from outside the organization, to experiment within existing collections or resources. Increasingly, institutions are turning to the concept of a "Wikimedia Visiting Scholar": someone whose real expertise is on creating Wikimedia content and exposing the institution to the relationship between institutional knowledge and Wikimedia, while not focusing on capacity development.²⁹

Visiting scholars, like Wikipedians in Residence, usually have some experience with Wikimedia projects, but need that experience to be very targeted on developing high quality content. To create such a role, an institution works in partnership with an affiliate or a champion to find a Wikimedian editing in a certain topic area relevant to the collection, and then invites that Wikimedian to fill that "Visiting scholar" position. Modeled off "visiting scholar" positions at academic institutions, the Wikipedian gains some type of unique access arrangement, such as access to materials licenced by a research library or direct support from a handful of the staff, that allows them to more effectively research so that they can contribute around an agreed upon field of knowledge. These Visiting Scholar roles provide an interface with the Wikimedia community: humanizing the activity, introducing staff to the creation of content on Wikimedia projects, and helping staff examine the relationship between organizational knowledge and Wikimedia projects.

Typically, Visiting Scholar roles are initiated for a window of time, usually for six months to a year and often remotely, to contribute a certain amount of content (i.e. 15-30 Quality Wikipedia article, or integration of a dataset into Wikidata), with a presentation or collaboration with staff at the end which highlights the relationship of the Wikimedia content to the organizational goals. Some Wikipedia Visiting Scholars have asked for closer collaboration with their host institutions, creating the stepping stone for a Wikimedian in Residence type position; while in other situations, the temperament or interests of the Wikimedian don't lend themselves to deeper collaboration, but they sustain contributions to Wikimedia projects in collaboration with the institution.

²⁹ Documentation for this model of collaboration can be found at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Visiting_Scholars

Case study: The Wikipedia Visiting Scholar scheme offers more flexibility than the more formal WIR role. It can be adapted to suit the needs of the host institution, but also the skills and interests of the volunteer. In 2015 the National Library of Wales developed and invited applications for a Wikidata Visiting Scholar position. Working to the same principals as the Wikipedia Visiting Scholar position, the successful applicant was guaranteed access otherwise closed access datasets as well as specialist advice from curatorial staff and technical support from the systems team. The successful candidate was able to work remotely, processing library data and combining it with other open data to create a rich linked open data resource on Wikidata. This allowed the library to share its data openly for the first time, and to study the advantages of doing so, with little or no cost, or disruption to core library duties. Whilst the library had clear goals (convert metadata to linked data and release via Wikidata), the Visiting Scholar was given the freedom to choose which data he would develop and how he would visualize and interpret the data later. This flexible approach can make all the difference in keeping key volunteers engaged, motivated and focused.³⁰

Student Interns, Practicum students or University Classes

One of the common patterns that emerges among Wikimedians who become Wikipedians in Residence or staff champions: they often do so after being high performing students (usually graduate students) in a field related to the institution's focus, either library science, museum studies, archival studies, or a related writing-focused program, such as art history, history or a social science. Moreover published case studies in the library and archive studies community include a number of projects where university libraries or archives engage student workers to highlight institutional content by contributing new content on Wikimedia projects. Early case studies take the approach of “just adding links” to institutional collections on Wikimedia, a practice perceived as spam by some parts of the Wikimedia community; newer case studies focus on the win-win relationship between quality content on Wikimedia projects and the visibility of not only the contributing institution’s digital assets, but also the broader materials available on that niche subject area.

Employing students to get involved in Wikimedia contributions for the institution, acts as a flip-version of the Wikipedia Visiting Scholar project: instead of a low-cost, low risk contribution from a Wikimedian, student employees offer a low cost, low risk introduction where the institutional supervisor and their student learn how to effectively participate within the

³⁰ Jason Evans and Simon Cobb. ‘*How the world’s first Wikidata Visiting Scholar created linked open data for five thousand works of art*’ Wikimedia Blog, November 5th, 2016. <https://blog.wikimedia.org/2016/11/05/wikidata-visiting-scholar-art-dataset/>

guidelines put out by the Wikimedia community. Important to this process is creating the expectation that students not only add references to digital institutional resource, but expand content using different kinds of cultural heritage research from beyond the institution. The Wikipedia Library team ran an experiment with several academic and research libraries, to systematize these kinds of internships into cohorts. Outcomes were high with better quality of Wikipedia content than typical documented student work, but the cohort model was intensive to organize.³¹ By building champions out of the students and their supervisors, the institution is able to do low-risk experiments while learning about Wikimedia projects, and testing whether the student can be a good long-term advocate, in the form of a staff champion or Wikipedian in Residence.

There are a number of examples of this kind of project. See the chapter in this book about the Pritzker Library, where they supported a continuous flow of student interns filling topically important gaps like World War I patriotic music.³² Other institutions, such as the Smithsonian Freer/Sackler Gallery in cooperation with Smithsonian Libraries, have hosted interns who profiled Asian art topics that are systematically undercovered on Wikimedia projects.³³ All of these models find a champion either in the students themselves or in their supervisors or institutional instructors, and allow the institution to test broad potential of Wikimedia fit with existing efforts and staff priorities.

Extending beyond individual student contributions into the well documented and supported project model, the Wikipedia Education Program, can be a good way to extend this low-risk experimentation. Wikipedia Education Program assignments allow instructors, typically college-level, to assign students to write full articles which fill topical gaps on Wikipedia. This can be done with a focus on topics relevant to institutional collections, acting as a form of academic outreach and collaboration. Working with a full class of students at local University might be a unusual form of outreach for public or non-university research libraries: however, for local history, public history and GLAM professional programs, direct engagement with collections held by institutions and using Wikipedia as an example environment and platform for public access to heritage, provides ample learning opportunities.

³¹ Though they are not running the program any longer, the curriculum is still a valuable tool: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:TWL/I>

³² For example, the recent work by the Pritzker Museum and Library: Theresa A.R. Embrey and Andrew H. Bullen. "Music of World War I: Turning a Static Collection Into a Vibrant Resource." *Information Today* 37.4 (May 2017) <http://www.infotoday.com/cilmag/may17/Embrey-Bullen--Music-of-World-War-I-Turning-a-Static-Collection-Into-a-Vibrant-Resource.shtml>

³³ See the blog post: Eirn Rushing. "Mughal Art for the Masses." *Unbound, Smithsonian Libraries*, September 21, 2016. <https://blog.library.si.edu/2016/09/mughal-art-masses/>

Working with classes of students can also introduce a number of complications for libraries who have previously not worked with educational communities, for example, it may be necessary to plan around a semester, provide research skills support, and match projects against learning outcomes. In the United States and Canada, there is a fair amount of assignment design and student support available from the Wiki Education Foundation for curriculum development and online tracking and community engagement support. Affiliates in other parts of the world, also regularly support education assignments, and although they frequently can't provide the same amount of professional support as the Wiki Education Foundation, they have a fair amount of ability providing curriculum development support and might be able to support broader support (including workshops).

Case study: While working at Kansas State University, Stinson worked with the Beach Museum of Art to have students in an Art History class write content that exposed particular parts of the institutional collection alongside the best external research for that topic. The Wikipedia article work acted as a first step towards adding bibliographic research to finding aids and catalog materials for the institutions actual collection.³⁴ Moreover, students were introduced to the difference between primary-source research and secondary research, and the various venues in which this knowledge can be shared -- among researchers, with the public and into institutional catalogues where the project provides context.

Innovating, growing, and supporting communities

The models for engaging volunteers, collaborators and champions are still very fluid in the Wikimedia community -- outreach with cultural heritage organizations has only been systematically approached within the international Wikimedia community since 2010/2011. As a community working with libraries, the Wikimedia community is still learning what consistently creates desired outcomes, and how to best serve the missions of both communities, institutions and Wikimedia. Within this shifting context and understanding of how these collaborations work, it behooves Wikimedia allies in the library community to continue iterating upon what we know about community engagement: public programming around access to knowledge is something that librarians have much more experience with than the Wikimedia community.

Iterating on other forms of volunteer and stakeholder development, and finding ways to make Wikimedia participation relevant to local stakeholder groups, is important for both communities for the long term. The Wikimedia community is at a critical point in time: a very slow decline in active contributors on Wikimedia projects, from a peak of participation during 2007-2009, has

³⁴ See the outcome of their work can be found at:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_artwork_by_John_Steuart_Curry

recently leveled off, but during that time, the content on Wikimedia projects has more than doubled.³⁵ Developing communities of knowledge seekers and preservers ready to build the next stage of quality improvements, as well as finding knowledge stewards who can ensure the long-term reliability of Wikimedia content, is a strategic investment in the broader availability of information for the public. Ultimately libraries and Wikimedia communities need to figure out how to bring the right participants into these collaborations for maintaining public access to this knowledge.

³⁵ For this information, see: <https://stats.wikimedia.org/EN/SummaryZZ.htm>