Brick by brick: Libraries and Wikimedia building on each other

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Overview

• Australia, Queensland, SLQ and WMAU
• What we did together
• What worked and what didn’t around specific activities
• Some comments on collaboration
• Making Wikipedia Business as Usual in GLAM
Australia
Queensland is large

- 2nd largest state in Australia
- 6th largest state in the world
- 2423 km long (1505 miles)
- 1457 km wide (905 miles)
- Area: 1,852,642 km²
- Tropical / sub-tropical (9°S to 30°S)
- Population: 4.8M with 3.4M crammed into the SE corner
Queensland is Outback

• Royal Flying Doctor Service is world’s largest provider of primary & emergency healthcare by air

• School of the Air educates children in the Outback, originally by radio, now by phone and slow Internet
State Library of Queensland

• Traditional beginning
  • Neo-classical building
  • Collect lots of books
  • Wait for people to come in and read
  • 1960s extension

• Distance to people is a problem

• Mid 1970s Country Lending Service
  • Now serves local government areas with < 15,000 people
State Library of Queensland (reboot)

• Funky modern building
• Full of giant screens, computers, A/V streaming, 3D printers, etc
• Still plenty of books
• Difference in the thinking
  • Bring knowledge to the people
  • Not people to the knowledge
• Digitisation & digital delivery
• Going to where the people go
  • Social media
  • Wikipedia
Wikimedia Australia

• Around 40-50 people spread across Australia
• Not possible to meet together
• Many activities tend to be local

• 2009: WMAU organised GLAM-Wiki conference in Canberra
  • SLQ attended and met some Brisbane WMAU members
  • Start of collaboration
What SLQ and WMAU did together

• Donation of 50K out-of-copyright photos of Qld to Commons
• Wikipedia Edit training to librarians, partner orgs, & the public
• Wikipedia-in-Residence program: Qld home front during WW1
• #1Lib1Ref – adding citations to Qld content on Wikipedia
• WikiClub – monthly afternoon for local GLAM to contribute
• And other stuff ...
Commons donation

- Hard to determine copyright status
  - Half of photos had problematic meta-data
  - Lots of work for WMAU members
- But very successful
  - Many images used in Queensland articles
- Successful in unexpected ways
  - Images used in surprising articles
  - Most-viewed images are not in Qld articles
  - Photos are out of copyright in Australia until 1954, later than many other countries

Prince Philip, Brisbane, 1954
Wikipedia edit training: what we’ve learnt

• Use Visual Editor
  • Very much preferred by new/lapsed trainees
  • Game changer for getting continued contribution after training

• Teach “just enough” skills/policies & have a “real editing” experience
  • Paid editing, conflict of interest, copyvio, need for citations
  • No MoS except by example

• Practice on user page, then expand “real” stubs
  • Don’t create new articles, strongly discouraged until “more experienced”
  • Most have an article they want to write (often no/marginal notability)

• Short sessions (2 hours now vs 1 day initially)
  • Longer sessions: teach more but not learn more

• Provide business cards for email/phone follow-up
  • Not ready for Talk/User Talk, too many new things to learn all at once
Wikimedian-in-Residence

• Theme: Queensland home front during World War I
• 3 x WiRs, each one day a week for 3-4 months over a year
  • 2 experienced Wikipedians & 1 SLQ staff (experienced writer, 2 intensive days to learn WiR-level skills!)
• Aims:
  • Add Wikipedia content on the theme - successful
  • Engage with public to find “new stories” – less successful
    • WiR not in a public space, needed to make an appointment
    • ANZAC deaths are “sacred” to Australians, but “not notable” to Wikipedia
#1Lib1Ref

• SLQ had small engagement in #1Lib1Ref in 2016
• New State Librarian encouraged a “big effort” for 2017
  • ambitious target of 1000 new citations for Qld content
  • Lousy timing – Australian summer school holidays!
• Awareness session for staff with citation “refresher” (both editors)
  • Advertised to local GLAM community beyond SLQ
• Full edit training session for new/lapsed editors (Visual Editor)
• 5 edit-a-thon sessions over 3 weeks
• 35 SLQ staff added at least 1028 citations (¼ world total)
  • Based on internal tracking, no #1Lib1Ref statistical support available!
  • Challenge to find the articles, Citation Hunt not very useful
QWiki Club

• 1Lib1Ref edit-a-thons “enjoyable” and “empowering” for SLQ staff
• Started monthly get-togethers for Wikipedia contributions by SLQ and other local GLAM staff supported by Wikimedia Australia
• Theme of the month, with proposed easy and more complex tasks to accommodate different skills and confidence levels with contributing
• Average around 10 participants with some beginners at each session, others maturing as contributors
• Some participants are active contributors between sessions
GLAM & Wikimedia collaboration

• Partnerships develop over time
• Start small and grow
• Under-promise and over-deliver
• Experiment with different types of activity and see what works
• Needs to be an intersection of interests in terms of both activity and topic area (win-win) to keep both sides engaged in the longer term
• Big cultural differences (gender balance, attitudes to privacy/transparency, timeframes)
Advice to GLAMs

• Wikipedians are volunteers and must fit in their GLAM interactions in between work, family and their own Wikipedia contributions
  • weekday activities can be very difficult to resource for volunteers

• Wikipedians and chapters can’t change the rules or outcomes of decisions (e.g. Article for Creation) – not issued with magic wands

• Notability for new articles is very hard to get right
  • don’t try new articles too soon

• Some Wikipedians you encounter on-wiki are “difficult”
  • We don’t get to choose our volunteers
Advice to Wikimedian partner orgs

• Learn about your GLAM partner before you first formally meet
• Read strategic plans, annual reports, org charts, etc
  • Know what they are interested in, how they measure success (KPIs)
  • Know who to talk to about what
  • Expect long planning cycle
• Use their collections, visit their website, attend their events
  • Improves your understanding and leads to serendipitous opportunities
• Expect weekday meetings and events
  • Who can attend these?
• Use your real name, hand out business cards
  • expect to communicate by email and phone etc rather than Talk pages or IRC
• Learn the Visual Editor, add {{VEFriendly}} to your User Talk page
Advice to Wikimedians generally

• GLAM staff are paid editors but contributing photos/citations/further reading/external links from their GLAM’s collections are desired outcomes by the WMF strategic plan
  • NOT “conflict-of-interest edits by paid editors” or “spamming”

• GLAM staff act in “good faith” but can be over-enthusiastic or over-confident in their actions (think “excited puppy”), try to explain nicely what the problem is

• Enable the Visual Editor in all namespaces and on all wikis and on all new user accounts
  • Why build the VE for new users and then NOT give it to them?
Advice to WMF

• Enable the Visual Editor in all namespaces and on all wikis
  • DYK: the Visual Editor is not enabled on the Outreach wiki!

• Understand GLAMs have long planning cycles
  • Less last-minute-ism
  • Run campaigns across different but locally convenient timeframes
  • Make sure the local chapter/liaison are cc-ed on contact with GLAMs

• Support gathering of KPIs by GLAMs
  • Provide high-level aggregate information by geolocation
  • No need to provide details of the individuals
  • GLAM funding and ongoing support of WMF depends on demonstrable KPIs
Transition to Business as Usual in GLAMs

• Look for ways to incorporate Wikimedia as part of regular work flows or project planning

• New photos into library and through to Commons (where suitable)
• Reference librarians’ answers to questions into Wikipedia
• Part of the standard “palette” of activities that is considered in programme development
• Add Wikimedia skills as desirable in job selection criteria ("normalise")
Conclusions for partnerships

• Seek out GLAM partners who are thinking non-traditionally
  • Open/eager for online/digital activities

• Wikimedians need people skills to partner
  • Not just Wikimedian skills

• Use the Visual Editor
  • Focus on the joy of sharing knowledge, not the tools