



Women in Religion

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WikiProject Women in Religion Report

Women in Religion User Group

WikiConference North America

Toronto

November 2023

Outline

- What is the Women in Religion Project?
- Summary of What do we Do?
- Short History and Timeline
- Benefits to New Participants
- Results of the Women in Religion book series
- Results of our experiments with AI
- How to join

What is Women in Religion?

The **Women in Religion Project** was inaugurated at the 2018 [Parliament of the World's Religions](#) in Toronto, Canada. It was originally a project of the Women's Caucus of the [American Academy of Religion](#) (AAR) and the [Society of Biblical Literature](#) (SBL). It became an official Wikimedia User Group in 2021 ...

Join us!: https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Religion_User_Group

The Project's Mission

Women in Religion seeks to create, update, and improve Wikipedia articles pertaining to the lives of [cis](#) and [transgender](#) women scholars, activists, and practitioners in the world's religious, spiritual, and wisdom traditions. We seek to write women back into history, especially those who have made an impact in their faith and religious communities.

What We Do and How We Do It?

- Initiate Edit-a-Thons to recruit & train new editors
- Compile lists of notable Women in Religion
- Improve existing articles
- Create new biographical entries
- Add photos of women on WikiCommons
- Add Women to Wikidata
- Create reliable secondary sources



Why we do it!

- **Wikipedia is a global source of knowledge**
- **It is the 6th most visited website in the world**
- **Over 400 million visitors monthly**
- **It's Open Source and Collaborative**
 - It's free; content is open for all to use
 - Anyone can edit and participate
 - 72,000 active contributors on English Wikipedia

Yet, Wikipedia also reproduces and amplifies the gender and racial inequity already present in the real world.



[Diana Nkesiga](#)

Anglican priest from Uganda

The Gender Gap on Wikipedia



- Only 19.67% of biographies in English Wikipedia are about women (as of October 2023)
- Women contributors made up 11.5% of Wikimedians in 2019 and 15% in 2020
- Women often are not respected for their accomplishments the way that men are, for example: [Wangari Maathai](#) won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.
- Women's pages are more likely to be deleted or tagged
- Women's pages often don't have any photos

History and timeline

November 2018	Founding of the 1000 Women in Religion WikiProject (now Women in Religion), Parliament of the World's Religions, Toronto, Canada
2019	Creating a Wikipedia Project Page Establishing monthly planning meetings ATLA Annual Meeting – Editathon and Poster Session Begin Wikidata project WikiConference (Boston) – Bridging the Divide between the Academy and Wikipedia American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting – Women's Biographies Panel and Editathon (panel and editathon have been held every year at the AAR Annual Meeting in November, 2019 -2023)
2020	Publication of Volume 1 of the Women in Religion series Australian Women in Religion project begins and takes off Establishing monthly meetups for editing
March 2020	1st Virtual Edit-a-thon – Celebrating Women's History Month with the Parliament of the World's Religions

History and timeline (continued)

2021	Publication of Volume 2 of the Women in Religion series WATER Virtual Presentation (February) Seekers and Scholars Podcast (September)
July 2022	1st Edit-a-thon, The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians
August 2023	Edit-a-thon, Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago, IL AI presentation, Wikimania 2023
November 2023	Edit-a-thon, American Academy of Religion, San Antonio, TX Presentation, WikiConference North America Publication of Volume 3 of the Women in Religion series

Monthly Events

Women in Religion WikiProject page:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Women_in_Religion

Monthly project meetings

- ★ 2nd Monday of the month: Wikipedia question/answer and edit time (4 pm CST)
- ★ 3rd Monday Editing Africa 11 AM, CST; 7 pm EAT:
[African Continent Meet Up Zoom Link 2023](#)
- ★ 4th Thursday of the month: Business meeting 4 CST:
[WIR Business Business Meeting Zoom 2023 link](#)
- ★ Email rosalind at rhinton1@tulane.edu to get on the mailing list.

Who Benefits from Joining

- New editors (with or without subject expertise)
- Skilled editors who want to learn:
 - More about women from a wide range of religious communities.
 - How user groups with a wide range of skills manage and maintain momentum.
- Great group for collaborative editors
- “Scholars” of religion who would like to contribute to **reliable, published sources**

Betha Mae Lillenas



Born	Bertha Mae Wilson March 3, 1889 Hanson, Kentucky, U.S.
Died	April 13, 1945 (aged 56)
Resting place	Forest Hill Calvary Cemetery Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.
Occupations	Evangelist · hymn writer
Spouse	Haldor Lillenas (m.1910)

Women and Religion Book series



*Claiming Notability for Women
Activists in Religion*

<https://books.atla.com/atlapress/catalog/book/40>



*Challenging Bias against
Women Academics in Religion*

<https://books.atla.com/atlapress/catalog/book/46>



*Women Advancing Knowledge Equity:
The Parliament of the World's Religions*

Coming soon

Books result in Wikipedia articles!

- [Mae Eleanor Frey](#)
- [Janet McKenzie](#)
- [Miranda E. Shaw](#)
- [Beatriz Melano](#)
- [Bertha Mae Lillenas](#)
- [Yvonne V. Delk](#)
- [Ida Weis Friend](#)
- [Aoyama Rōshi](#)
- [Margaret Peoples Shirer](#)
- [Ellen Leonard](#)
- [Mary Burt Messer](#)
- [Isabel Apawo Phiri](#)
- [Traci C. West](#)
- [Chanequa Walker-Barnes](#)
- [Mary Milligan](#)

Aoyama Roshi



Shundo Aoyama Roshi

Personal

Born	1933 Aichi Province, Nagoya Prefecture , Japan
Religion	Sōtō Zen
Known for	first nun to be appointed to the rank of Daikyoshi

Women in Religion lists

- Suggest women for the list
 - Contact rhinton1@tulane.edu
 - Add to the crowd-sourced list on our WikiProject page
- Create “**women in red**” lists from existing encyclopedic content
- Help upload the list to Wikidata
- Help us maintain the list!

WiR redlist index: *1000 Women in Religion*

Welcome to [WikiProject Women in Red](#) (WiR). Our objective is to turn **red links** into **blue ones**. Our scope is women's biographies, women's works, and women's issues, broadly construed.

This list of red links is intended to serve as a basis for creating new articles on the English Wikipedia. All new articles must satisfy Wikipedia's [notability criteria](#); red links on this list may or may not qualify.



Finding historical women

- **Sister Madeleine Juneau**, CND (1945-2020), Executive Director, Maison Saint-Gabriel, Montreal, Canada
- **Juanita García Peraza** (1897-1970), founder of the Mita Congregation, a spin-off of the Pentecostal church with Puerto Rican origins
- **Susie Forrest Swift** (later, Sister M. Imelda Teresa, O.P.; 1862-1916), American Salvationist, and after converting to Catholicism, a Dominican nun
- **Amelia Elizabeth Roe Gordon** (1852-1932), president, Ontario Woman's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) before serving as president of the Dominion W.C.T.U.; World's W.C.T.U. Superintendent of evangelistic work



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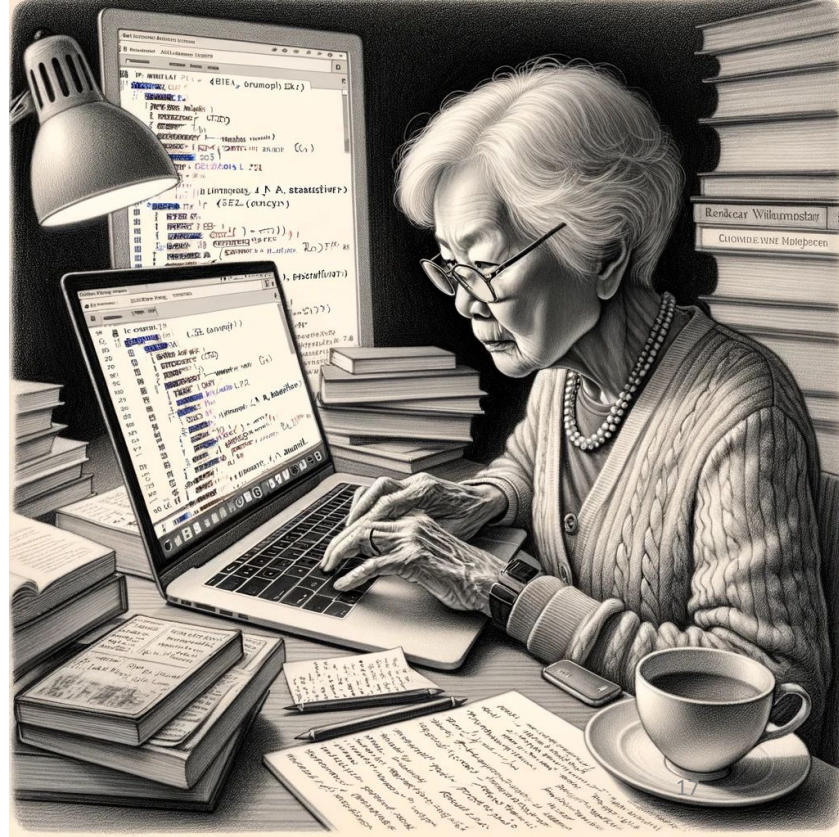
Wikipedia edit-a-thons focused on biographies about women

1. Sign up and get trained as Wiki-editors: Monday Edit-a-Thons; Women In Red
2. Improving entries about women on Wikipedia that need editing for
 - a. Writing style and grammar
 - b. Content
 - c. Accuracy
3. Create Stubs and new entries on Wikipedia
4. Upload photos to WikiCommons
5. Add info to Wikidata
6. Add names to lists

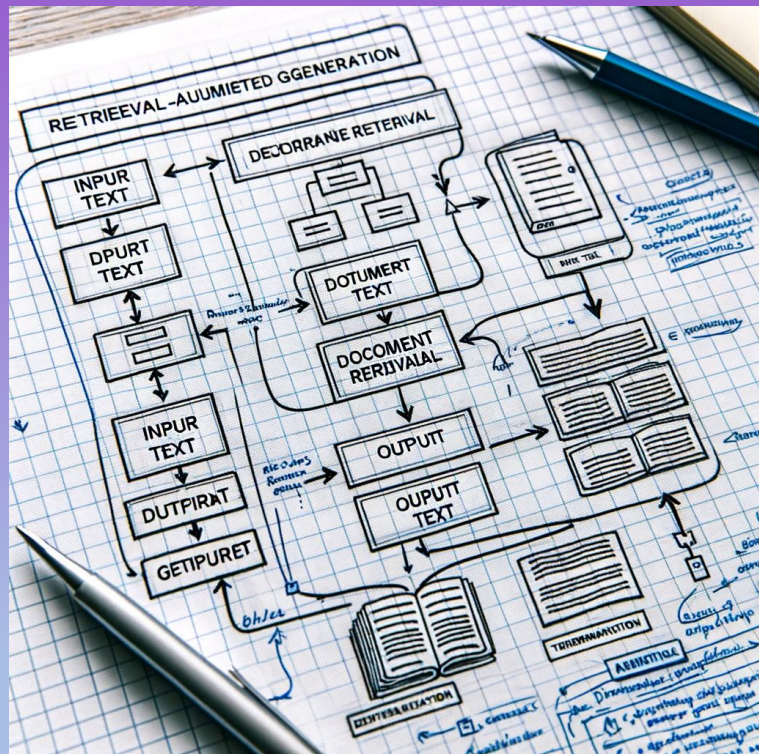
Exploring Artificial Intelligence

Can generative AI help to rectify imbalances in Wikipedia's coverage of Women in Religion by accelerating the process of writing articles about neglected and underrepresented women religious leaders?

Prompt: Pencil sketch of an older woman of Asian descent sitting at a desk, typing on a laptop with a software interface displaying artificial intelligence algorithms. Around her, books and papers related to Wikipedia and research are scattered, hinting at her contribution to the platform. (DALL-E 3)



Retrieval-Augmented Generation



Our team investigated whether Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) could overcome AI hallucinations and also improve the quality of our footnotes.

Prompt: “Photo of a detailed technical specification on graph paper. The main title reads 'Retrieval-Augmented Generation'. Below the title, there's a flowchart showcasing the process. The flowchart has three main boxes: 'Input Text', 'Document Retrieval', and 'Output Text'. Arrows connect the boxes in sequence. 'Input Text' feeds into 'Document Retrieval' which then feeds into 'Output Text'. Around the flowchart, there are annotations and notes written in blue ink explaining key steps and terminologies.” (DALLE-3)

Chat GPT-4 + LangChain. Learn more from our [Wikimania 2023 presentation](#)

How Did Things Turn Out?

Article leads in the biography of Traci C. West

RAG AI version of West

Traci C. West is an influential Christian leader whose interest in activism was partly inspired by the Civil Rights Movement. She studied religious studies at Yale University and was a key figure in the Alexander v. Yale Title IX lawsuit, helping create the University's first sexual harassment policies and procedures

Wikimedian version of West

Traci C. West is a scholar and activist. She is the James W. Pearsall Professor of Christian Ethics and African American Studies at Drew University Theological School and Professor Extraordinarius in the Institute for Gender Studies in the College of Human Sciences at the University of South Africa. ...

How Did Things Turn Out?

We compare the quality of an AI-generated [sandbox draft](#) and a human-authored article (created by User:Jaireedell) about [Mary Burt Messer](#).

- RAG AI is braver ... asserting a significance that I was less sure of--e.g. “was renowned”
- RAG AI is quicker to draw conclusions-- e.g. “life and works demonstrate ...” and “story shows ...”
- RAG AI was maybe better at synthesis--integrating the breadth of her work, while I preferred to segment: “her research which merged diverse domains such as sociology, feminism, Christian Science healing, and activism for women's rights.”



But the ... nuance?

RAG AI Version (emphasis mine)

She was born into **a family of pioneers** known for their intellectual, geographical, and spiritual pioneering, most notably her maternal grandfather, John Wesley North. **Her ancestry** traced back to Puritan Separatist Elder William Brewster, who was an early Pilgrim settler in the Plymouth Colony. ...

... in a *The New York Times* article titled "Science and Society Take Up Divorce Evil" where Messer's **research was used** to investigate the causes ...

A **trailblazing** feminist thinker, Messer was also noted for creating and teaching a course on family life ...

Mary Burt Messer made a **significant impact in her field** ...

As an early voice in the field of sociology, particularly family studies, and given her feminist activism, Mary Burt Messer has a **significant place in the history of academic work** in these domains, and **deserves renewed attention**

But the ... linkages

Wikipedians often write with links to other Wikipedia entries in mind. In other words, one doesn't need to provide a lot of context when a link to a related entry suffices. In contrast, the AI version tends to write in whole-cloth.

[Wikipedian Version](#)

In New York, Messer worked as a social worker with organizations that included the [Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor](#) and the [Charity Organization Society](#).^[10] During this time, she also served as an organizer for the [National American Woman Suffrage Association](#), led by [Carrie Chapman Catt](#), in New York.^[2]

But the ... references

We fed real references to the AI tool, but the Wikipedian version uses a greater volume and variety.

	RAG AI Version	Wikipedian Version
Citations Made	11	50
Unique Sources	6	16

But the ... all the same

A start is a start, right?

This Wikipedian could have generated dozens of Start Class entries in the same time that they devoted to a single B Class entry.

**Where do quality,
quantity, and gender
equity meet?**

Join Us!

Bring your energy and curiosity to
Women in Religion

Join the user group:

https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Religion_User_Group

Visit the WikiProject:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Women_in_Religion

Contact an organizer:

User: Dzingle1 (Colleen Hartung)

User: RosPost (Rosalind Hinton)

User: PMCH2

User: Jaireeodell (Jere Odell - jdodell@iupui.edu)

How Can You Participate?



Kenyan Wikipedians at the Nairobi #SheSaid edit-a-thon.

Photo credit: Cmwaura, CC BY-SA 4.0
<<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

- Join the Women in Religion Project community!
- Make edits to existing pages in English or another language
- Share names of women you think should have a Wikipedia article
- Add citations to articles or share good sources with another editor
- Take and add photos to WikiCommons
- Identify meaningful quotations from women authors, to be added to WikiQuote
- Add new articles to Wikipedia
- Write a biography in one of our publications!



Thank you!

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