WikiShtetl
Preserving the Memories of Lost Communities

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(1974–2023)
The WikiShtetl Project was established with the aim of commemorating Jewish communities that perished in the Holocaust in Wikipedia entries and Wikimedia Commons, giving them a memory, a name and a face.
WikiShtetl*

*Shtetl* is the Yiddish term for “small town”.

Through the project, small and unknown lost communities, as well as large ones, are brought to public memory.
WikiShetl, since 2016...

- 200 commemorated Jewish communities
- 90 entries as academic assignments
- 3 Wikipedia contests (Hebrew Wikipedia)
- Partners: Herzog College, UnitEd, Yad VaShem, Wikimedia Israel
10 Whys of WikiShtetl

WIKIMANIA
SINGAPORE
Writing about heritage attracts interest and creates involvement.
3 WikiShtetl Contests:

- **150** New Entries
- **At least 50** first time Wikipedians

*Winning prizes for different tracks range from $140–$850.*
Publishing on online universal platforms encourages people to be involved with heritage because it enables stories and images to reach the public.
“You put my face in the internet... and I want to thank you very much for doing it - so something of me will remain in this world.”

Shmuel Brim, Survivor from Spishke Podhradie, Slovakia
Involvement with heritage strengthens identity.
“By connecting to my roots, I myself had grown.”

“If I remember, my family will remember and my students will remember – the tree of life will forever be growing and evolving... And I will always remember.”
Recording history on digital platforms strengthens intergenerational ties.
The entry on the Jewish community of Zakynthos, Greece was created jointly by a student and the daughter of a survivor.
Wikipedia, as a collaborative space, supports preservation of small, unknown and previously unrecorded communities.
Names and Faces from Nagyfalu, Transylvania

Esther Weinberger

Chana, Gittel and Rivka Hurwitz

Jozeph and Rachel, parents of Menahem Zvi and Gimpi
Recording the past can create closure, and support the emotional processing of painful memories and experiences.
Malvina (Malka) Daks
Wiesbaden, Germany
When in an academic setting, Wikishtetl creates involvement of students and teachers in the learning process, as they become knowledge prosumers.
Interdisciplinary, Multi-skill Learning

- Team Work
- Critical Thinking
- Engagement
- Problem Solving
- Independence
Wikishtetl takes learning from knowledge acquisition to service learning.
Jewish children celebrating the holiday of Purim with soldiers of The Jewish Brigade, Benghazi, 1944.
The use of Wikipedia in the classroom gives students an opportunity to hone their 21st Century skills.
Introducing students to the inner workings of Wikipedia enables them to appreciate it not only as a practical tool, but as a concept; a perception.
Israel Sharir (left), from Zhorov, Ukraine, with Vladimira - the daughter of Mikhail Belegai, who hid and rescued Israel and 3 other people during the Holocaust.
conclusions

No community is too small, and no history too unimportant to deserve mention in the largest and most visited database of human knowledge.
What’s Next?

- International educational program
- Expansion to more languages
- Global partnerships
Thanks

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We’d love to connect.

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Questions & Suggestions