WOMEN+SOUND+ART
Organizing Wikipedia edit-a-thons as a form of information activism

SLA Annual Meeting, Saskatoon, SK
May 7, 2016

Presenters: Leah Bruce, Carolyn Doi, Shannon Lucky & Danielle Raymond
Outline

• Wikipedia’s gender problem
• What is an edit-a-thon?
• Art+Feminism
• Why organize an edit-a-thon at the library?
• Our Events
  • Outcomes
  • Best practices
  • Challenges & Lessons Learned
• Future directions
## Why is Wikipedia Important?

**Top 500 sites on the web (alexa.com)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Google.com</td>
<td>Enables users to search the world’s information, including webpages, images, and videos. Offers...More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Youtube.com</td>
<td>YouTube is a way to get your videos to the people who matter to you. Upload, tag and share your...More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Facebook.com</td>
<td>A social utility that connects people, to keep up with friends, upload photos, share links and ...More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Baidu.com</td>
<td>The leading Chinese language search engine, provides &quot;simple and reliable&quot; search exp...More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yahoo.com</td>
<td>A major internet portal and service provider offering search results, customizable content, cha...More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wikipedia.org</td>
<td>A free encyclopedia built collaboratively using wiki software. (Creative Commons Attribution-Sh...More</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wikipedia’s Gender Problem

GENDER BREAKDOWN OF WIKIPEDIA EDITORS

ONLY 13% OF WIKIPEDIA EDITORS ARE WOMEN

CREDIT: DYLAN PETROHILOS
http://thinkprogress.org/culture/2015/03/06/3629086/wikipedia-gamergate-war
Systemic Absences

“I can add all kinds of things to male YA authors’ pages with minimal cites and no one says a word. Whereas, every time I try to add a female YA author, or contribute to their pages, I invariably end up with some obnoxious gatekeeper complaining that my cites from Publisher’s Weekly and School Library Journal aren’t NEARLY enough, and besides, this author isn’t SIGNIFICANT enough to have an entry, who cares if she published three books? They’re not NOTEWORTHY. Meanwhile, 1-Book Nobody Dude’s Wikipedia page is 14 printable pages long.”

From a discussion at Metafilter titled Wikipedia, Snips & Snails, Sugar & Spice’
What is an edit-a-thon?

- An organized event
  - In person “meetup”
  - Online
- Focus on a topic or subject area
- Initiate new editors
- Engage different communities
Art+Feminism

“... a rhizomatic campaign to improve coverage of women and the arts on Wikipedia and to encourage female editorship.” (art.plusfeminism.org)

- Developed in response to...
  - less than 10% female editorship (Wikimedia 2011)
  - potential for structural sexism in Wikipedia (Filipacchi 2013)
- Collaboration
- Mechanism for support
Why organize an edit-a-thon in the library?

- Librarians make great Wikipedia editors!
- Edit-a-thons make great assignments for students
- Resources needed already in library
- Neutral space
- Engage community
An edit-a-thon in Saskatoon...

2-3 months of planning:

• Secured partners & sponsors
• Set date and location
• Promoted via Facebook, through our organizations, with posters and in the media
• Prepared a list of appropriate artists, research materials, and support documents and schedule
• Distributed feedback survey
Best practices

• Work in a team
• Promote
• Provide equipment
• Food+Coffee
• Childcare
• Time
Best practices

- Encourage Wikipedia account set-up in advance
- Gather books and articles
- Provide training on research techniques and working in Wikipedia
Best practices

After the event:

• Evaluate
• Read over articles
• Document the work
• Plan for the next one!
Challenges

- Take time to learn the basics of editing Wikipedia prior to the event
- Identifying notable topics for new articles
- Offering relevant and useful training
- Saving articles from deletion
Outcomes - Global

- Over 175 locations worldwide
- ~2500 participants globally
- ~2000 new articles created globally
- ~1000 articles improved globally

Articles created and updated at Saskatoon edit-a-thons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>December event</th>
<th>March event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles created</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles updated</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey results

- Paper and electronic versions of the survey distributed following the event
- Response rate: 83.33% (10 / 12)
How much experience did you have with Wikipedia editing before this event? How much did your confidence with editing in Wikipedia improve as a result of this event? How likely are you to continue editing in Wikipedia after this event?

Survey results March 5 – comfort and confidence editing in Wikipedia
Future directions

• Presentation at CAPAL, May 2016
• Article in Briarpatch Magazine, July 2016
• Global events are ongoing
• Upcoming local events... tbd
Thank you!

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