History, Play, and the Public: Wikipedia in the University Classroom

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NEARLY A DECADE HAS PASSED since *The History Teacher* published three seminal articles on the role of Wikipedia in the university classroom.[1] In 2008 and 2010, Wikipedia was in many ways still terra incognita, an alien landscape that made history professors nervous and history students defensive. Many of the key points brought up in those three articles are still relevant, but the digital history landscape has evolved. Whereas Wikipedia's ultimate role was still in question five years ago, it is now so interwoven into daily "Western" (if not perhaps global) Internet use, we decided the time was ripe for a serious revisit to the theme of history on "the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit." Initially in 2007 and 2008, we conducted Wikipedia experiments remarkably similar to Cullen Chandler and Alison Gregory: we are a history professor and an information literacy librarian, and as a pedagogical experiment, we had students choose a historical topic not yet on Wikipedia (yes, this was possible in 2007), research the topic, write 500 words, list five quality sources, then post and edit their entry. The students were amazed to see their entries already being edited during the very three-hour seminar in which they initially uploaded them. Indeed,

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they had received a memorable lesson earlier in just how volatile Wikipedia could be: as an example of a locked site that they could not edit, we brought up the "George W. Bush" Wikipedia entry on the Smart Board. Forty students witnessed that the entire entry had been replaced by one, rather inappropriate sentence.[2] This seemingly "radical" assignment proved to be very popular, and of course the Bush comment became legend in the History Department at the University of Windsor.

A few years later, we decided to take the Wikipedia assignment beyond that initial foray, and indeed beyond what was discussed in the three pioneering *History Teacher* articles. In the Spring and then again in the Fall of 2014, we taught a new third-year undergraduate course, "History on the Web," in which the key assignment was a semester-long Wikipedia project. Groups of two to five students would work together over twelve weeks on a historically themed Wikipedia entry, add significant text and sources, and ideally "interact" with Wikipedia editors over a prolonged period to the extent that there would be a "story" to tell by the end of the semester. We hoped that the students would learn several things: how popular tastes in history are different from what they study in university (i.e., what gets traffic and editorial attention on Wikipedia); how historical authority functions in a supposedly "radical democracy;" and how useful (or not) collaborative work is in Web 2.0. We openly encouraged students to feel free to be "playful" in a Bakhtinian sense.[3] As Elizabeth Nix pointed out in her discussion of her Wikipedia-based student project, it is in the very play of Wikipedia "edit wars" that students see the real push and pull of historiographical debate.[4] Indeed, by poking at and toying with the boundaries of Wikipedia, many truths were revealed to both the students and their instructors about history on the web, and to a certain extent about the writing of history itself.

One of the first "truths" uncovered in the class, however, was that there is indeed a deeply embedded false assumption among students, instructors, and often in the literature as well: the generalized, generationally based belief that students "know" the Internet and how to use it, and their older instructors do not. danah boyd's 2014 book, *It's Complicated: The Social Life of Networked Teens*, examines the segment of the population often referred to as "digital natives," the group of students who grew up surrounded by digital technology,

never knowing a non-digital world. The group of teens and high school students boyd interviewed are now in our universities, and some may have already graduated with their degrees. For those of us teaching in universities, boyd's book is timely because she describes the worlds inhabited by our recent, current, and near-future students.   Within our university classrooms, there is a recurring assumption—on the part of both students and faculty—that because our students are "digital natives," they are innately skilled in using and understanding digital technologies and that we need not talk about technology with our students. Moreover, there is an inference that digital immigrants have nothing to contribute to these discussions.[5] One of the most salient points for us to consider is that even though "Teens may make their own media or share content online," boyd argues:

> this does not mean that they inherently have the knowledge or perspective to critically examine what they consume. Being exposed to information or imagery through the internet and engaging with social media do not make someone a savvy interpreter of the meaning behind these artifacts. Technology is constantly reworking social and information systems, but teens will not become critical contributors to this ecosystem simply because they were born in an age when these technologies were pervasive.[6]

Most people, boyd goes on to argue, "have little training in being critical of the content they consume."[7] Presuming all youth to be digital natives "implies that there is a world in which these young people all share and a body of knowledge they have all mastered, rather than seeing the online world as unfamiliar and uncertain for all of us."[8] Over-estimating our students' comfort with, knowledge of, and critical understanding of digital technologies and social media does our students a disservice. Moreover, we cannot conflate all students' understandings and experiences with digital technologies. Quick surveys of students in our digital history class (presumably those who felt a sufficient degree of comfort with technology to register for the course) revealed a wide spectrum of interests in, knowledge of, and confidence in technology. Digital technology and its role in our current world is something that digital natives and digital immigrants need to explore together so that we can learn from each other and share perspectives. Simply banning certain kinds of information from our students' assignments does nothing to help

students understand the kinds of information they will discover in their academic, work, and personal lives. As boyd argues:

> Censorship of inaccurate or problematic content does not provide youth the skills they will one day need to evaluate information independently. They need to know how to grapple with the plethora of information that is easily accessible and rarely vetted…we cannot abandon them to learn these lessons on their own.[9]

In short, we need to see Wikipedia as an opportunity to engage our students and ourselves with real-world critical thinking skills about history and the formal and informal study of history.

The Assignment

In the second week of the semester, the students had to form groups and come up with an entry to edit on Wikipedia. They had to explain to the instructors the problems with their chosen site and why it was ripe for improvement. Once the instructors had confirmed the suitability of the topic, the groups immediately got to work researching and were (hopefully) soon editing. At the mid-point of the semester, each group had to present to the class on how things were going, share problems encountered, and receive feedback and tips from the student audience. This mid-semester presentation was crucial as it forced all groups to begin their "narrative" long before the last week of the semester—and this massively increased the likelihood that they would have an edit war or two. On the final day of the semester, each group handed in Word files of all of their original material, screenshots of their Wikipedia site before their first edit, and a group reflection essay, and then presented once again to the class on what they experienced. The written work was evaluated in a straightforward manner for research, clarity, and style, although unlike any typical university history assignment, the work had to (appear) to have a "neutral point of view" (NPOV)[10] Our students, trained to make an argument, had to adjust to the encyclopedia-style writing approach that Wikipedia insists upon. Key to our evaluation of the reflection essays was student engagement with the larger themes of Wikipedia and history, and what this assignment revealed to them about those issues. We also looked for such elements in their class presentations, and the groups whose presentations and reflections merely catalogued exactly what they had done did not do

as well as those groups who indicated a clear and steady engagement with our larger themes.

Across the two semesters, groups chose the following entries to edit: Japanese-Canadian Internment in World War Two; Machu Picchu; Canadian Women in the World Wars; the Eastern Front in World War One; Hiram Walker; Carrie Chapman Catt; Fort Malden; the Black Donnellys; and Lipograms. Each person in each group was expected to contribute at least one thousand words of new text as well as cite five "traditional" sources (i.e., "print" sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and monographs). They were encouraged to begin contributing as early as possible in the semester in order to have time to "play out" possible edit wars with earlier contributors who would likely exhibit some sense of ownership over their material. To be honest, we did encourage the students to deliberately choose somewhat controversial topics, since one of the foundational purposes of the assignment was to interact with the larger Wikipedia community. We also indicated that a certain amount of "tricksterism" would be tolerated as the students tested some of the limits of the Wikipedia universe. While all the students reported that they learned something from the assignment, the groups who edited early and often were the ones with the best and most revealing stories about how Wikipedia functions as a forum for Public History. And, as this was an exercise in online history, we as supervisors and markers had the added luxury of seeing exactly when each and every edit of a Wikipedia entry was made. As expected, the groups whose entire editing history represented the forty-eight-hour period before the assignment deadline had no edit wars to report, and did not get much out of the assignment.

Choosing a Topic:
Mass Appeal and the "Typical" Wikipedia Editor

To set the stage for the assignment, our initial class readings and discussions about Wikipedia revolved around who the editors and audiences were. Perhaps the main "problem" with Wikipedia today is the immense gender disparity among its editors: at least 85% are male.[11] It is also the case that editors are overwhelmingly based in North America or Europe, write in English, and thus give a highly Western slant to entries regardless of what part of the world those

entries describe.[12] The students were thus conflicted: they wanted
their sites to see a high volume of traffic, yet they also wanted to
address these glaring issues of underrepresentation on Wikipedia.
Because most Wikipedia editors are male, Wikipedia already gives
the impression that it favours topics of male interest.[13] This, along
with the overwhelming dominance of all things military in popular
history, led most groups to consider tackling a military history topic.
In the end, however, only one group went with a "traditional" military
entry, the Eastern Front in World War One, and lo and behold, this
was by far the most visited site of any group. Another military-
themed entry was simply too obscure to generate traffic: Fort Malden
(a War of 1812 historic site located just outside Windsor, in Southern
Ontario). Two groups attempted to bridge themes of race or gender
to military history: Japanese-Canadian Internment during World
War Two and Canadian Women in the World Wars. The remaining
entries were largely based on group interest and had varying levels
of success in appeal. It must be emphasized, however, that every
student wished their site had had more traffic. This is a generation
of status-updating students, often with as many "friends" as they
can accept and as many "likes" as they can garner.[14] Negotiating
this desire within the very real limits of what "sells" in the world of
Public History was a sometimes surprising and often disappointing
lesson for our students.

   The group who most directly challenged the "women problem"
actually began in incredibly traditional territory with an initial plan
to contribute to Wikipedia's entry for the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the
most famous Canadian engagement of World War One. But, with
131 footnotes already in place, this was well-trampled ground and
did not require "improvement." They then attempted to visit an entry
devoted to some element of Canadian women in the First World War,
only to discover that an entry titled "Canadian Women in the World
Wars" lumped both historical events and all of women's activities
therein, into one short entry with a mere fifteen footnotes. Although
we had read in class that the Wikipedia gender gap extended even
into popular culture, with much longer entries for episodes of *The
Sopranos* than for *Sex and the City*, this cursory, almost insultingly
meager reference to female agency during two major historical
events was a shock. In a *History Teacher* article that appeared just
as our experiment was coming to a close, Jennifer C. Edwards walks

us through the specific ways in which Wikipedia is a male-dominated space, and argues that only through activism and pedagogy can we begin to change this status quo. This group's attempt to do exactly that is a strong indicator of just how steep this mountain path is and will continue to be.[15]

The Canadian Women in the World Wars group immediately began beefing up the entry, making sure to embed hyperlinked connections to their site in other, more popular Wikipedia entries on war, in the hopes of bringing in new people to both their page and their topic. Nothing worked. Wikipedia sites allow you to see daily visit numbers, something that can be very exciting, but usually soul-crushing for our groups (except when they mistook their own group's edits for new traffic…a misperception unquestioningly and happily accepted by most students). The time was ripe for this group to perform the most open act of "vandalism" that occurred during our year-long project.[16] Right before class one day, one group member, Gillian, visited the long and popular entry "The Military History of Canada During World War 1" and replaced the entire introductory paragraph with this sentence: "Canadian women played a quintessential role in the First World War. Without their contributions, the war would not have been won for the allied powers. The world owes Canadian women a debt." When Gillian reported this to the class, there was an enormous amount of excitement and pride for this brazen act of chutzpah and bold "historical/political" intervention. Yet, three hours later, the edit was removed, Gillian was warned by a Wikipedia editor against committing any further vandalism, and there wasn't the slightest uptick in traffic to "Canadian Women in the World Wars." Our students thus witnessed firsthand how the utter dominance of military history in popular history book sales and as content on *The History Channel*, combined with the overwhelmingly male world of Wikipedia, has rendered the world's most comprehensive reference work largely inhospitable to women's history.

Authority

Another group attempted to combine under-representation and military history by addressing the entry on Japanese-Canadian Internment. They discovered that the entire pre-war history of Japanese-Canadians was summed up in a mere 300 words, and

further that the internment was nowhere mentioned in the "History of Vancouver" entry. As soon as they began editing their site, Dustin and Lisa ran up against the other overarching "problem" with Wikipedia: authority. Lisa had discovered that one of the footnotes was not connected to the claim it was supposed to be supporting. She deleted the sentence and footnote. Then came *The User*. This Wikipedia editor (which we will refer to as "U-1" rather than their actual user name) reversed her changes with the ever-so-slightly condescending explanation: "your new material is welcome, but anything cited can't be wantonly wiped out like that."[17] Whether or not U-1 fully understands how academic footnoting works is unclear, but the message was that all footnotes ("right or wrong") were sacrosanct, and that "newcomers" were simply not allowed to remove them. But this "someone" was not just "anyone." As Lisa quickly found out, she had quite unexpectedly had an encounter of near biblical proportions, for U-1 is basically a minor deity (some might say demon) at Wikipedia. He is one of the top 400 editors. According to his user page, he appears to be a body-building actor who used to work for a travel guide publisher. In the world of Wikipedia, he is heavily "credentialed," as his list of Wikipedia awards attests. He also openly embraces his well-earned caustic reputation by citing what others have written about his Wikipedia editing: "It's about time someone exposed this person. He's caused a lot of trouble for a lot of people," and "Somewhere humanity collapsed and…some creatures similar to humans came and took the place of humanity."[18]

The problem of "authority" and its function within Wikipedia has now received a masterful book-length treatment with Thomas Leitch's 2014 work, *Wikipedia U: Knowledge, Authority, and Liberal Education in the Digital Age*. Respect for "traditional authority" was the Original Sin that saw Larry Sanger, one of Wikipedia's two founders, cast out of Eden when he insisted that there be some form of hierarchy among editors.[19] Basically, Sanger, himself a Ph.D., wanted "experts"—usually professors—to have more "power" at Wikipedia, whereas Jimmy Wales won out with his idea of a truly radical democracy of editors. As Leitch points out, the uncomfortable position of intellectual elites in ostensibly egalitarian democracies is nothing new, and the pushback one sees on Wikipedia to "credentialism" (i.e., that having a Ph.D. on a given topic should give

you *any* advantage) should surprise no one. Yet, one look at U-1's user page makes evident that what we might call "wiki-credentialism" is alive and well on Wikipedia, and that the number of edits now replaces "expertise," or is, in fact, the new "expertise." Wikipedia may bill itself as some form of radical democracy, but, in Leitch's paraphrase of Orwell: "Although every user of Wikipedia is equal, some are more equal than others."[20] Put simply, no matter how well you know your sources and how to use footnotes, if you are new to Wikipedia and you go head-to-head with a deity, you are at a distinct disadvantage. This radical inequality, which appears remarkably similar to the problem of seniority in ostensibly egalitarian (even socialist) Trade Unions, has been named as a chief reason for the declining numbers of Wikipedia editors.[21] Leitch walks us through the incredible layers of committees and rules that run Wikipedia (where, astonishingly, the most famous rule is "Ignore all rules"), and one is left with a solid lesson in how authority operates (and how gender bias permeates). To see the impact of such authority, we can look at the experience of our student Lisa, who did not engage in an edit war with U-1 because his tone and credentials intimidated her into silence.[22] Lisa's story, however, has a coda worth noting: the rule with any hierarchy is that there is almost always someone more powerful than you, and, alas, as of the time of writing, another Wikipedia administrator has banned U-1 indefinitely.[23] While we can see that Wikipedia does have such mechanisms in place to control such behavior, it is easy to understand why only 15% of new Wikipedia editors last for more than a year.[24]

    After Lisa reported to the class on her tête-à-tête with U-1, another group took up the Bakhtinian gauntlet in order to press the boundaries of authority in Wikipedia. Robert and Adamo had been diligently adding to the entry for Machu Picchu, again with little response from other editors. Robert initially decided to play "politely" by creating a section titled "Concerns over Tourism" and filling it with real issues of crime against tourists, in the hopes that some editors would not want this element emphasized. Alas, nothing happened. He then placed the following text under the already extant section, "Human Sacrifice, Aliens and Mysticism":

> Scientologists believe that their founder L. Ron Hubbard was the re-incarnation of the Incan king Pachacuti, who was believed to be a direct descendant of an alien from the highest class of elites.

Pachacuti's thetans travelled to earth from a distant planet after being banished by Xenu. These thetans were re-incarnated into Hubbard upon Hiram Bingham's meddling at Machu Picchu in 1911. It is no coincidence that Hubbard was born in March of that year which was the precise time that Bingham had re-discovered the lost city.

Initially, editors removed this paragraph because it was not cited properly. Robert the Trickster then invented the following citation: "Garrison, Hubert (2013). 'Scientology and Hubbard's Origins.' *Scientology Americana* 2 (1): 4-6." This footnote's veracity was never challenged, and instead the paragraph was deleted due to what is ultimately a much greater concern on Wikipedia: categorization. As the editor determined, "I've removed the paragraph about L Ron Hubbard as that bit of info may fit in his biography or the religion article, but is rather irrelevant here [sic]." This concern over proper categories, as opposed to much larger questions, such as the very existence of the journal being cited, is a hallmark of Wikipedia. It was, of course, an obsession with category creation that led to one of the major soul-searching episodes at Wikipedia, when one editor stripped out all the female authors from "American Novelists" and put them in "American Women Novelists."[25]

Yet this episode with Machu Picchu alludes to another issue the class expected but did not encounter: the digital divide in terms of access to "expertise." Unfortunately, a vast number of active, helpful Wikipedia editors would have been unable to verify the secondary source citations our students used. It may very well have been the case that editors saw *Scientology Americana* but ignored it, as even if it did exist, they likely could not have accessed it in order to verify this interesting Hubbardian episode. It should be remembered that Wikipedia editors who are not affiliated with a university do not have access to an enormous amount of scholarly literature. Without access to JSTOR (which universities pay for), it is virtually impossible for many editors to fact-check scholarly resources. In any case, this central problem of both the authority of footnotes, and the inability of most Wikipedia users to access those sources of authority, is a very real issue that nevertheless appeared only in class discussion and not on our students' Wikipedia sites.

Another group went looking for some friction and found it when they blended their interest in women's history with a desire for controversy by tackling women's suffrage leader Carrie Chapman

Catt's racism. Sabrina and Taylor very quickly butted heads with an editor they nicknamed "Patty the Party Pooper," since her Wikipedia name was only an IP address.[26] Patty initially had their section tagged with "The neutrality of this section is disputed," despite soon showing her own POV cards with the comment that "this is an encyclopedia article on Catt, not a discourse on historical feminism." Patty's most disquieting move, however, was playing the anti-intellectual card. When Sabrina and Taylor asked Patty to explain the specific reasons why she was removing so much of their information as "biased," the students made the mistake (in the Wikiverse) of invoking the Ivory Tower: they told her this "was a University project." Patty responded with a link to the "Wikipedia: Student Assignments" site, adding "and have your instructor read it." This is a fascinating site, well worth a read, though we would recommend an instructor read it only after they have conducted a Wikipedia assignment. In the supposedly radical democracy of Wikipedia, it is "a communal consensus" that university students and their instructors should have to follow a rather onerous extra set of duties, work that any gang of non-experts are never asked to perform. Among many requests, we were asked to review all student writing before it was uploaded to a Wikipedia site, and, much more galling, several times throughout the document, we were told how to grade our assignment: "A successful assignment requires careful crafting and its grading system will be in accordance with Wikipedia needs and Wikipedia norms."[27]

Collaboration

Patty, it turns out, was the snarkiest of all the editors our students interacted with: in one instance, despite a piece of evidence regarding Catt's beliefs being clearly backed up with a footnote, Patty wrote: "oh really? Is this a séance?" Yet, much to our surprise, but in keeping with virtually every group's experience, Sabrina and Taylor found:

> [E]ven though Patty was critical throughout our process, she was essential to the project. Not only did Patty condense information, but also re-worded some of our edits to make it concise and easily understood for audiences who would come view the Wikipedia page on Catt. Therefore, we would personally like to thank Patty (the Party

Pooper), for motivating us to be better throughout our Wikipedia experience and also for giving us a story to tell about our process.[28]

Although it took a little while for Sabrina and Taylor to shift from seeing Wikipedia as a site for trolling to understanding the promise of collaboration in Web 2.0, another group came around much more quickly. The group editing the "Eastern Front in World War One" entry came up against an editor named "Chris Troutman." This team of four students was already prepared for any unwanted edits: each of them would counter one editor's changes, so that it appeared that four different anonymous users were disagreeing with Troutman, as opposed to what was really one group's point of view. The group enlisted this kind of power, for Troutman had multiple credentials (5,000 major edits, Counter Vandalism Officer, Wikipedia Campus Ambassador, etc.).[29] Despite being prepared for endless war, this group was soon won over by the work Troutman was doing:

> [He] made our article considerably better. 'TROUTMAN' deleted our content and edited our writing, but he did so with good intent, always justifying his edits and private messaging us with editing guidelines and formatting tips and tricks.[30]

Acknowledging that they, like most Wikipedia authors, felt ownership of their own material, our students reflected "the severity of 'TROUTMAN's' arbitrary 'peer editing' was more wounding but efficient, and it undoubtedly improved the quality of our article."[31] Finally, in more than one instance, Wikipedia editors corrected our students' mistakes, forcing them to go back to their sources and teaching them to be more critical thinkers and readers.

These last examples, highlighting the collaborative nature of what are only pejoratively named "edit wars" far outweighed the wholly negative experiences (i.e., with user U-1). The Eastern Front group went on to comment:

> Writing posts on Wikipedia can also provide great practice for amateur historians to write history in an informal setting and receive criticism from a community of diverse editors. Wikipedia is more than just a reference work; it is a tool for scholarship.[32]

Not only does the instantaneous push and pull of online (counter-) editing force the poster/editor/historian to refine his or her arguments, it brings their work into a "community." And who our students imagined this community to be was both fascinating and touching:

"The thought of our work possibly being utilized by some high school student for their research paper on the First World War was very exciting, but also daunting."[33] The Japanese-Canadian Internment group wrote, "it is cool to think that, in the future, people looking to learn more about this important piece of Canadian history will be reading work that we have done."[34]

Wikipedia and "Real History"

The group that researched and wrote about the whiskey producer Hiram Walker stated: "we actually felt like historians."[35] However, they only felt that way because they directly broke Wikipedia's rules. The three groups that really enjoyed the research phase of this assignment improved the sites for Hiram Walker, Fort Malden, and the Black Donnellys. The reason they had so much fun is because they committed the Wikipedia sin of "Original Research." Despite all that we have recounted here with regard to the seemingly anti-intellectual, anti-expertise, anti-student atmosphere of Wikipedia, there is a great paradox: a Wikipedia editor may not conduct and/or refer to any original research in order to back up their claims (a policy known as "NOR," for "no original research"). Instead, they may only reference secondary sources (i.e., "expertise") in their footnotes. Nonetheless, we were left with the definite feeling that the average Wikipedia editor does not really understand this distinction, as no use of original research by any of our students was ever removed or flagged. In the three cases mentioned here, the student groups travelled directly to archives in Windsor, Amherstburg, and Chatham (all in Southern Ontario), and literally "got their hands dirty" sifting through original material. It was this archival sleuthing (never planned or encouraged by us) that led them to really enjoy *doing history*. They referenced their research in their Wikipedia entries, but these little-trafficked sites failed to elicit any blowback. It was very strange indeed for a history professor, forever lamenting that his students rarely read secondary sources let alone primary ones, to discover that fifteen of his students were inspired to conduct solid primary archival research. We found in this course that the ultimate "digital history" assignment is one that combines both this new online world and all it has to offer, with good old-fashioned archival work.

Conclusion

Wikipedia-based history assignments teach students about Public History, Web 2.0 collaboration, issues of authority and power in the telling of history, as well as useful digital skillsets. Although we made students vaguely aware of the underrepresentation of various groups in the "world out there," only in the vicious struggle over "site visits" did they seem to truly understand how serious this issue really was. While our students were familiar with "web virality" and the ease with which they could contact a thousand people about a house party in five minutes, the idea of constructively "crowd-sourcing" help for their own university assignments was exciting. And as a lesson in voice and authority, as well as who gets to write history and how, this assignment has instilled a critical reading ability in each of our students to see the battles underneath the text of every Wikipedia entry (and by extension, every sentence of every history textbook they read). This was an enormously popular assignment and bears many of the hallmarks of active learning that modern university classrooms should be employing. The students "bought in" to the project immediately and took an unusually high level of ownership and pride in the assignment. The instructors should spend time preparing the ground for the kinds of experiences the students are likely to encounter. Then, just as importantly, the students should be asked to thoroughly reflect on the assignment, linking their encounters back to the broader themes explored throughout the semester. As Edwards encountered, students have to be "forced" out of their comfort zone for such an assignment.[36] But we would also encourage instructors to step outside of their own comfort zone, invite some controversy, and even try a tad of the Trickster.

Notes

1.   Elizabeth Ann Pollard, "Raising the Stakes: Writing about Witchcraft on Wikipedia," *The History Teacher* 42, no. 1 (November 2008): 9-24; Cullen J. Chandler and Alison S. Gregory, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Wikipedia in the College Classroom," *The History Teacher* 43, no. 2 (February 2010): 247-256;

Elizabeth M. Nix, "Wikipedia: How It Works and How It Can Work for You," *The History Teacher* 43, no. 2 (February 2010): 259-264.

    2.   The single-sentence entry read: "George W. Bush is a fucking douchebag." We immediately refreshed the site and the vandalism was gone. But the lesson was learned.

    3.   "In response to the tendency for one voice to dominate the narrative, [Bakhtin describes characters who] look for opportunities to upend the power structure, to transgress boundaries by violating social mores or customs. In these circumstances, characters might parody the power in the world they live in or use humor or playfulness as a way to inject their own voices into the narrative. In Bakhtin's analysis, voice is subject to power, but it finds ways to burst into the open through the process of 'carnival'." James Elmborg, Heidi Jacobs, Robert L. Nelson, and Kelly McElroy, "Giving Voice to Students as Literacy Practice," *Reference and User Services Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (Winter 2015).

    4.   Nix.

    5.   For boyd's discussion of the problematic nature of these terms, see danah boyd, *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 179.

    6.   Ibid., 177.

    7.   Ibid., 181.

    8.   Ibid., 192.

    9.   Ibid., 181-182.

    10.   For Wikipedia's explanation of its NPOV policy, see "Wikipedia: Neutral point of view," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view>.

    11.   See the Wikimedia Foundation's study of gender representation, "Research: Wikipedia Editors Survey 2011 November," <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Wikipedia_Editors_Survey_2011_November>.

    12.   Wikipedia breaks down its editors and audience, including "The 'average Wikipedian'" in "Wikipedia: Systemic bias," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Systemic_bias>. See also Jennifer C. Edwards, "Wiki Women: Bringing Women into Wikipedia Through Activism and Pedagogy," *The History Teacher* 48, no. 3 (May 2015): 409-436.

    13.   A fascinating neologism that points to the young male audience on Wikipedia is the "Wikigroan." It is what one supposedly elicits when hearing the answer to a question such as: "Which has a better Wikipedia entry—prime number or Optimus Prime?" A list of classic Wikigroans can be found at Something Awful. See Jon "@fart" Hendren, "The Art of Wikigroaning," *Something Awful*, 5 June 2007, <https://www.somethingawful.com/news/wikigroaning/>.

    14.   This is, of course, a generalization: we do not want to reify "digital natives" in the manner we are already critiquing. And it goes without saying that there are many history professors and librarians eager to accrue their own "likes."

    15.   Edwards.

    16.   Of course, while some may call this vandalism, others saw it as a justified act to bring some sense of fairness and balance to Wikipedia. Although, of course, on a fundamentally different scale, the similarity to the age-old question—"When is a terrorist a freedom fighter?"—was not lost on our history students.

17.   In the "talk" page, U-1 wrote: "I know you're new here, but you *can't* deleted [sic] cited material as you did in the lede for the Japanese Canadian internment article; you can move it around but it's not polite to remove it; your own biases and views you must remember to hold in check; you may not agree with the quoted/cited materials, but that doesn't give you license to remove it." Yes, he did have a citation, but the source did not reference what was being claimed in the sentence. Notice his rhetorical attempt to invoke "No Point of View" in reference to her mere correction of an incorrect footnote.

18.   Quotes are from the Wikipedia user page for U-1.

19.   The fallen Sanger now oversees Citizendium: The Citizens' Compendium at *citizendium.org*, where expertise is privileged, and editors must provide their real identities.

20.   Thomas M. Leitch, *Wikipedia U: Knowledge, Authority, and Liberal Education in the Digital Age* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 22.

21.   See the Wikimedia Foundation's study on the declining number of editors, "Editor Trends Study," <https://strategy.wikimedia.org/wiki/Editor_Trends_Study>. See also Dariusz Jemielniak, "The Unbearable Bureaucracy of Wikipedia," *Slate*, 22 June 2014, <http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2014/06/wikipedia_s_bureaucracy_problem_and_how_to_fix_it.html>.

22.   Hostility toward women is not, of course, limited to Wikipedia. Within intellectual and academic spheres, there is a long history of inhospitable environments for women and there are many examples still to find today. Recently, the intimidating atmosphere of male-dominated Philosophy Departments, and the resulting serious lack of female philosophy professors, has garnered some attention. See Nick Anderson, "Philosophy's Gender Bias: For Too Long, Scholars Say, Women Have Been Ignored," *The Washington Post*, 28 April   2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2015/04/28/philosophys-gender-bias-for-too-long-scholars-say-women-have-been-ignored/>.

23.   Indeed, U-1's "block log" leading up to his indefinite block reads like a rap sheet:

06:01, 16 March 2015 (talk | contribs) blocked [U-1] (talk | contribs) with an expiry time of 3 months (account creation blocked) *(battleground and disruptive editing, personal attacks)*

21:17, 21 April 2014 [user G-2] (talk | contribs) blocked [U-1] (talk | contribs) with an expiry time of 12 hours (account creation blocked) *(Personal attacks or harassment: https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Categories_for_discussion/Log/2014_ [...])*

21:52, 12 April 2014 [user B-3] (talk | contribs) blocked [U-1] (talk | contribs) with an expiry time of 4 days (account creation blocked) *(persistent disruption of consensus-forming discussions, most recently identified at Talk:Chipewyan_people#Requested_move_2)*

> 08:36, 23 March 2014 [user F-4] (talk | contribs) blocked [U-1] (talk | contribs) with an expiry time of 48 hours (account creation blocked, email disabled, cannot edit own talk page) *(You need a break. Take this as a gift. Enjoy a couple of days away from Wikipedia.)*
>
> 18:16, 16 April 2011 [user M-5] (talk | contribs) blocked [U-1] (talk | contribs) with an expiry time of 21 days (account creation blocked) *(Disruptive editing: Come back after the election if you're not going to retire.)*
>
> 20:43, 1 January 2007 [user Z-6] (talk | contribs) unblocked [U-1] (talk | contribs) *(retracted legal threat)*
>
> 19:26, 28 December 2006 [user Z-6] (talk | contribs) blocked [U-1] (talk | contribs) with an expiry time of indefinite *(legal threats)*

24.   See Jemielniak, "The Unbearable Bureaucracy of Wikipedia."

25.   James Gleick, "Wikipedia's Women Problem," NYRDaily (blog), *The New York Review of Books*, 29 April 2013, <https://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2013/apr/29/wikipedia-women-problem/>.

26.   Of course, we have no idea if "Patty" was female, but will use "her" in keeping with Sabrina and Taylor's comments.

27.   "Wikipedia: Student assignments," Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Student_assignments>.

28.   Sabrina and Taylor, Student Reflection Essay, HIST 43-397: History on the Web, University of Windsor, November 2014.

29.   At the time of writing, Chris Troutman already had 15,000 edits. See "User: Chris troutman," Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Chris_troutman>. Chris Troutman recently spent time as a Wikipedia Visiting Scholar at the University of California, Riverside. This program allows major Wikipedia editors to have access to a university's firewall-protected resources, the cause of one of the very "digital divides" referenced in this article. See Alex Stinson and Jake Orlowitz, "What Happens When You Give a Wikipedia Editor a Research Library?" Wikimedia, 17 March 2015, <https://blog.wikimedia.org/2015/03/17/wikipedia-research-library/>.

30.   Sydney, Calin, Emile, and Justin, Student Reflection Essay, HIST 43-397: History on the Web, University of Windsor, March 2014.

31.   Ibid. Indeed, a full year after the group had finished their project, they noticed "Chris Troutman" protecting their work against new editors.

32.   Ibid.

33.   Ibid.

34.   Lisa and Justin, Student Reflection Essay, HIST 43-397: History on the Web, University of Windsor, March 2014.

35.   Lauren, Sarah, Matt, and Tom, Student Reflection Essay, HIST 43-397: History on the Web, University of Windsor, November 2014.

36.   Crucially, Edwards gave her students a choice: critique an existing Wikipedia entry or edit one. Much to her (and our) surprise, only one student over two semesters chose the latter. In other words, although this is an exciting

and rewarding project, students are not "risk takers" when it comes to grades, and so instructors must "force" them to do such an assignment. Edwards, "Wiki Women: Bringing Women into Wikipedia Through Activism and Pedagogy," 420-425.

Appendix

HIST 43-397: History on the Web
Group Wikipedia Project Description and Evaluation

Throughout the semester, students will improve a chosen, historically themed Wikipedia site. Students will form groups and will receive this mark collectively, although there will be a peer evaluation.

This project is worth 25% of your grade. The 25% will be broken down as: 5% for initial group pitch/presentation on the site the group would like to work on; 10% for the quality of the content that is added to the site; and 10% for a semester-end short reflection paper and presentation.

Evaluation: Projects will be evaluated on the following elements:

- Addition of least a thousand words of new text per group member to Wikipedia essay.

- Citation of five "traditional" sources (i.e., "print" sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and monographs) per group member to Wikipedia essay.

- Semester-long engagement with topic, with other Wikipedians, and with Wikipedia itself.

- Ability to use reflection paper and presentation as a way to connect group's contributions to Wikipedia and issues encountered therein with overarching theoretical questions addressed in course readings and class discussions.