

Wiki Women: Bringing Women Into Wikipedia through Activism and Pedagogy

Jennifer C. Edwards
Manhattan College

INTERNET USERS worldwide turn to Wikipedia, the web-based, open-content encyclopedia, for basic information on all subjects. According to a 2011 Pew Research study, 59% of American Internet users “look for information on Wikipedia.”¹ Not only do Wikipedia articles feature prominently in most search engines, but Google and Microsoft now display data mined from Wikipedia alongside search results; even if users do not click on the Wikipedia link, the page of results still confronts users with Wikipedia’s content.² There is much to concern an academic audience in the encyclopedia’s prominence: bases for evidence are different from those used by scholars; no expertise is required to edit an article; the site is a target for “trolls,” vandals who actively undermine the site’s veracity; and guidelines prohibit contributions based in original research.³ Yet, another Pew study found that 94% of students are Googling for their research and that “75% of teachers said their students were ‘very likely’ to use [Wikipedia] in a typical research assignment.”⁴ Many users, students included, have come to see Wikipedia as an objective source for factual data in a wide array of topics on which they do no further research; it is “the canon, the go-to source of ‘knowledge.’”⁵

And many are unaware of or unconcerned by the ease with which incorrect or misleading information might be introduced to articles.

For a feminist audience, there are even more troubling issues to consider, as identified in the 2008 Wikimedia Foundation and United Nations University's MERIT program survey of more than 50,000 Wikipedia contributors around the world, which found that fewer than 13% of Wikipedia's contributors identified as women.⁶ Noam Cohen's *New York Times* report of this statistic in January 2011 set off a fury of responses, including the Wikimedia Foundation's own goal of increasing the number of female contributors to 25% by 2015.⁷ As Cohen explained, the shape of Wikipedia articles reflects the male dominance among contributors: articles on "female topics" are fewer, shorter, and less well maintained. For example, as BBC News Magazine's Lynsea Garrison pointed out: "the list of pornographic actresses from the 1950s to the present is more than three times longer than the list of notable Native American women. It also has more names on it than the list of female poets and 'sports women' combined."⁸ The problem also extends to the site's organization, as author Amanda Filipacchi revealed in *The New York Times* in 2013 that women were being moved from the "American Novelists" category to a sub-category of "American Women Novelists." This leaves the impression that "American Novelists" are all men or that the default novelist is a man.⁹

This article examines the problem Wikipedia has posed to women contributors, the importance of improving the female presence in Wikipedia articles, feminist attempts to both encourage women participants and expand female topics, and pedagogical methods to engage with these issues in the undergraduate classroom. I focus, ultimately, on an assignment I created in 2009 to encourage students to analyze Wikipedia critically, a paper whose stakes changed by its second assignment in 2013. I demonstrate that adding a Wikipedia writing assignment to a history course can enhance the site, address feminist concerns, promote the activist project, and inspire students to value research and historiography in new ways. Certainly, women are not the only authors who might improve Wikipedia's coverage of women and "female" topics; projects of feminist activism and courses in the history of women and gender offer the best opportunities for encouraging both men and women to rectify the encyclopedia's masculine culture and male orientation.

Where are the Women?

The immediate response to Cohen's article was to consider why women were not more active collaborators on Wikipedia. Some suggested that Wikipedia had developed a "hacker culture" that was inhospitable to women.¹⁰ Several commenters revealed that women who intervened in existing articles were "flamed"—received online harassment—for their changes, found their changes redacted and new pages deleted as "insignificant," and experienced hostility to their participation in general. Expertise in an area that one editor did not find "significant" was belittled. Thus, articles featuring "female topics," such as friendship bracelets (Cohen's suggestion), were more quickly targeted for deletion. This can feel unfair and biased to a contributor who watches other topics receive loving devotion from its niche groups. As Shyong Lam discovered by surveying thousands of Wikipedia articles on movies, films with a more female audience receive much less attention, and articles on such films have a more difficult time surviving: often, new pages on these films are marked for deletion.¹¹ Historian Louisa A. Burnham explained in January 2011:

[I] dutifully "adopted" a Wikipedia page or two related to my research. Eventually, however, I completely gave up, because no matter how fast and how frequently I corrected mistakes or attempted to insert recent scholarship, the eager-beaver Wiki-types (male, every single one of them) would "correct" my changes back again. I cited my sources, and engaged regularly in the discussion pages, but ultimately, it was too time consuming and frustrating to continue. Every once in a while, I check up on "my" pages, and I find them more or less back to where they started when I got involved.¹²

Indeed, in May 2014, historian Julie Hofmann, also an experienced Wikipedia editor, created an article for the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship (SMFS), an academic society devoted to supporting feminist scholarship on the Middle Ages, after its initial page was deleted by Wikipedia user "Deb" for its lack of "notability." Deb responded to the new page with, "Sorry, J, I would never have deleted the article if I'd realised you'd created it. However, it doesn't, in its present form, have the requisite independent references to demonstrate notability...."¹³ For Deb, a scholarly society was not notable on its own without reference to external sources, though s/he

was willing to put faith in a familiar user. Some of these responses are business as usual for Wikipedia, as users try to prevent vandalism by removing edits or articles that do not fit community standards, and some reflect a culture that is easy to read as sexist. Wikipedia has made some effort recently to counter this problem by creating a Draft area where users can “start new articles as a draft, instead of publishing them immediately,” so that they will not be deleted before editors have a chance to improve them.¹⁴ Such a function might make female contributors more willing to participate.

Several commenters suggested that women did not have the confidence to participate in Wikipedia’s overtly masculine “geek” culture, such as when Susan C. Herring cited a “difference in communication styles” that kept women from contributing online because they were “intimidated by the tone of the discussions” more than men.¹⁵ Executive Director of the Wikimedia Foundation Sue Gardner summed up these complaints on her blog: “Some women don’t edit Wikipedia because they aren’t sufficiently self-confident, and editing Wikipedia requires a lot of self-confidence.”¹⁶ Rather than dismiss women as less strong or confident, however, it is possible to read a decision to remain aloof from the site as protective: women might choose not to lavish time on a frustrating and negative platform where their contributions are devalued or removed. Indeed, since her 2013 complaint, Filipacchi has suffered attacks by mean-spirited editors: “The article about Filipacchi is undergoing a flurry of editing, not all well-intentioned. Her categories keep changing. Lambert [one of the editors responsible for her recategorization] created a new category, American humor novelists, just so he could move her into it.”¹⁷ It is not necessary to perceive women as “weak” or “intimidated,” but rather as frustrated and self-protective.

Jessamyn West contrasted Wikipedia with MetaFilter.com, where editors carefully monitor contributions and delete inflammatory and sexist material—such as rape jokes—to consciously encourage female contributors. According to West, this allows MetaFilter to nurture a more welcoming environment: “At MetaFilter we take a strong affirmative stance on gender equity. We solicit female members intentionally. We set a tone....”¹⁸ While the MetaFilter editors are able to create an environment hospitable for women, as well as for other vulnerable groups, they are attacked for these interventions—accused of violating free speech. Such format is also

unpopular with committed Wikipedians, who object to limitations on the democratic ideals of the site, even if their exercise is hostile to other groups.¹⁹ Even before the survey, a discussion list for “female-only discussion” named “WikiChix” was created in 2006 because “a number of women were not comfortable contributing to the conversation”; the list was tasked with discussing “issues of gender bias in wikis, to promote wikis to potential female editors, and for general discussion of wikis in a friendly female-only environment.”²⁰ The list was removed from Wikimedia due to numerous protests that the presence of an exclusive group on the Wiki sites violated ideals of freedom and democracy. As Janet M. Giddings later observed, “adding a controlling authority would change the very nature of freedom of collaboration and smack of containing and respecting authorship,” and would certainly violate the site’s core value of a neutral point of view, or NPOV, a tenet that prevents the site’s users from espousing a position that might protect other users from systemic harassment.²¹

Women are, however, major contributors to other sites—such as Flickr, Tumblr, or social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest—and women blog extensively. Herring suggested that the difference between these sites and Wikipedia was “control”—women on these sites control content, delete negative comments, and prevent the removal of their contributions. Further, Herring claimed that men and women had different styles of communication—with men claiming objective authority for their statements, and women using language that was more nurturing and suggestive. Wikipedia’s model of a NPOV caters to the former, while more open-ended social media sites better fit the latter.

A further problem from an academic perspective is that the criteria for documenting contributions to the site permits little room for scholarly expertise as measured in the academy. Wikipedia has a policy called “no original research,” or NOR, that prohibits material “for which no reliable, published sources exist.”²² This is one of the three core values of Wikipedia, along with NPOV and “verifiability.” A scholar reporting on her own area of expertise thus often finds the article reduced or eliminated.²³ For example, Roy Rosenzweig described an edit he made, a deletion of a debunked notion contained in several older books; the faulty information was quickly reinserted because it had been widely documented, and documentation matters

more than accuracy or expertise. Jaron Lanier called this trend “Digital Maoism,” valuing “online collectivism” over independent thought, while Rosenzweig called it the “denigration of expertise.”²⁴

The implications for women on Wikipedia are troubling: while now established in the academy, in the public realm, women’s studies is still a young field struggling for respect, one that can be “invisible” to editors relying on web research.²⁵ Much information has been published by a single author drawing on manuscript and archival research, so many details cannot be “sourced” in a way that adheres to Wikipedia’s standards. Out-of-date, misleading, but repeatedly reported information can be documented according to the community standard; moreover, such information is easier for web users to find since scholarly information is typically housed in libraries or behind digital paywalls. This means that a woman academic expert cannot update a Wikipedia article and cite her own research unless it has been published, and even then, her book might be less prominent than those citing incorrect and out-of-date information. This method of testing information makes the site inhospitable to an academic audience, and particularly one concerned with “marginal” subjects or the distant past for which documentation is primarily archival.

Beyond issues of community, hospitality, evidence, and respect is a more simple reason women do not contribute: editing Wikipedia articles requires some technical know-how as well as an understanding of the site’s conventions, rules, community, and jargon. The learning curve to access this knowledge is steep, much more so than blogging or becoming a Pinterest pinner. And one’s contributions are constantly evaluated, which increases the difficulty for newcomers. Lynsea Garrison suggested that gender disparities in STEM fields might also affect the number of women skilled in this sort of coding. As an effort to combat this problem, Wikipedians have created the Teahouse, a hospitality suite where new users can ask questions and seek assistance in learning the basics.

While women are roughly half the readers of Wikipedia, then, very few women contribute to the site, and their contributions are relatively minor.²⁶ Wikipedia’s editors and content are thus dominated by men and male interests, and this disproportion has an obvious impact on the content of the encyclopedia. Addressing this imbalance has become urgent for feminists and academics alike. Given the concerns addressed above, however, one might question

whether women should be encouraged to participate on a site that has a history of hostility to their involvement, or whether teachers should press students to spend time on a site whose problems are well known. Historians emphasize interpretation and nuance over the recitation of “facts,” while Wikipedia-centric research collapses the richness of such analysis. The urge to write from an NPOV requires contributors to report debate rather than participate in it; NPOV prohibits the sort of analysis and interpretation that defines academic history writing.

There are many reasons to engage in this work, however. First, Wikipedia is claiming public authority for its representation of the world, and that claim is gaining traction. If women make up half the users of the site but only represent a tiny fraction of its contributors, women are allowing themselves to be written out of history, all topics, knowledge in general. Since students use Wikipedia even when they know to be critical of it, and an increasing portion of the public relies upon Wikipedia for research, it is crucial to ensure that the encyclopedia represents its subjects fairly.²⁷ Contributing to the site is important for shaping history, for shaping knowledge. Doing this within the university is an important way to bring academic knowledge to the public, particularly since so much scholarly work is now available only behind a paywall in expensive article databases. Encouraging women and feminists to intervene in the site will improve its representation of women, allow articles related to women start receiving attention, better ensure that articles added by and about women are considered significant, and protect women’s representations in categories rather than being marginalized in women-only sections of the site. There are two broad areas for this engagement: within activism and pedagogy.

Response: Activist

Cohen’s report of the Wikimedia Foundation (WMF) survey immediately gained a great deal of attention, with many commentators urging women to become editors. Sue Gardner blogged frequently about the response and, with apparent sincerity, sought ways to encourage women’s participation as editors, as well as to identify articles requiring better attention. A goal of increasing female participation to 25% of all contributors by 2015

became part of the WMF Strategic Plan. She did not suggest how to handle intimidation, redaction, and general hostility toward female interventions on the site.²⁸ Indeed, even the Wikipedia “Gender Gap” page warns contributors: “This subject is **very sensitive**. People who want to talk about the gender gap are sometimes victims of harassment. Before publicly discussing the topic, assure yourself that you have secured and manage your online identity well.”²⁹ Gardner and others were uncomfortable with intervening too directly or seeming to fill quotas, though they were clearly interested in recruiting women to the site. Ideas considered include establishing a Girl Scout badge for editing Wikipedia, engaging with academic listservs, and soliciting celebrity outreach.³⁰ Gardner also began a “gender gap mailing list” to share information about surveys and projects to address the lack of women contributors.

Activists then began more targeted campaigns focused on Wikipedia. A workshop for women in Wikipedia designed to train women editors took place in India in 2011, with follow-ups in Washington D.C. and Buenos Aires in 2012. Twenty female Wikipedia editors met in May 2012 for networking at a WikiWomen Camp. In October 2012, the “WikiWomen’s Collaborative” began a blog, Facebook page, and Twitter account, engaging Wikipedians with online technology that women report as more engaging than the site itself.³¹ The Facebook page encourages women to participate in editing events (see below), celebrates female editors, notes important dates in women’s history with a link to the relevant Wikipedia article, and relates topics of interest to women back to Wikipedia.³² Women were invited to the table actively, with the hope that more female contributors would make the site attractive to further participants.

Since issues of hospitality and technical experience continued to hinder female participation, however, organizers turned to communal events like the Edit-A-Thon. Participants met in a Wi-Fi-enabled public space armed with laptops and lists of suggested entries. Organizers provided basic training in the conventions and technical requirements for editing or creating Wikipedia articles—all kept updated on their own Wiki page—and participants did the digital work. The first massive push for such events was in March 2012, when editors created over 100 articles and updated almost sixty more as part of the first “WikiWomen’s History Month,” a “wiki-coordinated program of international events and edit-a-thons”

focused on history, artists, feminism, and women scientists. The event was repeated in 2013 and 2014.³³ As part of the Women's History Edit-A-Thon, "#tooFEW: Feminists Engage Wikipedia" initiated events at several colleges on March 15, 2013 to inspire a coordinated event at multiple locations.³⁴ Although #tooFEW attracted positive attention and resulted in improvements to the site, organizer Moya Bailey reported a backlash—the group's own Wiki event page suffered vandalism.³⁵ Several edit-a-thons followed the success of these initial events. They successfully updated articles of interest to women, and they inspired women to edit through networking and collegial collaboration in social spaces.

Building on the success of #tooFEW, subsequent edit-a-thons focused on more specific subjects, such as women in science and women in the arts.³⁶ The Global Women Write-In, or GWWI, is an initiative of the Rewriting Wikipedia Project designed to "increase the number of and improve existing entries on marginalized peoples and cultures" and focuses on incorporating global editors and subjects.³⁷ The organizers, Roopika Risam and Adeline Koh, made the stakes for this project explicit: "anyone can edit Wikipedia, so this openness represents tremendous opportunity to help shape global forms of knowledge." The GWWI began to hold edit-a-thons known as "write-ins" on April 26, 2013.³⁸ The initial meet-up focused on women-of-color and "global" women. Follow-up events also took place on March 18, 2014.

Edit-a-thons have been devoted to women in science since 2012, when the Royal Society hosted one in honor of Ada Lovelace Day on October 16. United Kingdom astronomer Karen Masters declared that the edit-a-thon "kind of motivated me to try again. I [had] been scared off by former edits being deleted."³⁹ The event was repeated at the Royal Society in October 2013. In February 2014, an Art + Feminism edit-a-thon took place in New York City and around the world, with great success: "The campaign attracted an estimated 600 participants, resulting in more than 100 new Wikipedia articles focused on women and the arts."⁴⁰ And the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship planned a "Medieval Women Wikipedia Write-In," organized by Dorothy Kim and Mary Suydam, to run throughout the 49th International Congress on Medieval Studies in May 2014. Running during most business hours through the conference, with thirty-minute workshops held twice a day and troubleshooters

available for individual attention, the write-in connected explicitly to the GWWI.⁴¹ Since, as Judith Bennett discussed in *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism*, topics from the distant past are often neglected in popular history and women's studies often overlook medieval topics, this write-in adds another dimension of marginalization to the project.⁴²

#tooFEW, the GWWI, and other edit-a-thons are publicity events meant to draw attention to the issue of under- and misrepresentation of marginal groups in Wikipedia, and to inspire action and new participants. As one Twitter respondent wondered about the #tooFEW events, "why not just contribute regularly instead of making a big deal out of one weekend?"⁴³ But these events also provide crucial training in Wikipedia conventions, technique, and technology; they build new contributors from an interested and sympathetic base and hope that these new collaborators will apply this training in the future. They also connect activists interested in the marginalization of women within a variety of fields who are eager to bring greater attention to women's work by featuring such figures and topics on Wikipedia.

The Distributed Open Collaborative Course (DOCC) courses organized by FemTechNet in Fall 2013 demonstrate another activist model that embraces an academic setting. The DOCC on "Dialogues on Feminism and Technology" was a "networked learning experiment." The designers created the DOCC as a MOOC alternative: rather than a "massive open online course" at a single school, the DOCC creates a network at an array of campuses collaborating together. Instructors at more than a dozen colleges and universities created courses customized to their institutional culture and teaching style that presented content—primarily video presentations—offered by FemTechNet, examining feminist issues in technology.⁴⁴ The DOCC's "Storming Wikipedia" assignment taught students editing and revising Wikipedia pages related to women in science and technology "to engage a wider group of participants.... so that the histories of the future will be well populated by the ideas and people that took feminism seriously as a source of inspiration." The workshops caused enough anxiety that a Fox News article complained that "fifteen universities including some Ivy League schools are offering college credit to students who will inject feminist thinking into the popular website Wikipedia."⁴⁵ The DOCC

expanded the “write-in” model into a semester-long project extended across multiple campuses.

Thus, activists have taken direct action to inspire and train new participants, to include more articles about women in Wikipedia, and to improve existing articles devoted to women. Through these events, participants are energized to continue collaborating, they gain knowledge and experience that they can employ or share later, and the site receives an injection of improved material. Since women’s topics tend to draw female contributors, the number of female—or at least feminist—collaborators also increases. The media campaigns around these events keep attention on the gender gap in Wikipedia. This attention is beneficial for marketing the meetups and encouraging women to take action; it can also be dangerous in provoking harassment of event organizers and participants, however. The write-ins also fail to deal with continuing issues with Wikipedia’s quality. Thus, we next examine the response to the gender gap in the classroom.

Response: Pedagogy

Teachers created paper assignments involving Wikipedia long before discussion of a gender gap because the site is so present in the lives of students and the public.⁴⁶ Indeed, Rosenzweig urged academic historians to take direct action in editing the site: “if every member of the Organization of American Historians devoted just one day to improving the entries in her or his areas of expertise, it would not only significantly raise the quality of *Wikipedia*, it would also enhance popular historical literacy.”⁴⁷ Rosenzweig argues that editing Wikipedia is even more important in the classroom, since the process “fosters an appreciation of the very skills that historians try to teach” even if “Wikipedia as a product is problematic.”⁴⁸ Some academics applaud Wikipedia for democratizing knowledge and creating a level playing field for information’s dispersion beyond the academy.⁴⁹ Others have complained about the site’s inaccuracies, its replacement of traditional research, and the ease with which students accept the encyclopedia’s statements as fact and truth.⁵⁰ Teaching the critical examination of the site’s articles can disrupt student comfort in basing research on the site so frequently in academic work. Evaluating public information can also empower

students to see the value of classwork and their own analysis. As Michelle Commeyras and her colleagues at MIT discovered when they incorporated Wikipedia writing into graduate work in the comparative media studies program, “writing for Wikipedia” can help students “translate specialized knowledge into a discourse for a general audience.”⁵¹ The site offers further opportunities to historians since, as Rosenzweig noted, the “talk” pages attached to each article reveal a historiographical conversation, similar to the work historians conduct. As Elizabeth Pollard suggests, the talk page “is a place to engage in ongoing historiographical discourse on specific topics with a high-stakes audience much larger than [students’] in-class peer group.” It can empower students by demonstrating the immediate relevance of their work.⁵²

These were my primary interests when I introduced a Wikipedia assignment to History 308: European Women to 1500 in Spring 2009. By offering hands-on experience evaluating Wikipedia through their own research, I hoped students would become more critical of the site’s claims to factual objectivity and become less prone to rely on the site for research in the future; that they would gain a greater sense of the dangers of open-access information; and that they would have a more concrete sense of historiography. I initially designed this assignment for upper-division work in history, not specifically tailored to the topics of women’s history, though that connection would grow through this first run for the assignment and through the conversations taking place after Cohen’s 2011 article.

The assignment offered two options, each based on research involving the work of at least four authors publishing in scholarly journals or presses:

Option One: Critique an Existing Wikipedia Entry

Select a Wikipedia entry dealing with a pre-modern woman or an issue related to the lives of women in pre-modern Europe. Review the information contained in the article, including basic facts, analysis, images, sources, and external links. Research the topic, using your four authors. Write a critique of this entry based on your research. Is the information contained in the article accurate? Does it reflect the current state of research on the topic? What is missing from the entry? How would you solve the flaws you identify in the entry? If it succeeds, what makes the entry work? You must provide evidence for your critique and document your sources.

Option Two: Write a Wikipedia Entry

Identify a pre-modern woman or a topic related to the lives of women in pre-modern Europe that does not have an existing article in Wikipedia. Research the topic, using your four authors. You might choose this option if only a stub currently exists. Write a Wikipedia entry on this topic based on your research. You should include basic details about the subject, discuss any controversial topics, present some relevant images, reading suggestions, relevant external links, etc. This should be a biographical sketch as well as an analysis of the topic's historical significance. You must document your article as in any piece of historical writing. Pay special attention to Wikipedia formatting and content.

Option One encouraged students to use their research to analyze an article critically; the goal was to increase the stakes for their research projects by demonstrating a real-world application, and to encourage them to approach Wikipedia with skepticism in the future. I invited students selecting this option to edit the Wikipedia article to reflect the criticisms they identified. Option Two required students to move from criticism to creation by writing an article themselves. Both options posed a challenge to students, who needed to identify a topic that either provided a lush article worthy of criticism, or a topic absent from the site.

To prepare students for the project, I wrote a sample proposal focused on Wikipedia's article on the sixth-century Saint Radegund, a subject of my own research. I offered an in-class tutorial on navigating the various components (images, links, references, text) of the article and looking at the behind-the-scenes elements, such as the discussion and history tabs. In my proposal and in the tutorial, I demonstrated the ways my research identified flaws in the text, and the lacunae in the presentation. For example, the biographies of Radegund written by two sixth-century men were included in the Wikipedia article, but the equally important life by the nun Baudonivia was not mentioned. I showed students how local interests might shape the page: the inclusion of the church of St. Radegund in Grayingham, England (rather than her own church in Poitiers) and the St. Radegund pub in Cambridge.

In 2009, most of my students selected Option One; only one selected the second option. This student chose a "stub" article on Macrina the Younger and wrote a clear, accessible article.⁵³ The

rest of the students selected articles related to Heloise, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Margery Kempe, Benedetta Carlini, Camilla, Dhuoda, Christina of Markyate, and the goddess Vesta. Their analysis fell into two groups: those studying Heloise, Eleanor, and Margery found detailed pages with minor issues, while those examining the other women found very brief articles with significant flaws. Students in the first group compared “facts” from Wikipedia to those contained in their scholarly research; noted inaccuracies, misrepresentations, and chronological issues; questioned the weight given certain parts of Eleanor’s life and the brevity with which others were covered; and similarly questioned the article’s focus on Heloise’s affair with Abelard rather than paying attention to her letters, scholarly writing, or abbacy. Students writing about Margery and Heloise complained that these articles failed to examine properly debates about the authenticity of these women’s texts, whether Heloise really wrote her letters, and whether Margery’s *Book* is truly an autobiography. Students in this group all discussed schools of scholarship and the way the Wikipedia article revealed the influence of one approach over another. These were careful critiques of small details, as well as demonstrations that students understood the impact of historiography on the presentation of a topic.

Students in the second group protested that their articles did not reflect the richness of available sources on their subjects, and strongly criticized the articles’ suggestions that little could be said; in discussing the page on Christina of Markyate, one student stated, “The page cited important and valid sources for learning more about her life, but does not actually use the sources to elaborate on her life.”⁵⁴ These papers were more argumentative, even indignant in disproving dismissive or inaccurate details. As the student writing about Vesta complained, “This article fails from a scholarly perspective.”⁵⁵ Students pointed out that their subjects should be more contextualized—that the article on Dhuoda should place her within the Carolingian Renaissance, that Benedetta Carlini should be better located within the history of monasticism. These papers contained excellent analyses, closely examining details. More importantly, students gained a greater appreciation both for the difficulty of studying medieval women and for the amount of information available to scholars willing to spend the time mining sources.

Since I had permitted students writing a new article to do so completely offline, and only *recommended* that students critiquing an article incorporate edits into the actual site, none of my students took their work back to Wikipedia. Students became sophisticated users of the site, more aware of the way content was produced, but they did not become contributors themselves. My larger motivation to encourage students to see the relevance of historiography and to have a real-world application for their academic work was a success, but the assignment did not translate into any changes for the site itself.

In light of Cohen's article on the WMF survey, the importance of the assignment and its use specifically in my women's history course changed dramatically for me in 2011. As blogger and Wikipedia editor Shane Landrum, who uses the handle "Clitropic," suggested in the wake of Cohen's article, "If you teach history courses on women, gender, or sexuality, or on the history of any racial or ethnic minority in the United States, it's worth considering adding a Wikipedia assignment to your syllabus."⁵⁶ Such a discussion has occupied many academic blogs and listservs, including the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship MEDFEM-L listserv, multiple times since January 2011. Reading the calls for feminists to teach with Wikipedia energized me, because I already had a Wikipedia assignment on my women's history course syllabus. Due to scheduling demands, I was not able to teach History 308 again until Fall 2013, when I employed this assignment once more.

I changed very little in this assignment from its 2009 version, though I spent more time in one-on-one counseling and provided an extensive in-class tutorial on navigating Wikipedia. In presenting my sample proposal on Radegund, I discovered that the article had changed significantly, and I showed students the older version through the Wayback Machine and the "view history" tab. Although I offered students the Wikipedia tutorial for editing articles, I did not devote significant class time to exploring how to contribute to the site. This was a mistake since, to my surprise, in this round, all students selected Option One.⁵⁷ Students chose primarily biographical articles such as those on Cleopatra, Perpetua, Guglielma, Mary Magdalene, Hilda, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Hildegard of Bingen, Eleanor of Provence, and Alice Perrers, as well as categories such as "queen" and "chastity," and objects such as the conduct book *Le Ménagier de Paris*. In this round, unlike in 2009, all of the topics

had detailed and substantial Wikipedia articles; there were no stubs or one-paragraph articles.⁵⁸ Whether this was due to topic selection or new attention to women in Wikipedia following Cohen's 2011 exposé is unclear—it is likely a bit of both.

Once again, I found the quality of student research to be outstanding, and superior to research in more traditional papers I had assigned in other courses. Indeed, the paper on Alice Perrers was such an excellent piece of historiographical investigation that I nominated it for an essay award. In their papers, students found that the data contained on the Wikipedia articles were accurate, though they quibbled with small details. They criticized instead the articles' tendency to focus on insignificant aspects of their topic and the absence of key details. The paper on Eleanor of Provence revealed that "the page leaves out very profound diplomatic and maternal accomplishments which made Eleanor one of the foremost protagonists of the English monarchy in the thirteenth century."⁵⁹ Other students criticized articles for superficial examinations of the page's subject, a common academic complaint about Wikipedia. Students investigating the page on Hildegard compared the way the richness of Hildegard's life was lost in the page's accurate yet shallow description of her story. Or, as the student analyzing the entry on *Le Ménagier de Paris* observed, "discourse in the academic field is completely ignored....There is a tendency to ignore how the academic field looks at texts and only focusing on the popular understanding of the text. For *Le Ménagier de Paris* that is particular[ly] problematic because the text is popularly understood as a Medieval cookbook and its true purpose as a conduct book, which expresses misogyny and describes medieval patriarchy, is ignored."⁶⁰ The 2013 version of the assignment was also a success: it provoked students to be critical of Wikipedia, encouraged them to value their own analysis, and demonstrated a real application to their scholarly endeavors; it was certainly beneficial to the students. Once again, however, no changes were made to the site itself. I am convinced that this assignment empowered students and that it will translate into improved research in future assignments.

I admit disappointment, however, that this assignment did not result in greater participation in editing Wikipedia, since it seems a promising avenue for addressing feminist concerns identified above. Since most students in my women's history courses (and such courses

worldwide) are women and/or feminists, this assignment provides an easy training ground for Wikipedia contributors who might, in turn, facilitate a more hospitable site for future editors. In talking with students about the reasons for choosing the first option, the same concerns identified in 2011 remain: intimidation about publicizing intellectual work, lack of confidence about authority to speak on a subject, ignorance about the technical requirements, and a reluctance to learn the format. Criticism is, it seems, a more familiar student writing task, and one with which my students were more comfortable.

Multiple scholars require students to critique, edit, and write for Wikipedia, and the three other assignments I discuss below are useful models for training students to deal with Wikipedia's "Gender Gap," even though they are not focused on women's history explicitly. These examples all come from historians, though academics in many disciplines offer alternatives.⁶¹ Elizabeth Pollard and Tobias Higbie each designed assignments for upper-division history courses focused on a theme, while Jeremy Boggs introduced an assignment into his U.S. history survey. All three assignments emphasized writing for the site and so they offer a useful complement to the critical approach that my assignment provided.

Pollard's assignment required students to create or enhance Wikipedia articles on the history of witchcraft and magic. Students in Pollard's course searched for "problematic entries and gaps" in the site, and contributed directly to Wikipedia in a way that reflected "both the depth of their research and the conflicting historical opinion on the topic."⁶² In U.S. history surveys, Boggs directed students mainly to create new content, either by fleshing out topics on the history stubs page or by identifying a topic that did not yet have a substantial article.⁶³ Students contributed 500 words with footnotes, used at least two books and two websites, and linked to two Wikipedia pages, matching Wikipedia formatting requirements. Higbie incorporated an assignment writing and editing Wikipedia into his history course on "American Working Class Movements." Students focused on "missing or underdeveloped entries about United States labor, radicalism and economic justice movements" from a list that Higbie provided.⁶⁴ These are distinct approaches to the first dilemma of the assignment: how to select an article. Such approaches could allow an instructor to tailor the assignment to the skill and experience level of a class.

In order to engage in the historiographical debate about the selected article, Pollard encouraged students to interact with the discussion/talk page.⁶⁵ Boggs also advised students to use the history and talk pages before making changes so that they had a clearer sense of the debates around the page. As Rosenzweig had suggested, beyond the work researching and writing new content, students could gain a better appreciation of the complexity of historical debate in this way. Pollard suggested “inviting...published experts on [students’] topics to visit their entry” in order to raise the stakes of the contributions even higher, an additional step that might work especially well in an introductory methods course.⁶⁶

Pollard found that students requested more assistance in learning the technology mechanics of using the site than she had anticipated.⁶⁷ Higbie required his students to complete a training session online to learn Wikipedia’s format and NPOV, as did Pollard and Boggs. Boggs agreed with Pollard that “the trickiest part of the assignment is showing students how to write for Wikipedia”; for this reason, he offered a full class meeting to teach the formatting requirements, in addition to the online tutorial. In thinking about the future of her assignment, Pollard considered offering students more structured instruction in Wikipedia, a tool that my students clearly require, as well.

Boggs’ assignment includes a second phase in which students “watch the article” to test whether changes are made, and connect with the editors changing the content. Students then write a “reflection” paper to describe the experience of editing the site. He lists his goals as (1) teaching students research methods, (2) demystifying Wikipedia, and (3) distinguishing between “fact-only writing” and “analytical writing.” The second goal is most interesting here: he encourages students to go beyond reading and writing for Wikipedia, so that they interact with Wikipedia’s editors and administrators (admins). They learn some of the technical requirements and the limitations of the site, but they also learn the site’s structure and community. This aspect of the assignment could be useful for handling concerns about hostility to female contributors in Wikipedia’s community, by teaching students how to navigate the site’s expectations, where to seek assistance, and how to receive criticism.

Higbie, Pollard, and Boggs designed their assignments to encourage students to see their work as relevant and, in Higbie’s

words, “consequential.” Pollard wanted students to recognize “the relative value of various resources for historical research (including Wikipedia), contributing to high-stakes historical discourse, understanding and constructing historiography” and actual outcomes included providing students “with twenty-first-century learning skills such as digital-age literacy, inventive thinking, effective communication, and high productivity.”⁶⁸ They claimed success for all of these goals. Pollard and Higbie were also keen to use student work to improve the quality of Wikipedia in their area. Higbie suggested articles to “fill the void” on topics related to labor history, and Pollard hoped to improve the quality of articles related to magic and witchcraft. This notion of “enriching” Wikipedia through student work speaks directly to the activist desire of the edit-a-thon.

Pollard, Boggs, and Higbie demonstrate the power of contributing to the site, rather than simply critiquing existing articles. In planning for the next iteration of my medieval women’s history course and Wikipedia assignment, I plan to break Options One and Two into discrete papers building from criticism to editing over the course of the semester. There is value in assigning students to critique Wikipedia articles based on research they have executed personally, both for building student confidence and for helping students to understand the site better. Such a criticism-based assignment should begin earlier in the semester to become a short, initial paper in History 308. But my assignment in its current form does not lead students to intervene in Wikipedia as contributors, editors, or writers, and so the assignment should be more like these models, to truly encourage feminists in my classes to engage with the site. Option Two should be a required, second, and longer research project focusing the attention of students for the semester.⁶⁹ Adding a component, like Boggs, in which students “watch” their content on the site and engage with the talk page about changes, can become an excellent end-of-term assignment.

Encouraging students to incorporate their own work into Wikipedia articles, or to create entirely new articles, however, will require greater help. Students need more assistance approaching the technical requirements of contributing to the site, as well as more cheerleading to encourage them to value their potential impact. Rather than relying on students to explore Wikipedia’s tutorial, I will need to devote serious class time to demonstrating tools, as well as

intervening with students during office hours. Admittedly, this will require more time and commitment from me than my current iteration of the assignment; I submit that the value that students, the course, Wikipedia, and the Internet-using public will all gain is worth the effort. Given the discussion above, we might read this engagement as urgently needed in women's history courses and desired by the broader community.

Conclusion

The revelation that women make up a small portion of Wikipedia's contributors, and thus that Wikipedia's content reflects primarily male interests, has galvanized reporters, feminists, and academics to intervene. The activist response to inspire greater female participation, to train women and feminists to use the site, and to create events and spaces where "women-friendly" articles might be created and edited is an accelerating movement, with events scheduled in a variety of fields and sub-fields through the coming year. The long-term success of these movements cannot be assessed at this moment, but they appear to be growing and successfully drawing attention to the "Gender Gap." Feminist participants should become a new group of collaborators able to train like-minded contributors, who thereby improve the content and culture of Wikipedia. Ideally, by bringing women and feminists into Wikipedia's community of contributors, value for women's methods of working and communicating, if truly distinct, will increase. Of course, rectifying the lack of articles focused on women and women's history is work that both men and women can complete; while it is important to make Wikipedia an online environment hospitable to all contributors and to encourage women to participate, it is equally important to recognize that men also write women's history and can improve the quality of the site's articles on women and women's topics.

Academics might move from bemoaning the state of scholarship in Wikipedia to addressing absences, on a variety of academic subjects and on an array of course levels. My assignment hopes to improve the information—its accuracy, its presentation, its simple presence—in topics related to women. Using such an assignment in women's history courses can provide a semester-long "write-in" that will train, in small batches, feminist-friendly students to contribute

to the site, as well as encourage students to value their work by publicizing their research. Moving the students from criticism to online contribution, however, requires more training for instructors, which might come from attending one of the write-ins. The activist model can enhance the pedagogical one, and vice versa.

It is also important for students in *medieval* women's history courses to engage with the gender gap in Wikipedia. As Bennett identified in *History Matters*, women's historians and feminist activists have disconnected from one another's projects.⁷⁰ Women's historians have become less engaged in activism, and activists have lost interest in the deep past. By training a new group of feminist scholars to edit Wikipedia from within the milieu of a *medieval* women's history course, I hope to bring two marginal topics to center: women and medieval history. With my class assignment, I also hope to encourage activists and historians to work together to better represent women in public forums such as Wikipedia. Perhaps this work can help bridge the gender gap, as well as the chronological one.⁷¹

Notes

This article began as a class assignment in Manhattan College's History 308: European Women to 1500 course, and I am grateful for the work and enthusiasm of the two groups of students whose papers provide the findings here. Discussions on the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship listserv MEDFEM-I encouraged me to pursue the topic as an article. And I am grateful for conversations and kind critiques from Monica Green, Elisa Miller, Bridget Chalk, Paul Droubie, Richard K. Emmerson, and Julie Hofmann, who all read or listened to parts of the work in progress. Any remaining errors are, as always, my own.

1. This figure is up from 53% in 2010, Pew Internet & American Life Project Poll, 19 February 2012 and Pew Internet & American Life Project Poll, 30 May 2012, Pew Research Center, <<http://www.pewresearch.org/question-search/?keyword=wikipedia&x=0&y=0>>; Kathryn Zickuhr and Lee Rainie, "Wikipedia, Past and Present: A Snapshot of Current Wikipedia Users," Pew Research Center, 13 January 2011, <<http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/01/13/wikipedia-past-and-present/>>.

2. Google has been responsive to criticism about gender bias in its own practices, such as the announcement that Google will address a gender bias in

“Google Doodles” and commit to a 50/50 male to female ratio, in response to a report from the SPARK Movement showing that only 17.5% of doodles between 2010 and 2013 had featured women. Jane Spencer, “Google’s Doodles: Oodles of Men,” *Digits: Tech News & Analysis From the WSJ* (blog), 27 February 2014, <<http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2014/02/27/googles-doodles-oodles-of-men/>>.

3. Brock Read reported that Professor of Communications Alexander M. C. Halavais acted as a troll to insert thirteen errors into articles on Wikipedia. “Can Wikipedia Ever Make the Grade?” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 27 October 2006, <<http://chronicle.com/article/Can-Wikipedia-Ever-Make-the/26960>>. Halavais discovered that all of his errors were removed within three hours by “vigilant” editors. For another example of mean-spirited vandalism, see Andrew Leonard, “Revenge, Ego and the Corruption of Wikipedia,” *Salon.com*, 17 May 2013, <http://www.salon.com/2013/05/17/revenge_ego_and_the_corruption_of_wikipedia/>.

4. “Teachers Say that for Students Today ‘Research = Googling,’” Pew Research Center, 6 December 2012, <<http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/teachers-say-that-for-students-today-research-googling/>>.

5. Justine Cassell, “A Culture of Editing Wars,” in “Where are the Women in Wikipedia” (opinion), *The New York Times*, 2 February 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/02/02/where-are-the-women-in-wikipedia/a-culture-of-editing-wars>>.

6. Andrew Lavalee, “Only 13% of Wikipedia Contributors Are Women, Study Says,” *Digits: Tech News & Analysis from the WSJ* (blog), 31 August 2009, <<http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2009/08/31/only-13-of-wikipedia-contributors-are-women-study-says/>>. A 2011 Wikimedia Foundation survey was even more bleak, suggesting that only 9% of Wikipedia’s editors are women: Wikimedia Foundation, “Editor Survey 2011 (April 2011),” Wikimedia, <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Editor_Survey_2011>.

7. Noam Cohen, “Define Gender Gap? Look Up Wikipedia’s Contributor List,” *The New York Times*, 30 January 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/business/media/31link.html?_r=1&>. The Wikimedia Foundation immediately began conversations about this issue, as evidenced in the Wikimedia Foundation Report of February 2011, where a new section on “Gender Gap Conversation Begins” appeared: <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Foundation_Report_February_2011#Gender_Gap_Conversations_Begin>. Three years later, the goal of 25% female editing participation has still not been met: the Wikimedia Foundation’s Strategic Plan for 2013-2014 still lists “support healthy diversity in the editing community by doubling the percentage of female editors to 25 percent and increase the percentage of Global South editors to 37%”: “Wikimedia Movement Strategic Plan Summary,” Wikimedia, <http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Movement_Strategic_Plan_Summary>.

8. Lynsea Garrison, “How can Wikipedia woo women editors?” *BBC News Magazine*, 7 April 2014, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26828726>>. Thanks to Monica Green bringing this article to my attention.

9. Amanda Filipacchi, “Wikipedia’s Sexism Toward Female Novelists” (opinion), 24 April 2013, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/opinion/>>

sunday/wikipedias-sexism-toward-female-novelists.html>. The same move was happening for novelists of other nationalities. As of 25 February 2014, Filipacchi's Wikipedia article belonged to categories for "American women writers," "writers from Paris," "American women novelists," and two categories for American novelists from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but does *not* belong to "American novelists," even still.

10. Joseph M. Reagle also blamed "hacker elitism": "Open Doesn't Include Everyone," in "Where are the Women in Wikipedia" (opinion), *The New York Times*, 2 February 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/02/02/where-are-the-women-in-wikipedia/open-doesnt-include-everyone>>. Wikipedians agree with this assessment, asserting that "geeks run the place"; that the articles use a "geek style of language...unreadable or esthetically very displeasing"; and that the site is mired in "geek priorities" such as science fiction, computer science, physics, and mathematics. "Wikipedia: Why Wikipedia is Not so Great," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Why_Wikipedia_is_not_so_great>.

11. Shyong (Tony) K. Lam, Anuradha Uduwage, Zhenhua Dong, Shilad Sen, David R. Musicant, Loren Terveen, and John Riedl, "WP:Clubhouse? An Exploration of Wikipedia's Gender Imbalance," *WikiSym '11*, 3-5 October 2011, Mountain View, California, <<http://files.grouplens.org/papers/wp-gender-wikisym2011.pdf>>.

12. Louisa A. Burnham, MEDFEM-L listserv, 31 January 2011. In a separate MEDFEM-L thread, historian Monica H. Green explained her attempts to work an end-run around Wikipedia by making her work accessible online, since "Internet 'scholarship' runs by consensus. Nothing is 'true' until it is repeated endlessly. There is no such thing as a single 'voice of authority' in this new economy of knowledge." MEDFEM-L listserv, 17 November 2013.

13. "User talk: JHK," Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_talk:JHK>. "Deb" has a history of deleting pages she finds insufficiently notable, and includes a long defense of this practice on her "talk" page: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_talk:Deb>. Deb is also active in policing perceived sexism, as seen at "Wikipedia:Requests for comment/PrivateWiddle," <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Requests_for_comment/PrivateWiddle&oldid=595869854> and the "Personal Attacks" section on "User talk:PrivateWiddle," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_talk:PrivateWiddle#Personal_attacks>. This example demonstrates that the "masculine" culture of Wikipedia includes female users.

14. "'Drafts' feature provides a gentler start for Wikipedia articles" section in "Wikimedia Foundation Report, December 2013," Wikimedia, <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Foundation_Report,_December_2013#22Drafts.22_feature_provides_a_gentler_start_for_Wikipedia_articles>. See also Jim Giles, "Free for All? Lifting the Lid on a Wikipedia Crisis," *New Scientist*, 17 April 2013, <<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21829122.200-free-for-all-lifting-the-lid-on-a-wikipedia-crisis.html>>.

15. Susan C. Herring, "A Difference of Communication Styles," in "Where are the Women in Wikipedia" (opinion), *The New York Times*, 2 February 2011,

<<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/02/02/where-are-the-women-in-wikipedia/communication-styles-make-a-difference>>.

16. Sue Gardner, "Nine Reasons Women Don't Edit Wikipedia (in their own words)," SueGardner.org (blog), 19 February 2011, <<http://suegardner.org/2011/02/19/nine-reasons-why-women-dont-edit-wikipedia-in-their-own-words/>>.

17. James Gleick, "Wikipedia's Women Problem," in "NYRblog: Roving Thoughts and Provocations," *The New York Review of Books*, 29 April 2013, <<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2013/apr/29/wikipedia-women-problem/>>; and Leonard, "Revenge, Ego and the Corruption of Wikipedia."

18. Jessamyn West, "More About Power Than Gender," in "Where are the Women in Wikipedia" (opinion), *The New York Times*, 2 February 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/02/02/where-are-the-women-in-wikipedia/more-about-power-than-gender>>. Sue Gardner found this reaction "heartening because I think the people at Metafilter are fairly similar to the people at Wikipedia," which seems to be missing the point. "[Gendergap] Wikipedia's Gender Gap: Discussion on Metafilter" (discussion mailing list), 3 February 2011, <<http://lists.wikimedia.org/pipermail/gendergap/2011-February/000081.html>>.

19. Joseph M. Reagle noted that the "ideology and rhetoric of freedom and openness can then be used (a) to suppress concerns about inappropriate or offensive speech as 'censorship' and (b) to rationalize low female participation as simply a matter of their personal preference and choice." Reagle, "Open Doesn't Include Everyone."

20. As quoted in Joseph M. Reagle, Jr., "In Good Faith: Wikipedia Collaboration and the Pursuit of the Universal Encyclopedia" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2008), 96 and 100.

21. Janet M. Giddings, "Ethical Issues in Pedagogy: Wikipedia," *SBL: Society of Biblical Literature Forum*, September 2006, <<http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=601>>.

22. "Wikipedia: No original research," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No_original_research>, reads: "Wikipedia articles must not contain original research." Scholars must only reference their own work if it is published, and then only in the third person.

23. This happened also to Halavais as described by Read, "Can Wikipedia Ever Make the Grade?"

24. Jaron Lanier, "Digital Maoism: The Hazards of the New Online Collectivism," *Edge*, 29 May 2006, <<http://edge.org/conversation/digital-maoism-the-hazards-of-the-new-online-collectivism>>; and Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 93, no. 1 (June 2006): 117-146, reprinted online at the Center for History and New Media, <<http://chnm.gmu.edu/essays-on-history-new-media/essays/?essayid=42#t11>>.

25. Monica H. Green, personal communication, e-mail, 10 April 2014.

26. In "WP:Clubhouse? An Exploration of Wikipedia's Gender Imbalance," Lam and his team estimates that about 47% of the readers of Wikipedia are women, and that "only 6% of the editors who have contributed more than 2,000

edits are female.” A research team led by Judd Antin found that of 256,190 users they sampled, only 13,598 users “optionally declared a gender in their Wikipedia profile,” and of these, 82% were men and 18% women. Judd Antin, Raymond Yee, Coye Cheshire, and Oded Nov, “Gender Differences in Wikipedia Editing,” *WikiSym '11*, October 3-5, 2011, Mountain View, California, p. 12, <http://www.academia.edu/1412395/Gender_differences_in_Wikipedia_editing>. This paper is significantly limited by the decision to survey contributors who had recently joined the site and by limiting the sample to those profiles that identified gender. They found that women who were most active on the site were primarily adding new content and rephrasing existing text. Their research roughly confirmed the smaller numbers of women contributing to Wikipedia, and the notion that men control the shape of the encyclopedia to a much larger extent.

27. Sook Lim, “How and Why Do College Students use Wikipedia?” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 60, no. 11 (November 2009): 2189-2202; Andrew D. Madden, Nigel Ford, David Miller, and Philippa Levy, “Using the Internet in Teaching: The Views of Practitioners (A Survey of the Views of Secondary School Teachers in Sheffield, UK),” *British Journal of Education Technology* 36, no. 2 (February 2005): 255-280; and Marte Blikstad-Balas and Rita Hvistendahl, “Students’ Digital Strategies and Shortcuts—Searching for Answers on Wikipedia as a Core Literacy Practice in Upper Secondary School,” *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy* 8, no. 01-02 (2013), <http://www.idunn.no/dk/2013/01-02/students_digital_strategies_and_shortcuts>.

28. The Wikimedia Foundation did add a page for “Proposals for more female editors” with several ideas, however. “Proposals for More Female Editors,” Wikimedia, <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Proposals_for_more_female_editors>. These suggestions included a mentoring program, using a noticeboard to report bias and abuse, and improving the ease of the interface. The page thus acknowledges that issues preventing women from participating include inexperience, tech challenges, and community hostility.

29. “Gender Gap,” Wikimedia, <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Gender_gap>.

30. “Proposals for More Female Editors,” Wikimedia, <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Proposals_for_more_female_editors>.

31. See the Wikiwomen community on the Wikimedia blog at <<http://blog.wikimedia.org/c/community/wikiwomen/>> and the “WikiWomen’s Collaborative” Wikimedia page at <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WikiWomen%27s_Collaborative>.

32. See, for example, the 23 November 2013 post encouraging women to discuss science fiction they read or edit on the site: “Dr. Who is the Google Doodle today! What’s your favorite science fiction to edit or read on Wikipedia? Share your links!” WikiWomen’s Collaborative page on Facebook, <<https://www.facebook.com/WikiWomensCollaborative>>.

33. “Wikipedia: WikiWomen’s History Month,” Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiWomen's_History_Month>. The 2014 “outcomes” page lists 345 new pages created as part of the project and 43 articles expanded or improved. “Wikipedia: WikiWomen's History Month/2014/Outcomes,”

Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiWomen%27s_History_Month/Outcomes_2014>.

34. “Wikipedia:Meetup/Feminists Engage Wikipedia,” Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Meetup/Feminists_Engage_Wikipedia>.

35. Moya Bailey, “Patriarchy Proves the Point of #tooFEW,” MoyaBailey.com (blog), 9 March 2013, <<http://moyabailey.com/2013/03/09/patriarchy-proves-the-point-of-toofew/>>. Vandalism included “changing the location to ‘DICKS’” and deleting pages marked for editing and “replacing them with ‘Adolf Hitler.’” Fortunately, Wikipedia enables reversion to a previous version to combat vandalism, and logs the IP addresses of those disrupting the page.

36. Several of the edit-a-thons listed are focused on women’s history. “Wikipedia:How to run an edit-a-thon,” Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:How_to_run_an_edit-a-thon>.

37. “The Rewriting Wikipedia Project,” Global Outlook, <<http://www.globaloutlookdh.org/working-groups/the-rewriting-wikipedia-project/>>.

38. Organizers used a Wiki page for organizing the meet-ups. “Wikipedia:Meetup/globalwomen,” Wikipedia, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Meetup/globalwomen>>.

39. Ed Yong, “Edit-a-thon Gets Women Scientists into Wikipedia: Royal Society Hosts Event to Redress Online Encyclopaedia’s Gender Imbalance,” *Nature: International Weekly Journal of Science*, 22 October 2012, <<http://www.nature.com/news/edit-a-thon-gets-women-scientists-into-wikipedia-1.11636>>.

40. “Wikipedia: Meetup/ArtAndFeminism,” Wikipedia, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Meetup/ArtAndFeminism>>. Description of outcomes is at “Wikipedia:Meetup/ArtAndFeminism 2014/Outcomes,” Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Meetup/ArtAndFeminism_2014/Outcomes>. The edit-a-thon drew press attention, too, to its success. Robin Cembalest, “101 Women Artists Who Got Wikipedia Pages This Week,” *ARTnews*, 6 February 2014, <<http://www.artnews.com/2014/02/06/art-and-feminism-wikipedia-editathon-creates-pages-for-women-artists/>>.

41. A write-in also took place during the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women in 2014, just after this article was completed.

42. Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

43. As reported by Moya Bailey in “Patriarchy Proves the Point of #tooFEW.”

44. “DOCC 2013: Dialogues on Feminism and Technology,” FemTechNet, <<http://femtechnet.news.school.edu/docc2013/>>; and Scott Jaschik, “Feminist Anti-MOOC,” *Inside Higher Ed*, 19 August 2013, <<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/08/19/feminist-professors-create-alternative-moocs>>.

45. “Wikistorming: Colleges Offer Credit to Inject Feminism into Wikipedia,” *FoxNews.com*, 6 September 2013, <<http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2013/09/06/wikistorming-colleges-offer-credit-to-corrupt-wikipedia/>>.

46. See, for example, Gabriel Bodard, “Wikipedia Editing as Teaching Tool,” *The Stoa Consortium: Serving News, Projects, and Links for Digital Classicists Everywhere*, 25 March 2007, <<http://www.stoa.org/archives/600>>; and “Teachers Say that for Students Today Research = Googling.”

47. Rosenzweig, “Can History be Open Source?”

48. Ibid.

49. Rosenzweig called it a “democratic triumph. Ibid.

50. *Nature* conducted a study in 2005 that compared Wikipedia articles to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and found articles roughly equal in terms of accuracy with about three *Encyclopaedia Britannica* errors to Wikipedia’s four. The results have been challenged by *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, of course. Jim Giles, “Special Report: Internet Encyclopaedias go Head to Head,” *Nature: International Weekly Journal of Science* 438, 15 December 2005, with a 28 March 2006 update responding to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*’s objections. Rosenzweig also tested the Wikipedia’s accuracy in articles related to history, finding only four “small and inconsequential” errors in his very small sample, and he noted that other encyclopedias repeated some of the same errors. Rosenzweig, “Can History be Open Source?” Rosenzweig acknowledges, however, that the balance of information is problematic.

51. Michelle Commeyras, Lisa Lang, and Amy Jo Evers, “Writing for Wikipedia: Teaching: An Authentic Writing Experience,” n.p., 2012, 159-176, <http://www.academia.edu/2465292/Writing_for_Wikipedia_Teaching_An_Authentic_Writing_Experience>. And Jimmy Wales, one of Wikipedia’s founders, has often marked the quality of the site’s scientific articles, due, in his estimation, to the ease with which scientists already collaborate.

52. Elizabeth Ann Pollard, “Raising the Stakes: Writing about Witchcraft on Wikipedia,” *The History Teacher* 42, no. 1 (November 2008): 12.

53. The article on Macrina the Younger now, five years later, contains most of the content my student suggested, and is no longer a stub. “Macrina the Younger,” Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrina_the_Younger>.

54. Student paper, Manhattan College, History 308, Spring 2009.

55. Student paper, Manhattan College, History 308, Spring 2009.

56. Shane Landrum, “Women’s History & Wikipedia’s Gender Gap,” *Clotropic* (blog), 31 January 2011, <<http://clotropic.org/blog/2011/01/wikipedia-and-womens-history/>>.

57. In hindsight, I think this was because students had difficulty selecting topics. The assignment’s proposal deadline fell early in the semester so students did not have the benefit of much instruction before selecting a subject. In the future, I will post Wikipedia’s list of “top important articles,” which includes issues related to medieval women’s history, as well as a link to the list of stub articles, following the example of other professors, discussed below.

58. However, the student writing about Guglielma thought it was “ridiculous” that there was no page on the Guglielmites, the saint’s followers. Student paper, Manhattan College, History 308, Fall 2013.

59. Student paper, Manhattan College, History 308, Fall 2013; a similar point is made in the papers about Eleanor of Aquitaine and Alice Perrers. Complaints about scholars overlooking the important contributions of royal women—despite their obvious place in available sources—is frequently noted by scholars such as Theresa Earenfight, Kathleen Wellman, and Tracy Adams.

60. Student paper, Manhattan College, History 308, Fall 2013.

61. Other explorations of the subject include: Rachel Goodman, "Students Contribute to a Global Community through Improvement of Wikipedia," *The American Biology Teacher* 70, no. 3 (March 2008): 138; and Esther Hoorn and Dore van Hoorn, "Critical Assessment of Using Wikis in Legal Education," *JILT—Journal of Information Law & Technology* 1 (2007): 28-37.

62. Pollard, "Raising the Stakes," 9 and 10.

63. Jeremy Boggs, "Assigning Wikipedia in a US History Survey," *ClioWeb* (blog), 5 April 2009, <<http://clioweb.org/2009/04/05/assigning-wikipedia-in-a-us-history-survey/>>.

64. Kendal Mitchell, "Professor Incorporates Wikipedia into Course Syllabus," *Daily Bruin* (University of California, Los Angeles), 28 May 2013, <<http://dailybruin.com/2013/05/28/professor-incorporates-wikipedia-into-course-syllabus/>>.

65. Pollard, "Raising the Stakes," 15.

66. *Ibid.*, 20.

67. *Ibid.*, 18.

68. *Ibid.*, 9 and 10.

69. I had three writing assignments: a book review, the Wikipedia assignment, and a final research paper. One concern, raised by my Dean, Richard Emmerson, is that this model risks turning my women's history course into a "Wikipedia course."

70. Bennett, *History Matters*.

71. For teachers interested in incorporating Wikipedia into their syllabi, Adrienne Wadewitz has developed a brochure, "Instructor Basics: How to Use Wikipedia as a Teaching Tool," Wikimedia Commons, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Instructor_Basics_How_to_Use_Wikipedia_as_a_Teaching_Tool.pdf>.