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Filling in the Gaps Together: International Women's Day Wikipedia Edit-A-Thon

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Filling in the Gaps Together: International Women's Day Wikipedia Edit-A-Thon

April 3, 2017March 29, 2017

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Rose Olivera introducing the edit-a-thon

By
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Oliveira, Becky Parmer, and Ariella Rotramel

On Wednesday, March 8, we hosted the first annual International Women's Day Wiki-Edit-A-Thon in Shain Library's Advanced Technology Lab (ATL). International Women's Day is observed throughout the world on March 8 and in some countries it is a public holiday. While celebrations in some countries include bringing women flowers or celebrating with a women's night out, the day has a political history (<https://iwd.uchicago.edu/page/international-womens-day-history>) that resulted in this year's call for a women's strike (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/08/strike-for-womens-rights-international-womens-day>) in the United States. International Women's Day provides an important opportunity to reflect on ongoing gender inequality and the ability of women and allies to act to make change. Editing Wikipedia collectively provides one platform for responding to issues of gender inequality.

According to the 2011 Editor Survey

(https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Wikipedia_Editors_Survey_2011_April), 91% of Wikipedians are men. Not only does such a homogenous editor force yield a body of work that reflects a limited scope of perspectives, but the survey also found that the relatively few women editors each make far fewer edits than men editors. Wikipedia Edit-a-Thons are staged periodically around the world, and often focus on reversing such trends by bringing women editors on board to fill in gaps in

content related to women's issues and women in history. A great example of one such initiative is the Art + Feminism Edit-a-Thon (<http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/a-feminist-edit-a-thon-seeks-to-reshape-wikipedia>).

To address these issues of gender bias, we held an International Women's Day Wikipedia-Edit-A-Thon. Edit-a-thons are events where newcomers and experienced Wikipedians alike come together to learn and participate in editing. Everyone was welcome and no prior editing experience was needed to participate. We had 13 people attend the evening's event to create or improve articles on women and related topics.

Faculty, staff, students, and community members at the edit-a-thon

Rose Oliveira, Becky Parmer, and Ariella Rotramel started the event by talking about the the gender issues that face Wikipedia and how Ariella has used Wikipedia in her feminist theory class (<https://wikiedu.org/blog/2016/03/23/feminist-praxis-and-wikipedia-in-the-classroom/>). Becky and Rose then reviewed the Five Pillars of Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five_pillars) to ensure that editors understood how to carry out their work effectively. Rose demonstrated how to create content on Wikipedia and the basics of editing. Andrew Lopez and Ashley Hanson shared a set of library resources they curated to help participants get started in their work. We also linked many resources on our Wikipedia libguide (<http://conncoll.libguides.com/c.php?g=619346&p=4310823>) to assist editors in moving into editing.

Articles edited or created during the edit-a-thon

For the remainder of the time, we dove into the work. People chose to either collaborate in teams or work by themselves to research, create or improve a variety of articles. They contributed citations; rephrased poorly written sections; added new content to existing entries; and began work on developing new entries. All of these

actions help improve Wikipedia by creating or strengthening content that relates to women and other underrepresented groups. In the last 10 minutes, everyone added their entries that they worked on a whiteboard: Lois Gibbs (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lois_Gibbs); Mary Foulke Morrisson (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Foulke_Morrisson); 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/16_Days_of_Activism_against_Gender-based_Violence); Trans Day of Action (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans_Day_of_Action); Caroline Black ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caroline_Black_\(botanist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caroline_Black_(botanist))); Avtar Brah; Beatrice Cuming; and Marie Hoppe-Teinitzerová. We concluded the evening by taking turns sharing the woman, organization, or event that they worked on. It was rewarding to see what we were collectively able to do in a short amount of time.

As a result, on the third Wednesday of every month, we have decided to hold an informal Wiki Meetup or "Wiki Wednesday" at The Social (<http://www.socialnewlondon.com/>) at 5:15pm. We welcome new and experienced editors! To check in about the meetup, please contact Rose Oliveira

(roliveir@conncoll.edu (<mailto:roliveira@conncoll.edu>)). For more information about working with Wikipedia in the classroom, please contact your instructional technologist or library liaison.

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