



Wikipedia as a Platform to Teach the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

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Introduction

As the world's most popular free encyclopedia, Wikipedia is often the first resource students consult when starting their research. While not considered a reliable source for academic research, it's an excellent platform for teaching students the six information literacy threshold concepts in the *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. Writing and editing Wikipedia articles showcases the research process, requiring students to understand how information is created, ask questions to identify information gaps, use strategic searching techniques to find information, evaluate the authority of information, properly use and cite sources, and even connect with other researchers. Students become invested in the process and gain a sense of authorship because they have a public application for their research.

ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

Adopted by the Association of College and Research Libraries in January 2016, the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* can present a challenge for librarians teaching information literacy due its conceptual nature, which makes Wikipedia an ideal platform to facilitate the research process.

Scholarship as Conversation

Wikipedia affords students the ability to enter the existing conversation on a topic in a form of public scholarship. Through talk pages, students are able to communicate with fellow contributors and get feedback on their edits from other researchers.

Information Creation as a Process

As a crowd-sourced encyclopedia, Wikipedia can easily be updated with current events and the latest developments. Librarians can use Wikipedia as an example to guide discussions about the differences between the scholarly and popular publishing processes.

Research as Inquiry

Students can use Wikipedia articles to develop research questions by investigating the existing conversation on a topic and identifying knowledge gaps on topics of interest.

Searching as Strategic Exploration

Students can use notes and references on Wikipedia articles as starting points for further research and discover key terminology and concepts in order to develop keywords for strategic searching.

Authority is Constructed & Contextual

As a free encyclopedia, Wikipedia provides a ripe opportunity for critical discussion about open access resources, the closed nature of academic publishing, and how the lack of representation amongst Wikipedia contributors and scholars skews the content. Students learn authority is a constructed and dependent upon context.

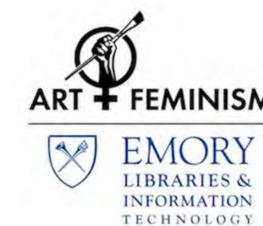
Information Has Value

In order for edits to “stick” on Wikipedia, information must be verifiable and supported by citations. Students navigate copyright, fair use, and permissions when attempting to add images and other visual media to Wikipedia articles.

Wikipedia in the Classroom

Oxford College Library has hosted an annual Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon since 2016. Recently, we expanded our effort beyond hosting a standalone library event to bringing Wikipedia into the classroom through collaboration with faculty on a scaffolded research assignment in a survey art history course at Oxford College.

In this assignment, students not only develop discipline-specific research skills through the process of editing articles on Wikipedia, but are tasked with critically evaluating Wikipedia articles to identify gaps and address uneven attention to specific artists and art topics. Based on student enthusiasm for this assignment and their demonstrable understanding of the research process, we shifted our discussion of Wikipedia in classroom from “don't use it!” to “let's edit it!”



Students editing Wikipedia articles during the 2018 Art+Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon at Oxford College Library in conjunction with the Art 102 class at Oxford College of Emory University. Picture courtesy of *The Oxford Spokesman*.

References

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