UNRELIABLE GUIDELINES

RELIABLE SOURCES AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN FRENCH, ENGLISH AND SPANISH WIKIPEDIAS

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Amber Berson
Monika Sengul-Jones
Melissa Tamani

ART + FEMINISM

Unreliable Guidelines, a project of *Reading Together: Reliability and Multilingual Global Communities*, is an inaugural **Art+Feminism** research report partially funded by **WikiCred**, which supports research, software projects and Wikimedia events about information reliability and credibility.

Author: **Amber Berson**, co-lead Art+Feminism;
Ph.D. Candidate 2021 Art History, Queen's University, Canada

Author: **Monika Sengul-Jones**, freelance researcher Art+Feminism;
Ph.D. 2020 Communication & Science Studies, UC San Diego, USA

Author: **Melissa Tamani**, co-lead Art+Feminism;
B.A. Art History, National University of San Marcos, Peru

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Report of the research project *Reading Together: Reliability and Multilingual Global Communities*

Executive Summary

In a historical moment typified by concerns about the proliferation of propaganda and misinformation online, we ask to what extent are contributions from and content about marginalized communities affected by guidelines about reliability in three language versions of the world's largest crowdsourced online encyclopedia? This report takes on this question and addresses how Wikipedia trainers involved in the Art+Feminism movement approach the reliable source guidelines in French, English and Spanish Wikipedias. Based on community conversations and interpretative analysis of the guidelines, the report shows that on Wikipedia source authority is facilitated by social and technical processes which elevate the decisions of a small number of self-selected editors. Trainers play an essential role in translating guidelines and processes, and take on additional labor in managing editorial friction. We also highlight that translations of texts about reliability between different language versions of Wikipedia tend to center Western knowledge formations. This report describes our methodology; our findings; and the effects for marginalized communities and readers writ large. Reliability should not mean exclusion: we end with recommendations for enacting more inclusive and diverse Wikipedias.

DIRECTIVES PEU FIABLES

LES SOURCES FIABLES ET LES COMMUNAUTÉS MARGINALISÉES DANS LES WIKIPÉDIAS ANGLAISE, ESPAGNOLE, ET FRANÇAISE

Repport du projet de recherche Lire ensemble : Fiabilité et communautés mondiales multilingues

Résumé

Dans un moment historique caractérisé par des préoccupations concernant la prolifération de la propagande et de la désinformation en ligne, nous posons la question : dans quelle mesure les contributions et le contenu des communautés marginalisées sont affectés par les directives sur la fiabilité dans les trois versions linguistiques de la plus grande encyclopédie en ligne du monde ? Ce rapport aborde cette question et traite de la manière dont les formateurs et formatrices de Wikipédia impliqués dans le mouvement Art+Féminisme abordent les directives sur la fiabilité des sources dans les versions de Wikipédia en français, anglais et espagnol. Se basant sur des conversations communautaires et sur une analyse interprétative des directives, ce rapport montre que sur Wikipédia, l'autorité de la source est facilitée par des processus sociaux et techniques qui privilégient les décisions d'un petit nombre d'éditeurs et éditrices auto-sélectionnés. Les formateurs et formatrices jouent un rôle essentiel dans la traduction des directives et des processus, et assument un travail supplémentaire dans la gestion des frictions éditoriales. Nous soulignons également que les traductions de textes sur la fiabilité entre les différentes versions linguistiques de Wikipédia ont tendance à centrer les formations de connaissances occidentales. Ce rapport décrit notre méthodologie, nos résultats et les effets sur les communautés marginalisées et les lecteurs et lectrices en général. La fiabilité ne doit pas être synonyme d'exclusion : nous terminons par des recommandations pour la mise en place des versions de Wikipédia plus inclusives et diversifiées.

NORMAS POCO FIABLES

FUENTES FIABLES Y COMUNIDADES MARGINADAS EN LAS WIKIPEDIAS FRANCESA, INGLESA Y ESPAÑOLA

Informe del proyecto de investigación Reading Together: Fiabilidad y comunidades globales multilingües

Resumen

En un momento histórico caracterizado por la preocupación por la proliferación de la propaganda y la desinformación en línea, nos preguntamos hasta qué punto las contribuciones de las comunidades marginadas y los contenidos sobre ellas se ven afectados por las directrices sobre fiabilidad en las versiones en tres idiomas de la mayor enciclopedia en línea de código abierto del mundo. Este informe aborda esta cuestión y se ocupa de cómo las/los/les capacitadora/es de Wikipedia que participan en el movimiento Arte+Feminismo abordan las directrices sobre fuentes fiables en las Wikipedias francesa, inglesa y española. Basándose en las conversaciones de la comunidad y en el análisis interpretativo de las directrices, el informe muestra que en Wikipedia la autoridad de las fuentes se ve facilitada por procesos sociales y técnicos que elevan las decisiones de un pequeño número de editores autoseleccionados. Las/los/les formadoras/es desempeñan un papel esencial en la traducción de las directrices y los procesos, y asumen una labor adicional en la gestión de las fricciones editoriales. También destacamos que las traducciones de textos sobre la fiabilidad entre las distintas versiones lingüísticas de Wikipedia tienden a centrar las formaciones de conocimiento occidentales. Este informe describe nuestra metodología, nuestros resultados y los efectos para las comunidades marginadas y lectoras y lectores en general. La fiabilidad no debería significar exclusión: terminamos con recomendaciones para construir Wikipedias más inclusivas y diversas.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Research on Wikipedia's guidelines and editorial processes on reliable sources matters in this historical moment typified by the propagation of mis and disinformation in the digital information ecosystem. *Reading Together: Reliability and Multilingual Global Communities* was a multilingual research project conducted from September 2020 through March 2021. It was developed by members of ***Art+Feminism***, an international community working to improve Wikipedia's content on gender, feminism, and the arts since 2013, and partially funded by **WikiCred.**

The goal behind this effort was to understand the effects of the current set of reliable source guidelines and rules on the participation of and the content about ***marginalized communities*** on Wikipedia. We choose to work on the English, French, and Spanish language versions, as these are ranked among the top 10 Wikipedias in number of articles (1, 5 and 9, respectively.)[1] However, our analysis can be replicated in other languages. In this research, the term "marginalized" refers to communities and individuals who are currently underrepresented in Wikipedia, both in terms of participation and content. This categorization includes, but is not limited to, cis and transgender women, non-binary people, non-Western communities, 2SLGBTQI+ (Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex), and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities. This study focused on naming what constitutes the reliable source guidelines on English, French, and Spanish Wikipedias and how source authority is negotiated among the Wikipedia users who do editorial work in these communities, and the effects for marginalized communities.

> *Our findings showcase how in French, English and Spanish Wikipedias, contextualized knowledges that matter to marginalized communities are —at best— challenged by the definitions of "reliable source."*

Our findings showcase how in French, English and Spanish Wikipedias, contextualized knowledges that matter to marginalized communities are—at best—challenged by the definitions of "reliable source." Source authority is facilitated by the social and technical processes that elevate the decisions of a small number of self-selected editors. Trainers play an essential role in translating guidelines and processes, but also take on additional labor to manage friction between new editors and editors on-wiki. We also note that translations of texts about reliability between Wikipedias tend to center Western knowledge formations. This report describes how we conducted our research; our findings; and the effects for marginalized communities and readers writ large. Reliability should not mean exclusion: we end with recommendations for more inclusive and diverse Wikipedias.

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[1]   Meta contributors, "List of Wikipedias."

BACKGROUND

Founded in 2001, Wikipedia.org is an internet-born crowdsourced online encyclopedia that is governed by volunteer users and hosted by the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation (WMF) in the United States. The WMF supports affiliated projects and the Wikimedia movement to bring "free educational content to the world."[2] There are 310 active language editions of Wikipedia.[3] The largest have millions of articles; English Wikipedia has more than 6 million articles, French Wikipedia has more than 2.2 million articles, and Spanish has more than 1.6 million articles. Beyond article numbers, Wikipedia content is widely and freely accessed around the world.[4]

Like commercial digital media "giants" hosted in the United States, both the WMF and Wikimedia users are immunized from legal liability for the contents on the platform and granted the right to make governance decisions under the 1996 Communication Decency Act, Section 230. In other words, the Wikimedia Foundation does not make editorial decisions. Rather, the Wikimedia Foundation supports volunteers to manage the Wikimedia platforms. This governance strategy is distinct from the content creation and management processes of other popular for-profit platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube (Alphabet) or Instagram (Facebook). Though these platforms encourage users to join and share "user-generated content,"[5] platform governance—including what and why content is featured, prioritized, or minimized—is undertaken by the company. Social theorists have advanced concepts such as the commercial, networked "attention economy" and "super public," "surveillance capitalism"[6] and "affective publics"[7] which name ways that the neoliberal ideologies and emotional networks animate page views, sharing, and visibility.

However, these concepts are less useful to explain the dynamics of user interaction and governance on Wikipedia, due to the peculiarities of its user governance. In the popular press, Wikipedia has increasingly been described in opposition to the commercial platforms as an internet success story.[8] English Wikipedia's achievements as a user-governed platform have gained appreciation in light of the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms. English Wikipedia, largely, has relied on core content strategies and community policies and arguably

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[2] "Wikimedia."

[3] "List of Wikipedias."

[4] According to Alexa.com, an internet traffic ranking service owned by Amazon.com, the domain is the 8th most-visited website in the United States and the 13th globally.

[5] boyd, "Hacking the Attention Economy"; boyd, *It's Complicated.*

[6] Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism.*

[7] Papacharissi, *Affective Publics.*

[8] Cohen, "Wikipedia: Exploring Fact City"; "Once Considered a Boon to Democracy, Social Media Have Started to Look like Its Nemesis."

avoided mass circulation of unsourced or unverifiable material to the same degree as social media platforms such as Facebook.[9] The *Reading Together* project team is sympathetic to the motivations of Wikipedia editors to actively flag or cross-check sources in a historical moment when disinformation has been pervasive across the internet ecosystem.[10]

New editors are reticent to participate using an online interface that is a gateway to a male-dominated online environment known for doxing and harassment.

Wikipedia is distinct from other social media platforms in that it relies on **volunteers** to govern. Moreover, Wikipedia's content has been adapted to verify information elsewhere: Google uses Wikimedia metadata to develop its knowledge graph. YouTube began linking to Wikipedia articles as an effort to counter the circulation of conspiracy theories.[11] Home robots such as Amazon's Alexa and Google Home are built using metadata from Wikipedia, DBpedia (a derivative of seven language versions of Wikipedia), and sister project Wikidata for knowledge graphs.[12] In 2020, Twitter announced it is using Wikipedia articles to determine which users will get a "blue check" verification.[13] In 2021, Wikimedia will offer paid services to companies and organizations reusing Wikimedia content with Wikimedia Enterprise.[14] While not always comprehensive nor correct, the cross-validation of Wikipedia by these internet platforms has bolstered Wikipedia's visibility and status as an authoritative source of information.[15]

An individual can be a **Wikipedia user** in a range of ways. Anyone is free to read, use, and share Wikimedia content following posted Creative Commons licenses. According to Wikipedia's policies, anyone is free to edit and make editorial decisions.[16] Volunteers who have been involved in the Wikimedia movement as editors, admins, and community organizers are sometimes called "Wikipedians." Wikipedians have come together to form movement affiliates, including "user groups and chapters," which are legal entities that support involvement of volunteers in the governing of Wikimedia projects. For instance, the non-profit Art+Feminism is among the recognized affiliate user groups. This constellation of editors and user groups, formal and informal, are often referred to as "the community."[17] However, as described in a 2020 book chapter by Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, and Melissa Tamani, the "community" is not homogenous nor singular, but multiple and contradictory.[18]

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[09] McDowell and Vetter, "It Takes a Village to Combat a Fake News Army."
[10] Wardle, "The Age of Information Disorder."
[11] Etherington, "YouTube to Add Wikipedia Background Info on Conspiracy Videos."
[12] Sengul-Jones, "The Promise of Wikidata"; Simonite, "Inside the Alexa-Friendly World of Wikidata."
[13] Harrison, "Twitter Wants to Use Wikipedia to Help Determine Who Gets a Blue Checkmark."
[14] "Wikimedia Enterprise."
[15] Media studies scholar Jose van Dijck describes these relationships as examples of the ideological alignments between Wikipedia and for-profit platforms. See Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity.*
[16] "Wikipedia:Wikipedians."
[17] "So in this sense, Wikipedians are people who form the Wikipedia Community," see "Wikipedia:Wikipedians."

Notable for this project is that Wikipedia has been criticized for ***systemic biases***.[19] Though "anyone" can edit, not all users who read Wikipedia contribute as editors.[20] There are millions of page views per month, but only approximately 15,500 users are editors who make more than 25 edits per month in English.[21] In French, there are approximately 2,500 users who are also editors who make more than 25 edits per month,[22] and in Spanish only 2,200.[23] Most editors self-identify as male; the "gender gap" present among English Wikipedia editors and content has been well-documented.[24] A 2011 Wikimedia Foundation survey found fewer than 10% of editors self-identified as female.[25] More recent research puts that number at 16% globally and 23% in the United States.[26] Beyond editor demographics, content has been adversely affected. Data analysis tools and computational linguistics studies show that English Wikipedia has fewer and less extensive articles on women.[27] These same tools have shown gender biases in biographical articles. French and Spanish Wikipedias suffer from similar inequities. Other research on Wikipedia has found evidence of content bias that cannot be attributed to existing prejudices in secondary literature, but is the outcome of biases in the editing process.[28] The 2018 Gender Equity Report identifies editorial rigidity as a significant barrier to achieving the Wikipedia project's vision and mission of providing a summation of human knowledge.[29]

"The colonial act of erasing cultures includes the psychological condition of feeling as if you cannot and should not 'disrupt' the information architecture."
Alexandria Lockett.

Our effort builds upon research on Wikipedia that calls into question how participation in the self-governing community takes place and the effects. Some Wikipedia editors who self-identify as women exert "emotional labor" and "toll" in editing.[30] New editors are reticent to participate using an online interface that is a gateway to a male-dominated online environment known for doxing and harassment. In her 2020 book chapter, Alexandria Lockett identifies several socio-technical barriers

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[18] Evans et al., "What We Talk About When We Talk About Community," 224.

[19] In their essay, Causevic and Sengupta describe how Wikipedia, as an essential infrastructure of the internet, exacerbates existing inequities of marginalized communities across the world, even as the project, like the internet more broadly, promise to be emancipatory and democratic. Instead, the persistence of invisibilities on Wikipedia further entrenched marginalities through its use. Wikipedia is not a reflection of existing inequalities, rather, it entrenches them. See Causevic and Sengupta, "Whose Knowledge Is Online? Practices of Epistemic Justice for a Digital New Deal"

[20] Ford and Wajcman, "'Anyone Can Edit', Not Everyone Does."

[21] "English Wikipedia Editors by Edit, January 2001-April 2021."

[22] "French Wikipedia Editors by Edit, January 2001-April 2021."

[23] "Spanish Wikipedia Editors by Edit, January 2001-April 2021."

[24] See also: "Gender Bias on Wikipedia" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_bias_on_Wikipedia

[25] "2011 Editor's Survey."

[26] Hill and Shaw, "The Wikipedia Gender Gap Revisited"; Lam et al., "WP."

[27] Graells-Garrido, "First Women, Second Sex: Gender Bias in Wikipedia"; Wagner et al., "It's a Man's Wikipedia?"; Wagner et al., "Women through the Glass Ceiling."

[28] Graells-Garrido, et al., "First Women, Second Sex: Gender Bias in Wikipedia."

[29] "Gender Equity Report."

[30] Menking and Erickson, "The Heart Work of Wikipedia: Gendered, Emotional Labor in the World's Largest Online Encyclopedia."

that suppress inclusive participation, specifically reflecting upon her experience guiding hundreds of young Black women at Spelman College, a historically Black women's liberal arts college in the U.S., to edit Wikipedia. First, contributing to Wikipedia requires numerous literacies, including the process of learning the contribution process and editorial pecking order.[31] Lockett also names the power that the clean, authoritative Graphic User Interface (GUI) has over new users. There are psychological stakes of intervening, especially for users who fear they either do not know enough or may be penalized for participating in the wrong way.[32] Lockett argues that the interface is a form of information warfare against colonized populations. "The colonial act of erasing cultures includes the psychological condition of feeling as if you cannot and should not 'disrupt' the information architecture." Wikipedia users who believe they have the authority to edit are those who feel welcomed and recognize themselves in the graphic interface and have confidence their knowledge will be recognized within this space.

Unfortunately, the experience of recognition is an exception for most readers, rather than the rule, as the saying goes. As information activists and trainers, we are well aware of the user interface and psychological difficulties that newcomers face as the question of authority has not only been our own experience but is present the experiences of the participants in our training programs. In our respective positions prior to undertaking this research project, we have piloted new ways of training participants, including orientations to Wikipedia's culture and workarounds. This research project identifies the ways that organizational values and processes around reliability and the reliable source guidelines are implicated in maintaining hierarchies and excluding marginalized knowledges and communities. This effort challenges the mythology that Wikipedia's user-governance process is a complete success story. Instead, we name invisible layers of labor, the barriers, the lack of rigor, and the effects of the guidelines as they are currently enacted.

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[31] Ford and Geiger, "'Writing up Rather than Writing down': Becoming Wikipedia Literate."
[32] Lockett, "Why Do I Have Authority to Edit the Page? The Politics of User Agency and Participation on Wikipedia."

METHODOLOGY

Understanding the circumstances and values through which legitimacy is conferred, and at what costs, is crucial to the effort to remediate asymmetrical structures of power.

This research project was guided by an intersectional feminist epistemology and methodology. Intersectional feminist research is committed to questions of power, including how differences are created and reproduced. While united in struggle, scholars and activists before us have taken diverging analytical lenses in the effort to understand and remedy oppressive structures of power. We build on efforts in feminist technoscience to acknowledge that, epistemologically, knowledge is "situated" and knowers have a "partial perspective."[33] In other words, there is no such thing as purely "objective" knowledge because there are no pure, objective knowers. Rather, there are practices of knowing. We foreground asking "who is the knower and who is being known" in efforts to determine reliable sources.[34] Understanding the circumstances and values through which legitimacy is conferred, and at what costs, is crucial to the effort to remediate asymmetrical structures of power.

The concept of ***"situated knowledge"*** is central to our methodology. We reclaim offwiki processes and conversational space as legitimate and used them as opportunities to generate new forms of knowing about how reliability might be understood and alternative ways of knowing can be shared. We drew on the collective expertise of our own experiences, that of the members of the project's advisory committee,[35] and participants in community conversations as our research data collection.

Who are we?

As researchers, we are embedded in the communities we are studying. All of us are Wikipedia editors: Berson, Sengul-Jones, and Tamani have fluency in French, English, and Spanish, respectively. In addition, we are experienced as trainers and feminist information activists. Berson and Tamani are co-leads of Art+Feminism. Sengul-Jones has independently led and supported numerous training initiatives over the past decade, including Art+Feminism events. We used the Art+Feminism Safe/Brave Space policy to run our meetings.[36]

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[33] Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective"; Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.

[34] Hesse-Biber, *Handbook of Feminist Research, 5*.

[35] Biographies of the members of the AC are listed at the end of this report.

[36] "Brave Space: Remember the common goal. 2. Make no assumptions. 3. Use all-gender inclusive language. 4. Put accessibility at the center. 5. Honor everyone's boundaries. 6. Confront harassment and reduce harm. 7. Make your support and safety team visible. 8. Embrace your mistakes, then move forward. 9. Be brave in holding others to account, then move on."
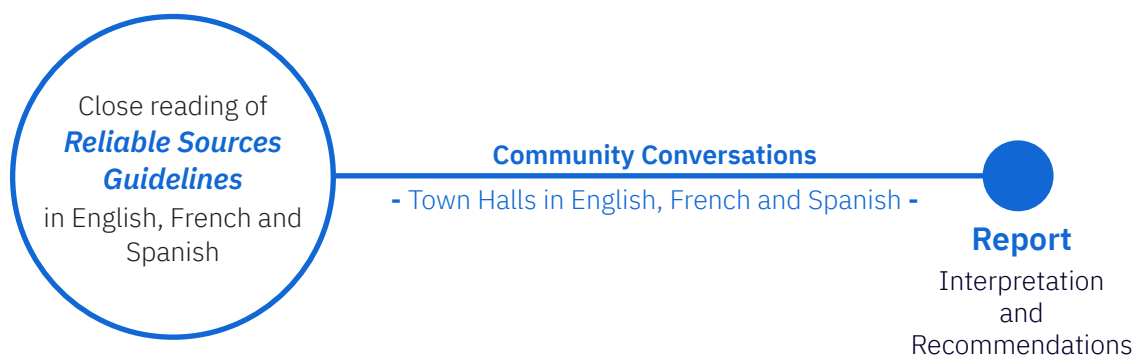See https://artandfeminism.org/resources/safety/safe-space-brave-space/

Art+Feminism is an international nonprofit organization committed to closing information gaps related to gender, feminism, and the arts, beginning with Wikipedia. Based in the United States, the co-leads of the international Art+Feminism community hail from Peru, French Canada, and Ghana. Since 2014, more than 1,260 Art+Feminism events have taken place around the world, with more than 18,000 people participating. Art+Feminism's flagship program is a do-it-yourself campaign to create and improve articles on Wikipedia and its sister projects. There are 21 regional ambassadors and community organizers, as well as many institutionally supported librarians, curators, and cultural industry workers who champion the Art+Feminism community campaign, along with tens of thousands of followers in social media spaces.

Research participants in Reading Together include five members of the multilingual Advisory Committee and 52 participants in three community conversations (Town Halls) about their experiences with Wikipedia between 2015-2020. The majority of participants in these sessions had led at least one Wikipedia editing or training initiative. Participants were librarians, trainers, educators, editors, and Wikipedians-in-Residence. The community conversations were a time for movement leaders to share success stories and anecdotes, air grievances, and brainstorm what they would like to see to enact knowledge equity on Wikipedia.

What we did

Reading Together had three parts: three Town Hall community conversations, close readings, and this report, which includes recommendations for a more equitable Wikipedia. Throughout the process, we have solicited written and oral feedback from the Advisory Committee.

Close reading of
Reliable Sources Guidelines
in English, French and Spanish

Community Conversations
- Town Halls in English, French and Spanish **-**

Report
Interpretation and Recommendations

Components of the research project *Reading Together: Reliability and Multilingual Global Communities* **(September 2021 - March 2021).**

Who is this report for?

As an Art+Feminism project funded by WikiCred, this report is for the multilingual Wikimedia community interested in critical approaches to reliability from the perspective of both credibility studies and antiracist and intersectional feminism. Our recommendations are specific to Wikipedia's current community processes, however we anticipate current and new editors, trainers, librarians, journalists, artists, activists, and academics in the social sciences and humanities will find this report of interest. More broadly, this report will be of interest to people and organizations concerned with an equitable, multilingual internet society.

Close reading

We conducted close reading of relevant community pages. We also analyze case studies brought to us in the community conversations.

Community conversations

In November 2020, we advertised and ran three open Town Hall community conversations in French, Spanish and English. They were between one and a half hours and three hours. We had 52 participants total. Conversations were administered in three languages, and translation services were provided by Cenzontle Language Justice Cooperative. The conversations were recorded and transcribed for the purpose of this research. We also gathered feedback via email and online survey responses. Excerpts from the community conversations are included in this report. Participants have been anonymized.

OVERVIEW OF GUIDELINES

Community pages about reliable sources in French, and Spanish were translated from the English version, which was created in 2005. They have diverged in content since however similarities persist. All three define a reliable source as a publication that is independent from the subject and suggests privileging of academic presses. Citations are not used in the guidelines or essays, as community consensus is presumed. The next sections summarize each language version in greater detail.

English Wikipedia

Summary - Reliable Sources Guidelines in English Wikipedia -	
Official guideline	Content Guideline
Status	Project Page "Reliable Sources" - Shortcut: WP:RS *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable_sources*
Date of creation	2005 *Largest number of edits between 2006 - 2009* *Greatest editorial changes between 2011-2020*
Definition of reliability	No
Complementary pages	**"Reliable sources Noticeboard"** *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable_sources/Noticeboard* **"List of Perennial Sources"** *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable_sources/Perennial_sources*

The ***English Reliable Source guideline article page*** begins by stating that Wikipedia articles should be based on verifiable sources that are reliable, independent, published, and have a reputation for fact-checking and accuracy. A source may be a piece of work (book, article), the creator of the work (author), or the publisher of the work (a press). Reliability and unreliability are not defined in the guideline. The definition of published is broad: "materials that have been recorded then broadcast, distributed, or archived by a reputable party may also meet the necessary criteria to be considered a reliable source." The criteria mentioned, however, is not specified. Editors are cautioned against using unpublished or self-published sources, as well as commercial sources, predatory journals, and press releases. The guideline offers advice on how to interpret

sources (e.g. four types of sources, questionable and self-published sources, and reliability in context) to make decisions about reliability.

The Reliable Source guideline article page was started on February 28, 2005. The information in the guideline has changed overtime, but the page has retained the same structure over the past decade. The largest number of edits were made to the page from 2006 through 2009. The greatest editorial changes, indicated by growth in size by bytes from 20,000 to 50,000, took place from 2011 through 2020.[37] New contributions to the page in the past decade have been reverted due because editors ask for new changes to community consensus. These contributions have included suggestions to expand the guideline to include self-published materials and experts weighing in on discussion boards or social media.[38]

Ultimately, the guideline foregrounds the role of interpretation by Wikipedia editors in deciding what counts as a reliable source. "Editors must use their judgment to draw the line between usable and unreliable sources."

Only about fifteen sources are used to develop this guidance on evaluating the reliability of sources. There is no definition of reliability or a literature review on the history or cultural specificity of the concept. According to the English Wikipedia community, guidelines do not require references. Policies and guidelines are not a part of the encyclopedia. These texts are developed through collaboration and governed by community consensus.[39] Consensus is defined as a "normal and invisible process" that "naturally" happens between editors.[40] Editors participate until they reach a resting point, after which, silence is presumed to mean consensus.[41] We'll analyze the significance of this process for new editors and marginalized communities in the findings.

Ultimately, the guideline foregrounds the role of interpretation by Wikipedia editors in deciding what counts as a reliable source. "Editors must use their judgment to draw the line between usable and unreliable sources." The page, which is approximately 5,000 words, also is a landing page for more than fifty wikilinks that editors are suggested to consult, including the Wikipedia policy on Verifiability, a Reliable Source noticeboard, additional essays, and the Perennial Sources list.

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[37] See Figure 1.1.

[38] "Talk: Reliable Source Guideline."

[39] "The policies, guidelines, and process pages themselves are not part of the encyclopedia proper. Consequently, they do not generally need to conform to the same content standards or style conventions as articles. It is therefore not necessary to provide reliable sources to verify Wikipedia's administrative pages, or to phrase Wikipedia procedures or principles in a neutral manner, or to cite an outside authority in determining Wikipedia's editorial practices. Instead, the content of these pages is controlled by community-wide consensus, and the style should emphasize clarity, directness, and usefulness to other editors." See "Wikipedia:Policies and Guidelines."

[40] "Silence and Consensus."

[41] "Silence and Consensus."

French Wikipedia

Summary - Reliable Sources Guidelines in French Wikipedia -	
Official guideline	There isn't a specific guideline about reliable sources. The closest recommendation is the page "Citez vos sources" (in English, "Cite your Sources"). - Shortcut: WP:CVS The page was started as a translation of the 2004 version of the English Wikipedia content guideline "Citing Sources". *https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikip%C3%A9dia:Citez_vos_sources*
Status	Recommendation
Date of creation	2004
Definition of reliability	No
Complementary pages	Essay "Sources Fiables" (in English, "Reliable Sources"). *The essay was started as a translation from the 2011 version of the English Wikipedia content guideline "Reliable Sources".* *https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikip%C3%A9dia:Sources_fiables* "L'Observatoire Des Sources" (in English, "Observatory of Sources"). https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikip%C3%A9dia:Observatoire_des_sources

French Wikipedia is distinct from English Wikipedia and Spanish Wikipedia because there is no specific guideline about reliable sources. The closest guideline (recommendation) in French Wikipedia is the ***Citez Vos Sources page (Cite Your Sources)***, which was created in 2004 as a translation from the English project page Citing Sources. This is the page where new users are directed when looking for information on creating articles. Like other guidelines, it requires community consensus.[42] The page is written as a series of answers to the question of "Why cite sources?" The short answers provide editors with general guidance on citations and their importance for an encyclopedia. There is a brief bibliography, which is self-referential in nature: the publications cited are about Wikipedia's citation practices. There is a short section on quality and problematic sources, including a statement that blogs are not reliable. Finally, and more recently, the ***Citez Vos Sources*** subsection on evaluating the quality of sources is a redirect to an essay, ***Sources Fiables***.[43]

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[42] A "recommendation" is the French equivalent of a guideline and uses community consensus to achieve authority.

[43] Whereas Citez Vos Sources has been relatively consistently but quietly edited by a small but dedicated group of users since its creation, Sources Fiables has experienced low numbers of edits since 2013, until 2020 when it was heavily edited by user Nouill. Sources Fiables contains a redirect back to Citez Vos Sources, added by user Nouill on April 14th, 2020.

This essay, Sources Fiables, is a translation of the English Reliable Sources guidelines article page, which was translated from English in 2011.[44] [45] In French Wikipedia, essays are not supported as policies or guidelines and have no official status in the Wikimedia community.[46] While an essay may "addresses a particular aspect of the functioning of Wikipedia, [...] it does not necessarily represent the opinion of the community, but primarily the opinion of its authors."[47] Sources Fiables is approximately 4,000 words and includes detailed information about the importance of sourcing for the encyclopedia and suggestions on ways to evaluate source reliability, including context and cross-checking. Editors are cautioned to not use sources that may have been sponsored or that lack editorial oversight, including conference inserts and academic journal supplements. While the essay receives fewer page views than the Citez Vos Sources, there is crossover material. In April 2020, a survey was conducted on French Wikipedia to determine whether Sources Fiables should become a recommendation. The results were closed as inconclusive.[48]

Consensus is defined as a "normal and invisible process" that "naturally" happens between editors. Editors participate until they reach a resting point, after which, silence is presumed to mean consensus.

As it stands, the official guideline Citez Vos Sources and the essay, along with a noticeboard and a third site ***Observatoire Des Sources***, are among the pages that editors may go for guidance on evaluating reliable sources. Yet, across these sites of information, there are inconsistencies. For example Citez Vos Sources states that blogs are not reliable sources and should not be used on French Wikipedia. Meanwhile the Observatoire Des Sources condones some blogs, but cautions against allotting disproportionate importance to these sources (Wikipédia:Importance disproportionnée).

The project page on Sources and ***Chez Manon*** include discussions on blog reliability under a section on self-published media but the conversations are inconclusive. "Blogs can be acceptable sources if their authors are journalists or professionals in the field on which they write [...] self-published expert sources can be considered reliable when they are produced by an established expert on the subject of the article and have been previously published by serious third-party publications."[49]

Since their creation, the official French guideline Citez Vos Sources has received the highest number of page views, with a daily average of approximately 1,200. The page

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[44] "Sources Fiables."

[45] As described in the previous section, on English Wikipedia, the Reliable Sources guideline is a content guideline that supports the three core content policies. A policy has more weight than a guideline.

[46] See "Project_namespace" and "Essai." Essays in Spanish and English do not require community consensus either.

[47] (Translation author's own) "Essai."

[48] (Translation authors own) "Sources Fiables." "The survey, which was open from March 31 to April 30, 2020, did not yield any results. A majority of contributors were in favor of maintaining the trial status. Several Wikipedians have mentioned that the page has yet to mature, others are in favor of maintaining the test in the long term because several pages of recommendations already address the subject."

[49] "Sources Fiables."

has had edits from 167 distinct editors since recording began in 2015. However, it is important to highlight that Citez Vos Sources contains information on citations that is outside the scope of reliability, it is not possible to accurately determine what percentage of page views of or edits to Citez Vos Sources pertain to the section on reliability. Meanwhile, the essay Sources Fiables has received far fewer average page views, the daily average is five, and there have been 28 editors since the page was created.[50] [51]

Spanish Wikipedia

Summary - Reliable Sources Guidelines in Spaish Wikipedia -	
Official guideline	Page "Fuentes fiables" (in English, "Reliable Sources"). Shortcut: WP:FF *The page was started as a translation of the 2008 version of the English Wikipedia content guideline "Reliable Sources".* *https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Fuentes_fiables* *https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikip%C3%A9dia:Citez_*
Status	Official Policy
Date of creation	2008
Definition of reliability	No
Complementary pages	There are none

On Spanish Wikipedia the Project Page Reliable Sources (in Spanish, Fuentes fiables) was initiated in October 2008, as a translation from the English Wikipedia project page Reliable Sources.[52] In December 2009, the page was stated as an Official Policy, which means that it's content is mandatory for all Wikipedians and, like English Wikipedia above, any attempt to make significant changes should have prior community consensus. The hierarchy of editorial rules in this language version is headed by "policies," followed by "guidelines or conventions," which describe recommended good practices. Along with Wikipedia is not a primary source,[53] Verifiability,[54] Neutral

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[50] "Pageviews Analysis: Wikipedia: Sources Fiables and Wikipedia: Citez Vos Sources."
[51] See Figure 1.2.
[52] Spanish Wikipedia. "Fuentes fiables."
[53] Spanish Wikipedia. "Wikipedia no es una fuente primaria."
[54] Spanish Wikipedia. "Verificabilidad."[53] Spanish Wikipedia. "Wikipedia no es una fuente primaria."

Point of View,[55] and Biographies of Living People,[56] these four policies constitute the main editorial policies regarding the types, quality and forms of use of the sources within Spanish Wikipedia.

In the Spanish policy, *reliable sources* are defined as "works by authors who are accredited in the field in question." ***The authority of a source*** is determined by the publication process, which certifies the veracity of the information based on the degree of acceptance and use of the source by third parties. To be considered reliable, sources must be *"independent"* from their subject and published. The absence of reliable sources on a topic may be a reason for deciding not to include it in Wikipedia as an article.

The policy addresses the ***degree of reliability*** of specific varieties of sources: primary, secondary and tertiary; specialized publications; press and self-publications. It indicates the degree of acceptability of these types of sources by Wikipedia and the specific ways in which they can be used. For example, primary sources and self-publications aren't considered reliable in general, but they can be used rarely to provide information of general nature or about themselves. Some self-publications can be considered reliable if they are produced by persons or entities "of widely recognized authority on the subject" or if their content is based on reputable sources. It is not specified whether this accreditation should match the rules established in the policy itself or the credibility criterias used in other fields (e.g., academia or the media), thus creating room for interpretation by the reader.

It is relevant to observe how one of the rules was defined taking into consideration that university and peer-reviewed publications are not always available to Wikipedians, so the use of sources with less strict verification standards is allowed. This includes what is named as "the rest of the specialized publications," especially if they have "a consolidated reputation in their field," and the monographs made by "authors with an accredited curriculum in the respective field."

The policy is not presented as a set of rigid rules, there is considerable room for interpretation and judgement of the reliability of the sources by the reader. The only case in which categorical terms are used to forbid the use of certain types of sources is in reference to Biographies of Living People. In the other cases, the policy takes on a recommendatory or character, which is expressed by the recurrent use of language constructions such as "attempts will be made to use reliable sources;" "special care should be taken;" "the absence of sources may be grounds for deletion of an article." In some cases the term "must" is used (e.g. "Sources must directly support the information," "Wikipedia articles must use reliable secondary sources"), however, exceptions to the above rule are usually mentioned afterwards.

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[55] Spanish Wikipedia. "Punto de vista neutral."
[56] Spanish Wikipedia. "Biografías de personas vivas."

The View History tab[57] and the Tool History Statistics[58] provide information about the collaborative editorial process, the maintenance and volume of readings of the policy. The editorial process consisted of the direct translation of content, discussions around the interpretation of specific terms, addition of original content, the definition of the page structure and the rigidity of its enforcement.

Until November 2020, the total number of edits on the page since its creation was 410. The total number of editors was 54, not counting editions from IP addresses and bots. Minor edits makeup 68.5% of the total (281). Most of them were made in 2009 (250). The frequency of editing is considerably reduced thereafter, fluctuating between 20 and 1, which is the case for 2013, 2015 and 2018. In other words, the main content of the policy has remained unchanged for 12 years.[59] As for the number of visits, using as a sample the range between October 27 and November 26 2020, the daily average is 590 and the total number is 18,271.[60] Taking into account the same range of time, visits to the Reliable Sources policy exceed by far visits to related policies.[61]

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[57] Spanish Wikipedia. "Historial de «Wikipedia:Fuentes fiables»."
[58] Wikipedia User Aka. "History statistics for 'Wikipedia:Fuentes fiables'."
[59] See Figure 1.3.
[60] Wikipedia Users Musik Animal, Kaldari, Marcel Ruiz Forns. "PageViews Analysis, Wikipedia:Fuentes fiables."
[61] Between October 27 and November 26 2020, the "Neutral Point of View" Policy had 1989 visits, and "Wikipedia is not a primary source" had 8,655 visits.

FINDINGS

These findings read together the English, French, and Spanish Wikipedia's conceptualizations of reliability as located in the pages themselves and found in the lived experiences and perspectives of editors, trainers, and educators. The evidence we provide of the features of the reliable source guidelines are not found in individual page histories or guideline language alone but are located at the intersection of the user experiences with these guidelines, the reports of labor and interpretation by trainers and educators to make the many guidelines of Wikipedia legible to newcomers, and selected case studies of articles that were called into question or challenged.

The guidelines do not cover the history of the concept of reliability or the epistemological criticisms within the French, English, and Spanish academies.

I. Lack of rigor

The guidelines about reliable sources in English, French, and Spanish *lack academic rigor*, notably through the lack of citations to support the claims. The English, Spanish, and French guidelines, and the French essay, emphasize that academic sources are a gold-standard of reliability, though such sources are not used in the construction of the guidelines. The Spanish guidelines notes that university and peer-reviewed publications are not always available to Wikipedians, which is why the use of sources with less strict verification standards is allowed, such as "the rest of the specialized publications," especially if they have "a consolidated reputation in their field," and the monographs made by "authors with an accredited curriculum in the respective field."

Thus, the documentation in the guidelines provides for ways that Wikipedia editors might consider reliability in their efforts to edit, but the same standards are not applied to the guidelines themselves. The guidelines do not cover the history of the concept of reliability or the epistemological criticisms within the French, English, and Spanish academies. These are schools of thought that call into question the ways that mainstream academic presses rely on Enlightenment concepts (or in French, the ideas of liberté, égalité, fraternité). Historically, these have excluded perspectives and reinforced historical inequality.[62] Prestigious institutions and custodians of research and knowledge—including academic libraries, textbook publishers, categorization and indexing standards—have been shaped historically by legacies of injustice and erasure.[63] Their authority is contextual and constructed. Consequent biases in

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[62] Henry, Tator (eds.) *Racism in the Canadian University: Demanding Social Justice, Inclusion, and Equity, and Cesaire, Discourse on Colonialism.*

[63] Christen, "Tribal Archives, Traditional Knowledge, and Local Contexts: Why the 'S' Matters."

secondary literature can take the form of **_misrepresentation or absence_**, adversely affecting marginalized communities due to the limits of existing sources, and access to them. These limitations go unmentioned in all three language versions of the guideline,

In all three languages, editors are cautioned to avoid commercially-motivated publications, including sponsored content, supplemental materials, press releases, "churnalism" and human-interest features. While scholarship, especially textbooks, and news media are acceptable.[64] This definition leaves out the ways that some commercially-motivated materials can include factual information, while scholarship and news media can reproduce biases and marginalizations through claims to objectivity. As one participant identified in a Town Hall conversation:

> *This definition can obscure the political and economical agendas behind scholarship and academic research that influence research lines, topics, budgets, dissemination and reputation, impacting knowledge availability around marginalized subjects.*

Participants in all three community conversations described this lack of rigor and the subsequent biases as problematic. One participant said in a recorded conversation that the supposed universality of these suggested sources is frustrating for activists concerned about **_indigenous communities_**, who have been misrepresented. In general, they went on:

> *There is no mention of problems of systemic biases in secondary sources in either English, French or Spanish. The problem of the existence of systemic biases in the construction of sources, especially secondary sources, is not mentioned in the content of the policies, nor in their discussion page.*

A trainer in the conversation on Spanish Wikipedia found the lack of attention to criticisms about reliability missing from the guidelines especially troublesome because it meant Wikipedians didn't have a frame of reference for epistemic criticisms:

> *There is no section on non-hegemonic communities or issues with little representation, [no] guide for Wikipedians on how to address these issues.*[65]

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[64] "Human-interest reporting is generally not as reliable as news reporting." There is a citation for this claim, but the citation undermines the claim. The citation is to a book review by Laura Miller, where in the review, Miller notes that the author of the book under consideration includes a section where that author reported that one of her interviewees said that they exaggerated ("took considerable license") in their human-interest reporting. This caught our attention as an unconvincing, unreliable source to support a general claim about the said rigor or reliability of human-interest articles. Inquiries about the lack of rigor of this source on the Talk page resulted in a reminder that policies and guidelines are based on consensus, not sources.
See the next section for further discussion of consensus.

[65] "No existe una sección sobre comunidades no hegemónicas o temas con escasa representatividad, una guía para wikipedistas acerca de cómo abordar estos temas."

As one participant in the session concerning French Wikipedia said, this emphasis privileges French perspectives and consequently marginalizes Quebec-based users.

> *It's so focused on the Académie Française, arts, letters, etc., that there is a French system that doesn't represent itself for Quebec artists, so it's really hard for our pages to be accepted or to have credibility.*[66]

There was agreement among participants in the Town Hall about French Wikipedia in French that "the information is very clear. It is when you get into specific details, specific disciplines, that it becomes more complicated." Another participant noted that the reliability "regulations need to be adapted for different disciplines." For arts and culture disciplines, areas of expertise not mentioned in the guideline, trainers experienced having their, and their trainees, expertise questioned by editors who were interpreting a guideline rather than a corpus of knowledge.

> *[The guidelines and essay] are very clear but not applicable to all environments. We are used to creating pages in the arts community. People who recommend these pages for removal are not people who know reliable sources in the arts community. An example catalog is a reliable source. Some media. It's as if the guidelines are too general and don't apply to the nuances of different media.*[67]

A trainer who organizes editathons at a feminist cultural center for Spanish Wikipedia similarly reported on the problems her participants encounter with sourcing and a lack of understanding among editors about the sources they were using for their articles:

> *When they work on articles about women they run into the problem of reliable sources in various Wikipedias. With biographies, but also about topics like motherhood, breastfeeding.*[68]

Others pointed out that sources that are not necessarily unreliable are cast as such according to the guidelines:

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[66] "C'est tellement axé sur l'Académie française, arts, lettres etc., qu'il y a un système français qui ne se représente pas pour les artistes de Québec, donc c'est vraiment dur pour que nos pages soient acceptées ou qu'on ait de crédibilité."

[67] "[Ces lignes directrices et l'essai] sont très clairs, mais ne s'appliquent pas à tous les milieux. Nous sommes habituées à créer des pages dans le milieu des arts. Les gens qui recommandent ces pages pour la suppression ne sont pas des gens qui connaissent les sources fiables dans le milieu des arts. Un catalogue par exemple est une source fiable. Certains médias. C'est comme si les lignes directrices sont trop générales et ne s'appliquent pas aux nuances de différents milieux."

[68] "Cuando trabajan artículos sobre mujeres se topan con el problema de las fuentes fiables en diversas Wikipedias. No solo escribe sobre biografías, sino también sobre temas como maternidad, lactancia."

I would like to see a note on judgment with using blogs and online magazines, to weigh in favor of newer and more diverse publications that might not have the bona fides of traditional media. Because publishing has changed and traditional media sources that cover the knowledge of marginalized groups are less likely to emerge, blog sources in marginalized or "niche" topics should be used more widely.

Trainers expressed frustration that institutionally-produced pamphlets, catalogs and essays are challenged as "unreliable" due to a perceived lack of independence from the subject, or being "promotional":

Pamphlets [have] important information. And a curatorial essay has cited information. Pamphlets [can be] produced [by] institutions that have smaller budgets, which might actually be more likely to represent artists from, for example, BIPOC community. It is these spaces that actually give us sources on the work of these artists that are not represented in large museums or that won't have the traditional space in the media.

Participants, especially librarians, also noted the **lack of guidance** for editors on how to evaluate the range of sources of secondary information such as catalogs, databases, indexes, bibliographies, pamphlets, online magazines or press releases, which may be from institutions but are not primary sources, nor are unreliable simply by nature of being produced by an institution.

In summary, the lack of rigor of the guidelines results in "reliable source" and "individual interpretation" being treated as ahistorical and uncontroversial concepts, which they are not, and the guidelines reinforce their ideological power.

II. Silence as consensus is problematic

"If you disagree, the onus is on you to say so."[69]

The lack of rigor described above is an outcome of the reliance on **community consensus** to write editorial guidelines. As explained in the previous section, community consensus controls the content of policies and guidelines for all three Wikipedia editorial communities. Consensus is a "normal and invisible process" that "naturally" happens between editors.[70] Editors participate until they reach a resting point, after which, silence is presumed to mean consensus.[71] In other words, newcomers or editors who may feel uncomfortable by the interface are presumed to be in agreement, even if they do not agree, simply because they have not spoken up by pressing edit in the editorial backchannels. In English and Spanish, the guidelines were solidified through the consensus of a small number of editors. While in French, the page about reliable sources that is consulted frequently is an essay, an article type which does not require consensus, but represents the view of a single Wikipedian.[72]

Others noted a disconnect between the Wikimedia Foundation's claim to support knowledge equity and the actions of the community in terms of values

During our community conversations, participants expressed frustration at the **exclusionary features** of this foundational principle on how to govern Wikipedia, even those who had successfully edited in Wikipedia and made new pages or other contributions that were not contested.

> *Silence equals consent, I think, [...] just sounds so problematic. I said consent, and I meant consensus' There's consent, [which means] you're like, well, 'I'm not saying anything so obviously I agree with it.' But so many people don't even know that these changes are ongoing. If you're not aware that it's happening, then how can you talk about it? And then getting into talking about it on those pages can be a very toxic environment. [...] I don't think that silence should equal consensus.*

Others noted a disconnect between the Wikimedia Foundation's claim to support knowledge equity and the actions of the community in terms of values, which may not enact knowledge equity in the patrolling or reviewing processes, or in Articles for Creation or Articles for Deletion noticeboards. Said one trainer:

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[69] "Silence and Consensus."

[70] "Silence and Consensus."

[71] "Silence and Consensus."

[72] In French Wikipedia, the English Wikipedia Reliable Sources guideline was translated from English to French in 2011 and linked as Wikipédia:Sources fiables. This is not a Project Page, as in English, but an essay. On English Wikipedia Reliable Sources is specifically a content guideline developed through community consensus that supports the three core content policies of Verifiability, Neutral Point of View, and No Original Research. See "Wikipédia:Sources Fiables (Essai)."

I would like to see a note on judgment with using blogs and online magazines, to weigh in favor of newer and more diverse publications that might not have the bona fides of traditional media. Because publishing has changed and traditional media sources that cover the knowledge of marginalized groups are less likely to emerge, blog sources in marginalized or "niche" topics should be used more widely.

A new editor wrote in an email that they perceived Wikipedia's reliable source guidelines to have exclusionary features.[73]

Honestly this issue is one of those innocuous institutional barriers that seem harmless but actually shuts many, many people out. Because oftentimes, they operate in tandem with other barriers and end up creating an echo chamber of exclusion. [...] So whether Wikipedia wants to acknowledge this or not, this policy contributes to a long-standing process of historical erasure under the guise of academic integrity and rigor.

On French Wikipedia, the editorial process has an added layer of exclusion due to the treatment of the essay, Sources Fiables, which is longer and more developed than Citez Vos Sources, as a de facto extension of the Citez Vos Sources guideline. A small number of editors have participated in the community consensus process to develop Citez Vos Sources, while one editor has inserted a section taken, and linked to, the essay, which does not use consensus.

In summary, community consensus is a foundational pillar of the Wikimedia movement. We learned trainers see this process as privileging those who participated first in the development of the encyclopedia's editorial back channels. As well, the participants in our community conversations were uncomfortable with the presumption that agreement is communicated through silence, which privileges those who have the time and feel comfortable speaking up and participating in editorial conversations.

III. The essential work of trainers

The user interface of Wikipedia (across all three languages) is a known **barrier to entry** for new editors. From the abundance of information to navigate to using Media Wiki[74] to contribute to community pages, new users have many cultural-technical norms to learn to not only contribute to articles, but to participate in Wikipedia's editorial

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[73] Note the editor uses the word "policy" instead of "guideline," as they were unfamiliar with the hierarchy of editorial rules.

[74] Media Wiki is also known as Wiki markup or Wiki code.

backchannels.[75] Though guidelines and policies are publicly visible, they are difficult to locate for newcomers, which can exacerbate inequalities in participation.[76]

By and large our community conversations showcased the work that trainers do to help participants and institutions successfully include information into Wikipedia.

To expand the editor pool and diversify the content on Wikipedia, more experienced Wikipedians have become trainers to welcome and guide newcomers to navigate editing. There are many trainers and training programs. For instance, Art+Feminism has devoted considerable resources to developing guides and providing a welcoming community to orient newcomers. More generally, Wikimedia Chapters and User Groups, universities, libraries, museums, and galleries may have staff or volunteers who work as Wikipedia trainers; some have more official statuses as Wikipedian-in-Residence. Trainers help newcomers get started and provide guidance, resources, and technical and support with editing. This essential labor provides newcomers with access to Wikipedia editors who are eager to champion and support their good-faith contributions.

The majority of our participants in the community conversations were trainers in some capacity: Wikipedians-in-Residence, librarians, curators, Wikimedia chapter or user group representatives, or leaders or support staff organizers who have led Wikipedia community training and public editing events. The centrality of trainers to the success of new users was emphasized to us in our research period by a reversal--the nonpresence of trainers and the reported experience of a new editor. A faculty member at a university in Canada received the Art+Feminism newsletter and reached out to share an experience. A contributor to both English Wikipedia and French Wikipedia, they had used the Articles for Creation tool to "submit" an article with 25 sources for review in English Wikipedia.[77] A reviewer replied by suggesting that the article should not be published, but needed more reliable sources to sufficiently meet the notability guideline.[78] A second commented the article likely met the General Notability Guideline, though they did not move the article to mainspace. When we received the email from the original editor, we saw evidence of a common experience for new editors: the new editor appeared to see the suggestion as judgement; in addition, they disclosed later,

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[75] Wagner et al. It's a Man's Wikipedia? Assessing Gender Inequality in an Online Encyclopedia, 461.

[76] See "Wikipedia:Gender Bias," Pandi "Shedding Light on Women Who Edit Wikipedia," and Kleefield "Wikipedia's Gender Bias – and What Your Students Can Do About It."

[77] "Wikipedia:Pamela Edmonds;" "The Articles for Creation (AfC) process is designed to assist any editor create a new page as a draft article, which they can work on and submit for review and feedback when ready. The AfC process must be used by non-registered users and by those who do not yet have sufficient editing experience because these groups of editors are not permitted to create articles directly in Wikipedia's mainspace. The AfC process should also be used by anyone with a conflict of interest." From Wikipedia: Articles for Creation.

[78] The General Notability Guideline is a "test" on English Wikipedia that editors use to determine if a topic merits an article. The "test" requires a subject is covered in multiple, independent reliable secondary sources over a considerable amount of time.

they did not know how to technically move the article to main space. When we learned about this, one of us moved the article for the editor.

This example highlights the importance of hands-on trainers, who serve as mentors to newcomers, in scaffolding the editing experience. By and large, our community conversations showcased the work that trainers do to help participants and institutions successfully include information into Wikipedia. Trainers relayed how they helped newcomers learn the culture of Wikipedia, specifically the way that guidelines around sourcing are monitored and how to respond if their article is flagged for deletion by another user. On all three encyclopedias, new editors have the fewest privileges and may face scrutiny from editors with special editorial privileges, such as Pending Changes Reviewer or New Page Patroller. Users with special access to tools provide an additional layer of judgement. Gaining special user access depends on the level: Admins are selected through a lengthy peer-review and question and answer. New Page Patrollers can self-nominate and to be selected, are expected to have had an account for 90 days and have made 500 uncontested mainspace edits.

Meanwhile, trainers are often hired or selected through either self-nomination, or brought on by a partner organization. Some trainers also have special access to tools themselves. Other trainers may have general knowledge about the layers of editorial governance, such as how articles are challenged through the Articles for Deletion noticeboard, or how to move a draft to mainspace, and have not or do not wish to seek additional special user access tools due to concerns about time and hostility. Nevertheless, despite their alignment in the effort to improve the encyclopedia, friction can arise between trainers and users who patrol new contributions. As two of our participants in French Wikipedia explained:

> *Every time we do a Wiki day, it is always work for us afterwards, fighting for the pages that are deleted.*[79]

> *For scientists [biographies] I have very few problems with pages to delete. But in our workshops, when we work on artist pages, yes, it's much more complicated and makes us delete a lot of pages.*[80]

In English, contributors from English-speaking countries in Africa said their contributions often faced scrutiny. One organizer from an unnamed African country who participated in our session said when they hosted events, contributions were deleted en-mass for lacking reliability. This was demoralizing for the participants and required extra work by the trainers to stand up for their publications and citations, said one participant.

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[79] "A chaque fois qu'on fait des journées Wiki, c'est toujours un travail supplémentaire pour lutter pour les pages qui sont supprimées par la suite."

[80] "Pour les [biographies de] scientifiques, j'ai très peu de problèmes avec des pages à supprimer. Mais dans nos ateliers, quand on travaille sur des pages d'artistes là, oui c'est beaucoup plus compliqué et on se fait beaucoup supprimer de pages."

I think some of the English admins are not being fair to some of us in Africa, what we consider reliable [is] not reliable to them. It's very difficult to understand why they think so.

To avoid new editors experiencing these disappointing responses, other trainers in English Wikipedia explained they would review sources before new editors begin editing. This could lead to bad feelings, so they explained how they were careful to keep up morale.

Well, you might have to tell them they have to remove half the information because they don't have a reliable source. They can take it really poorly, shut down, not want to edit Wikipedia anymore--like this defensive, conflictual stance. So I've started approaching it as, okay, so you want to edit Wikipedia and it's really exciting. Here is a list of like really absurd rules you know have to look at. I kind of almost, you know, depending on the person or the group or whatever, approach it like it's kind of a game.

To become a New Page patroller, users nominate themselves. To be selected, users "are expected to have been registered for at least 90 days and to have made at least 500 uncontested edits to mainspace articles." Art+Feminism has previously petitioned to change the retained active editor guidelines, as they previously resembled "a re-inscription of a traditional hierarchy of gendered labor [...] The effect is that the current guidelines systematically exclude new users, including people from marginalized communities new to the Wikimedia userspace."[81] As a result of this petitioning, Wikipedia's guidelines for active editors were changed. On French Wikipedia there is an extra layer of difficulty as the regulations and those who patrol them replicate a colonial standpoint on French culture. As one French conversation participant stated:

There is a perceived tension between Wikimedia France and Wikimedia Canada (run by French Canada); French speaking Africa; and French users in the U.S.[82]

One participant based in North America said they only create new pages at night when new page patrollers in France and Switzerland are likely to be asleep.

Further, the quantity of material that a trainer is required to parse in relation to reliable source guidelines is immense. As one participant said:

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[81] Evans, Siân, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, and Melissa Tamani. "What We Talk About When We Talk About Community."

[82] "Il y a une tension perçue entre Wikimédia France et Wikimédia Canada (gérée par le Canada français) ; l'Afrique francophone ; et les utilisateurs français aux États-Unis."

This bushy structure makes the guidelines pages unreadable. Who has the time and the meticulousness to read it completely without being lost to a certain point? It took me a decade to go through it [in French] and I must admit I'm not done yet!

In summary, our community conversations emphasized the essential work of trainers who are actively supporting new editors to make contributions. Trainers are themselves essential technologies who take on the labor of learning the guidelines, policies, and technical processes, which are numerous, to support newcomers. In addition, they can diffuse friction between on-wiki editors who are patrolling pages and newcomers who may be less familiar with the editorial processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recognize the complexity of enacting change on these large, distributed, user-run platforms. While there is a desire in the movement for things to change in the spirit of knowledge equity, the reality is that change is difficult. In part because many of the infrastructural norms in place that we've identified. We have shown that the current guidelines and policies lack rigor, which allows for editors to prefer certain kinds of sources, which may uphold Western knowledge formations. We have shown that the consensus process is exclusive by presuming all editors embody a subject-position where it is easy—technically and psychologically—to intervene. There are high psychological stakes to intervening, this definition of consensus enshrines the guidelines as they are crafted. Finally, we have shown the crucial work that trainers do to scaffold the experience of new editors, forming an invisible and unrecognized layer of editorial work. The movement, via the 2030 Movement Strategy, is already engaged with processes of moving towards greater knowledge equity.[83] We have recommendations for this community in the spirit of this strategy, which are specific to the findings we've outlined in this report.

Recommendations related to the contents of the reliable sources guidelines

1. Provide funding and resources to redevelop the guidelines with a task force of a broader range of stakeholders, including trainers, librarians, and academic and community-based subject matter experts. The task force can revitalize the guidelines in the following ways:

a. De-center English Wikipedia's definition of reliable source and Western-centric biases.

b. Improve the guidelines in each language foregrounding references to scholarship in the social sciences and humanities that addresses the historical and cultural specificities of the concept of "reliability."

c. Offer specific guidelines for editors on how to address ways scholarship and news media can reproduce biases and marginalizations through claims to objectivity. In addition, the task force can guide editors to evaluate institutional materials such as catalogs, databases, indexes, bibliographies, pamphlets, online magazines or press releases as reliable sources of factual information.

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[83] "Wikimedia 2030 Movement Strategy Recommendations."

d. Provide guidance for editors to use alternative methods to assess source reliability. For instance, during the Town Hall about Spanish Wikipedia, participants observed that the challenge posed by the scarcity and dispersion of reliable sources of information on women and other marginalized communities can be overcome through the use of the Triangulation method,[84] which has been taken up by feminist researchers to reveal new information.[85] Participants expressed that Reliable Source (and Notability) guidelines on Wikipedia would benefit from the contrasted and complimentary use of different types of information sources (e.g., primary and secondary sources; sources that address the topic directly or tangentially). This would generate a more receptive environment to the presence of content on marginalized topics and communities, as the use of the same set of rules to determine the reliability of sources without taking into account the partial and situated character of knowledge results in the rejection of identities that do not fit the standard.

e. Offer guidance to editors on how to approach sources where there is a presence of hateful or harmful speech, or ambiguity about fact-checking.

Recommendations related to community processes

2. Revisit the user consensus definition and processes. We have called into question the problem of relying on "silence" as consensus. We suggest that a task force is assembled to develop a user consensus process that is welcoming to all editors and potential editors.

3. Celebrate and uplift the work of trainers and Wikipedians-in-residence. There needs to be more direct support for trainers positions, especially given how consensus works on Wikipedia.

4. Enable the VisualEditor across all platforms including Talk pages and Meta Wikimedia to facilitate engagement, as well as provide support and promotion to new features such as Tools for Discussions, which is currently in beta. This set of tools for Talk pages aims to make participation easier through improvements like creating Reply to and New discussion buttons.[86]

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84 Triangulation refers to using more than one particular approach when doing quantitative or qualitative research to get richer, fuller data and/or to help confirm the results of the research. Wilson, "Research Methods: Triangulation." However, the concept of triangulation has been acquiring a wide range of meanings and uses in the social sciences, from a tool of convergence with the aim of validation, especially of quantitative data by qualitative information, to one that seeks divergence to add complexity and richness to the understanding of phenomenons. Hesse-Biber, "Feminist Approaches to Triangulation: Uncovering Subjugated Knowledge and Fostering Social Change in Mixed Methods Research."

85 Hesse-Biber has described how feminist researchers have extended the concept of triangulation as an analytical tool to shed light on subjugated knowledge by confronting quantitative and qualitative information to find dissonances or complementarities that reveal new information that can impact social change for marginalized communities. Hesse Biber, "Feminist Approaches to Triangulation: Uncovering Subjugated Knowledge and Fostering Social Change in Mixed Methods Research."

CONCLUSION

We began this research by asking what the guidelines are on reliable sources in the English, French and Spanish Wikipedias. How is a "reliable source" defined in practice? What is the impact of these guidelines on content about marginalized communities in these three Wikipedias? To address these questions, we leveraged Art+Feminism's network of hundreds of information activists who have participated in the Wikimedia movement in an intersectional qualitative research project. Our study combines interpretative analysis of the guidelines *in situ* with reported experiences gleaned from three Town Hall community conversations about the reliable sources guidelines and editing. Our findings argue that the guidelines themselves are unreliable. We showcase how contextualized knowledges that matter to marginalized communities are subordinated or challenged by the definitions of "reliable source," due to the lack of rigor in the guidelines and their translations.

Ultimately, the Reliable Source guidelines are an unreliable and incomplete guide

Our analysis showcases three ways that the guidelines impact the inclusion of content for marginalized communities. There are few citations, dozens of hyperlinks, and no reviews of academic sources on the historical and cultural meaning of reliability. The guidelines do not mention how scholarship and news media have reproduced biases, marginalizations, and erasures through claims to objectivity. Nor is there mention of the various ways that factuality is established in institutional settings, with metadata in catalogs, databases, indexes, bibliographies, pamphlets, online magazines or press releases. The English version of this guideline was written first. Versions of the French and Spanish guideline were created through translation, which upholds Western knowledge formations and the presence of English as a geopolitical force. Ultimately, the Reliable Source guidelines are an unreliable and incomplete guide to provide editors with a meaningful understanding of how to assess source reliability.

The editing process of community pages is exclusionary. In the case of the articles on reliable sources, these were developed in all three languages by small groups of editors. We show how the rule, "if you disagree the onus is on you to say so," is problematic. Silence as a signal of consent in practice privileges more experienced editors or those who feel comfortable participating in dialogues on the platform. Wikipedia's user interface, specifically Media Wiki, and numerous editorial rules make it difficult for new and casual contributors to participate. As such, our research highlights the crucial role of trainers in fielding questions and providing a buffer between the platform and the

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86 The updates about this tool are published in: MediaWiki contributors, "Talk pages project/Updates."

interests of newcomers to Wikipedia, especially those who are prepared to contribute subject-area specific content and/or strengthen the editorial procedures.

During the course of the research, we became aware of the difficulties in retrieving evidence of discussions on the deletion of articles that were not maintained in the crowdsourced encyclopedia. This limited the number of case studies we were able to analyze. For this reason, we believe that it is essential to document the cases in which controversies arise regarding the interpretation of the guidelines on reliable sources in order to inform future research. We have concluded the study with actionable recommendations based on our communications and interpretative analysis.

In summary, guidelines on reliable sources matter to the users who engage with Wikipedia. They are the cornerstone to the distributed, remote collaboration between strangers. In calling the reliable source guidelines unreliable, we are emphasizing crucial pain points and weaknesses in this important aspect of the Wikipedia project, which is built on the importance of citations for matters of fact. Without citations, and with a limited consensus process, the guidelines will continue to be unreliable. We emphasize the important work of trainers as a way to circumvent this, but trainers cannot shoulder all of the inconsistencies themselves. Rather, as our recommendations lay out, we are hopeful that the unreliability of the guidelines is not unresolvable, rather, we advocate for persistence and an openness to change.

APPENDIX

Figure 1.1

Change over time in edits and size of the English Reliable Source Guideline article page (2005-2020). This graph shows how a smaller number of editors were responsible for contributing the most, and most recent, editorial changes.
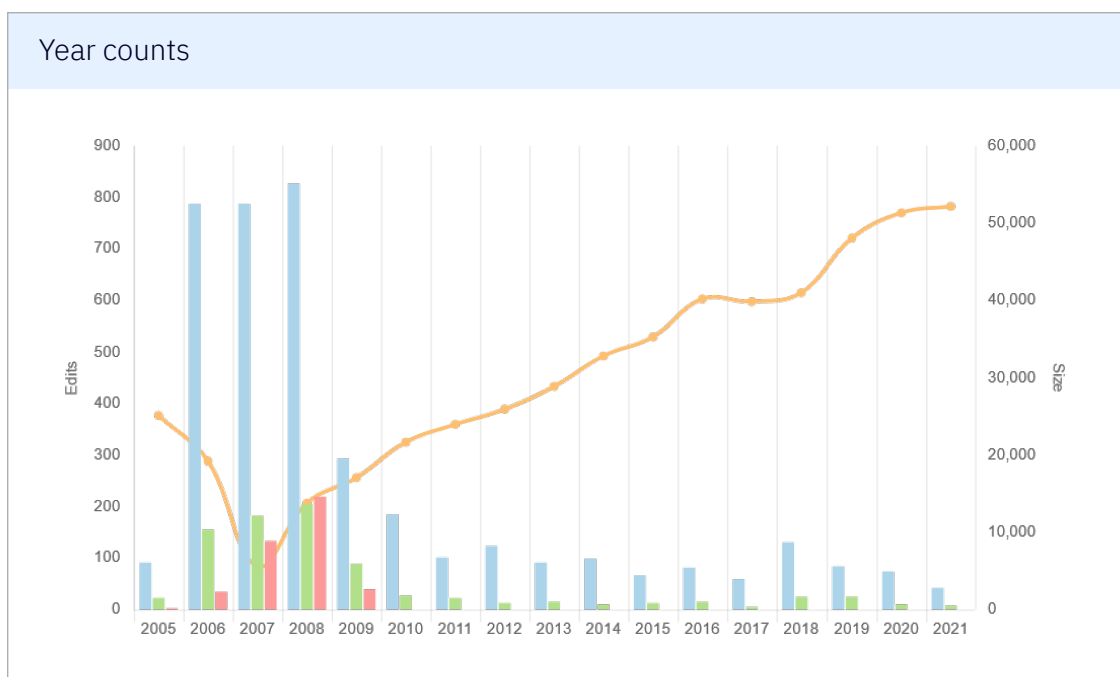
Source

View History
https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Wikipedia:Reliable_sources#year-counts

Figure 1.2

Change over time in edits and size of the French Reliable Source Guideline article page (2005-2021). This graph shows how a smaller number of editors were responsible for contributing the most, and most recent, editorial changes on French Wikipedia.

The text is a translation of the English guideline.

Source

View History

https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/fr.wikipedia.org/Wikip%C3%A9dia:Sources%20fiables/
2008-01-23/2021-02-23
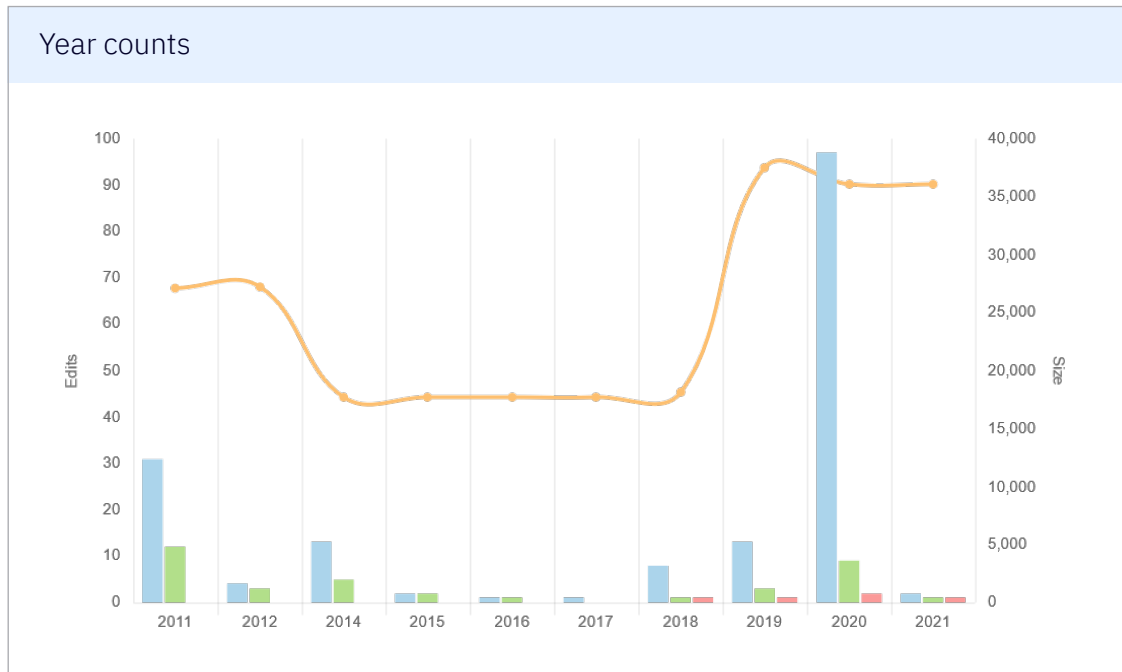
Figure 1.3

Change over time in edits and size of the Spanish Reliable Source Policy Guideline article page (2008-2021). The graph shows that nearly 50% of the content (8,870 bytes) was developed in 2008, with only 4 edits. The page almost doubled in size (15,646 bytes) in 2009, and so increased the number of edits (336).

The content's size hit a stable point in 2013 (14,464 bytes) and has not increased since then.
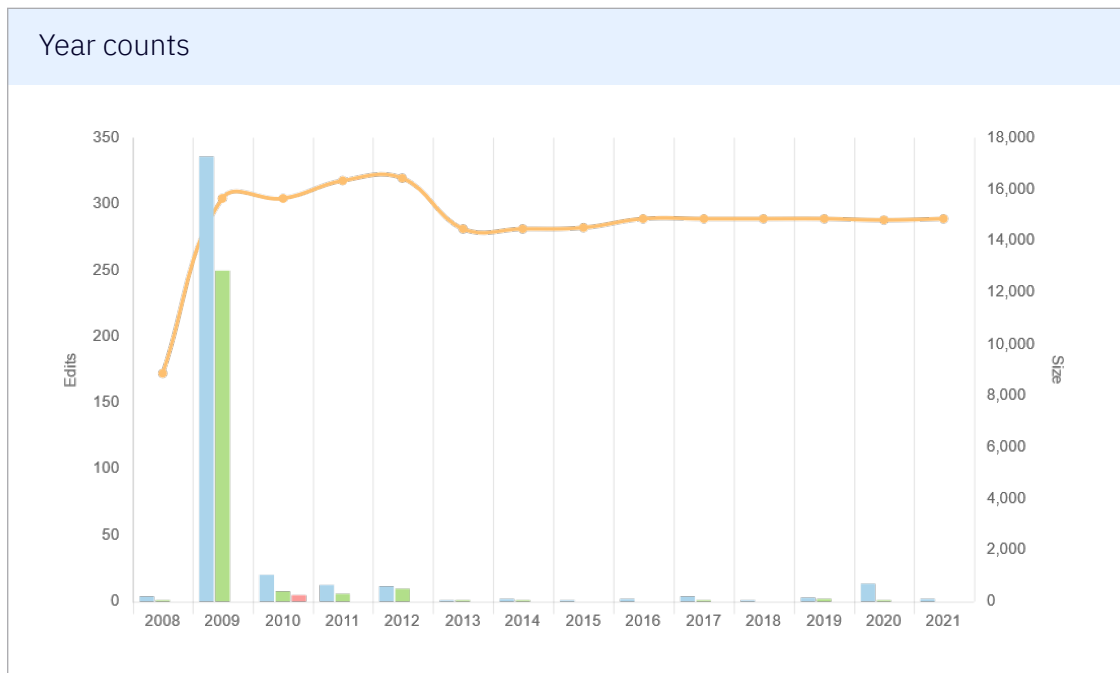
Source

View History

https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/es.wikipedia.org/Wikipedia:Fuentes_fiables?format=html

GLOSSARY

We choose not to use Wikipedia (WP) shorthand in the document. However we recognize the ways in which unfamiliarity with these terms can cause further barriers for participation. Below is a list of commonly used shortcuts and their definitions.

WP - Shorthand for Wikipedia

Enwiki - English Wikipedia

WP:AfC - Articles for Creation
WP:AfD - Articles for Deletion
WP:GNG - General Reliability Guidelines
WP:NFP - General principles
WP:NOR - No original research
WP:NPOV and WP: PVN - Neutral Viewpoint
WP:OBS - Obscurity
WP:RS - Reliable Sources
WP:V - Verifiability
WP:VER - Verifiability

Frwiki - French Wikipedia

WP:FIABLE - Sources Fiables
WP:CVS - Citez vos sources
WP:SOURCE - Projet source
WP:ODS and WP:OBS - Observatoire des sources

Eswiki - Spanish wikipedia

WP:FF - Fuentes fiables
WP:VER - Verificabilidad
WP:PVN - Punto de vista neutral
WP:NO- Lo que Wikipedia no es
WP:BPV - Biografías de personas vivas

WMF - Wikimedia Foundation

Offwiki - In person, or otherwise outside of Wikipedia

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FUNDING

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BIOGRAPHIES

Lead researchers

Amber Berson is a writer, curator, and Ph.D. candidate conducting doctoral research at Queen's University on artist-run culture and feminist, utopian thinking. She most recently curated Utopia as Method (2018); World Cup! (2018); The Let Down Reflex (2016–2018, with Juliana Driever); TrailMix (2014, with Eliane Ellbogen); *~._.:*JENNIFER X JENNIFER*:.~ (2013, with Eliane Ellbogen); The Annual Art Administrator's Relay Race (2013, with Nicole Burisch); The Wild Bush Residency (2012–14); and was the 2016 curator-in-residence as part of the France-Quebec Cross-Residencies at Astérides in Marseille, France. She is a co-lead at Art+Feminism, a project that works for a more equitable Wikipedia and was the 2019–2020 Wikipedian in Residence at Concordia University. She speaks English and French.

Monika Sengul-Jones, Ph.D., is a writer, researcher, speaker, and educator with expertise in cultures and technologies. She has been involved with English Wikimedia since 2012 leading numerous initiatives involving equity, feminism, arts, and information literacy, including The Gap Finding Project with Wiki Education and Wikipedia+Libraries: Better Together as the OCLC Wikipedian-in-Residence from 2017–2018. Monika has an M.A. degree in Gender Studies from Central European University and PhD in Communication and Science Studies from UC San Diego. She edited at Catalyst Journal and adjunct lectured in the Department of Communication at University of Washington in Seattle, WA, U.S. Learn more at www.monikasjones.com.

Melissa Tamani is currently pursuing an M.A. in Administration of Organizations in the Cultural and Creative Sector at the University of Buenos Aires, and has a B.A. in Art History from the National University of San Marcos, Lima. She's developed a career in the fields of cultural management and museum education at various cultural institutions in Peru. In 2017 she was the Cultural Manager at the Faculty of Art and Design from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. She's part of Art+Feminism since 2015, formerly as Regional Ambassador in Latin America and currently as Lead co-organizer. She is also a promoter of Wikimedia culture in Peru, organizing and taking part in campaigns focused on gender, human rights, and ecology. She speaks Spanish and English.

Advisory board

Sue Barnum is a public services librarian at El Paso Public Library in Texas, United States, on the border of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. She has a decade of experience in libraries and is an administrator on English Wikipedia where she also volunteers as Librarian in Residence for WikiProject Women in Red, supporting editors in finding reliable sources using library tools to expand coverage of notable women. In 2018, Barnum was chosen as a U.S. Library Journal Mover & Shaker — a special award for changemakers in the library field — for her contributions to Wikipedia. Barnum edits to ensure overlooked subjects, such as the work of Chicana artists, women in history, and the history of borderlands, are represented in Wikipedia.

Mariana Fossatti is a feminist and a free culture activist. Her background is in sociology and she has a master's degree in Society and Development from the Universidad de la República, Uruguay. She co-founded the digital cultural centre Ártica in 2011, and co-founded the Uruguayan chapters of Creative Commons and Wikimedia in 2013. Since 2018 she coordinates the online campaign #VisibleWikiWomen with the Whose Knowledge? initiative. She also works in the APC Women Rights Programme, amplifying women's voices in tech on GenderIT blog, and facilitating feminist ways of knowing in the Feminist Internet Research Network.

Camille Larivée is an independent curator, street artist, writer, and cultural worker based in Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyaang (Montréal, QC). Their practice revolves around the invisibility of BIPOC and 2SLGTQQIA artists and muralists in urban public spaces. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Art History and a certificate in Feminist Studies from the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM). They are the Director of Programming for the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective / Collectif des Commissaires Autochtones (ACC/CCA).

Walaa Abdel Manaem is an Assistant Lecturer in the Spanish Department at Cairo University; as well as a Wikipedia Admin (1st female admin on Arabic Wikipedia) and editor on Arabic Wikipedia; she is the co-founder of Egypt Wikimedians User Group as well as an active member of Wikipedia Education Collaborative (Collab), known now as Wikipedia & Education User Group, as one of the few program leaders who mentor other programs around the world. She is part of the Movement Strategy Working Group for Diversity and is a Regional Ambassador with Art+Feminism.

Ha-Loan Phan, M.Sc. (Biology), is a project coordinator at University of Montreal (Bureau de valorisation de la langue française et de la Francophonie). She previously worked in communication and event planning for a century-old scientific organization based in Quebec that advocates research in French. She has participated in Wikimedia projects as an editor of Wikipedia since 2011 (she also hosted several editing workshops) and as a board director of Wikimedia Canada since 2016. An enthusiastic lifelong learner, she graduated as Administratrice de sociétés certifiée (equivalent Chartered Director) in Summer 2020. Mission: ensure the future of free knowledge and free culture.

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