ABSTRACT

APOSTOLOPOULOS, PETROS. Discussing the Past: The Production of Historical Knowledge on Wikipedia. (Under the direction of Dr. Tammy Gordon).

This dissertation investigates how historical knowledge is produced in one of the most central digital communities of knowledge, Wikipedia. In 2001, the American Internet entrepreneur Jimmy Wales founded the online encyclopedia, its main concept being that "anyone can edit any page at any time." This concept allowed Wikipedia to function also as a common and public space for personal reflection. Wikipedia provides this opportunity through the portal of "talk," as each Wikipedia entry has its own "talk" area. This study explores how historical knowledge is produced on Wikipedia. The project is based on multiple methodologies ranging from qualitative analysis of Wikipedia pages related to history, survey with Wikipedia editors, to quantitative analysis of participatory practices within the Wikipedia community. The main argument is that Wikipedia allows people to discuss the past, express their opinions and emotions about history and its significance in the present and the future through the portal of "talk" that Wikipedia provides. Wikipedia offers a public and digital space for personal engagement and reflection on the production of historical knowledge. Wikipedia users develop multiple relations with the past, take part in discussions and debates about history and its representation, and in that way produce historical knowledge. This does not mean that all Wikipedia users have the same role and power in the production of historical knowledge. Historical knowledge is not just a product of collaboration and public discussion but result of hierarchy and power. That explains why there is so much discussion behind the main articles, which leads in so little editing. Wikipedia allows all its users to discuss the editing process of a Wikipedia article and express their own historical understandings in the "talk page" of the

article, but few of them, the most experienced editors, can make their contributions part of the main entry.

Discussing the Past: The Production of Historical Knowledge on Wikipedia

by
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DEDICATION

To Katerina and my parents, for all their love and support.

BIOGRAPHY

Petros Apostolopoulos is a Ph.D. candidate in Public History at North Carolina State University He holds a Bachelor (BA) in History from the University of Athens, a Research Master (MPhil) in History from the same university, and a Master (MA) in History (specialization in Cultures of Knowledge) from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His research interests focus on public history, digital history, and modern United States history. He has served as a Teaching Assistant and Instructor at North Carolina State University and as a Research Assistant in digital humanities projects at Stanford University.

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The Department of History at North Carolina State University offered me a great intellectual environment to develop my research ideas and benefit from discussions with multiple scholars. I would like to thank Craig Friend for his valuable remarks and constructive criticism in

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Introduction

In the mid-1990s, the rise of the Internet and the proliferation of personal computers challenged many habits of historical scholarship.[1] Professional historians and enthusiasts, genealogists, and other groups started to publish websites and blogs about history.[2] As the historians Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig have argued, many scholars in academia became skeptical about the reliability of these websites, where amateur and non-professional historians were able to produce, store, and disseminate historical knowledge.[3] History and knowledge about the past became accessible and usable to anyone with Internet access. As the literature scholar Ann Rigney points out, the digital production of historical knowledge became appropriated by several agents "including those who produce sites and those who visit them and leave their traces in the form of additional photographs, comments or stories."[4] Professional historians remained active participants in that process, but they do not constitute the only "gatekeepers" of this public distribution and production of historical knowledge.[5] This means that the Internet did not change only the way that people engage with history but also the structures and hierarchies of historical knowledge.[6]

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[1] Regarding the rise of the Internet and the expansion of personal computer, see Janet Abbate, *Inventing the Internet. Inside Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

[2] Mark Poster, "History in the Digital Domain," *Historein* 4 (2003): 20.

[3] Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "Web of lies? Historical knowledge on the Internet," *First Monday: Peer-Reviewed Journal on the Internet* 10 (2005), accessed February 15, 2019, http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1299/1219.

[4] Ann Rigney, "When the monograph is no longer the medium: Historical narrative in the online age," *History and Theory* 49 (2010): 114-115.

[5] Ibid., 115.

[6] Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History. Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 90.

As Jerome de Groot writes, several important high-tech companies started to control these new opportunities and tried to give "programming and content power" to the user.[7] Some striking examples are Google (search engine), Wikipedia (online encyclopedia), Facebook (social networking), and YouTube (video-sharing website).[8] These popular digital spaces changed the ways that knowledge is gathered, produced, and disseminated.[9] At the same time, these digital spaces include much more than a simple distribution of historical knowledge. They encourage a creative engagement with the past, as users are not just passive consumers of histories produced by others but take active roles in using and understanding the past.[10] Web-users engage, discuss, use, and interpret the past by producing historical knowledge.

This study examines how historical knowledge is produced in one of the most central digital communities of knowledge, Wikipedia. In 2001, the American Internet entrepreneur Jimmy Wales founded the online encyclopedia, its main concept being that "anyone can edit any page at any time."[11] This concept allowed Wikipedia to function also as a common and public space for personal reflection. Wikipedia provides this opportunity through the portal of "talk," as each Wikipedia entry has its own "talk" area. More specifically, each entry has two tabs, one with the up-to-date version of the article, and the other named "talk" where users can find all the archived discussions about all the edits that the given entry suffered through time. Thus, the "talk" area shows all the discussions and debates between Wikipedia users about the entries. The users question statements that are cited on the Wikipedia page expressing their disagreements

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Arnold, 2000), 189, Mark Poster, "Manifesto for a history of the media," in *Manifestos for History*, ed. Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 40.

[10] Regarding the participation of people in popular historical activities, see Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past. Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[11] Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia Revolution. How a bunch of Nobodies Created the World's Greatest Encyclopedia* (London: Hyperion ebook, 2009), 14.

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and their suggestions for the page. Other users then correspond, and the "talk" page becomes a discussion page. On top of that, there is also the "view history" page for each entry, with just the logs of all the changes (without the discussion), with copies of older versions of the articles.

To demonstrate how historical knowledge is produced on Wikipedia, the study takes into account the following sub-questions: Which are the methods and the guidelines that Wikipedia establishes to produce knowledge about the past? How does Wikipedia have managed to make its users get involved in the production of historical knowledge, expressing online their views about the past and the way they remember it? What historical connections do they make between the past and the present and how is this expressed in the main entry? How do Wikipedia editors engage with historical events of the past and transform the past into historical knowledge? Why do Wikipedians decide to contribute to the production of historical knowledge? Which factors determine their editing choices? What are the characteristics of Wikipedia editors, who actively create and edit articles related to history?

The main argument of the dissertation is that Wikipedia allows people to discuss the past, express their opinions and emotions about history and its significance in the present and the future through the portal of "talk" that Wikipedia provides.[12] Wikipedia offers a public and digital space for personal engagement and reflection on the production of historical knowledge. Wikipedia users develop multiple relations with the past, take part in discussions and debates about history and its representation, and in that way produce historical knowledge. This does not mean that all Wikipedia users have the same role and power in the production of historical knowledge. Historical knowledge is not just a product of collaboration and public discussion but result of hierarchy and power. Wikipedia allows all its users to discuss the editing process of a

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[12] "Wikipedia: Core Content Policies," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 20, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Core_content_policies.

Wikipedia article and express their own historical understandings in the "talk page" of the article, but few of them, the most experienced editors, can make their contributions part of the main article.

Between Public and Digital History

This dissertation is based on the historiography of public and digital history. In the next paragraphs, I analyze the most important studies, concepts, and historiographical frameworks by dividing them into two categories. Studies that investigate public memory and studies that focus on the co-production of historical knowledge and "shared authority."[13] These two categories cover several significant works and create an important ground for the examination of Wikipedia, but they also reveal weaknesses and historiographical gaps that this dissertation aims to fill.

History and memory have a long relationship, however, the term public memory was a result of public history's engagement with memory.[14] Several decades before the institutionalization of public history in the late 1970s, the historian Carl Becker introduced the connection between history, memory, and the public.[15] Becker opened up history by enabling the public to engage with the past and, more precisely, to be part of the past through its memories.[16] However, Becker's arguments remained marginal for the next decades. In 1981 the oral historian

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[13] I focus on public memory, as it has been developed in the historiography of public history, and not on the general term of memory and its role in historical scholarship.

[14] The first work that engaged with memory on a collective level was the study of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs published in 1925, see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[15] Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review* 37 (1932): 221-36. Halbwachs argued that collective memory is socially constructed. For the different types of memory (collective memory, popular memory, public memory, counter-memory), see David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *The Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (April 1996): 7–23.

[16] Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," 223.

Michael Frisch started to engage further with the relationship between public memory and history.[17] Frisch argued that most of the works in public history make clear the need for a wider sharing of knowledge and broader participation in the history-making.[18] Frisch followed Carl Becker's suggestions for the importance of memory in the production of historical knowledge and pointed out that public history cannot be public without the studying of memory. For that reason, even if a memory is historical or ahistorical, public historians should activate the process of remembering.[19] The study of historical memory can reveal information about "how the past does or doesn't figure in our lives, and what this, in turn, tells us about both history and ourselves."[20]

In the historiography of public history, memory took the form of an active agent that shapes the public understanding and perception of the past. This became the dominant approach of public historians to public memory. In the late 1980s the French historian Pierre Nora showed that memory is affective and signifies a connection with the present, while history is a representation of the past.[21] Based on this theoretical framework, in the next decades, several studies started to appear and investigate how memory shapes our historical understanding through its connection to present, its affective character, and its connection to institutions that influence people's perception of the past.

For the historian Michael Kammen, memory became an important agent that shaped two major processes that defined tradition in American culture since 1870, the Americanization of tradition and then the democratization.[22] The urban historian, Hayden Dolores argued that both

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[17] Michael H Frisch, "The Memory of History," *Radical History Review* 25 (1981): 9-23.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., 22.

[20] Ibid., 17.

[21] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24.

[22] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 13.

personal and collective memories are tied to public spaces.[23] For Hayden, landscapes are "storehouses," in which different social groups of people place their memories.[24] Edward Linenthal and John Bodnar showed that memory can be productive and generate "history wars" that led to the cancelation of exhibitions and public debates.[25] Mike Wallace examined memory close to power and the present and showed how the relation of Americans with their past changed from the 1940s to the 1970s.[26] John Bodnar focused on Vietnam Veterans Memorial and showed two different dimensions of public memory, one related to "official" culture and another related to "vernacular" culture.[27] Both sides represent different political beliefs about the past and its commemoration in the present. In another study, Bodnar also explored how the present and future shaped the memories of two generations, the 1930s and the 1960s in Whiting, Indiana, a town close to Chicago, in 1991.[28] Both generations remember their stories based not only on the past but also on the future.[29]

In the late 1990s, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen showed a different way to approach memory. Instead of focusing on archives, memorials, exhibitions, they conducted interviews and investigated how the past shapes the "historical consciousness" and "historical memory" of Americans.[30] However, the emphasis on how the public actively engages with the past seems

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[23] Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 9.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 5. Edward Linenthal, "Struggling with History and Memory," *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 1094-1101, John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010).
[26] Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), xi.
[27] John Bodnar, *Remaking America. Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-14.
[28] John Bodnar, "Generational Memory in an American Town," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 26 (Spring 1996): 619.
[29] Ibid., 637.
[30] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). The approach of Rosenzweig and Thelen to focus on the public to detect

more an exception in the studying of public memory rather than the norm. It is worth mentioning

that the abandonment of that approach by more recent studies has led to a lack of knowledge on

how the public remembers and makes sense of the past in the digital age, something that the

current study aims to do. In 1998, David Glassberg examined how Americans have understood

and used the past in the twentieth century.[31] He made a significant distinction between the

"interpretation of history" that professional historians do and the "sense of history" that the

public has. The "sense of history" is a "perspective on the past at the core of who they are and

the people and the places they care about."[32] However, Glassberg's work differs from

Rosenzweig and Thelen's study, as he focused on the public perception of the past through war

memorials, festivals, places, and historical documentaries and not on how people themselves

understand and think about the past. Following a similar approach, Alison Landsberg introduced

the useful concept of "prosthetic memory" to describe the memory that appears when a person

becomes part of a broader and larger story through media, even if they did not live during that

period.[33] Landsberg viewed public memory through movies, novels, or museum exhibitions and

not on how people perceived all those historical forms. This approach reveals a repeating pattern

in the historiography of public memory.

   Erika Doss connected public memory to emotions.[34] She explored why in recent years,

there is an explosion of public monument-making, a "memory boom," in the US and Europe, but

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memory has also been followed by other studies, see for example Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Greek* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), Tammy Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976. Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).

[31] David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), xiii.

[32] Ibid., 6.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Erika Doss, *The Emotional Life of Contemporary Public Memorials. Towards a Theory of Temporary Memorials* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008). Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010).

also a broader shift from monuments to memorials.[35] Her main argument was that "today's 'memory boom' reflects less, then, a declension of historical consciousness than a cultural shift toward public feeling, toward affective modes of knowledge and comprehension."[36] However, she did not ask the public how it expresses its emotions, how it engages with the past, and perceives the memorials. Instead, she approached the public as a receptor of cultural changes that have given rise to modern memorialization.

In the last decades, several studies appeared and focused on the relation between public memory and museums. The work of Dell Upton explored several civil rights and African American history monuments in the contemporary South to show how these sites managed to integrate their past and define it in the twenty-first century.[37] Roger Aden used the case study of President's House in Philadelphia to explore how a place of public memory is shaped and how different social groups, institutions, and individuals give meaning to it.[38] The past becomes public memory through power, arguments, conflicts, compromises, selections, and negotiations.[39] Amy Sodaro studied different memorial museums and explored how those museums engage with the past, trauma, and violence.[40] Her study showed that public memory in museums is always socially and politically constructed and strongly connected to the present.[41]

All those studies have offered useful theoretical frameworks and concepts for the studying of public memory on Wikipedia. However, as shown above, there is a tendency to study memory as a reflection of institutions, memorials, museums, media, movies, novels, etc. that

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[35] Doss, *The Emotional Life*, 5.
[36] Ibid., 37.
[37] Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015).
[38] Roger Aden, *Upon the Ruins of Liberty: Slavery, the President's House at Independence National Historical Park, and Public Memory* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2015)
[39] Ibid.
[40] Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity. Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence* (New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 133.
[41] Ibid., 182.

shape the public perception of the past. This repeating approach has ignored to a great extent the publicity of public memory. Even though memory reveals people's understanding of the past, it seems to be imposed on the public by museums, movies, TV shows, memorials, historical sites, exhibitions, etc. In that way, the historiography of public history has ignored how the public(s) create, shape, and share their memories about the past. In my study on Wikipedia, I focus on the memories of Wikipedia users and explore how their memories encounter the dominant historical narratives, why they feel the need to share their memories, and how their memories contribute to the production of historical knowledge. At the same time, as I show in this dissertation, on Wikipedia historical knowledge is not only result of personal and collective memories but also of compliance with the policies and guidelines of Wikipedia community.

Regarding the second category, the "shared authority," in 1990 Michael Frisch offered a significant methodological framework of how to do public and oral history. He pointed out that a great way of doing oral and public history is through the concept of "shared authority."[42] For Frisch, public historians should not just set questions to the public and simply extract knowledge from it, but they should promote collaboration between themselves and the narrators.[43] They should advance a democratized shared historical consciousness and encourage more participation in debates about history.[44]

Several works tried to engage with that concept and the co-production of historical knowledge. Most scholars saw "shared authority" as a theoretical element naturally embedded in

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[42] Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), xx. Frisch has also analyzed "shared authority" in other works. For a more contemporary view of "shared authority" in the digital age, see: Michael Frisch, "From *A Shared Authority* to the Digital Kitchen, and Back," in *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, ed. Adair Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski (Philadelphia: Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011), 126-137.

[43] Ibid., xxii, Thomas Cauvin, "The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective*," Historia Crítica* 68 (2018): 8.

[44] Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, xxii.

public history's identity and few tried to explore it deeper or -even more importantly- to apply it.[45] Of course, there are important studies that tried to apply "shared authority" to specific projects. For example, Katharine Corbett and Howard Miller used the concepts of "shared authority" and "shared inquiry" as ways of "doing history with the public" and not for the public.[46] Also, John Bodnar successfully applied "shared authority" on generational memory in Whiting, Indiana in 1996, by conducting several interviews with individuals.[47] Benjamin Filene explored how many people who work outside museums and universities, called as "outsider history-makers," approach history in a way that causes the interest of thousands.[48] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen followed the method of "shared authority" by using surveys to explore how Americans understand their past.[49] For Rosenzweig and Thelen, this approach showed how historians can make historical culture more participatory and the individuals "active users or interpreters of the past."[50] Andrea Burns explored how the African American communities of the 1960s and 1970s worked for the creation of their own cultural institutions.[51] Tammy Gordon offered a great analysis of the two-hundredth anniversary of the American Revolution by showing how all those individuals, social groups, and communities of 1976 actively engaged with the past and tried to integrate their works to the national narrative.[52] All

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[45] There are several theoretical works on "shared authority" and its significance for the development of public history, see David Dean, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Public History*, ed. David Dean (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 1-11, Rebecca Conard, "Complicating Origin Stories: The Making of Public History into an Academic Field in the United States," in *A Companion to Public History*, ed. David Dean (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 19-32, Cauvin, "The Rise of Public History," 3-26.

[46] Katharine T. Corbett and Howard S. Miller, "A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry," *Public Historian* 28 (2006): 16.

[47] John Bodnar, "Generational Memory in an American Town."

[48] Benjamin Filene "Passionate Histories: 'Outsider' History-Makers and What They Teach Us," *Public Historian* 34 (2012): 11.

[49] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen. *The Presence of the Past*.

[50] Ibid., 192, 194.

[51] Andrea A. Burns, *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).

[52] Tammy Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976. Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 4-7.

those works saw "shared authority" as a methodological tool to do public history and applied to specific cases. However, in the last three decades, there are more works that theoretically engage with "shared authority" than works that apply "shared authority."[53] In this study, I have used "shared authority" in multiple perspectives by focusing on the comments that Wikipedia editors make, their data in their profile pages, their stories, and experiences from their engagement with the production of history on Wikipedia.

Since the late 1990s, as the personal computer and the Internet had become part of people's everyday life, several historians started to explore the opportunities that digital technologies offer. Most scholars identified the promise of digital technologies for the co-production and democratization of historical knowledge. The term democratization does not refer only to issues of access to historical scholarship but also to issues of production – more people involved in the process of writing and defining history. In other words, more -nonacademic-people can have access to digitized historical sources and they can also take actively part in the production of history. So, digital technologies made the discussion about co-production and "shared authority" even more intensive. As Michael Frisch explained "shared authority" in the digital age, digital technologies can make audio or video recordings available and reachable for the archive, the researcher, the user, and the community. [54]

More and more scholars started to engage with the increasing digitization of archives and historical records through digital technologies. Roy Rosenzweig and Michael O'Malley saw the Web as a global "hypertext," in which the users can follow different roads and have access to documents, images, sounds, and films.[55] Edward Ayers argued that digital technologies can make

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[53] See footnote 46.
[54] Michael Frisch, "From *A Shared Authority* to the Digital Kitchen, and Back," 128.
[55] Roy Rosenzweig and Michael O'Malley, "Brave New World or Blind Alley? American History on the World Wide Web," *Journal of American History* 84/1 (June 1997): 132-133.

historians imagine new ways to present history by displaying data, maps, texts, images, and sounds and by enabling users to make connections and explore all those materials.[56] Rosenzweig and Daniel Cohen showed that digital archives can preserve different voices that exist in the Web and give a democratic perspective to the past.[57] As Rosenzweig wrote, digital archives will not belong to intellectual and academic power, but everyone can have access to them.[58] In 2008, in a round table on digital history, several historians argued that the digitization of archives through digital technologies and their online availability can contribute to the democratization of historical knowledge, as more and more people will have access to it.[59] They saw the web as place where the historian and the public can collaborate, produce, and share historical knowledge.[60] However, all those works have been characterized by two patterns. Firstly, most scholars viewed digitization more as a promise for the future rather than as a phenomenon that was taking place during that time. Secondly, and even more importantly, all those works have focused more on the growing access of the public to historical knowledge in the digital era rather than on the participation of the public in the production of historical knowledge.

Rosenzweig was an influential figure in the association of digital technologies with the democratization of historical knowledge. In 1994 he created the Center for History and New Media, a research institution at George Mason University, which aimed to study and use digital media "to democratize the past—to incorporate multiple voices, reach diverse audiences, and

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[56] Edward Ayers, "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," *History News* 56/4 (2001): 6.
[57] Roy Rosenzweig, "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era," *American Historical Review* 108, 3 (June 2003): 755, Daniel J Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).
[58] Rosenzweig, "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era," 755.
[59] Daniel J. Cohen, Michael Frisch, Patrick Gallagher, et al. "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History," *The Journal of American History* 95 (2008): 455.
[60] Ibid., 472.

encourage popular participation in presenting and preserving the past."[61] This center contributed

to the development of several digital history projects, such as the *September 11 Digital Archive*,

the *Hurricane Digital Memory Bank*, the *Bracero History Archive*, *Gulag: Many Days, Many*

Lives and Objects of History, which showed that digital technologies can bring the public closer

to history.[62] Most of those projects aimed to engage users to upload documents, photographs,

videos, letters related to traumatic historical events, such as September 11 or Hurricane Katrina.

They did not use technology to provide only access to historical documents to the public.

Instead, they invited the public to creatively engage with the past and make its personal stories

part of the broader historical narrative by placing those stories into a digital archive.

In the 2000s, several other digital public history projects started to appear in collaboration

with universities, research centers, and libraries. [63] They aimed to enable users to both consume

and produce historical knowledge. Digital public history projects continued to use "shared

authority" in the direction of integrating marginalized stories of the public.[64] Most of those

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[61] Stephen Robertson, "The Differences between Digital Humanities and Digital History," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/ed4a1145-7044-42e9-a898-5ff8691b6628#ch25.

[62] Ibid. For some studies on those projects, see Despoina Valatsou, "History, our own Stories and Emotions Online," *Historein* 8 (2008): 108-116, Pedro Telles da Silveira, "From Instant History to the Infinite Archive: Digital Archiving, Memory and the Practical Past at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media," *Historein* 17.2 (2018), accessed July 3, 2020, https://ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/pfiles/journals/14/editor-uploads/issues/735/main735.html?1=735&2=10964. For the connection between digital technologies and public history, see Daniel Cohen, "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History," 464, Mellisa Dinsman, "The Digital in the Humanities: An Interview with Sharon M. Leon," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 10, 2016, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-digital-in-the-humanities-an-interview-with-sharon-m-leon, Fien Danniau, "Public History in a Digital Context. Back to the Future or Back to Basics?," *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 128-4 (2013): 118-144.

[63] For the concept of digital public history, see Dinsman, "The Digital in the Humanities: An Interview with Sharon M. Leon*," * Danniau, "Public History in a Digital Context," 118-144.

[64] For example, see Vicki Mayer and Mike Griffith. "MediaNOLA: A Digital Humanities Project to Tell Stories of Cultural Production in New Orleans." *Journal of Digital Humanities*, No.2 (2013), accessed March 10, 2019, http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/2-2/medianola-by-vicki-mayer-and-mike-griffith/, Shawn Graham, Guy Massie, and Nadine Feuerherm, "The HeritageCrowd Project: A Case Study in Crowdsourcing Public History," in *Writing History in the Digital Age* ed. Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki. (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2013), https://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/public-history/graham-etal-2012-spring/, Lauren Jae Gutterman, "OutHistory.org: An Experiment in LGBTQ Community History-Making," *The Public Historian* 32, no. 4 (2010):

projects were based on the method of crowdsourcing and wiki technologies to attract individuals

to visit and contribute to the project. On the other hand, several other projects used "shared

authority" as a tool for giving the public more access to historical sources and interpretations of

the past.[65] However, some crucial questions remained unanswered. Did all those digital public

history projects manage to attract a non-academic public? How did the public engage with the

past and understand history? Only a few scholars tried to analyze how all these projects worked,

if they were successful and managed to engage a broader non-academic public, how people took

part in the projects, and more significantly how they interpreted history.[66] For that reason, all

those projects still contain, in Cameron Blevins' words, a "perpetual future tense," even if they

have taken place in the last three decades.[67] Thus, there is a significant lack of studies that

explore how the public has participated in the production of historical knowledge by using digital

technologies.

In the last decades, most works in digital history have been connected strongly to the

broader field of digital humanities and have focused more on the application of computational

tools for the study of history.[68] However, the connection between digital technologies and the

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96-109, Andrew Hurley, "Chasing the Frontiers of Digital Technology: Public History Meets the Digital Divide," *The Public Historian* 38, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 69–88.

[65] For example, see Drew VandeCreek, "Webs of Significance: The Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project, New Technology, and the Democratization of History," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (2007), accessed May 8, 2020, http://digitalhumanities.org:8081/dhq/vol/1/1/000003/000003.html, M. Tebeau. "Listening to the City: Oral History and Place in the Digital Era," *Oral History Review* 40, no. 1 (December 1, 2013): 25–35.

[66] Only a few scholars have evaluated or critically examined those projects. For example, Fien Danniau has mentioned the failure of many digital public history projects to attract the public, see Danniau, "Public History in a Digital Context." Also, Pedro Telles da Silveira has criticized the Roy Rozenzweig Center's project for its inability to contextualize history, Pedro Telles da Silveira, "From Instant History to the Infinite Archive: Digital Archiving, Memory and the Practical Past at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media."

[67] Cameron Blevins, "Digital History's Perpetual Future Tense," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/4555da10-0561-42c1-9e34-112f0695f523#ch26.

[68] On what Digital Humanities is and the different approaches of scholars to DH, see: Mellisa Dinsman, "The Digital in the Humanities: A Special Interview Series," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, March 27, 2016, https://lareviewofbooks.org/feature/the-digital-in-the-humanities, Ray Siemens Schreibman and John Unsworth. *A New Companion to Digital Humanities* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), Patrik Svensson and

democratization of historical scholarship still remains important. In a series of interviews with digital humanities scholars organized by the English Literature professor Mellisa Dinsman, several historians, media, and literature scholars discussed the possibility of digital humanities to create a bridge between academia and the public.[69] The historians Jessica Marie Johnson, Sharon Leon, the English scholars, Marisa Parham and Bethany Nowviskie argued that digital technologies can fill the gap between scholarship and the public, which has remained powerful and has characterized the discussion about digital history in the last decades.[70]

The major weakness of the works in digital and public historiography is that they have been limited to simple celebrations of the potential achievements of "shared authority" without investigating all these projects closer and examining whether these projects have managed to engage the public. Most works have focused on the access and not on the production of historical knowledge.[71] Also, only few works have applied "shared authority" as a method of doing public history and even fewer have studied the co-production of knowledge critically. In the last years, many studies have criticized "shared authority," co-production, and openness as neoliberal features that hide labor exploitation, structures of power, hierarchies, social, economic, racial inequalities in the digital world.[72] Several works have also analyzed how digital platforms, such as Facebook, Amazon, YouTube, etc. make a profit based on users, who produce content and

David Theo Goldberg. "Introduction," in *Between Humanities and the Digital*. Cambridge, ed. Patrik Svensson and David Theo Goldberg (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015), 1-8.

[69] Dinsman, "The Digital in the Humanities."

[70] Of course, other digital humanities scholars, such as Franco Moretti, David Golumbia, and Alexander Galloway disagreed with the statement that DH can create bridges between academia and the public.

[71] For a more detailed analysis of how the historiography of public history has focused more on the consumption of history by the public and not on the production of history by the public, see Petros Apostolopoulos, "What is the Public of Public History? Between the Public Sphere and Public Agency," *Magazén - International Journal for Digital and Public Humanities*, vol 2 (2021): 311-327.

[72] For example, see Fred Turner, "Machine Politics: The Rise of the Internet and a New Age of Authoritarianism," *Harper's Magazine*, January 2019, 25-33, Daniel Kreiss, Megan Finn, and Fred Turner, "The Limits of Peer Production: Some Reminders from Max Weber for the Network Society," *New Media and Society* Vol. 13, No. 2 (March 2011): 243-59, Nathaniel Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017).

data without being properly compensated.[73] Most of them have been written by media and communication scholars, not historians.

My study on Wikipedia takes into account all those aspects and explores how historical knowledge is produced on Wikipedia by revealing the power relations that are embedded in the online encyclopedia, the hierarchy and the structure of Wikipedia, the characteristics of Wikipedia editors, who create and edit historical articles, the reasons why Wikipedia editors decide to contribute to the production of historical knowledge. In 1990, Michael Frisch criticized public history scholarship for being "supply side," namely, for focusing on historians and curators as suppliers of historical memory.[74] This approach created two different sides in public history, the historians as suppliers and the public as consumers.[75] This dissertation breaks down the dichotomy between producers and consumers. It places the public itself at the forefront of historical inquiry by exploring how Wikipedia users actively engage with history, how they remember and discuss the past, while they try to contribute to the creation and editing of historical articles on Wikipedia.

A historiographical overview of Wikipedia

The foundation of Wikipedia and the new methods of collection, production, and dissemination of knowledge that it introduced, piqued the interest of many academics, who were curious to study this new encyclopedia. Many works were published to analyze this digital source of knowledge. It is difficult to order these works thematically, as they are dispersed.

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[73] On digital platforms and labor, see Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism*, Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," in *Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emory (Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press, 1996), 132-147, Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 73-97, Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus, "Learning to Immaterial Labour 2.0: My Space and Social Networks," *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 7, no. 1 (2007): 88-106.
[74] Frisch, A Shared Authority, 187.
[75] On this dichotomy, also see Tammy Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976*, 4.

Nevertheless, the most significant works fall into the following categories: 1. The accuracy of Wikipedia and its relation to education, 2. The history of Wikipedia, 3. The structures of Wikipedia including its participation practices, open character, hierarchy, underrepresentation of specific social groups, and bias in its contents.

Regarding the first category, important work and one of the first studies on Wikipedia is the article of the historian Roy Rosenzweig, in which he examined the accuracy of Wikipedia in U.S. history and the way that Wikipedia presents historical events.[76] According to this study, Wikipedia accurately reports names, dates, and events in U.S. history and most of the factual errors are small and insignificant. Also, the errors did not differ much from Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia and the Encyclopedia Britannica. Rosenzweig's critique of Wikipedia was that "good historical writing requires not just factual accuracy but also a command of the scholarly literature, persuasive analysis and interpretations, and clear and engaging prose".[77] In their study, the historian Cullen Chandler and the librarian Alison Gregory went beyond the traditional warnings of academics about the problems of Wikipedia for education and used Wikipedia as an example that can help students develop their critical thinking.[78] Several other studies have emphasized more on the broader wiki technology that Wikipedia uses and explored how this technology can become an important tool for education.[79]

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[76] Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past", *The Journal of American History* 93 (2006):117-146.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Cullen J. Chandler and Alison S. Gregory, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Wikipedia in the College Classroom," *The History Teacher* 42 (February 2010): 247-257.

[79] For example, see Robert E. Cummings and Matt Barton, *Wiki Writing: Collaborative Learning in the College Classroom* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008), Robert W. Maloy, Michelle Poirier, Hilary K. Smith, and Sharon A. Edwards, "The Making of A History Standards Wiki: 'Covering, Uncovering,' and 'Discovering' Curriculum Frameworks Using a Highly Interactive Technology," *The History Teacher* 44, no. 1 (2010): 67-81.

A volume edited by the scholars of education, Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, offered different interesting perspectives about history on Wikipedia.[80] Specifically, the chapter by the historian Martha Saxton studied the representation of women in the online encyclopedia and showed how students should deal with this source of knowledge.[81] Saxton shared her experience to work with students analyzing Wikipedia entries related to women's history, evaluating their contents, and sources for accuracy and significance.[82] The historian Amanda Seligman explored how Wikipedia can teach students to think about authority, authorship, and argument in tertiary sources.[83] Seligman pointed out that instead of forbidding Wikipedia as a source of knowledge, historians can use Wikipedia as a great pedagogical tool. She argued that educators should not only teach students how to make historical arguments, but how to value one argument from the other to acquire a more critical thought.[84] In the same book, the historian Shawn Graham described the way that an article of Wikipedia can be improved, to teach students "how knowledge can be crowd-sourced, produced, and disseminated" in the digital age.[85]

Over time, additional studies focused on the history of Wikipedia and its methods for the collection and production of knowledge. The work of the digital media strategist and journalism scholar Andrew Lih was published in 2009 and constituted the first popular history of Wikipedia.[86] Lih investigated the history of Wikipedia, its development over time, and shed light

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[80] Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, ed., *Writing History in the Digital Age*, (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2013), https://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/.

[81] Martha Saxton, "Wikipedia and Women's History: A Classroom Experience," in *Writing History in the Digital Age*, ed. Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2013), https://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/crowdsourcing/saxton-etal-2012-spring/.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Amanda Seligman, "Teaching Wikipedia without Apologies," in *Writing History in the Digital Age*, https://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/teach/seligman-2012-spring/.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia Revolution*, (London: Hyperion ebook, 2009).

on the community of Wikipedians.[87] The contents of his work ranges from short biographies of

Jimmy Wales and other Wikipedia founders to different important events in Wikipedia's history.

In 2011, the media theorists, Geert Lovink and Nathaniel Tkacz edited a collective work that

contained several chapters analyses of Wikipedia.[88] The study constituted a significant work on

the production of knowledge on Wikipedia and all its chapters examined very interesting aspects

of Wikipedia. In particular, the chapter of the historian Dan O'Sullivan traced the history of

encyclopedias in the Western tradition and placed the emergence of Wikipedia into that

historical context.[89] The historian Peter Burke also placed Wikipedia in the broader history of

knowledge by tracing different ways of gathering, analyzing, disseminating, and employing

knowledge. [90] Burke argued that Wikipedia's knowledge is based on the methods of a "citizen

science," a scientific – in the broad sense of the term "science" – research conducted by amateurs

and nonprofessional scientists. This process is described by Peter Burke as an "amateurization"

of knowledge, which signifies a new phase in both knowledge production and collection, as well

as in users' involvement.[91] Following a similar line of thinking, the Ph.D. dissertation of the

media scholar, Fethi Erinç Salor, *Sum of all Knowledge: Wikipedia and the Encyclopedic Urge*

(2012), examined the history of Wikipedia focusing on Wikipedia as a new form of an

encyclopedia. [92] In her recent work, *Should You Believe Wikipedia? Online Communities and the*

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[87] Ibid., 12.

[88] Geert Lovink and Nathaniel Tkacz, ed., *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Culture, 2011).

[89] Dan O'Sullivan, "What is an Encyclopedia? A Brief Historical Overview from Pliny to Wikipedia," in *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader*, ed. Geert Lovink and Nathaniel Tkacz (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Culture, 2011), 34-49. On the same topic, see also Dan O'Sullivan, *Wikipedia. A New Community of Practice?* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

[90] Peter Burke, *A Social History of knowledge. From the encyclopedie to Wikipedia* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 2012)., 273-274.

[91] Ibid., 273.

[92] Fethi Erinç Salor, *Sum of all Knowledge: Wikipedia and the Encyclopedic Urge* (Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam, 2012).

Construction of Knowledge (2022), the computing scholar, Amy Bruckman explored the characteristics of online communities that define the construction of knowledge, such as collaboration, identity, privacy, social roles, accuracy, online behavior etc.[93] In her analysis, she used Wikipedia as an example of an online community and focused on its design and structure.

In *Consuming History. Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*, Jerome de Groot explored different forms of public and popular history and investigated how the past is represented in these forms.[94] His book included a chapter on digital history websites and Wikipedia. He analyzed the history of Wikipedia as a digital source of knowledge, traced the main methods that Wikipedia uses to produce knowledge.[95] The chapter is more of a history of Wikipedia rather than an analysis of the history on Wikipedia, even though he offers a good description of the platform and places it in the field of public history along with other popular histories (games, tv shows, movies, etc.) Also, the Ph.D. dissertation of the historian Despoina Valatsou, *The emergence of new sites of memory on the internet* (2014), studied diverse kinds of "memory websites" where historical content and information are produced not only by professional historians but increasingly by a public audience. Valatsou examined Wikipedia as a site of memory and analyzed its different guidelines.[96] This work is significant for the historiography of Wikipedia; however, Valatsou did not perform an analysis of specific case studies to show how Wikipedia users remember the past and get involved in the production of historical knowledge. Instead, she explored how Wikipedia works and its broader conceptual ideas about history. Valatsou's work is based on the interesting study of Robert S. Wolff on how

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[93] Amy S. Bruckman, *Should You Believe Wikipedia? Online Communities and the Construction of Knowledge* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
[94] Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History*, 93-98.
[95] Ibid., 90-101.
[96] Despoina Valatsou, *Ανάδυση νέων μνημονικών τόπων στο διαδίκτυο* (Ph.D. diss., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2014).

digital technologies have transformed the writing of history.[97] Wolff used the famous concept of

Pierre Nora and examined Wikipedia as a virtual "site of memory," "places at which people

attempt to codify the meaning of past events."[98] According to Wolff, writing history in the digital

era and in public spaces such as Wikipedia forces professional historians to share a space with

others whose narratives come from their memories. His study is significant as it connected

Wikipedia with memory, however, it did not manage to show the complexity of Wikipedia as the

production of historical knowledge is not only the result of personal and collective memories but

also compliance with specific rules and policies.

Regarding the third category, several works examined the structures of the Wikipedia

community by exploring first its participatory and collaborative practices, open character,

hierarchy but later the bias and gender gap of its contents. Specifically, the communication

scholar Joseph Michael Reagle Jr. studied the "good faith culture" that exists within the

Wikipedia community by conducting an ethnographic analysis of Wikipedia.[99] He argued that

the NPOV policy brings users together to create and edit Wikipedia pages and the "good faith

culture" facilitates the process of collaboration.[100] This does not mean that Wikipedia is

harmonious, but that the collaborators have the purpose to work toward openness, universalism,

and good faith.[101] Regarding all those critics, who have seen the declination of Wikipedia,

Reagle mentioned that Wikipedia always discusses that criticism and tried to constantly

change.[102] In that way, Wikipedia has become a self-regulated community. Another significant

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[97] Robert S. Wolff, "The Historian's Craft, Popular Memory, and Wikipedia," in *Writing History in the Digital Age*, http://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/crowdsourcing/wolff-2012-spring/.

[98] Ibid. On Wikipedia as a global memory place, also see Christian Pentzold, "Fixing the floating gap: The online encyclopaedia Wikipedia as a global memory place," *Memory Studies* 2, no. 2 (May 2009): 255-272.

[99] Joseph Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration. The Culture of Wikipedia* (London, England and Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2010).

[100] Ibid., 169.

[101] Ibid., 170.

[102] Ibid., 173.

study on how Wikipedia authority works is the chapter of the communication scholar Mathieu

O'Neil, "Wikipedia and Authority." [103] O'Neil explored Wikipedia's organizational structure to

show how the distribution of authority's power takes place in the online encyclopedia. [104] He

argued that Wikipedia follows a new kind of organization, called as "online tribal bureaucracy,"

which contributes to the creation of an "online peer production project" that tries to manage the

critiques expressed by the users. [105] O'Neil pointed out that both the big size of Wikipedia and the

lack of a constitution to assign specific roles to users restrict its democratic character. [106]

Regarding the participation of Wikipedia users, the political scientist Johanna Niesyton

interviewed the Hebrew Wikipedia user, Drork Kamir to show how he became involved in

Wikipedia, his interests, and the reasons for his active involvement. [107] Kamir admitted how

different is the Hebrew with the Arabic Wikipedia and how the reactions of the users to his

comments change from one platform to another. [108] Following the same perspective, the media

theorist, Nathaniel Tkacz conducted an interview with Edgar Enyedy, an active Wikipedia user

from 2001 to 2002. [109] Enyedy argued that Wikipedia has been a "hierarchical social network,

behind an unreliable knowledge repository," as "it has reduced the minimal requirements of

knowledge to below average in both quality and reliability." [110] The work of the media scholar

Jose van Dijck also examined Wikipedia by placing into the context of connectivity. [111] He

[103] Mathieu O'Neil, "Wikipedia and Authority," in *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader*, ed. Geert Lovink and Nathaniel Tkacz (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Culture, 2011), 309-324.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 320.
[106] Ibid. 321.
[107] Dror Kamir and Johanna Niesyto, "User Drork: A call for a free content alternative for sources," in *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader*, 288-295.
[108] Ibid., 289
[109] Edgar Enyedy and Nathaniel Tkacz "'Good luck with your wikiPAIDia': Reflections on the 2002 Fork of the Spanish Wikipedia," in *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader*, 110-118.
[110] Ibid., 118
[111] Jose van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity. A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Sabine Niederer and José van Dijck, "Wisdom of the Crowd or technicity of the content? Wikipedia as a sociotechnical system," *new media & society* 12/8 (2010): 1368-1387.

showed that Wikipedia's success lies in the fact that it can mobilize different types of users to contribute to its contents.[112] Also, Wikipedia users finds in Wikipedia a space for socialization, which enhances user's mobilization.[113] His study is not only limited to the human agents of Wikipedia, but he also examines the important role of bots and non-human agents in the production of contents on Wikipedia.[114] One of the few studies that focuses on Wikipedia users' participation by exploring the discussions in the "talk pages" is the article of René König, "Wikipedia. Between lay participation and elite knowledge representation."[115] König focuses on the talk pages of the September 11 article in the German Wikipedia and argues that all related alternative theories of September 11 are mentioned in the "talk pages" but not in the main article, and the editing process of the article seems transparent. [116] However, the participatory structure of Wikipedia does not mean more democratic and inclusive practices.[117]

Another significant work on the participatory culture of Wikipedia is the book of the media and management scholar, Dariusz Jemielniak, who was also an active Wikipedia editor. [118] In his work, he explored the role of conflicts and debates in the development of an article, the "edit wars," the peer and bureaucratic control, which challenges the common assumption that Wikipedia is completely free, the development of trust in procedures, the organization design, and the evolution of leadership in the Wikipedia community.[119] Jemielniak argued that Wikipedia balances open access and users' power with a set of traditional organizational forms.

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[112] Jose van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity*, 136.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 137.
[115] René König, "Wikipedia. Between lay participation and elite knowledge representation," *Information, Community & Society* 16/2 (2013): 160-177.
[116] Ibid., 160, 173.
[117] Ibid., 173.
[118] Dariusz Jemielniak, *Common Knowledge? An Ethnography of Wikipedia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).
[119] Ibid., 6.

This is how Wikipedia manages to be successful and attractive to participants.[120] In his work, the

media theorist, Nataniel Tkacz explored Wikipedia's concept of openness by placing it into a

political and historical context.[121] He argued that Wikipedia is not just characterized by

collaboration and participation but by hierarchical structures and power relations between the

users.[122] Tkacz connected Wikipedia with neoliberalism and argued that the model of Wikipedia

as a space "without politics" is, in fact, a "post-political space."[123] Tkacz's analysis is very

useful for this dissertation, as it presents Wikipedia not just a simple public space, but as a space

where power relations are embedded. At the same time, even though his arguments about

neoliberalism and Wikipedia accurately present many Wikipedia strategies and logics, it seems

exaggerating to see Wikipedia as a representative example of neoliberalism, especially, in our

current data-driven and market-oriented digital world.

In 2010, the information science scholars, Noriko Hara, Pnina Shachaf, Khe Foon Hew,

analyzed how Wikipedia communities change across different languages.[124] The authors made a

comparative examination of typical behaviors on the discussion pages of non-English Wikipedia

communities. They aimed to show the differences and similarities of Wikipedia communities

through an examination of different cultural patterns. A few years later, Noriko Hara and Pnina

Schachaf created a collective study of Wikipedia, in which they followed a global approach for

the examination of Wikipedia.[125] The book includes several comparative studies of Wikipedia in

more than one language and case studies of Wikipedia in languages other than English.[126] Its

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[120] Ibid.
[121] Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness*.
[122] Ibid., 6.
[123] Ibid., 4-7.
[124] Noriko Hara, Pnina Shachaf, Khe Foon Hew, "Cross cultural analysis of the Wikipedia community," *Journal of the American Society of Information Science and Technology* 61 (2010): 2097-2108.
[125] Pnina Fichman and Noriko Hara, *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration* (Lanham: Rowman et Littlefield, 2014), 1.
[126] Ibid.

chapters focus on the content, processes, structures, and policies of Wikipedia. In the same thematic area, the article of the translation scholar Henry Jones explored the role of translation in the production of knowledge on Wikipedia.[127] For Jones, Wikipedia articles included a series of activities, such as "translating, collating, summarizing and synthesizing" based on sources published in different languages.[128] So, Wikipedia editors, who are engaged in these practices, are not just "information bridges," but they are active and engaged participants occupying important roles in the production of knowledge.[129]

It is worth mentioning that some scholars also applied computational tools to study the community of Wikipedia. For example, the professor of Game Design, William Emigh, and the professor of Linguistics, Susan Herring followed corpus linguistic methods and factor analysis for word counts for features of formality and informality.[130] They showed how the actions of the users through the mechanisms of the system can shape (or not) the contents of Wikipedia and Everything2.[131] For them, Wikipedia works as a concise encyclopedia in a very similar way with an expert-based encyclopedia, but it also contains "talk pages" that give a more personal perspective to the production of knowledge.[132] Also, the physicists Csilla Rudas and János Török focused on how the editors' change the consensus-building process in Wikipedia.[133] They used

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[127] Henry Jones and هنري جونز, "'Wikipedia,' Translation, and the Collaborative Production of Spatial Knowledge / ويكيبيديا والترجمة والتشارك في إنتاج المعرفة الفضائية," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 38 (2018): 264-97.
[128] Ibid., 272.
[129] Ibid., 271.
[130] W. Emigh and S.C. Herring, "Collaborative Authoring on the Web: A Genre Analysis of Online Encyclopedias," In *Proceedings of the 38th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*. Los Alamitos: IEEE Press, 2005, 1.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., 10.
[133] Csilla Rudas and János Török, "Modeling the Wikipedia to Understand the Dynamics of Long Disputes and Biased Articles," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 43, no. 1 (163) (2018): 72.

an agent-based opinion model and showed that banning agents from editing reduces the

consensus-building process and increases the system's relaxation time.[134]

In the last years, there is an increasing volume of works on the bias and gender gap in

Wikipedia contents. In the chapter, "Gender Gap in Wikipedia Editing: A Cross-Language

Comparison," the information scholars Paolo Massa and Asta Zelenkauskaite explored the

gender gap across different versions of Wikipedia and tried to show if the gender gap in other

language editions of Wikipedia is as pronounced as it is in the English one.[135] Their main

argument is that the gender gap in Wikipedia shows the broader gender gap in science.[136] In the

same collective work, Hélène Bourdeloie and Michaël Vicente examined the gender gap in

Wikipedia as a reflection of the broader gender inequalities in society.[137] Their study was based

on the statement that the gender gap exists in all versions of Wikipedia, so Wikipedia reproduces

the existing gender inequalities of society.[138] Following a similar line of thinking, the

sociologists Julia Adams, Hannah Bruckner, and Cambria Naslund investigated the extent of

underrepresentation of women and people of color by examining the American sociologists on

Wikipedia.[139] Even though there is diversity in the discipline of sociology, in Wikipedia most

represented sociologists are white men.[140] The paper reveals the mechanisms that are responsible

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[134] Ibid.
[135] Paolo Massa and Asta Zelenkauskaite, "Gender Gap in Wikipedia Editing: A Cross-Language Comparison," in *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration*, ed. Pnina Fichman and Noriko Hara (Lanham: Rowman et Littlefield, 2014), 85-96.
[136] Ibid., 95.
[137] Hélène Bourdeloie and Michaël Vicente, "Contributing to Wikipedia: A Question of Gender," in *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration*, ed. Pnina Fichman and Noriko Hara (Lanham: Rowman et Littlefield, 2014), 148.
[138] Ibid., 147, 157.
[139] Julia Adams, Hannah Bruckner, and Cambria Naslund, "Who Counts as a Notable Sociologist on Wikipedia? Gender, Race, and the "Professor Test," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 5 (2019): 1-14. See also Wei Luo, Julia Adams, and Hannah Brueckner, "The Ladies Vanish? American Sociology and the Genealogy of its Missing Women on Wikipedia," *Comparative Sociology* 17 /5 (2018): 519-556, Julia Adams and Hannah Bruckner, "Wikipedia, Sociology, and the Promise of Big Data," *Big Data & Society* (July-December 2015): 1-5.
[140] Julia Adams et al., "Who Counts as a Notable Sociologist on Wikipedia?" 1.

for the gaps in Wikipedia, such as gatekeeping practices, deletion of articles about women, the

policy of "no original research," etc.[141] One of the latest works on Wikipedia is the collective

study of communication scholar Joseph Reagle and social scientist Jackie Koerner, *Wikipedia*

@20. Stories of an Incomplete Revolution, which explored multiple topics related to Wikipedia

but focused mainly on the problems of diversity, bias, and gender gap of Wikipedia.[142] In one of

the chapters, Jackie Koerner examined the problem of bias that Wikipedia has and makes its

environment of unfriendly for the users.[143] For Koerner, bias exists in Wikipedia's contents,

policies, and participation.[144] So, Wikipedia should restrict all those policies and focus more on

how it will become more inclusive.[145]

The historiography of Wikipedia reveals a broader shift from studies that examined the

accuracy of Wikipedia in the production of knowledge to studies that focused on how Wikipedia

works, its policies, structures, participatory culture to more current works on how Wikipedia can

become more diverse and inclusive. All these works provide a useful context for my research,

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[141] Ibid., 8-11.

[142] Joseph Reagle and Jackie Koerner, *Wikipedia @20. Stories of an Incomplete Revolution* (Massachusetts: MIT Press 2020). On the problem of bias and gender gap, and the need for Wikipedia to become more inclusive and diverse, see Heather Ford and Judy Wajcman, "'Anyone can edit', not everyone does: Wikipedia's infrastructure and the gender gap," *Social Studies of Science* 47/4 (2017): 551-527, Alexandria Lockett, "Why do I have Authority to Edit the Page? The Politics of User Agency and Participation on Wikipedia," in *Wikipedia @20. Stories of an Incomplete Revolution*, ed. Joseph Reagle and Jackie Koerner, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/37r377zs/release/1. Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, Melissa Tamani, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Community," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/llx97ml5/release/2, Adele Vrana, Anasuya Sengupta, Siko Bouterse, "Towards a Wikipedia For and From Us All," in *Wikipedia @20*, ed. Joseph Reagle and Jackie Koerner, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/myb725ma/release/1, Jina Valentine, eliza myrie, and Heather Hart, "The Myth of the Comprehensive Historical Archive," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/bk2j57tr/release/1, Matthew A. Vetter, "Possible Enlightenments: Wikipedia's Encyclopedic Promise and Epistemological Failure," in *Wikipedia @20*, ed. Joseph Reagle and Jackie Koerner, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/n9hykkgk/release/1, Ian A. Ramjohn and LiAnna L. Davis, "Equity, Policy, and Newcomers: Five Journeys from Wiki Education," in *Wikipedia @20,* https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/t0ldob7m/release/1, Katherine Maher, "Capstone: Making History, Building the Future Together," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/4d61w771/release/1.

[143] Jackie Koerner, "Wikipedia Has a Bias Problem," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/rpamp9jh/release/1.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid.

but their combined nature also reveals the lack of works on Wikipedia users' involvement in the production of historical knowledge. Both the engagement of people with the production of historical knowledge and the opportunity that everyone can write their own opinions about history constitute important aspects that are marginalized or neglected by the above-mentioned studies. This perspective is significant if we consider that the main feature of Wikipedia is the "amateurization" of knowledge as the British historian Peter Burke has argued.[146] We cannot have a complete understanding of how Wikipedia works without examining and, more importantly, asking its mains protagonists, the Wikipedia editors, about their engagement with the production of historical knowledge and their participation within the Wikipedia community.

Chapter outline

The dissertation consists of five chapters, each chapter examines different aspects of the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia. The research takes advantage of multiple methods, ranging from qualitative analysis and surveys to quantitative approaches. Specifically, Chapter 1 focuses on history as a subject category of Wikipedia and explores the broader system of Wikipedia. It aims to show how Wikipedia allows editors to produce historical knowledge, what tools Wikipedia provides them, which policies and guidelines it has established, and how it manages to engage users to actively engage with Wikipedia's contents. Its methodology is based on a qualitative analysis of the English-language Wikipedia pages, which refer to the guidelines and methods of Wikipedia.

Chapters 2 and 3 investigate the agency of Wikipedia users by exploring how they engage with history and contribute to the production of historical knowledge. Both chapters

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[146] Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge*, 273.

focus on four case studies, four traumatic historical events that have shaped modern United States history and had a significant impact on the world, the Great Depression, the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Vietnam War, and the September 11 attacks. The second chapter examines the production of history in the pages of the Great Depression and the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while the third chapter analyzes the Vietnam War and September 11 attacks. The point of that division is to show whether there are differences in the users' engagement with history between the four case studies. In both chapters, I study the main pages of the historical events on Wikipedia and their related "talk pages" to show the discussions and debates about history between the involved Wikipedia editors.

Chapter 4 studies the characteristics of Wikipedia users who contribute to pages related to history, the volume of edits they make, their interests, experiences, and education, which make them take part in the Wikipedia community and produce historical knowledge. By applying a network analysis of thousands of Wikipedia historical pages, I detect repeating patterns that reveal why Wikipedia editors decide to contribute to pages related to history, the interests of Wikipedia editors, who engage with articles related to history, and their identities as they are promoted within the Wikipedia community. At the same time, by examining the number of edits Wikipedians make and the centrality of Wikipedia editors within a network, I reveal the different kinds of editors, their roles, and their power, which define the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia. This chapter is based on the pages from three categories related to modern United States history, "History of organizations based in the United States," "History of science and technology in the United States," and "LGBT history in the United States."[147]

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[147] For the three categories, see "Category:History of organizations based in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:History_of_organizations_based_in_the_United_States, "Category:History of science and technology in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021,

Chapter 5 examines the experiences of Wikipedians, who create and edit historical pages on Wikipedia. By doing survey research and asking Wikipedians themselves, this chapter provides an overview of Wikipedia users' engagement with history, their editing experiences, the reasons why they edit, their historical interests, their criteria to edit or create a historical page, their personal relation to the historical topics they edit, their educational background, their collaboration with other editors, and their activity within the -history related - WikiProjects. The results of the survey and the stories that participants shared in their responses answer why Wikipedians get involved in the production of historical knowledge and how they view the past they create or edit.

Overall, this dissertation presents Wikipedia as a "sociotechnical system" that manages to engage a public audience and make it active agent in the production of historical knowledge.[148] The engagement of the public with the history is based on scholarship, personal experiences, intimate relations to the past, emotions, and is disciplined by a community-authored set of guidelines and practices. However, that engagement with history does not always result in the production of historical knowledge. Even though Wikipedia allows all its users to discuss the editing process of a Wikipedia article and express their own historical understandings in the "talk page" of the article, few of them, the most experienced editors and some non-human agents can make their contributions part of the main article.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:History_of_science_and_technology_in_the_United_States,
"Category:LGBT history in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:LGBT_history_in_the_United_States.
[148] For the term "sociotechnical" system of Wikipedia, see Sabine Niederer and José van Dijck, "Wisdom of the Crowd or technicity of the content?"

Chapter 1: Framing the Production of Historical knowledge on Wikipedia: Policies, Guidelines, Methods, Hierarchy, and History

We cannot understand how historical knowledge is produced on Wikipedia without knowing how Wikipedia works, how it appeared in the digital and public sphere, what rules it has established to produce knowledge. The aim of this chapter is to shed light on how the Wikipedia community collects and disseminates knowledge, what tools it uses, how Wikipedia editors decide which pages will create or edit, and what is the hierarchy of users within that community. Wikipedia as an encyclopedia includes subjects ranging from mathematics and biology to sports, culture, and the arts. Even if all guidelines and hierarchical structures are common for all its subjects, there are particular modifications and rules for each subject. In other words, each content category seems to be a small, consolidated community within the broader community of Wikipedia.

In this chapter, my analysis will focus on history as a content subject category of Wikipedia, but at the same time, I will explore the broader system of Wikipedia to examine the relation between Wikipedia's world and the production of historical knowledge within Wikipedia community. In other words, the chapter aims to show how Wikipedia allows editors to produce historical knowledge, what tools Wikipedia provides them, which policies and guidelines it has established, and how it manages to engage users to actively engage with Wikipedia's contents.

More specifically, I will examine the historical context, in which Wikipedia was founded, and the major technological and epistemological influences that shape its identity. Secondly, I will analyze the guidelines and methods that Wikipedia has established and explore how all these policies determine the production of historical knowledge. Wikipedia is not an empty box.

Instead, it provides both editors and users with a framework of interaction and engagement. The public agency within the Wikipedia community is determined by a set of rules established by the Wikimedia Foundation, the organization that funds Wikipedia and other related projects.[1] These rules allow specific types of engagement with history and, thus, define the production of historical knowledge. At the same time, the policies of Wikipedia reveal how the online encyclopedia has perceived history in the last twenty years of its function. Thirdly, I will investigate the hierarchy that exists within the Wikipedia community and show how that hierarchy affects users' engagement with the history. Lastly, I will examine history as a content category and the related WikiProjects that Wikipedia users interested in history have created. My main argument here is that a community-authored set of guidelines and practices enables and encourages the active agency of Wikipedia users within the Wikipedia community. However, these policies create a multilayered system of bureaucracy and surveillance that controls users' behaviors within the community, checks the quality of its contents, and supervises the editors' role in the production of historical knowledge.

The historical context of Wikipedia

Wikipedia itself has constructed its own history by creating a page about its relationship with other epistemological and technological developments. In that way, Wikipedia connects itself with different encyclopedic traditions and the broader history of knowledge and technology. According to the page, "History of Wikipedia," Wikipedia seems to have its roots in the Libraries of Alexandria and Pergamum, but its function is based on the printed encyclopedia of Dennis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, the *Encyclopédie*, and other eighteenth-century

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[1] See "Wikimedia Foundation," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Foundation.

French encyclopedists.[2] As the historian Peter Burke has argued, those encyclopedias signified a broader reform in the organization of knowledge itself, which became systematic and based on "research" and "improvement."[3] In these encyclopedias, knowledge became secular and covered topics from agriculture to education.[4] At the same time, even if Diderot and d'Alembert argued that there are several possible systems of knowledge and thus challenged the model of tree, which was the dominant system of knowledge organization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they organized the knowledge of the *Encyclopédie* by using a diagram of a tree.[5] The tree signified that knowledge has specific roots and a single order.

Wikipedia also clarifies that its influences are not limited to the encyclopedists of the eighteenth but is connected to several personalities of the twentieth century, who were devoted to compiling the world's knowledge in a single location.[6] Wikipedia refers to Paul Otlet, a Belgian information activist, who challenged the tree as a model for knowledge organization and argued that knowledge is a network, an interconnected web.[7] Thus, knowledge does not have a specific root but is interconnected.[8] At the end of the nineteenth century, Otlet created the Universal Decimal Classification Scheme to show the "multidimensionality of knowledge relationships" that the tree system could not present.[9] Otlet also wrote several books, in one of them, the *Traité de documentation* published in 1934, he developed the idea of using automated machinery to build a more useful encyclopedia and in 1910 he created the institution of Mundaneumto present

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[2] "History of Wikipedia," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 16, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Wikipedia#Background.
[3] Peter Burke, *A Social History of knowledge*, 254-255.
[4] Ibid., 254.
[5] Ruth Ahnert, Sebastien E. Ahnert, Catherine Nicole Coleman, and Scott B. Weingart, *The Network Turn. Changing Perspectives in the Humanities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 30.
[6] "History of Wikipedia."
[7] Ruth Ahnert et al., *The Network Turn*, 32.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

new methods on how to collect and organize the world's knowledge.[10] Paul Otlet was one of the first figures, who developed the idea that technology can produce, collect, and disseminate knowledge on an international scale.[11] This idea was based on the available technologies of his time, such as loose-leaf binders, index cards, and microphotography.[12]

Wikipedia also mentions two other personalities, H. G. Wells and Vannevar Bush, who were considered by Wikipedia as its main ancestors.[13] Both figures are very interesting and important not only for how Wikipedia presents itself but also for how Wikipedia connects itself with the broader history of computing. Firstly, H. G. Wells was a British socialist, novelist, and science writer influenced by the idea of Paul Otlet that knowledge can be classified flexibly and in multiple dimensions.[14] Wells did not agree with the narrow specialization of human knowledge and worked toward the creation of a World Encyclopedia, like what Diderot had done in the eighteenth century.[15] For Wells, the World Encyclopedia should have the form of a network of people as a "World Brain."[16] He started to develop his ideas about the concept of a machine-assisted encyclopedia in his book, *World Brain* (1938).[17] Both Otlet and Wells focused on the technologies of their time and developed an international vision for knowledge.[18] They expressed the idea of a universal encyclopedia based on technology and collaboration on a large

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Joseph Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration*, 20.
[12] Ibid., 21.
[13] "History of Wikipedia."
[14] Martin Campbell-Kelly and William Aspray, *Computer: A History of the Information Machine* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2004), 256, Ruth Ahnert et al., *The Network Turn*, 33.
[15] Campbell-Kelly and Aspray, *Computer*, 256-257.
[16] Ibid., 257.
[17] "History of Wikipedia."
[18] Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration*, 24.

scale.[19] However, as the communication scholar, Joseph Reagle has argued, this vision could not be accomplished with the available technology in the first half of the twentieth century.[20]

Vannevar Bush was also an influential figure for the development of Wikipedia. As the historians, Martin Campbell-Kelly and William Aspray write, in the postwar United States, H. G. Wells met Vannevar Bush the scientist and inventor who had developed an analog computer and had become chief scientific adviser to the president and head of the Office of Scientific Research and Development.[21] During the 1940s, Vannevar Bush was a prominent figure. He was working at MIT as an engineer and had an important influence on the government[22] Bush's greatest achievement was the OSRD's army of scientific men and university research laboratories to offer computational power and win the war.[23] It is worth mentioning, as the historian of technology Margaret O'Mara writes, the Stanford's engineer, Frederick Emmons Terman, was a PhD student of Vannevar Bush at MIT and then became faculty member at Stanford University.[24] Terman became Dean at Stanford and soon transformed Stanford to a high-tech university and contributed to the economic development of the West.[25] Bush envisaged a personal information machine, a proto-hypertext device that he called the memex.[26] This machine could contain much information but also make use of it. He defined memex as "a device in which an individual stores all his books, records, and communications, and which is mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility. It is an enlarged intimate supplement to human memory."[27]

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[19] Ibid., 26.
[20] Ibid., 27.
[21] Campbell-Kelly, *Computer: A History of the Information Machine*, 257.
[22] Margaret O'Mara, *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of America* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019), 20.
[23] Ibid., 21.
[24] Ibid., 21.
[25] Ibid., 27-28.
[26] Campbell-Kelly, *Computer: A History of the Information Machine*, 258.
[27] Ibid.

However, the existing technologies of the period could not allow the creation of that network of computers.[28]

The other major influence of Wikipedia comes from Ted Nelson, an American pioneer of information technology, philosopher, and sociologist, who introduced the concepts of hypertext and hypermedia through the Xanadu project, which appeared in 1960.[29] The Xanadu project was influenced by Bush's memex, however, users could create a document and make it available to other users for editing.[30] So, instead of several copies, users could make several edits on a single document and then store it. Also, the Xanadu project allows users to create links between whatever they want to link.[31] However, in the 1990s, the emergence of the Web lead to the dismissal of the Xanadu project, as the Web became the dominant networked system.[32]

In the 1990s, the Internet had become a public communication tool and embraced several opportunities for information gathering, social interaction, entertainment, and self-expression.[33] The Internet had moved from military to civilian control and made the network more accessible to the broader public.[34] During that time, people continued talking about the creation of a free and universal Internet encyclopedia. The major projects of that decade were the Interpedia of Rick Gates, which appeared as an idea in 1993, and GNUpedia of Richard Stallman, which appeared in 2000.[35] In the 1990s, more and more universities and companies were using emails and Usenet, so the idea of Interpedia was on these developments.[36] However, the project was not

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[28] Ibid., 259.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration*, 27, Belinda Barnet, *Memory Machines. The Evolution of Hypertext* (London, New York, Delhi: Anthem Press, 2013), 84-85.

[31] Barnet, *Memory Machines*, 85.

[32] Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration*, 28.

[33] Janet Abbate, *Inventing the Internet*, 181.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Roy Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 119.

[36] Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration*, 33.

accomplished, as its members were not very active in mailing and Usenet groups.[37] The project

managed to introduce the idea that anyone can create articles and a decentralized system can

check the quality of the articles.[38] So, that system will not accept or reject an article but will put a

seal that this article is good. The project also introduced the idea that editors should be based on

a "good faith" collaboration.[39]

The other influential project for Wikipedia is Richard Stallman's GNUpedia. Stallman

was an important pioneer in free and open-source software and a leading figure in the Free

Software Movement.[40] In the 1970s, Stallman was a programmer at the Artificial Intelligence

Lab at MIT and a significant member of the hacker culture left MIT and decided to open an

entire operating system (OS) that would not follow the concept of closed software.[41] He also

established a nonprofit company, the Free Software Foundation (FSF) to supervise the

movement and create copyright licenses.[42] Other programmers followed that logic and started the

Open Source Initiative (OSI).[43] Both FSF and OSI argued that the commodification of software

reduced the liberties of individuals who use it.[44] The free and open-source software (FOSS)

created several new products, such as the Open Humanities Press, the Bentham Open project,

Open Medicine, Open Courseware Consortium, Open Everything movement, etc.[45]

Richard Stallman, who envisioned the creation of an online encyclopedia was part of the

Free Software movement. The Free Software movement was based on the 1960s critique against

industrial-military complex that connected technology with centralization, violence, and

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 34.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired*, 119.
[41] Nathaniel Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness*, 22.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 23.
[44] Ibid., 25.
[45] Ibid., 25-27.

hierarchy.[46] That movement promoted the idea that the software should be free and should not belong to corporations and saw the Internet as an open space of discussion and communication.[47] According to the GNU operating system website, "the free software movement campaigns to win for the users of computing the freedom that comes from free software. Free software puts its users in control of their own computing. Nonfree software puts its users under the power of the software's developer."[48] As it also writes, "free software means the users have the freedom to run, copy, distribute, study, change and improve the software."[49] The Free Software movement was based on the 1960s critique against industrial-military complex that connected technology with centralization, violence, and hierarchy.[50] Influenced by the free and open-source software developments, Stallman proposed GNUPedia in 2000 and it appeared in 2001. According to Stallman's plan, each article should be written by a single author like in Interpedia.[51] He envisioned a decentralized system of knowledge without any central authority.[52] However, Stallman's idea just remained a proposal and it did not manage to become a completed project.[53]

While Stallman was planning for the creation of GNUpedia, Jimmy Wales was working on the creation of an online encyclopedia that would follow the structures of the past encyclopedias, and mainly of Encyclopedia Britannica.[54] The name of the encyclopedia that Jimmy Wales created, was Nupedia and went online in September 2000.[55] However, Wales

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[46] Margaret O'Mara, *The Code*, 120-126, Thomas P. Hughes, *American Genesis. A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm 1870-1970* (New York, New York: Viking Penguin Books, 1989), 11.
[47] For a broader analysis of the Free Software, see Christopher M. Kelty, *Two Bits. The Cultural Significance of Free Software* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008).
[48] "What is free software?" *GNU Operating System*, accessed May 26, 2020, https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.en.html.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Margaret O'Mara, *The Code*, 120-126, Thomas P. Hughes, *American Genesis*, 11.
[51] Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration*, 37.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 38.
[54] Fethi Erinç Salor, *Sum of all Knowledge*, 93.
[55] Ibid.

realized soon that the process of creation and editing articles in Nupedia demanded a lot of time, as the topic had to be studied professionally, so every article had to be sent to experts for review.[56] Wales has explained that the whole process was "felt like homework".[57] During the first months of Nupedia, from September 2000 to the end of 2000, there were only twenty-one articles online. Wales also hired Larry Sanger, who had finished his PhD in Philosophy from Ohio State University and was actively participating in online mailing lists and Usenet discussion groups about the philosopher Ayn Rand and objectivism.[58] Sanger became the first paid editor in chief.[59]

Both Jimmy Wallers and Larry Sanger, the two founders of Wikipedia, were also involved in the hacker culture of the early 1990s. In this childhood, Jimmy Wales was playing Dungeons & Dragons, a popular fantasy game of that period.[60] In the 1980s, a computer network, named Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) was created and allowed users not only to play games but also to create virtual fantasy worlds.[61] Wales became an active player of MUDs at Alabama during the 1980s and started to explore the opportunities of networked computers. He was also participating in several online discussion forums.[62] In a similar context, Larry Sanger, as he has admitted, when he was young, was also playing computer games and was coding an adventure game in BASIC, the first popular programming language.[63] Combining his interests in epistemology and programming, he created a mailing list, the Association for Systematic

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[56] Roy Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired*, 119.
[57] Stacy Schiff, "Know it all: Can Wikipedia Conquer Expertise," *The New Yorker*, July 31, 2006, accessed December 4, 2019, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/07/31/know-it-all.
[58] Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired*, 119.
[59] Ibid., 120.
[60] Marshall Poe, "The Hive," *The Atlantic*, accessed May 26, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/09/the-hive/305118/
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

Philosophy, in which users could discuss philosophy and express their opinions on different philosophical issues.[64]

After the creation of Nupedia, Jimmy Wales and his colleagues became aware of the success of open-source software, so they decided to change the structure and the model of Nupedia and create an encyclopedia based on the tools of sharing and openness. In January 2001, Jimmy Wales learned about a website, called WikiWikiWeb, which allowed anyone to edit any page at any time, while no special software was needed and no log-in or password was required, and the changes on a page were saved immediately.[65] The WikiWikiWeb software was developed by the programmer Ward Cunningham in the 1990s and allowed anyone to create and edit a Web page.[66]

By mid-January 2001, Sanger and Wales had followed that model and changed the encyclopedia's name to Wikipedia. From a free and online encyclopedia of experts, Wikipedia transformed to an encyclopedia, in which "anyone could edit any page at any time."[67] Soon, Wikipedia managed to surpass Nupedia and create a new community of people, which actively engages with its contents. Wales also created a discussion list for Wikipedia's users to enhance the improvement of the project.[68] In late-January, Wikipedia had managed to have seventeen articles, in late February it had 150 articles, in March 572, in April 835, in May 1,300, in June 1,700, in July 2,400, and in August, 3,700.[69] At the end of 2001, Wikipedia had 15,000 articles and 350 Wikipedia editors.[70] In late 2001, while a significant economic decrease in the dot-com industry was taking place, Sanger could not receive its salary, so he continued working

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Schiff, "Know it all," Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia Revolution*, 44, 61.
[66] Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired*, 120.
[67] Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia* Revolution, 14.
[68] Poe, "The Hive."
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

voluntarily on the project and on March 2002 he officially resigned from the project.[71] When Sanger stopped working on Wikipedia, he started making some claims about the encyclopedia's hostility to experts and problems of accuracy.[72]

So, why did Wikipedia become a successful free and online encyclopedia, while all the previous efforts failed? Joseph Reagle offers an adequate answer to that question. According to his analysis, Wikipedia was the project that managed to apply all the ideas related to universal knowledge production, access to knowledge, and collaboration through the wiki technology.[73] The wiki was the most significant factor that excelled Wikipedia in comparison to previous technological and epistemological efforts. The wiki gave people the opportunity to edit the Web and offered the tools for communication, documentation, contribution, reversion, and discussion.[74] In 2005, Jimmy Wales gave talk about the emergence of Wikipedia and explained the basic logic behind the online encyclopedia.[75] He argued that the major technological feature of Wikipedia is the wiki technology, which gives power to anyone who wants to create content.[76]

As shown in that chapter, Wikipedia has managed to combine a series of older epistemological and technological developments and create a digital and public space that enables users to contribute to the production of (historical) knowledge. Wikipedia's influences, the history that presents itself, its relation to important figures from the history of knowledge and computing make clear that Wikipedia incorporates an encyclopedic tradition and technological

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[71] Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia* Revolution, 174-175.

[72] Rosenzweig, *Clio Wired*, 121. See also Larry Sanger's user profile on Wikipedia, in which he also explains his involvement in Wikipedia, "User:Larry Sanger," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Larry_Sanger.

[73] Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration*, 42. Reagle clarifies that wiki technology was one of the important factors that made Wikipedia successful. Other factors were the NPOV policy, "culture of collaboration," "good faith social norms," and the role of the "benevolent dictator."

[74] Ibid., 171.

[75] Jimmy Wales, "The Birth of Wikipedia," *TED*, accessed December 10, 2020, https://www.ted.com/talks/jimmy_wales_the_birth_of_wikipedia#t-176024.

[76] Ibid.

mechanisms that aimed to empower the public and make it an active agent in the compilation of

human knowledge. However, most of those ideas remained either incomplete or did not manage

to give birth to a concrete project that will attract the public in long term. By borrowing ideas

and innovations from the past, Wikipedia has managed to make users active participants in the

collection, production, and dissemination of human knowledge. However, these features could

not stand alone and provide a digital public space, where a high number of people will be able to

co-exist effectively and produce historical knowledge efficiently.

Organizing the chaos: Policies and guidelines on content and conduct

In 2003, the constant growth of Wikipedia and the lack of revenues to fund the project

made Wales create the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation.[77] The aim of the foundation was to

supervise Wikipedia, appoint the appropriate staff to run the online encyclopedia and other

projects, such as the Wiktionary, and for organizing annual fundraising efforts.[78] Thus, Wales

transferred all the rights of Wikipedia to the Wikimedia Foundation and created a board of

trustees for the administration of the foundation.[79]

Since the creation of Wikipedia in 2001, there were few rules that determined both the

production of Wikipedia's contents and the interaction between the involved users.[80] However,

the establishment of the Wikimedia Foundation gave a more formal organizing structure to

Wikipedia, which expanded its rules and methods of knowledge production.[81] Wikipedia's

structure includes policies and guidelines that focus on how the content of Wikipedia and the

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[77] "Wikimedia Foundation," *Wikipedia*, accessed December 4, 2019,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Foundation#History.
[78] E. Salor, *Sum of all Knowledge*, 98.
[79] Ibid.,"Board of Trustees," *Wikipedia*, accessed December 4, 2019,
https://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Board_of_Trustees.
[80] Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia* Revolution, 112-113.
[81] E. Salor, *Sum of all Knowledge*, 99.

users' conduct within the Wikipedia community. In that way, Wikipedia creates a framework of interaction for its users and, thus, it can better control users' behaviors within the community of Wikipedia, check the quality of its contents, and, even more importantly, the editors' role in the production of historical knowledge.

As Wikipedia clarifies, its policies and guidelines are developed by the Wikipedia community and reflect the consensus of the community.[82] However, as Phoebe Ayers has argued, the policies and guidelines are mainly determined by the most experienced users of the community.[83] The policies and guidelines of Wikipedia have changed over time, as they respond to the needs and problems that Wikipedia faces every time. Unfortunately, there are no studies on how the Wikipedia community has developed its policies and guidelines since its creation in 2001. Nevertheless, as we can see in the works that have examined Wikipedia in the last two decades, there are some basic policies and guidelines, which determine the creation of content and Wikipedians' behaviors without having changed significantly. Those policies will be the subject of this chapter.

Wikipedia policies, guidelines, and rules appear on several pages and reveal how Wikipedia's system works. Even though, Wikipedia remains a chaotic digital space and it is almost impossible to analyze all these rules and policies, here I try to investigate the most significant of them, namely, those which determine how historical knowledge is produced. It is worth mentioning that all the pages described below are interconnected, as each page includes hyperlinks, which serve as references to other pages and, in that way, provide more explanations on how Wikipedia works. There is not only one page that contains all the guidelines and rules of

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[82] "Wikipedia:Policies and guidelines," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 3, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Policies_and_guidelines.
[83] Phoebe Ayers, "Wikipedia and Libraries," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/si6bc9pb/release/1.

Wikipedia. Instead, there is a network of policies, which appear on several pages and are interconnected through hyperlinks, so the user can jump from one page to the other and explore the universe of Wikipedia. Lastly, all the analyzed guidelines and policies refer to the English Wikipedia and cannot be applied to other editions of Wikipedia.[84]

The first policies that appeared on Wikipedia were the "neutral point of view" (NPOV), "verifiability" (V), and "no original research" (NOR).[85] These three policies constitute the three "core content policies" of Wikipedia, which "determine the type and quality of material that is acceptable in Wikipedia articles."[86] In other words, these three content policies shape the character of knowledge – in this case study, historical knowledge, - that Wikipedia collects, produces, and disseminates.

The policy of "neutral point of view" (NPOV) means that the content of Wikipedia articles should be neutral, fair, and without bias.[87] Wikipedia editors should not be biased, they should "describe disputes, but not engaged in them (sic)."[88] As Jimmy Wales has explained, the policy of neutrality is determinant for the quality of Wikipedia, it has been established at the beginning of Wikipedia, and is not debatable.[89] NPOV does not prevent editors from writing their own opinions about the related topics; instead, it forces them to present a more balanced narrative. As Wales has mentioned, Wikipedia does not emphasize in truth, as truth is subjective.[90] Wikipedia emphasized in neutrality, which is a "social concept of co-operation."[91]

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia* Revolution, 112-113.
[86] "Wikipedia: Core content policies," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 3, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Core_content_policies.
[87] Ibid.
[88] "Wikipedia:Neutral point of view," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 3, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view.
[89] Jimmy Wales, "The Birth of Wikipedia."
[90] Wales, "The Birth of Wikipedia."
[91] Ibid.

So, the goal of neutrality is to show what different editors write about a topic and, in that way, make them work together.[92]

The principle of NPOV does not exist only on Wikipedia but is connected to other epistemological fields. If we think about the historical scholarship in Wikipedia's terms, we notice that the notion of objectivity has been strongly connected to the study of history. As the philosopher of history, Herman Paul has mentioned, objectivity in the discipline of history is connected with the detachment of historians' feelings, opinions and biases, which has traditionally been regarded as a virtue for the historians and as "a sine qua non for epistemic success.".[93] In a more extensive analysis of objectivity, the historians, Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza argue that since the professionalization of historical studies in the late nineteenth century, the concept of objectivity became strongly connected to history and the work of historian.[94] The modern conception of objectivity meant use of footnotes, bibliographies, and different types of primary sources.[95] However, in the mid twentieth century, several historians challenged the idea of objectivity as something impossible and replaced it with the concept of "impartiality."[96] On the other hand, many historians argued that objectivity is crucial for the work of the historian, even if it is difficult to be reached.[97] Wikipedia values objectivity in terms of producing balanced and not biased historical narrative based on "verifiable sources." That feature is not radically

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Herman Paul, "What is a scholarly persona? Ten theses on virtues skills, and desires," *History and Theory* 53 (2014): 361.

[94] Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, "Introduction: The Cultural History of Historical Thought," in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, ed. Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 809. Kramer and Maza also mention that the relation between objectivity and history is even older and goes before the modern era.

[95] Ibid., 9. On the relation between history and "objectivity," see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Graham, Otis, et al. "'The Ideal of Objectivity' and the Profession of History." *Public Historian* 13 (1991): 9-23. For the broader concept of "objectivity" and its transformations over time, see Loraine Daston and Peter Galiston, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007).

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

different from how scholars approach historical knowledge, even if it seems more like a nineteenth century characteristic of historical studies.

The content policy of "verifiability" refers to the sources that Wikipedia editors should use to find information and, thus, produce knowledge.[98] That policy is important for the perception of history within the Wikipedia community. As the historian Despoina Valatsou writes, the concept of "verifiability" seems to replace the concept of truth on Wikipedia.[99] In other words, for Wikipedia, the most significant thing is not to produce "true" knowledge, as truth can be a contested notion.[100] The historian Marshall Poe provides an interesting definition of the truth on Wikipedia:

The power of the community to decide, of course, asks us to reexamine what we mean when we say that something is "true." We tend to think of truth as something that resides in the world. […] But Wikipedia suggests a different theory of truth. Just think about the way we learn what words mean. Generally speaking, we do so by listening to other people (our parents, first). Since we want to communicate with them (after all, they feed us), we use the words in the same way they do. Wikipedia says judgments of truth and falsehood work the same way. The community decides that two plus two equals four the same way it decides what an apple is: by consensus. Yes, that means that if the community changes its minds and decides that two plus two equals five, then two plus two does equal five. The community isn't likely to do such an absurd or useless thing, but it has the ability.[101]

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[98] "Wikipedia: Verifiability," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 3, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability.

[99] Despoina Valatsou, *Ανάδυση νέων μνημονικών τόπων στο διαδίκτυο*, 105.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Marshall Poe, "The Hive," cited in Despoina Valatsou, *Ανάδυση νέων μνημονικών τόπων στο διαδίκτυο*, 105-106.

Even if the description of Marshall Poe is overstated, he adequately presents the important role of the Wikipedia community in the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia. The policy of "verifiability" shows that Wikipedia does not care about what is "true" according to editors' views or research but what is "verifiable."[102] Wikipedia has created a separate page about that topic, named "Verifiability, not truth," in which it argues that "verifiability" is the minimum requirement for Wikipedia to accept a material.[103] It is interesting that the concept of "verifiability" is also associated with historical scholarship since the modern era. Historians have used the "verifiability" of sources as "evidence to support historical claims about what happened in the past."[104] In the nineteenth century, historians managed to separate themselves from novelists, poets, artists, and philosophers.[105] Of course, historians do not only aim to find "verifiable sources" but also to "tell a good story," in other words, to produce an accurate historical narrative.[106]

The third content policy is "no original research," which makes clear that Wikipedia articles should not be results of original research, as academic articles are, but they should be based on secondary published sources.[107] According to that policy, Wikipedia articles should be based on reliable -published- sources, namely, secondary sources, which are known and widely accepted.[108] This kind of research seems completely antithetical to academic historical research,

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[102] "Wikipedia:Verifiability, not truth," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability,_not_truth.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, "Introduction: The Cultural History of Historical Thought," 8.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] "Wikipedia: Core content policies."
[108] Ibid. For more information, see "Wikipedia:No original research," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No_original_research.

which is based on primary sources and values original research.[109] It is consistent, though, with

traditional encyclopedias and other tertiary sources.

To clarify its content policies, Wikipedia explains what sources are considered "reliable,

published sources."[110] According to Wikipedia, the definition of reliability is complex and

depends on three factors, the work itself, the author of the work, and the publisher of the work.[111]

The reliability of a source also depends on the broader context, in which this source will be used,

and the age of the sources, especially, for scientific and academic topics, as older sources can be

regarded as outdated and inaccurate.[112] However, Wikipedia warns editors to be careful when

they use very new sources and be able to discern the historical differences between the present

and the past and do not make anachronistic arguments.[113] This is particularly interesting about

historical topics, because, as Wikipedia mentions, editors should be aware of the problem of

"recentism" and provide a broader, long-term historical view.[114]

In addition to that, Wikipedia cites a catalogue of the sources that it considers as reliable

materials in each subject area.[115] It suggests different sources for mathematics, physics, arts,

sports, geography, and history. For the users interested in creating and articles about history,

Wikipedia urges users, to use mainly published scholarly sources from academic presses. These

sources include both books and journal articles, some of them can be available online and the

users can have easy access.[116] They can also use specialized encyclopedias on historical topics,

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[109] E. Salor, *Sum of all Knowledge*, 101.
[110] "Wikipedia:Reliable sources," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable_sources.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] "Wikipedia:Recentism," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Recentism.
[115] "Wikipedia:Reliable source examples," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable_source_examples#History.
[116] Ibid.

which are edited by experts.[117] As Wikipedia claims, the users can use "memoirs and oral histories that specialists consult with caution, for they are filled with stories that people wish to remember—and usually recall without going back to the original documentation."[118] This is an interesting point, as it shows that Wikipedia adopts its guidelines and policies to the subject that it aims to cover. It does not regard the same types of sources as reliable for both all its subjects. Also, the use of oral histories for articles about history reveals the broader Wikipedia's desire to cover marginal communities and individuals, who cannot be covered by printed materials. Wikipedia seems to value people's memories, at least at the level of guidelines and for the subject of history, even though several studies have pointed out the absence of oral histories within Wikipedia's contents.[119]

On the other hand, Wikipedia supports that its users should not get information about history from novels, films, TV shows, or tour guides at various sites, as "they are full of rumor and gossip and false or exaggerated tales and tend to present rosy-colored histories in which the well-known names are portrayed heroically."[120] Popular forms of history are not regarded as accurate historical knowledge by Wikipedia. Therefore, even though Wikipedia is a digital encyclopedia, its reliability and more specifically the reliability of the historical articles on Wikipedia is mainly based on printed academic sources that can be or cannot be available online. Even if Wikipedia has a public and digital character, it seems to prioritize printed and academic

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] About the absence of oral histories on Wikipedia, see Matthew A. Vetter, "Possible Enlightenments: Wikipedia's Encyclopedic Promise and Epistemological Failure," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/n9hykkgk/release/1, Jake Orlowitz, "How Wikipedia Drove Professors Crazy, Made Me Sane, and Almost Saved the Internet," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/n2e934et/release/1.
[120] "Wikipedia:Reliable source examples."

sources. In that way, on Wikipedia history is crowdsourced only in its editors' abilities to synthesize established academic knowledge.

Apart from the main content policies of Wikipedia, there are also broader principles that guide user engagement with Wikipedia. On his profile page, Jimmy Wales has listed the main principles of Wikipedia. The Wikipedia community created the "Statement of Principles" in October 2001.[121] Wikipedia has updated these principles since then but there are minor differences between the 2001 version and the current.[122] Specifically, Wales refers to Wikipedia's openness by arguing that "Wikipedia's success to date is entirely a function of our open community," namely that anyone can take part in Wikipedia community and contribute to its contents.[123] He adds that Wikipedia will continue to exist and grow, if the users respect the NPOV policy and promote a "culture of thoughtful, diplomatic honesty."[124] He encourages new users to take part and write, and makes clear that there should be no organization, elitism, or any hierarchy within Wikipedia, which prevents new users from participating in the community.[125] This does not mean that Wikipedia should not face vandalism or other misbehavior. [126] Instead, it means that more experienced editors should not impose obstacles for new users and, instead, create a friendly environment for them. Wales also writes that any user should feel free to intervene in the editing of Wikipedia articles and check the edits that have already taken place. He also reminds the collaborative spirit of Wikipedia to have good quality contents. As he mentions, "any changes to the software must be gradual and reversible," which means that

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[121] For the 2001 version of the statement of principles, see "User:Jimbo Wales/Statement of principles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 11, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=409315229.
[122] "User:Jimbo Wales/Statement of principles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 11, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Jimbo_Wales/Statement_of_principles.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.

editing on Wikipedia should be result of "community consensus."[127] Furthermore, users should

respect the non-licensed form of Wikipedia's contents and their open character. Users should

understand that "Wikipedia is an encyclopedia," so, it should cover more and more topics.[128]

Thus, editors should work on more and more subject areas and keep the existing ones constantly

updated. Users, who are dissatisfied and have complaints, should share their problems with other

users but in a "constructive way."[129] They should engage in discussions about the related topics

to develop and improve the coverage of the topic. The last principle refers to the way users

should behave within the Wikipedia community. As Wales writes, users should behave with

"honesty and politeness," and should not "misrepresent" other users' arguments.[130] In that way,

Wikipedia editors can reach a "community consensus," do not perform vandalism, and improve

Wikipedia's contents.

Wikipedia has established several other principles that supplement each other. One of

them is the "trifecta", as Wikipedia calls it, the three main guiding principles of the

encyclopedia.[131] In 2005, Wikipedia established the principles of "trifecta" to determine users'

engagement with Wikipedia's contents.[132] The "trifecta" warns editors to "remain neutral,"

"don't be a jerk," and "ignore all rules" (IAR).[133] The first principle refers to the policy of

neutrality that is analyzed above. The second principle shows the polite and respectful way

Wikipedia editors should behave within the Wikipedia community, while they create and edit

articles. The third principle is the most crucial here, as it reveals how Wikipedia perceives

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[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] "Wikipedia:Trifecta," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 12, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Trifecta.
[132] "Wikipedia:Trifecta: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 12, 2020,
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Trifecta&offset=&limit=500&action=history.
[133] "Wikipedia:Trifecta."

editors' agency. It introduces the logic of "ignore all rules," which means that users should prioritize the editing and improvement of Wikipedia, even it goes against Wikipedia's rules. It is worth mentioning that the principle of IAR was one of the first policies of Wikipedia and aimed to encourage users to participate in the Wikipedia community.[134] Specifically, Larry Sanger, the co-founder of Wikipedia proposed the policy of IAR, as he wanted to make clear that the rules of Wikipedia should not prevent users from taking part in the editing of Wikipedia articles.[135] According to Wikipedia, the original formulation of IAR was: "If rules make you nervous and depressed, and not desirous of participation in the Wiki, then ignore them and go about your business."[136] Wikipedia cites the following example to explain what this policy means in practice:

> Are you sure that your idea is a good one by common sense and that it improves the encyclopedia?
>
> No: DON'T DO IT
>
> Yes:
>
> Does it break the rules?
>
> No: DO IT
>
> Yes:
>
> Is that because the rules are wrong?
>
> No: Ignore the rules and DO IT
>
> Yes: Change the rules and DO IT.[137]

IAR is significant for how users should contribute to the production of knowledge on Wikipedia. It activates users' agency and subjectivities and does not just oblige them to follow

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[134] Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia* Revolution, 112.
[135] Ibid.
[136] "Ignore all rules," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 17, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignore_all_rules.
[137] "Wikipedia:What "Ignore all rules" means," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 17, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:What_%22Ignore_all_rules%22_means&oldid=851388560.

all the established rules and policies. Instead, Wikipedia promotes the belief that users should

improve the encyclopedia, even if they do not follow all rules.[138]

Since 2005, the Wikipedia community has updated the "trifecta" to the contemporary

version of the "five pillars," which summarize the fundamental principles of Wikipedia.

According to those principles, Wikipedia constitutes an encyclopedia which means that "it is not

a soapbox, an advertising platform, a vanity press, an experiment in anarchy or democracy, an

indiscriminate collection of information, or a web directory.[139] "It is not a dictionary, a

newspaper, or a collection of source documents, although some of its Wikimedia projects are."[140]

Secondly, "Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view." In other words, Wikipedia

consists of articles that "document and explain major points of view, giving due weight with

respect to their performance in an impartial zone."[141] This can be achieved if "articles strive for

verifiable accuracy, citing reliable, authoritative sources, especially when the project is

controversial or is on living persons."[142] Furthermore, "editors' personal experiences,

interpretations or opinions do not belong" to Wikipedia[143] Moreover, Wikipedia contents are free

and "anyone can use, edit and distribute." This means that "no editor owns an article and any

contributions can and will be mercilessly edited and redistributed."[144] Nevertheless, they have to

"respect copyright laws, and never plagiarize from sources."[145] They should also behave with

"respect and civility."[146] The last principle is that "Wikipedia has no firm rules", which means

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[138] See "Wikipedia:Here to build an encyclopedia," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 17, 2020,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Here_to_build_an_encyclopedia.
[139] "Wikipedia: Five Pillars," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 20, 2017,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Five_pillars.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.

that "Wikipedia has policies and guidelines, but are not carved in stone."[147] Consequently, "their content and interpretation can evolve over time."[148] The last pillar is the most important, as it consolidates users' active role within Wikipedia. The pillar of "no firm rules" is strongly connected to the policy of "ignore all rules" that I analyzed above. Both policies encourage users to care more about the broader spirit of editing and improving the online encyclopedia, and do not just focus on all the rules. The users should understand the broader logic of Wikipedia and how it works, not just try to follow all its rules. They should focus on the principles and not on the guidelines. As Wikipedia mentions, the policies can change over time, so users should prioritize editing, even if it goes against some policies.

In that way, Wikipedia encourages users to engage with the improvement of Wikipedia by contributing to it, even if they do not follow all its rules and guidelines. As Wikipedia clarifies, "the rules are principles, not laws."[149] In other words, "policies and guidelines exist only as rough approximations of their underlying principles."[150] The rules are just signs of broader principles that Wikipedia editors should consider while they edit Wikipedia pages. Wikipedia editors should interpret the policies of Wikipedia according to the broader framework to which they aim to contribute. As Wikipedia mentions, policies and guidelines "must be understood in context, using some sense and discretion."[151] The words "some sense" and "discretion" include hyperlinks that further explain what these terms mean. Both terms make clear that editors should not follow every single rule but "use common sense" and, in some cases,

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[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] "Wikipedia:The rules are principles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 16, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:The_rules_are_principles.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.

they should even ignore rules to improve Wikipedia.[152] Therefore, editors should find a balance

between the principles and the improvement of Wikipedia.[153] In other words, editors should be

able to understand the broader context of any principle and make the appropriate

contributions.[154] Each editing has its own context, so it should be understood separately.[155]

Editors cannot apply all rules to every case.[156] Of course, they should always be aware of the

core content policies, such as "verifiability, neutral point of view, no original research, reliable

source, and citing sources."[157] Also, every contribution should be the result of a broader

community consensus.[158] Thus, Wikipedia enables users' agency and prioritizes constructive

editing. As Jimmy Wales clarifies: "Wikipedia is first and foremost an effort to create and

distribute a free encyclopedia of the highest possible quality to every single person on the planet

in their own language. Asking whether the community comes before or after this goal is really

asking the wrong question: the entire purpose of the community is precisely this goal."[159]

     To enable the agency of the community in the editing of articles and give users space to

discuss the process of editing, Wikipedia provides the feature of "talk pages" in every article.

That option gives the opportunity to Wikipedia editors to actively engage with its contents,

discuss issues of editing, style, prose, and organization, and also broader questions related to the

topic they edit. More specifically, every Wikipedia article includes its own "talk page," which

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[152] See "Wikipedia:What "Ignore all rules" means," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 16, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:What_%22Ignore_all_rules%22_means#Use_common_sense, "Wikipedia:Ignore all rules," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 16, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ignore_all_rules.
[153] "Wikipedia:The rules are principles."
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.

provides space for editors to further discuss the topic of the article.[160] Wikipedia points out that

users should use the "talk pages" to "communicate, stay on topic, be positive, stay objective, deal

with facts, share material, discuss edits, make proposals."[161] As Wikipedia clarifies, "talk pages"

should not be used as spaces for the expression of personal opinions on a topic.[162] However, as I

will show, in the next chapters, editors use that space for personal reflection, even if that

reflection aims to the improvement of the article. Also, the "talk page" can be very long, so they

are archived, when they exceed seventy-five kilobytes.[163] Thus, the reader can find older

discussions by searching in the archive of the "talk pages." The "talk pages" constitute one of the

most significant features of Wikipedia's public character and reveal the process of how an article

was formed, which debates took place between editors, what differences they had, which issues

appeared, and how they were resolved.

Apart from its main policies and guidelines, Wikipedia has also established a set of rules

that do not determine only how Wikipedia editors should create and edit Wikipedia articles, but

how they should interact with other editors. According to these rules, Wikipedia editors should

"be civil," they should not "make negative remarks about other editors as people," even if they

disagree with them in their discussions.[164] The editors should "assume good faith," which means

that they should consider other editors as rational beings that aim to improve Wikipedia.[165] Also,

Wikipedia editors should "discuss contentious changes on a talk page," so when they edit other

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[160] "Wikipedia:Talk page guidelines," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Talk_page_guidelines.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] "Help: Archiving a talk page," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Archiving_a_talk_page.
[164] "Wikipedia:Simplified ruleset," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 12, 2020,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Simplified_ruleset.
[165] Ibid.

user's contributions, they should mention the reasons for their changes.[166] As Wikipedia clarifies, editors should "undo others' edits with care."[167] Moreover, editors should understand why their "article or edit was deleted."[168] There are several reasons why editors can delete an article. For example, if the article does not follow the guidelines of Wikipedia or it is not based on reliable sources.[169] Lastly, editors should use the talk pages of Wikipedia articles to "resolve disputes."[170] They should express their disagreements, but they should not be aggressive.[171]

On the same page, Wikipedia also defines how editors should collaborate to create and edit articles. Editors should provide summaries of their contributions to explain what they want to change and why.[172] If more clarifications are necessary, they should make discussion posts on the talk page.[173] Their discussion posts should be signed with their username and a timestamp.[174] Editors should also preview the changes they have made in order to be on track with how they have changed the article.[175] If the editors are not sure about some issues, such as neutrality or reliability of sources, they can use noticeboards to ask for help from the administrators.[176] In that way, editors can get feedback about their contributions. Wikipedia encourages editors to join in Wikipedia community, because, therefore, they would be able to see the community discussions, the tasks, the projects that should be covered.[177] Lastly, editors should ask for help, if they are not sure about potential issues. They can do that in several ways, such as posting on talk pages,

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[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.

using the help desk, the help chat, or visiting Wikipedia pages that offer guidance and assistance to editors.[178] The overall aim of all these guidelines is to make editors improve Wikipedia's contents by following broader established principles that I analyzed above, and by reaching a community consensus.

Regarding how users can reach a consensus, Wikipedia suggests a specific method of engagement with its contents.[179] Apart from diplomacy, good faith, and respectful behavior, editors should follow the logic of "bold, revert, discuss, cycle (BRD)."[180] "Bold" editing means that even if editors are not sure about their contributions to Wikipedia and haven't received any feedback from other editors, they should make the edit on Wikipedia.[181] Editors should "revert" an edit if they think that the edit does not improve Wikipedia. However, BRD does not encourage reverting.[182] Editors should also "discuss" a contribution and explain the reason why they made that specific contribution.[183] The last approach is "cycle," which means that if an editor has realized other editors' concerns about his contribution, they can make a new edit.[184] All those steps can lead to a community consensus quickly and produce knowledge in good quality.

In case that the editors do not reach a community consensus, Wikipedia has established a set of rules, the "three revert-rule" (3RR), that helps to resolve this situation.[185] This rule is applied when an editor is involved in a dispute between editors, in an "edit war," as Wikipedia

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[178] Ibid.
[179] On consensus, see "Wikipedia:Consesus," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 17, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Consensus.
[180] "*Wikipedia*:BOLD, revert, discuss cycle," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 17, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:BOLD,_revert,_discuss_cycle.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Wikipedia:Edit warring," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 18, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Edit_warring.

calls it. "Edit warring" is when an editor "repeatedly restores their preferred version."[186] Editors engaged with "edit warring" can be blocked or even banned from Wikipedia community.[187] The 3RR rule claims that an editor cannot make more than three reverts, either on the same or different material, on a single page within a 24-hour period.[188] In other words, performing a fourth revert within one day signifies "edit warring."[189] Wikipedia points out that there are exemptions from that rule, such as reverting their own actions, vandalism or clear violations of policies.[190] In that way, Wikipedia tries to prevent disputes between editors and promote only constructive debates and discussions that aim to improve and further develop Wikipedia's contents.

Overall, as shown above, the rules that Wikipedia has established in the last twenty years of its operation, can be categorized into policies, guidelines, content, and conduct.[191] Policies represent the broader Wikipedia's principles, and guidelines signify the application of the policies. The rules on content show how Wikipedia articles should be written and the rules on conduct refer to how editors should behave within the Wikipedia community and interact with other Wikipedia editors. Even though Wikipedia has established a solid community of users, whose actions are determined by rules, it gives space and freedom to users to become active participants and work on the production of knowledge. As Wales has pointed out, all Wikipedia's rules and methods are open-ended, as they are just on wiki pages, there is no mechanism of enforcement.[192] The main purpose of Wikipedia is not to force its users to follow

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[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] "Help:Introduction to policies and guidelines/4," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 18, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Introduction_to_policies_and_guidelines/4.
[192] Wales, "The Birth of Wikipedia."

all guidelines and policies but to create pages, edit them constantly, and thus, improve the online encyclopedia. The policies exist to create a self-regulated community and not restrict users' activities. As Wikipedia puts it policies do not "police content quality," they "provide the framework and a safe environment for an anarchic wiki community to function."[193]

Hierarchy and engagement within the Wikipedia community

Wikipedia has been celebrated as a digital platform, in which "anyone can edit any page at any time."[194] However, not all users have the same power to determine how they will edit a page, what they will delete, revert, or change. There is an important hierarchy within the Wikipedia community that categorizes users and assigns them specific roles.[195] At the same time, hierarchy does not only refer to the users but also to the articles on Wikipedia. There are articles that Wikipedia classifies as vital or featured and are discerned from other articles because of their contents' quality and good coverage.

Wikipedia includes a page that explains how its administration works.[196] As I mentioned above, Wikipedia belongs to the Wikimedia Foundation (WMF) and is one of the several wiki-based projects that WMF has.[197] The WMF is governed by a board of trustees, which is not involved in the creation or application of policies on Wikipedia.[198] Wikimedia also includes

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[193] "Wikipedia:The role of policies in collaborative anarchy," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:The_role_of_policies_in_collaborative_anarchy.
[194] Andrew Lih, The Wikipedia Revolution,14.
[195] The issue of hierarchy is complicated, and some scholars have pointed out Wikipedia's hierarchy, for example see Nathaniel Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness*, Jackie Koerner, "Wikipedia Has a Bias Problem," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/rpamp9jh/release/1. Other scholars have celebrated the lack of hierarchy within Wikipedia, see Yochai Benkler, "From Utopia to Practice and Back," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/3wt2fy6i/release/1.
[196] "Wikipedia:Administration," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Administration.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid. See "Board of Trustees," *Wikimedia Foundation*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://wikimediafoundation.org/role/board/.

several Wikimedia staff. Wikipedia, as analyzed above, constitutes a self-regulated community with its own members and structures. Wikipedia users, who contribute to its contents, can be categorized into editors, stewards, the arbitration committee, bureaucrats, and administrators.[199] Editors are also called Wikipedians and are volunteers, who write and edit Wikipedia pages.[200] Some of them can be registered users and include personal information on their profiles, and others can be unregistered.[201] In contrast to readers, editors actively engage with Wikipedia's contents. Even if all editors are equal theoretically, some editors have some "extra privileges," which are determined by the age of the account and the number of edits.[202] Those privileges can be provided by Wikipedia automatically or upon request.[203] For example, a user becomes an "autoconfirmed" user, when its account is older than four days. On the other hand, an editor has the right to revert, remove a page, edit a template, check users' IPS only after requests to administrators, bureaucrats, or the arbitration committee, depending on what they request.[204] As Wikipedia mentions, the English Wikipedia has 40.310.425 registered users and only 129.681 of them contribute frequently.[205] There is also an unknown number of unregistered users, however, Wikipedia encourages users to register.[206] Registered users have some benefits, they can create pages and not only edit, but upload media, and edit pages without making their IPs visible to the public.[207]

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[199] "Wikipedia:Administration."
[200] Ibid. For more details, see "Wikipedia:Wikipedians," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedians.
[201] "Wikipedia:Administration."
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid. For some of the editors' rights, see "Wikipedia:Rollback," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Rollback, "Wikipedia:Page mover," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Page_mover, "Wikipedia:Template editor, *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Template_editor.
[205] "Wikipedia:Administration."
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.

Stewards are volunteer editors, who have full access to the wiki interface on all Wikimedia wikis.[208] Stewards can change the permissions that are provided to different user groups.[209] They have "check user rights" and "oversight rights," which means that they can check users' IPs and can delete information from any page, edit, or entry.[210] Their tasks include "technical implementation of community consensus, dealing with emergencies, and intervening against cross-wiki vandalism."[211] Stewards are elected by the global Wikimedia community annually.[212] In addition to stewards, there is the arbitration committee (ArbCom or Arbs), who are volunteer editors assigned to find solutions to unresolved "conduct disputes."[213] Arbitrators can impose sanctions to resolve conduct disputes. They are elected annually, and the first committee was appointed by Jimmy Wales in 2003.[214]

The fourth category of Wikipedia editors is the bureaucrats, who are also volunteer editors.[215] Bureaucrats have the abilities to "promote other users to administrator or bureaucrat status," "remove the admin status of other users," "grant and revoke an account's bot status."[216] However, in contrast to stewards, bureaucrats do not have "oversight" and "check user rights."[217] As Wikipedia writes the total number of bureaucrats in the English Wikipedia is nineteen.[218]

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[208] Ibid. For more details, see "Stewards," *Wikimedia Meta-Wiki*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Stewards.

[209] "Wikipedia:Administration." See about these permissions, "Manual:User rights," *MediaWiki*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Manual:User_rights.

[210] "Wikipedia:Administration." For more details, see "Wikipedia:CheckUser," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:CheckUser, "Wikipedia:Oversight," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Oversight.

[211] "Wikipedia:Administration."

[212] See "Stewards/Election," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Stewards/Elections

[213] "Wikipedia:Administration." For more details on the arbitration committee, see "Wikipedia:Arbitration Committee," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Arbitration_Committee.

[214] "Wikipedia:Administration."

[215] Ibid. For more details on bureaucrats, see "Wikipedia:Bureaucrats," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Bureaucrats.

[216] "Wikipedia:Administration."

[217] Ibid.

[218] Ibid.

Administrators (admins or sysops) are editors who have access to specific technical functions, such as protecting and deleting pages, and blocking other editors.[219] Admins are not elected but appointed after a review process by bureaucrats.[220] The current English version of Wikipedia has 1,123 administrators.[221] Admins should use their privileges in disputes with other editors. The privileges of admins can be removed only by Jimmy Wales and the arbitration committee, and the removal should be authorized by bureaucrats or stewards.[222]

In the last years, because of the claims that Wikipedia's contents are biased and there is an important gender gap within the Wikipedia community, Wikipedia has added two more categories of editors, Wikipedians in residence, and educators and students of the Wikipedia education program.[223] Wikipedians in residence are volunteer editors, who have been placed into educational or cultural institutions by Wikipedia, such as art galleries, archives, libraries, museums, or universities, and try to improve Wikipedia's coverage of related topics.[224] Those editors should use the resources and material offered by their involved institution and work on the improvement of related Wikipedia pages.[225] They should also communicate their work to the public and organize workshops and training for other editors.[226] Some of the institutions that

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[219] Ibid. For more details on administrators, see "Wikipedia:Administrators," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 19, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Administrators.

[220] "Wikipedia:Administration."

[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Regarding the contents bias and gender gap within Wikipedia community, see Heather Ford and Judy Wajcman, "'Anyone can edit', not everyone does: Wikipedia's infrastructure and the gender gap," *Social Studies of Science* 47/4 (2017): 551-527, Jackie Koerner, "Wikipedia Has a Bias Problem," Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, and Melissa Tamani, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Community," Paolo Massa and Asta Zelenkauskaite, "Gender Gap in Wikipedia Editing: A Cross-Language Comparison," in *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration*, ed. Fichman, Pnina and Noriko Hara (Lanham: Rowman et Littlefield, 2014), 85-96, Hélène Bourdeloie and Michaël Vicente, "Contributing to Wikipedia: A Question of Gender," 147-160.

[224] "Wikipedia:Administration."

[225] Ibid., For more information on Wikipedians in residence, see "Wikipedian in residence," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedian_in_residence. For the broader collaboration between Wikipedia and institutions, see "Wikipedia:GLAM," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM.

[226] "Wikipedia:Administration."

have hosted a Wikipedian in residence are the National Library of Wales, the British Museum, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the British Library, the Smithsonian Institution, the Royal Society of Chemistry, UC Berkeley, Columbia University, the University of Toronto, the National Library of Norway, and the Federal Archives of Switzerland and smaller venues like the Derby Museum and Art Gallery and The New Art Gallery Walsall, and many others.[227]

The last category of editors is the educators and students, who are part of the Education Program.[228] Since its foundation, educational institutions, schools, colleges, and universities, perceived Wikipedia as a threat to education.[229] In 2010, as a response to all those claims, Wikipedia established the Education Program, which aimed to bring educators and students closer to Wikipedia.[230] At the same time, several teachers and university professors started to use Wikipedia in course assignments to make students more familiar with the encyclopedia, help understand the process of knowledge production, and how editing on Wikipedia works.[231] Therefore, the Education Program constituted an institutional effort of Wikipedia to connect Wikipedia to education and change its perception as a threat or enemy to students and

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[227] "Wikipedian in residence." For a list of the collaboration projects, see "Wikipedia:GLAM/Projects," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/Projects.
[228] "Wikipedia:Administration."
[229] On Wikipedia as a threat to education, see Cullen J. Chandler and Alison S. Gregory, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Wikipedia in the College Classroom."
[230] "Wikipedia Education Program," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_Education_Program.
[231] On the use of Wikipedia in education, see Robert E. Cummings and Matt Barton, *Wiki Writing: Collaborative Learning in the College Classroom* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008), Robert E. Cummings, "The First Twenty Years of Teaching with Wikipedia: From Faculty Enemy to Faculty Enabler," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/0e9c3f8e/release/1, Benjamin Mako Hill and Aaron Shaw, "The Most Important Laboratory for Social Scientific and Computing Research in History," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/fgas2h4l/release/1.

educators.[232] The members of that program are assigned to fulfill course-related assignments and, in that way, to improve Wikipedia's topics and promote gender diversity.[233]

All those hierarchical categories refer to the registered Wikipedia editors and do not include the unregistered users, who are also able to edit Wikipedia pages. Specifically, the unregistered users are those users, who have not logged in and are named with their IP addresses and not with their usernames.[234] Those users can edit all pages except for the "protected" pages, they can create talk pages, but they cannot upload media, such as files and images.[235] It is interesting that Wikipedia has created a page with the name "IPs are human too," which clarifies that unregistered users should not be discouraged from participating in Wikipedia and be perceived as inferior users.[236] Wikipedia points out that most edits by unregistered users did not lead to vandalism. To deal with common misconceptions about unregistered users, Wikipedia argues that unregistered users have the same rights as registered users.[237]

Apart from the users' hierarchy within the Wikipedia community, Wikipedia has created a hierarchical system for the assessment of its articles, which motivates users to make more and better contributions. Wikipedia has established a system of content assessment, which evaluates how good the quality of an article is.[238] That system is not only based on the quality but also on the language and the layout of the article.[239] Wikipedia discerns its articles into different

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[232] "Wikipedia Education Program."
[233] Ibid.
[234] "Wikipedia:User access levels," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:User_access_levels#Unregistered_(IP_or_not_logged_in)_users.
[235] Ibid. On what are the "protected" pages, see "Wikipedia:Protection policy," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Protection_policy.
[236] Wikipedia:IPs are human too," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:IPs_are_human_too.
[237] Ibid.
[238] "Wikipedia:Content assessment," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Content_assessment.
[239] Ibid.

categories by using a grading scheme. The most complete articles are those that have been

marked with the "A-class." Below that grade category, there are the following categories: "Good

articles," articles marked as "B-class," "C-class," "Start-class," "Stub-class," and "List-class."

"Lists" and "Stubs" are the most incomplete articles, which need further editing.[240] Articles that

have reached "A-class" can be improved even more and become "Featured articles," and more

developed lists can become "Featured lists."[241]

The articles that belong to the "List-class," do not offer adequate coverage of a topic,

they just contain links to other related articles.[242] This is the category with the most incomplete

articles that need the attention of editors. Articles that are a little bit better than "Lists" articles

but just include a brief description of the topic are the "Stub-class" articles. They are short

articles that need a lot of editing to become meaningful articles.[243] As Wikipedia writes, they can

be well-written, but they can also have important content issues.[244] They do not offer an

extensive narrative but a brief definition of the topic. In a better position, there are articles

marked as "Start-class," which are more developed than the "List-class" articles, but they are still

incomplete.[245] Usually, their sources are not reliable, or their prose is not encyclopedic.[246] Those

articles need improvement in content and organization.[247]

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[240] Ibid.

[241] Ibid.

[242] Ibid., Wikipedia has a specific page, which includes all Wikipedia "List-class" articles. See "Category:List-Class articles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:List-Class_articles.

[243] "Wikipedia:Content assessment." For the list of "Stub-class" articles, see "Category:Stub-Class articles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Stub-Class_articles.

[244] "Wikipedia:Content assessment."

[245] Ibid. For the list of "Start-class" articles, see "Category:Start-Class articles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Start-Class_articles.

[246] "Wikipedia:Content assessment."

[247] Ibid. For the list of "C-class" articles, see "Category:C-Class articles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:C-Class_articles.

The articles become more important when they reach a "C-class" grade. Those articles offer significant coverage of the related subject but still miss content or materials.[248] These articles need more editing to improve their clarity, balance, or prose, or to face problems, such as content bias, or original research.[249] "B-class" articles are almost complete, they do not have serious problems, but they need a little bit more editing to become "good articles."[250] Those articles should deal with few problems on content and structure.[251] "Good articles" are characterized by Wikipedia as "well written, verifiable, with no original research, broad in coverage, neutral, stable, and illustrated."[252] These articles just need some help from subject and style experts to become even more professional.[253] The most complete articles are in the "A-class" category. They are well-written, well-organized, and well-illustrated articles with clear structure and no copyright problems.[254] The only issues are few style problems, which should be faced, to allow articles to become "featured article" candidates.[255] The next category is the "featured list" articles, which contains articles with extensive and good quality lists of items. They are characterized by good "prose, lead, comprehensiveness, structure, style, and stability."[256] The last category includes the "featured articles," which fulfill all the professional standards of Wikipedia.[257] They are "well-written, comprehensive, well-researched, neutral,

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[248] "Wikipedia:Content assessment."

[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid. For the list of "B-class" articles, see "Category:B-Class articles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:B-Class_articles.

[251] "Wikipedia:Content assessment."

[252] Ibid., For the list of "Good articles," see "Category:GA-Class articles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:GA-Class_articles.

[253] "Wikipedia:Content assessment."

[254] Ibid. For the list of "A-Class articles," see "Category:A-Class articles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:A-Class_articles.

[255] "Wikipedia:Content assessment."

[256] Ibid. For the list of "FL-Class articles," see "Category:FL-Class articles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:FL-Class_articles.

[257] "Wikipedia:Content assessment."

stable" articles with a "lead section, appropriate structure, consistent citations," they also contain media, such as images and videos, and have an adequate length.[258]

The question is how the assessment of Wikipedia contents takes place and who is responsible for that process. The evaluation of contents' quality is a task that the members of WikiProjects have taken over, such as WikiProject History, WikiProject Chemistry, or WikiProject Technology. The members of those projects are responsible for checking and evaluating the related articles by tagging their talk pages.[259] Then, a bot collects all the tags determines the average rating of the article.[260] If several WikiProjects are involved in an article, the bot keeps the best rating.[261] However, for the assessment of "Good article" and "Featured article" independent editors are responsible and not WikiProjects.[262] More specifically, there is a single editor, who reviews potential "Good articles," while a panel is responsible for reviewing potential "Featured articles."[263]

The process of assessment is always a subjective process, and it varies according to the involved Wikiproject(s).[264] Wikipedia has established a list of criteria for each ranking of articles, however, each member of a WikiProject can prioritize different criteria and has different opinions. Therefore, each WikiProject tries to reach a consensus[265] It is worth mentioning that some WikiProjects have created their own systems of assessment with their own logic and levels of ranking. Wikipedia allows WikiProjects to differentiate themselves from the established rules, policies, and regulations, if, in that way, they will engage more with the editing of Wikipedia's

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[258] Ibid. For the list of "FA-class articles," see "Category:FA-Class articles," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:FA-Class_articles.
[259] "Wikipedia:Content assessment."
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.

contents.[266] At the same time, the system of assessment determines the quality of each article and, thus, assigns users which topic they need to pay more attention to, improve its coverage, its structure, or its prose. In that way, Wikipedia creates a self-regulated community, which is based on the users' self-engagement with the online encyclopedia.

In addition to that system of content assessment, Wikipedia has created a rewarding system that this time does not focus on the articles but on broader users' contributions to the online encyclopedia. That system works with "barnstars," which are digital awards attributed to an editor by another editor. To give that award, an editor should attach the image of "barnstar" to the other editor's talk page and explain why this award is given. There are several standardized types of "barnstars" provided by Wikipedia, but the users can also create new "barnstars" if the existing ones do not respond to what users want to applaud.

The categories of "barnstars" are three, the general, topical, and Wikipedia-space "barnstars."[267]The "general barnstars" are those awards that do not focus on a specific topic but on broader themes, such as "The Original Barnstar," "The Editor's Barnstar," "The Surreal Barnstar," "The Tireless Contributor Barnstar," "The Photographer's Barnstar," "The Anti-Vandalism Barnstar," "The Scholarly Barnstar," etc.[268] The "topical barnstars" refer to a specific topic or subject of interest.[269] Some of the are: " "The Technology Barnstar," "The Society Barnstar," "The Barnstar of High Culture," "The Science Barnstar," "The LGBT Barnstar," "The Human Rights Barnstar," "The Current Events Barnstar," "The Occupy Wallstreet Barnstar,"

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[266] For example, see the WikiProject Military history that has its own criteria of assessment, "Wikipedia:WikiProject Military history/Assessment," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 27, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Military_history/Assessment#Quality_scale.

[267] "Wikipedia:Barnstars," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 27, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Barnstars.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid.

"The Women's History Barnstar," "The BLM Barnstar," and several others.[270] The "Wikipedia-space barnstars" are given to editors for their contributions that have taken place behind the scenes, such as "The Copyright Barnstar," "The Template Barnstar," "Excellent User Barnstar," "The WikiProject Barnstar," "The Main Page Barnstar," "The Reviewer's barnstar," etc.[271] All those awards create a hierarchical environment within Wikipedia and, most importantly, motivate editors to make more and better contributions to Wikipedia.

As shown above, Wikipedia has established two different systems of assessment, one focused on the content and another focused on the users' engagement with the encyclopedia. Both systems of assessment contribute to the enhancement of users' agency within the Wikipedia community. This means that Wikipedia has created a digital space, which allows, unconsciously or not, the development of subjectivities and personal reflections, even if its main protocol promotes the concept of neutrality in the production of knowledge. Wikipedia does not aim to impose its rules on the users but to give them the power to actively engage with their content by creating, writing, editing, and improving Wikipedia articles. However, the agency of users does not stand alone, but it goes through the system of massive bureaucracy that Wikipedia has established.

History as a content category and WikiProjects related to History

Wikipedia as an encyclopedia has developed multiple systems for the categorization of its contents. Most users use search engines, such as Google to look for a specific page and then they find the page through Google.[272] However, Wikipedia has classified its contents into several

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[270] Ibid.

[271] Ibid.

[272] Brian Keegan, "An Encyclopedia with Breaking News," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/dj6frhgz/release/1.

portals and categories. Specifically, when users enter the main page of Wikipedia, they notice the following portals: The arts, Biography, Geography, History, Mathematics, Science, Society, and Technology.[273] By clicking on the portal of History, the users see the following definition of what history is according to Wikipedia.

History (from Greek ἱστορία, historia, meaning "inquiry; knowledge acquired by investigation") is the study of the past. Events occurring before the invention of writing systems are considered prehistory. "History" is an umbrella term that relates to past events as well as the memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation, and interpretation of information about these events. Historians place the past in context using historical sources such as written documents, oral accounts, ecological markers, and material objects including art and artifacts.[274]

That definition presents history as "the study of the past" and connects it to multiple historical approaches and sources. Even if several studies have argued that Wikipedia accepts only written sources and ignores oral sources, here Wikipedia offers a pluralistic definition of history. For Wikipedia, it is not important only what is written about the past but also the memories of people. As Wikipedia writes, memorization constitutes a significant process, which brings us information about the events of the past as people remember them.[275]

If the user clicks on the full article, the Wikipedia page about history will appear, which contains more details about history as a subject of study.[276] The article provides a more extensive definition of what is history, it refers to the development of historiography, the different historical methods, the areas of study, important historians, and the teaching of

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[273] "Main page," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page. For all the portals, see "Wikipedia:Contents/Portals," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Contents/Portals.
[274] "Portal:History," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:History.
[275] Ibid.
[276] For the full article of history, see "History," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History.

history.[277] The page seems well-written and well-researched, as it covers several aspects of historical study. It is interesting that Wikipedia does not offer a dry overview of what is history but a theoretical essay of how historians approach the past and how this approach has changed since the professionalization of history in the nineteenth century. The page includes references to important historians and theorists of history, such as Georges Lefebvre, Fernand Braudel, Eric Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson, Michael-Rolph Trouillot, but also contemporary historians, such as Constantin Fasolt, William Cronon, Lynn Hunt, and Natalie Zemon Davis.[278]

Moreover, the page mentions different historiographical approaches that historians have taken since the early ancient period and include more extensive details on how these methods have been developed over time.[279] There is also information on the different ways historians categorize history, namely according to chronological period, geographical area, and thematic area.[280] Also, the page offers a historiographical overview of each field of the historical disciplines, such as social history, cultural history, economic history, gender history, public history, LGBTQ+ history, intellectual history, etc.[281]

The article of history, like all Wikipedia articles, has "talk pages," which contain the discussions of the editors about the topic of the page, questions they have, debates that take place, the opinions of the editors on what to add or remove from the page. In the "talk page" of history, users discuss what is history, if history is a social science or part of the humanities, what history does and what sources historians use, how historical writing has changed over time, how they can divide history, differences between history and story, what makes someone a historian,

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[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid.

if there is only academic history, if amateurs interested in history can also be historians, etc.[282]

All that discussion aims to improve the content of the page and provide a more clarified and

updated coverage of the topic. Several editors who have contributed significantly to the

development of the page, claim that have studied history either at an undergraduate or graduate

level.[283] However, most involved editors do not have any educational background in history, but

they actively participate in the discussions and make their own arguments about the historical

discipline.[284] Overall, the discussion does not seem obsolete and the users are concerned with

research questions and historical topics that have been the subject of study by several academic

historians and philosophers of history in the last two centuries.

Apart from the definition, in the main portal of history, there is also a "featured article"

column, namely a good quality article, on a historical topic, a "featured biography," and a

"featured picture" column, which changes their content daily.[285] There is also an "On this day"

column, in which there are references to historical events that happened on this day in the past,

and a "Did you know…" column.[286] At the bottom of the same page, there is a column, which

includes different sub-categories of history. There are classifications of history by ethnic groups,

location, period, and topic.[287] There are also history related lists, historical timelines, outlines of

history and events, historians, fields of history, history awards, historical controversies,

historiography, oral history, philosophy of history, etc.[288] Each subcategory has the form of a

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[282] See all three archives of the "talk page," "Talk:History," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:History
[283] Ibid.
[284] For example, this user has studied history and engages in the discussions about history, "User:Ishmaelblues,"
Wikipedia, accessed November 30, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Ishmaelblues. However, most users have not
studied history, but they are just interested in history.
[285] "Portal:History."
[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid.

hyperlink, so by clicking these links the users can explore the Wikipedia's articles that are related to history. Another column of the page is the "Things you do," which mentions all the tasks that Wikipedia editors should do on articles related to history to improve them.[289] Those tasks include the creation of new articles, the improvement of grammar and spelling mistakes of existing articles, the further development of articles listed as "stubs," the placement of images, or the merge of two pages into a single page.[290]

Furthermore, the page includes a list of the "Wikipedian historians," namely all those users, who have studied/study history or are interested in history.[291] Wikipedia allows users to define themselves as they want in their profile pages, in which users can include descriptions of their education, occupation, relation to history, etc. By examining the profile pages of those users more closely, we notice that some of the users are educated in history at a university level, and others are just interested in learning and writing about history. In their profile pages, Wikipedia users also define their relation to history. Some of them are editors with degrees in history, a few of them are professors and scholars of history, many users characterize themselves as history enthusiasts, and there are also teachers of history, archivists, and librarians. Wikipedia encourages all those "Wikipedian historians" to take an active part in the Wikipedia community of history and engage with articles related to historical topics.[292] Both professional and amateur historians collaborate to collect, produce, and disseminate historical knowledge.

In that way, Wikipedia does not appear as a single unified community but is a broader community, which consists of several other smaller communities. It seems like an ocean

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[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid. For the list of "Wikipedian historians," see "Wikipedia:Wikipedian historians," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Wikipedian_historians.
[292] "Portal:History."

including several smaller islands. There are not only articles related to different subjects, such as history, technology, mathematics, but also several communities of users engaged with those subjects. Wikipedia has named those communities WikiProjects. WikiProjects are "groups of contributors who want to work together as a team to improve Wikipedia."[293] These groups of users can focus on a specific content topic, a process within the encyclopedia, or a specific task.[294] The WikiProjects take the name of the subject, on which they focus. For example, there WikiProjects, such as the WikiProject History, WikiProject Feminism, WikiProject Black Lives Matter, WikiProject Disambiguation, and WikiProject New Page.[295] In other words, each WikiProject is a separate community of people, who share common interests and goals, and exist within the Wikipedia community.

The portal of history mentions the WikiProjects that are related to history.[296] Specifically, it mentions three main projects. The WikiProject History, the WikiProject Time, and the WikiProject Biography.[297] The WikiProject History is the broadest group and focuses on the improvement of Wikipedia's contents related to history.[298] There are also the following projects that are dedicated to more particular areas of history, such as the WikiProject Ancient Near East, The WikiProject Australian History, The WikiProject Classical Greece and Rome, The WikiProject Dacia, The WikiProject Former countries, The WikiProject History of Canada, The WikiProject Chinese History, The WikiProject European History, The WikiProject Heraldry and vexillology, The WikiProject Indian history, The WikiProject Jewish history, The WikiProject

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[293] "Wikipedia:WikiProject," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] "Portal:History."
[297] Ibid.
[298] For the WikiProject History, see "Wikipedia:WikiProject History," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_History.

Medieval Scotland, The WikiProject Mesoamerica. The WikiProject Military history, The WikiProject Middle Ages, The WikiProject History of Science.[299]

The WikiProject Time is also connected to history but in broader terms. It aims to better organize the articles related to time and check how "temporal concepts" are approached on Wikipedia.[300] There are also two other related projects, the WikiProject Days of the Year, and the WikiProject Years. The former focuses on how to make all the historical anniversary pages consistent both in style and content and the later aims to improve all year-related pages.[301] The last mentioned project is the WikiProject Biography, which is dedicated to development of articles related to biographies not of persons but also of organizations, groups, and associations.[302] The WikiProject Biography is the parental project of the WikiProject Composers, the WikiProject Biography/Politics and Government, the WikiProject Saints, and the WikiProject United States Presidents.[303] All those projects seem to divide history into different smaller groups of editors, who collaborate to accomplish specific tasks and are devoted to particular historical areas. At the same time, these projects do not just aim to improve Wikipedia's content but also to establish specific guidelines and approaches of how to write a historical article on specific thematic areas and provide space for discussion between users interested in common historical topics.[304]

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[299] "Portal:History."
[300] "Wikipedia: WikiProject Time, *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Time.
[301] See "Wikipedia:WikiProject Days of the Year," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Days_of_the_year, "Wikipedia:WikiProject Years," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Years.
[302] "Wikipedia:WikiProject Biography," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Biography.
[303] "Portal:History."
[304] For example, see the goals of the WikiProject History, "Wikipedia:WikiProject History."

To better understand how WikiProjects work, Wikipedia provides a very interesting definition. It points out that "a WikiProject is fundamentally a social construct; its success depends on its ability to function as a cohesive group of editors working towards a common goal."[305] According to that definition, WikiProject seems to incarnate what Benedict Anderson has called "imagined communities."[306] All those users do not know each other, but they feel part of an "imagined community" of editors. Their interests in specific topics, tasks, or broader processes make them part not only of Wikipedia but of smaller digital "imagined" communities, the WikiProjects. As the mass vernacular newspapers made people imagine themselves within the same national community beyond their differences, Wikipedia articles and their interests in different subjects of knowledge make editors imagine themselves as members of WikiProjects and develop ties with other Wikipedians.[307]

In the English Wikipedia, there are more than 2.000 WikiProjects and 1.000 of them are controlled by 30-2.000 editors.[308] However, all the collaborators of a project are not involved in the same way, they have different roles, focus on different tasks, and have different experiences. The WikiProjects are not provided by Wikipedia, instead, any group of editors can create a new project at any time.[309] Wikipedia encourages that process and offers guides and instructions on how editors can propose and create a new WikiProject.[310]

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[305] "Wikipedia:WikiProject Council/Guide," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Council/Guide.
[306] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006).
[307] "Wikipedia:WikiProject Council/Guide."
[308] "Wikipedia:WikiProject."
[309] Ibid.
[310] On how editors can propose a new WikiProject see, "Wikipedia: WikiProject Council/Proposals," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Council/Proposals.

The WikiProjects can become semi-active or inactive, if the involved editors do not engage with the project anymore or if the project does not respond to their initial expectations.[311] From the WikiProjects related to history, which were mentioned above, the WikiProject History seems to be semi-active or to work slower than it used to be.[312] The WikiProject Middle Ages, the WikiProject Biography/Politics and Government are inactive, while the WikiProject Dacia seems completely inactive.[313] On the other hand, all the other projects are active. Some of them are more developed than others, however all mention on their main page that they are based on the collaboration between Wikipedians and encourage news users to participate in their project. Their pages include tips, suggestions on how the involved members should approach the related articles, specific templates for how to edit existing articles, and open tasks that should be accomplished. They also contain lists with "featured articles," which work as examples for the creation and development of the related articles. There is a list of the involved members of the project and a discussion section, in which the members of the project can share their worries and problems about editing, find solutions, and decide which articles they should develop further. Lastly, the WikiProjects have assessment tables with their articles graded according to their quality and importance.

To facilitate the production of historical knowledge, Wikipedia provides educational resources to Wikipedians. I mentioned above the Wiki Education Program, which aims to create partnerships between Wikipedia and educational institutions, such as universities, archives, and

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[311] "Wikipedia:WikiProject."

[312] "Wikipedia:WikiProject History."

[313] See "Wikipedia:WikiProject Middle Ages," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Middle_Ages, "Wikipedia:WikiProject Biography/Politics and Government, *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Biography/Politics_and_government, "Wikipedia:WikiProject Dacia," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 20, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Dacia.

libraries.[314] This program belongs to the Wiki Education Project, which was created in 2003 in order to encourage Wikipedia editors to use educational resources, such as an archive or a research collection to improve the contents of Wikipedia.[315] As an example, there is a partnership between the English Wikipedia and National Archives and the Smithsonian.[316] As Ian Ramjohn and LiAnna Davis, both founders of Wiki Education Project, argue, they created that project to face the problems of "systematic bias," "racial realism," "white pride," and harassment against women, which were detected within the Wikipedia community.[317] By developing partnerships between its editors and educational institutions, Wikipedia aims to train its editors on how to make better contributions to specific topics and, thus, offer better knowledge to the public. In 2019, 20% of all English Wikipedia new editors came from the Wiki Education Project.[318]

Another resource that Wikipedia has created to enhance the production of knowledge is the Wikipedia Library. That project appeared as a response to the critiques that Wikipedia's contents are not based on reliable sources and are biased.[319] The Wikipedia Library is a research place for active Wikipedia editors, in which they can find reliable sources for their work and use them in their edits.[320] As several academic papers, books, and resources are only accessible to those affiliated with universities or other cultural and educational institutions, Wikipedia

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[314] "The Wiki Education Project," *Wikipedia*, November 30, 2020, https://wikiedu.org/. For an analysis of the Wiki Education Project, see Ian A. Ramjohn and LiAnna L. Davis, "Equity, Policy, and Newcomers: Five Journeys from Wiki Education," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/t0ldob7m/release/1.

[315] "The Education Project, About Us," *Wikipedia*, November 30, 2020, https://wikiedu.org/about-us/.

[316] "The Wiki Education Project."

[317] Ramjohn and Davis, "Equity, Policy, and Newcomers."

[318] Ibid.

[319] Jake Orlowitz, "How Wikipedia Drove Professors Crazy, Made Me Sane, and Almost Saved the Internet."

[320] "The Wikipedia Library," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 30, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:The_Wikipedia_Library.

provides active editors free access to these resources. In that way, editors can find more and better-quality sources and produce a more accurate historical knowledge.

As shown above, Wikipedia establishes itself as an important station in the history of knowledge and, even more importantly, signifies a broader epistemological shift, from knowledge produced by experts to knowledge produced by amateurs and non-professionals. Its public and digital character has led Wikipedia to set a consensus-based on policies and guidelines that determine the production of knowledge and the users' behavior within the Wikipedia community. All those policies seem to restrict the agency of Wikipedia users and make editors passive receptors of established rules, methods, and guidelines. However, by closely examining the system of Wikipedia, all those policies are principles that form a framework of interaction between editors and between editors and Wikipedia contents. They do not restrict users' agency but the active role within the community by making clear that users should prioritize their involvement in the encyclopedia and not the meticulous application of all established rules. Wikipedia promotes creativity and active engagement and not the accomplishment of writing tasks.

At the same time, each subject category of Wikipedia constitutes a group of collaborators, who are interested in a common topic. That community people focus on a specific subject and participate in discussions about the articles related to the subject, share their worries and their goals for what articles to create or improve, and what to add or remove to the articles' contents. Each subject consists of other sub-groups of users, the WikiProjects that focus on even more particular thematic areas. Therefore, Wikipedia allows users to place themselves into groups of collaborators, according to what they are interested in and not to what they have studied. Professors of history, archivists, and librarians collaborate with history enthusiasts to

produce historical knowledge, cover historical topics, create, and edit historical articles. Their hierarchical positions on Wikipedia are not based on their degrees or their knowledge about the subject but on their experience and the quality of their contributions on Wikipedia. Even if Wikipedia has many common epistemological characteristics with historical scholarship, it constitutes a separate world with its own rules, principles, and ways to engage the public to produce historical knowledge.

Overall, my analysis does not imply that Wikipedia should be regarded as a "perfect" community that anyone can take part in it and contribute to the production of history. There are several studies that have shown the problems Wikipedia has, its biased content, the gender gap, the white and male-centered character, and have made suggestions to Wikipedia to deal with these challenges.[321] In contrast, in that chapter, I showed how Wikipedia has managed to become a public space that allows people to produce, discuss, and edit history. Of course, the digital set-up of Wikipedia including its policies, guidelines, and hierarchy, creates a complicated and multilayered system of bureaucracy and surveillance that defines which ideas and contributions will end up into the main historical article. However, the main logic behind Wikipedia, at least on a first level, seems to encourage its users to become active participants in the production of historical knowledge by taking part in projects related to their interests, discussing how history should be represented in the Wikipedia articles, making accurate and reliable contributions, and thus, become experienced users with awards and recognition within the Wikipedia community.

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[321] See Paolo Massa, Asta Zelenkauskaite. "Gender Gap in Wikipedia Editing: A Cross-Language Comparison," 85-96, Hélène Bourdeloie, Michaël Vicente, "Contributing to Wikipedia: A Question of Gender," 147-160, Adele Vrana, Anasuya Sengupta, Siko Bouterse, "Towards a Wikipedia For and From Us All," https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/myb725ma/release/1, Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, Melissa Tamani, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Community," https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/llx97ml5/release/2.

The question of how Wikipedia users engage with history, while they try to construct historical

knowledge I will try to answer in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Reconstructing the Distant Past on Wikipedia: The Great Depression and the

Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Both the guidelines and the organizational structures of Wikipedia enable the active

agency of Wikipedia users within the Wikipedia community. In this chapter, I examine the

agency of Wikipedia users by exploring how they engage with history and contribute to the

production of historical knowledge. Specifically, I focus on four case studies, four traumatic

historical events that have shaped modern United States history and had a significant impact on

the world.[1] My aim is not to analyze trauma as an analytical category but explore how Wikipedia

users engage with history, while they write about a traumatic historical event. Trauma works as a

thematic framework that characterizes the four case studies and advances an exploration of

Wikipedia users' interaction with history. In other words, trauma allows a better understanding

of how Wikipedians are been "touched by the past" – to borrow from Alison Landsberg – and

how they produce historical knowledge.[2] The Wikipedia pages I will examine are the Great

Depression, Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Vietnam War, and September 11

attacks.[3] In this chapter, I will explore the production of history in the pages of the Great

Depression and the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while in the next chapter I

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[1] On trauma and history, see Michael S. Roth, *Memory, Trauma, and History: Essays on Living with the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), Eelco Runia, *Moved by the Past. Discontinuity and Mutation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, History, Memory, Identity: What Remains?" *History and Theory* 55 (October 2016): 375-400.

[2] Alison Landsberg, *Engaging the Past. Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 10.

[3] See "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression, "Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki, "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War, "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks.

will analyze the Vietnam War and September 11 attacks. The point of that division is to show whether there are differences in the users' engagement with history between the four case studies regarding the historical context of the event and users' lived experiences.

All these four pages are part of the WikiProject United States History, a group of editors, who are tasked with the coverage of topics related to the history of modern United States.[4] My study focuses mainly on the "talk pages" of the Wikipedia articles, as the "talk pages" reveal the discussions between the participants who contribute to the editing and improvement of the articles. As the sociologist René König has argued, "talk pages" constitute arenas where discussions about important Wikipedia issues take place.[5] To make their action legitimate, editors make discussion posts while they edit an article.[6] Thus, any discussion or debate in the "talk pages" refers to potential changes in the contents of the article. This means that I study the "talk pages" in connection to the main pages of the Wikipedia articles. At the same time, I use the "view history" page for each entry, with just the logs of all the changes (without the discussion), with copies of older versions of the articles. The "talk pages" of the four case studies are very extensive, almost each discussion page constitutes a topic for a potential doctoral dissertation. For that reason, I have used some samples of the discussions that took place in the "talk pages," the most significant and representative examples that reveal how Wikipedia editors perceive history and write about it. I examine users' comments in their contexts by explaining their "source," "audience," "content," "intention," and "effects."[7]

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[4] See "Wikipedia: WikiProject United States History," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_United_States_History.
[5] René König, "Wikipedia. Between lay participation and elite knowledge representation," 163.
[6] Ibid.
[7] For how to study comments on the Web, see Joseph Reagle, *Reading the Comments. Likers, Haters, and Manipulators at the Bottom of the Web* (London, England and Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015).

The goal of this chapter is to show that the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia is a complex process, in which Wikipedians write about history based on a combination of personal experiences, memories, personal experiences from the past, academic scholarship, and Wikipedia guidelines. Wikipedia editors do not just write about history, but they actively engage with the past by agreeing and disagreeing about history, reading books and articles, sharing their personal memories, giving justice to the past, and preventing the past from falling into oblivion. All these levels of engagement comply with the established rules and guidelines that I presented in the previous chapter and determine the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia. Of course, Wikipedians' engagement with history is not stable but changes in each case study. It depends on the historical context of the event and the relation of Wikipedians to history. Therefore, I have divided the four cases into two chapters. In the current chapter, I study the Great Depression and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, two historical events that belong to the earlier 20th century and in the next chapter, I examine the Vietnam War and the September 11 attacks, two historical events of the recent past. The logic behind that division is not only chronological but lies in how Wikipedians experience historical events. I follow the theory of the historian and sociologist James Loewen. In his book on American high-school history textbooks, Loewen explores the time distinction of Eastern and Central African cultures between "sasha" and "zamani."[8] The former is the recent past, the "living-dead" past, which lives in "the memories of the living," while the latter is the distant past, which is "not forgotten but revered."[9] Every historical event starts as "sasha" and then can be transformed into "zamani." As I will show in the next lines, the Eastern and Central African

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[8] James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me. Everything Your American History Textbook Got Me Wrong* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2005).
[9] Ibid., 233.

notion that Loewen employed unveils the different levels of Wikipedians' engagement with the production of historical knowledge. In the first two case studies, which belong to the distant past of Wikipedia or "zamani," lived experience plays a lesser role, and interpretation of scholarship plays a stronger role, while in the following two historical events of the recent past or "sasha" editors have direct experiences from the past and try to make them part of the broader historical narrative.

The Great Depression

The Wikipedia page about the Great Depression which began in the United States in 1929 and expanded worldwide, constitutes a significant historical article according to Wikipedia's rating system. The article was created in 2001 and has received 11,095 total edits since then.[10] It was nominated as a "Social sciences and society good article" until July 2015 and has been listed as a "level-3 vital article" in History.[11] The article has also been supported by WikiProject Economics, the WikiProject United States, and WikiProject United States History.[12] The WikiProject Economics has rated the article as "B-class" on the project's quality scale and as "High importance" on the project's importance scale.[13] The WikiProject United States has rated the article as "B-class" on the project's quality scale and as "Top importance" on the project's importance scale.[14] Moreover, the page had 391,119 views in the last sixty days.[15]

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[10] Regarding the statistics of the Wikipedia page, see "Great Depression – page statistics," *Wikipedia*, accessed *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Great_Depression.
[11] "Talk:Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Great_Depression.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] "Great Depression – page statistics."

The current contents of the main page cover several topics that range from how the Great Depression started, the reason why the crisis took place, the different theories that try to explain the Great Depression to how the economy recovered and the socio-economic effects in all related countries.[16] At the end of the page, there is a section that compares the Great Depression with the Great Recession of 2008.[17] As we can see in the history of the page, the article was created on September 16, 2001, and has been edited until November 2020.[18] Apart from the textual contents of the page, there are also visual elements. At the beginning of the page, the main thing that the reader can see is Dorothea Lange's photo, *Migrant Mother* (1936), which is placed on the right side of the article.[19] The photo depicts destitute pea pickers in California in March 1936, centering on Florence Owens Thompson, a 32-year-old mother of seven children.[20] In the photo, there is only the mother with two children, who are crying alongside their mother. The main subject of the photo, the mother, looks disappointed, desperate, and hopeless. There are also other smaller images that depict the harmful effects of the Depression. They show unemployed men outside a soup kitchen in Depression-era Chicago in 1931, a crowd gathering at the intersection of Wall Street and Broad Street after the 1929 crash, crowds outside the Bank of United States in New York after its failure in 1931, an impoverished American family living in a shanty, unemployed men march in Toronto, and many other related scenes of the Great Depression.[21]

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[16] "Great Depression."

[17] Ibid.

[18] "Talk:Great Depression: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talk:Great_Depression&dir=prev&action=history.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "Dorothea Lange's Migrant Mother depicts destitute pea pickers in California, centering on Florence Owens Thompson, age 32, a mother of seven children, in Nipomo, California, March 1936," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression#/media/File:Lange-MigrantMother02.jpg.

[21] For the use of images on Wikipedia, see: "Wikipedia:Images," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Images.

The images coexist with graphs and statistics that present the US annual real GDP from

1910 to 1960, the unemployment rate in the US between 1910 and 1960, the money supply

during the Great Depression, the Depression an international perspective, and several other

economic indicators.[22] All these visual elements attribute different historical perspectives to the

representation of the Great Depression on Wikipedia. On the one hand, the graphs and statistics

seem to offer a neutral and impersonal view of the event focusing on how the economy changed

during that time, the fall of GDP, and the decrease in the money supply. On the other hand, the

reader of the article is encouraged to realize the "devastating effects" of the economic depression

through the affective practices that the pictures release. The reader is not only informed about the

Great Depression but is encouraged to think and mainly to feel the negative effects of the

Depression on society and the problems that it caused. The aim of these photographs is not only

to transmit the meaning of the past but to highlight the traumatic character of the Great

Depression and create a sentimental relation between the past and the present.[23]

However, the contents of the page have not just appeared in the main article but are the

results of broader discussions and debates between the involved editors. Also, the contents of the

page are not stable, but they have changed since the creation of the article in 2001. The initial

edition of the article in 2001 included only five short paragraphs, which just provided an

overview of what happened in the US in 1929, a short reference to Germany, which suffered

from the crisis and led to the rise of Adolf Hitler, and another short reference the New Deal.[24]

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[22] "Great Depression."

[23] On the connection between history and images, see Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), Jennifer Tucker and Tina Campt, "Entwined Practices: Engagements with Photography in Historical Inquiry," *History and Theory* 48/4 (Dec., 2009): 1-8, Michael S. Roth, "Photographic Ambivalence and Historical Consciousness," *History and Theory* 48/4 (Dec., 2009): 82-94, Elizabeth Edwards, "Photography and the Material Performance of the Past," *History and Theory* 48/4 (Dec., 2009): 130-150, Gregory Paschalidis, "Images of History and the Optical Unconscious," *Historein* 4 (2003): 33-44.

[24] "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=340280721.

Overall, the article was inadequate, lacked details and a deeper analysis, and its prose was not professional for an encyclopedic article. Gradually, the article started to become more extensive and detailed. In 2003, it had improved its prose and its structure by including three separate sections on Roosevelt's New Deal, the influence of World War II, and the end of the Great Depression.[25]

By clicking on the "talk page" of the article, there is the history of the discussions about the article. As we can see in the editing activity of the article between 2001 and 2021, the article received its most edits from 2004 to 2009 and from 2013 to 2015.[26] The first discussion posts were not dated, they probably appeared in 2003.[27] The first comments focused on what caused the Great Depression in the United States, the different theories of explanation, how the Great Depression was expanded to other European countries, and how Roosevelt faced the crisis.[28] The first editor, who started the discussion's thread, is Larry Sanger, one of the co-founders of Wikipedia.[29] He signed his comments as "LMS."[30] He wrote:

> (1) Removed "American" from "of American history." Books are written about the history of the Depression in Europe... Wikipedia is an international encyclopedia--has to be, since it's on the Internet!
> (2) I cannot parse this sentence, so I can't fix it either: "It was an extended economic contraction that ended with the government induced World War II spending economic expansion." I also wonder how widely-agreed upon this explanation is.

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[25] "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=736595.

[26] "Great Depression – Year counts," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Great_Depression#year-counts.

[27] Talk:Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Great_Depression.

[28] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 1," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Great_Depression/Archive_1.

[29] For the debate between Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger on whether Sanger was co-founder of Wikipedia, see Dariusz Jemelniak, *Common Knowledge? An Ethnography of Wikipedia* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014), 156.

[30] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 1."

(3) Finally--I'm no historian, so I'm just asking--*was* it the events in the U.S. that led to the worldwide depression? Is that widely-agreed upon as well?

--LMS[31]

Larry Sanger's comment caused the participation of several users in the "talk page," who started to discuss how the Great Depression took place, when it appeared, whether it started in the US or in another country, how was the economy of the United States during that 1920s, which were the economic effects of the crisis, and when the economy of the US started to recover.[32] Some editors seemed to have different views on the Great Depression. For example, the user "mike dill" argued that "the events in the USA were probably the trigger for the depression, but not the real cause."[33] Thus, "mike dill" pointed out:

> The economic situation in most parts of the world was a real mess ever since the end of World War 1. The appearance of prosperity 1919-1929 was an illusion. Unemployment was high, a lot of people were poor, and most of the rich had money and shares that turned out to be either borrowed, embezzled, or worthless. The big crash was going to happen somewhere, and no matter where it happened it was going to spread. -- mike dill[34]

The user "Jhanley" reacted to that post and argued:

> I know little about the depression in other countries, but for the U.S. this is not true. The depression began to ease after the Supreme Court struck down FDR's New Deal legislation, but after they began to uphold his legislation, the economy had another serious downturn in 1937 (I think). The economy was on an improving trend prior to our entry into WWII, but was nowhere near its pre-depression status. Jhanley[35]

Following the same line of thinking, the user "(DJK)" got involved in the discussion by sharing their readings and understanding of the Great Depression. He mentioned:

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

> Someone who has read Frederick Lewis Allen's 'Only Yesterday' and 'Since Yesterday' more recently than 40 years ago needs to work this article over. There is a great deal to be said about the extreme depth of the depression (25% unemployment in the US at one point), Hoover's unfortunate attempts to maintain budget balance (which I believe he himself abandoned near the end of his term); the failure of the US banking system in 1932, etc.[36]

The last two users seemed to disagree with the "mike dill" user, as they made different interpretations about the Great Depression. However, the discussions did not just aim to explore what happened in the past, but they aimed to change the representation of the Great Depression in the main page.

In July 2003, the editors started to express their concerns about the current form of the article, as it presented the Great Depression as a British Monetary Crisis that did not take place in the US but started in Britain and then expanded to the US.[37] Also, the article did not include an analysis of the factors that caused the Great Depression.[38] On July 20, 2003, several editors started to share their disagreements about that version of the article and suggested ways to improve it. Specifically, the user "172," one of the editors with the highest numbers of contributions to the article, wrote:

> Right now, this is the least NPOV article of which I'm aware. One rightwing user single-handedly hijacked this article, determined to stifle any Keynesian analysis. Granted the previous version was in bad shape, but the current version belongs on the talk page until it can be balanced. Until then, the old article should be posted. […] 172.[39]

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[36] Ibid.

[37] For the version of the article on July 17, 2003, see "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=1169970.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

The user criticized the article for its bias, as it did not mention all the reasons that caused the Great Depression in the US. The other participants agreed with the statement of the user "172." Specifically, the user "mav" responded to "172:"

> Then go through the article and delete the hopeless offending paragraphs, move the really bad but possibly fixable ones here and fix the ones that can be easily fixed. However the version you reverted to is ancient and a great deal of work has been done since then. It is very bad form to take the easy route and simply revert - thus destroying the work of many other people. –mav.[40]

Following the same line of thinking, the user "FearÉIREANN," who describe themselves as a historian in their profile's page, mentioned:

> Having read the article I do not think the rewrite done is salvageable. Its analysis is so biased even Margaret Thatcher would have blanched reading it. It is so inaccurate and POV it is mindblowing (sic); it is the equivalent of the IRA writing an Irish history article or Saddam Hussein (or rather his ludicrous war spokesman) writing an account of the war in Iraq. The version 172 reverted to is deeply flawed, by far less so than the rubbish which there now. IMHO we should use the version 172 reverted to as the starting point and work on it, incorporating from it the less loopy elements of the current article (I'm sure there is something in somewhere that qualifies, though a first and second glance didn't show up much). […] This is to history what the X-files is to science. And keeping what is there now as a template would make wiki a laughing stock (sic) among historians of the period. Wiki has many many (sic) good points but its weakness is that some people, if no-one notices, can totally agendise an article to the point where it becomes a totally biased loopy polemic, whether extreme right or extreme left. […] FearÉIREANN[41]

As the participants did not find the current version of the article well-analyzed and well-covered, they decided to improve the article by including a section on the causes of the Great Depression and presenting all the different explanations of the event in a neutral way. The user "172" wrote:

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[40] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 1."
[41] Ibid. For the user's profile page, see "User:Jtdirl," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Jtdirl.

> I've been working on the causes since we've rescued this article from the ideological hijacking. However, the causes section still requires significant work, along with every other section.
>
> Two problems stand out above all. One is the lack of social history. Impersonal macroeconomic indicators don't tell us the whole story. Second, the article is Amero-centric (something for which I'm partially responsible). […]
>
> If anyone's interested in internationalizing this article, I'd be interested in Latin America. I've already written a good deal on the Great Depression in Brazil for the history of Brazil article; […] 172[42]

The other participants of the discussion did not disagree with that suggestion, so the user "172" added a section on the causes of the Great Depression by mentioning the misdistribution of purchasing power, the lack of diversification, the credit structure, and the breakdown of international trade.[43] Other editors, such as "Mav" and "G-Man" also took part in the editing process by developing the main contents of the article, such as the introduction, the causes, and the responses.[44]

A few years later, another important discussion's thread appeared on the "talk page" of the Great Depression and this time focused both on the causes of the Great Depression and on the life during the crisis.[45] In January 2005, some editors criticized the article for presenting only one theory of explanation for the appearance of the Great Depression.[46] The user "Stirling Newberry," who also describes themselves as a historian, wrote:

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[42] Ibid.

[43] See the page of Great Depression as it was developed by the user "172," "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=1173616.

[44] For the revision history of the article, see "Great Depression: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&dir=prev&offset=20030813181016%7C1285005&action=history.

[45] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 2," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Great_Depression/Archive_2.

[46] Ibid.

The whole article does need work doesn't it. I was hoping it could be dealt with by a few edits. But it does need a more thorough redrafting to get the material to work together. Stirling Newberry 23:25, 10 Jan 2005 (UTC)[47]

The user "172" responded to that comment by arguing:

You're quite right. One of the particular recent changes that bothers me is the insertion of "one theory holds" toward the beginning of each subsection on the origins, which can give someone the impression that these explanations are mutually exclusive. [1] 172 00:28, 11 Jan 2005 (UTC)[48]

Therefore, the users added the theory of the economists Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz in the section, "The Federal Reserve and the Money Supply," which was part of the broader section on the cause of the Great Depression.[49] The addition of Friedman's and Schwartz's theories is strongly connected to the policy of NPOV that I analyzed in the first chapter. The editors were trying to make the article more inclusive by including all the related theories that explain the appearance of the Great Depression.[50]

Few months later, a sentence in the main article caused the reaction of users. Specifically, in the section, "the End of the Great Depression," there was the following quote:

In truth Roosevelt had foreseen from early in his Presidency that only a solution to the international trade problem would finally end the depression, and that the New Deal was, to no small extent, a "holding

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[47] Ibid. For the profile of the user "Stirling Newberry," see "User:Stirling Newberry," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Stirling_Newberry.

[48] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 2."

[49] See the version of the page, "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=9292546.

[50] This does not mean that we should not consider the several studies, which have criticized Wikipedia for being biased, male-centric, Western-centric, and exclusive to "marginalized" stories. See Joseph Reagle and Jackie Koerner, ed., *Wikipedia @20*, Dariusz Jemelniak, *Common Knowledge?*, 77, Elizabeth Losh, Jacqueline Wernimont, Laura Wexler, Hong-An Wu, "Putting the Human Back into the Digital Humanities: Feminism, Generosity, and Mess," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/cfe1b125-6917-4095-9d56-20487aa0b867#ch10.

action". He contemplated precipitating a war with Japan early on, in hopes of dealing with the problem early.[51]

In other words, the sentence claimed that the President of the US, Franklin D. Roosevelt had foreseen the participation of the US in World War II as a solution to the problem of the Great Depression. In October 2005, the user "stu" brought that topic into the discussion by arguing that:

> Anybody have a source for this? It seems pretty arbitrary and speculative to me.
>
> Without any source material to back it up, I find the claim doubtfull (sic), at best. Stu 22:18, 17 October 2005 (UTC)[52]

An unregistered user, who signed his comment as Kristopher Sandoval, intervened in the discussion and mentioned:

> Though that quote indeed has no direct evidence, the idea that a war would boost global and United States economy was prevalent, and fiscally obvious. Also, through Roosevelt's actions prewar, we can tell that he was building for the new war. The history books will tell you that we knew nothing about Pearl Harbor, when in fact we knew that the Japanese would strike by air...we just didn't know where. We assumed that they would attack major ports in San Francisco, but the Hawaiin (sic) Islands were a prime and simple target; we were caught with our pants down, yes, but Roosevelt had already started making a belt. […] So in conclusion, no, we don't have exact proof or quotes on that...but the circumstancial (sic) evidence is there, and pretty convincing. 207.166.55.253 Kristopher Sandoval, jackandmeg2001@comcast.net[53]

This intervention caused the strong reaction of the user "Trekphiler," who found the previous response illogical, as no one could predict that the Second World War will take place and contribute to the end of the Great Depression. The user "Trekphiler" argued:

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[51] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 2." For the version of the main article at that time, see "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=30066143.
[52] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 2."
[53] Ibid.

we knew that the Japanese would strike by air...we just didn't know where. We assumed that they would

attack major ports in San Francisco"? *Nonsense*. The Japanese were expected to strike in Thailand (where a

task force had been sighted), or the Soviet Union (where the Kwantung Army had been itching for a fight

since 1937), or (just maybe) the Philippines (where the U.S. had been building up #s B-17s, unintentionally

making a valuable target). San Francisco was *never* considered a target (except by racist California pols

who arranged the unconscionable removals...). *Nobody* in DC expected a Japanese air attack; the war was

expected to begin by subversion & sabotage, which is precisely why all the aircraft were clustered at AAF

bases in HI--to *prevent* it. Get your facts straight. Trekphiler 01:23, 9 December 2005 (UTC)[54]

Thus, the user "Trekphiler" removed that sentence from the main article.[55] This case constituted

an example of how Wikipedia editors discuss the problems that can exist in an article and try to

improve it. In that case, the users realized that this sentence did not make any sense and most

importantly was not based on reliable secondary sources.

Discussions on the quality of articles' contents are common on Wikipedia. A related

example took place in December 2008. The involved editors created a thread, in which they

discussed the possibility to merge the contents of a Wikipedia article on the causes of the Great

Depression with the main article on the Great Depression.[56] Specifically, the user "work permit"

wrote:

The section on causes in this article seems to be too long, given there is a main article specifically on the

subject. Should we merge the detailed information on causes provided in this article into the main article

Causes of the Great Depression, and provide just a short summary here?--Work permit (talk) 03:54, 1

December 2008 (UTC)[57]

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[54] Ibid.

[55] For the page after the editing, see: "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=30665272.

[56] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 3," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Great_Depression/Archive_3. For the article on the causes of the Great
Depression, see "Causes of the Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Causes_of_the_Great_Depression.

[57] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 3."

Several other users agreed with that suggestion, as it would improve the analysis of the article and the coverage of the causes, and it would make the two articles more consistent. The other users got involved in the following way:

> yes merge is a good idea. Rjensen (talk) 10:01, 1 December 2008 (UTC)
>
> **Support** merge and summary per WP:SUMMARY **dissolve**^talk 05:55, 13 December 2008 (UTC)
>
> **Support** I think we definitely need to do something because they both fall under the "Great Depression" heading, and if someone is looking this information up they will want to know the causes. Perhaps if we provide a brief overview at the beginning of the article and then go into more depth under a specific "Causes" section. Cajones (talk) 17:34, 19 January 2009 (UTC)
>
> **Support** The section on causes in the Great Homeless article, while important, is disproportionally large and needs reorganization. The differences between the "causes" section and "Causes of the Great Depression" article is (sic) also troubling, and a merger would address this. However, care should be taken in writing the new summary, for it is vital that the basic information is well covered for the casual reader. -- Alex60466176 (talk) 19:46, 25 January 2009 (UTC)
>
> **Support**! Definitely. It would help to keep the Great Depression article itself better in balance and eliminate confusion while giving the opportunity to confront and resolve inconsistencies. Of course, it will be important to ensure that the summary itself is in synch with the Causes article. -- Will O'Neil (talk) 20:49, 28 February 2009 (UTC)
>
> **Negative**! I think that it would lose something, besides where would u put the link to the causes? post to DCollins52's talk page ur (sic) opinion on this, im (sic) not signed in right now 24.110.2.116 (talk) 00:41, 29 March 2009 (UTC)
>
> I'm not sure it is possible to provide just a short summary on causes of the Great Depression because of the complexity of the issue. Also, article isn't too long so I think there is no real need to remove most of the section. -- Vision Thing -- 21:04, 9 March 2009 (UTC)
>
> I've begun by rearranging the article sections to mirror each other. --Work permit (talk) 02:50, 3 April 2009 (UTC)

Support Though somewhat late to see, I agree with the suggestion. Could also assist in rearranging and

editing work if needed. Drop a message in my talk page if need be. --Eleman (talk) 11:20, 14 April 2009

(UTC)[58]

This discussion is a typical example of how Wikipedia users can reach a consensus and,

therefore, decide to make an editing change in an article. As the edit history of the article reveals,

after the discussion the user "work permit" updated the section on the causes of the Great

Depression by adding information from the other Wikipedia page.[59] These examples reveal that

Wikipedia users try to produce a non-biased and inclusive historical narrative about the past and

represent the Great Depression in a fair way. They try to do that by following the guidelines of

Wikipedia and reaching a consensus about their editing choices.

As in historical scholarship, the present defines the topic of discussions about a historical

event, and more significantly it causes debates on how a historical article should look like. This

is obvious in the construction of the Great Depression article. In 2008, while the financial crisis

of 2008 had appeared, an unregistered user wrote on the "talk page" of the Great Depression that

a new economic crisis started to appear. The user wrote:

This is just a discussion placeholder. But it will soon be a current event. The financial markets are unstable

as the credit crisis is expanding daily. —Preceding unsigned comment added by 69.130.213.206 (talk)

07:09, 15 March 2008 (UTC)[60]

An unregistered user replied to that comment by expressing their strong disagreement with that

claim. The user wrote:

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[58] Ibid.
[59] For the revision history of the article when the discussion took place, see "Great Depression: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&offset=20090629055156%7C299257759&limit=250 &action=history.
[60] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 3."

That sort of Chicken Little talk is foolish and insane if you look at any of the signs of what a "Great Depression" is. The foolishness of people seems to have no bounds. No part of the Western World is even NEAR a Depression. 69.245.80.218 (talk) 14:43, 5 April 2008 (UTC)[61]

The user did not agree with the comment that a new economic crisis was taking place at the time. Another participant got involved in the discussion by agreeing with that opinion:

Agreed. That said I have heard media coverage of economists making statements on how the current recession could become a depression. It might be worth noting- with sources, of course - in the "Other depressions" section. (BTW although my IP number looks similar, I am not connected to any of the IPs on this thread) 68.146.41.232 (talk) 15:08, 18 April 2008 (UTC)[62]

However, this user suggested the inclusion of the potential recession in the section of the article, "Other depressions.".[63] One more user participated in the discussion, who agreed that a recession was taking place and they have not realized how important it is. The user argued:

You'll eat those words soon enough. Fact is the overwhelming cause of the GD was speculation on the stock market and people buying on margin. It was when the brokerage houses made margin calls that things fell apart and 1/3 of the perceived wealth evaporated. Checks and balances were put in place to limit the amount people can go on margin since then by the SEC. But....remember all the advertisements in the 90's about taking a 2nd mortgage out on your house at 150% of it's value. That is ,in essence, going out on margin in real estate. The foreclosure notice is the margin call. This is happening RIGHT NOW. […] 75.135.151.176 (talk) 23:50, 6 October 2008 (UTC)[64]

The discussion stopped at this point without any editing change in the article, but a few months later a similar thread appeared on the "talk page."[65] The user "Irpsit" brought again the topic of the ongoing economic crisis into the discussion. "Irpsit" wrote:

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid. For the version of the page at that time, see "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=243265955#Other_Great_Depressions.
[64] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 3."
[65] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 4," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Great_Depression/Archive_4#A_new_Great_Depression.

I would suggest adding a topic in this article, about the possibility that many economists predict that we can be about to enter a new Great Depression. Realize that a part of the thinkers predicts that recovery will be soon, and others predict that it should last 5 to 10 years, which then it could be a called as a new Great Depression due to the similarly of changes. Maybe a list of those predictions and how the lifestyles change, would be interesting. At least this recession is already promising to last a few years if not more, in a quite more dramatic way than previous ones and with a powerful worldwide impact, unlike previous recessions.

—Preceding unsigned comment added by Irpsit (talk • contribs) 05:45, 23 April 2009 (UTC)[66]

This time, other users did not disagree with that argument, however, some of them did not find historically accurate to compare the ongoing crisis with the Great Depression The user "GreatGodOm" responded:

While it might be worthwhile noting that many pundits are comparing the current crisis to the Great Depression, as it is the article refers to the specific historic depression of the early 20th C. Such a topic, as you're suggesting, already exists in Late_2000s_recession. Either that or wait a decade or two to see if this current crisis does indeed becaome (sic) the new 'Great Depression'... GreatGodOm (talk) 15:05, 27 April 2009 (UTC)[67]

Another user offered a different interpretation of whether is appropriate to mention the new economic crisis in the article on the Great Depression. The user "Mrzaius" wrote:

It might not be the worst idea in the world to explicitly discuss the Depression as a benchmark, however. There hasn't been a recession in my lifetime that some talking-head hasn't tried to compare to it. MrZaius talk 01:56, 29 April 2009 (UTC)[68]

For "Mrzaius" there should be a reference to the ongoing crisis, as the Depression constitutes a sublime historical event, so it is logical to compare other related events with Great Depression. Another participant, the user "Bri bri000," offered their own perspective to the discussion by arguing:

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

In fact, John Rublowsky suggests "Indeed, there are critics who argue that our economy never did recover from the [Great] depression ." [1] Current economic depression could be the result of the Great Depression, and therefore it would be a valuable discussion to study (sic) the relationship between the current economic crisis and the Great Depression. Current one could be 'the New Great Depression.'—Preceding unsigned comment added by Bri bri000 (talk • contribs) 23:02, 26 May 2009 (UTC)[69]

A very interesting intervention was made by the user "John Nagle," who agreed that a crisis was taking place, but the Wikipedia editors should give more time to see what will happen, and then they will decide whether it is worth including the new economic crisis. Specifically, the user mentioned:

In time there may be a rename. What we now call World War I was, prior to WWII, referred to as "The World War". It's too early to say. Usage of the phrase "second great depression" in reliable sources is picking up. [1] At some point, we may be using the phrase "First Great Depression" about the 1929 one. But not yet. --John Nagle (talk) 18:10, 31 May 2009 (UTC)[70]

Finally, a few months later, on October 7, 2009, the well-recognized editor, "Rickyrab" included a reference to the ongoing economic crisis in the article on the Great Depression.[71] The user added to the page: "People have been taking to calling the current economic recession the "Great Recession.""[72] The user based their claim on online newspaper articles.[73] In the following years, as the crisis became more evident, the editors developed the topic further, and gradually, they created a separate section named "Comparison with the Great Recession," which included a more extensive analysis of the relation between the two crises.[74]

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] For the profile of the editor, see "User:Rickyrab," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Rickyrab.
[72] "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=318507259#Other_%22great_depressions%22.
[73] Ibid.
[74] See for example the current version of the article, "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression#Comparison_with_the_Great_Recession.

The present and the contemporary developments force Wikipedia users to constantly keep Wikipedia articles updated. The computational social scientist, Brian Keegan, has pointed out that characteristic of Wikipedia by mentioning how fast Wikipedia updates its contents.[75] For Keegan, this is very innovative, as Wikipedia is the only encyclopedia that can cover the current news so quickly.[76] Thinking in these terms about history, the examples above reveal how the present determines the past and how Wikipedia users make connections between the past and the present.[77] By detecting similarities between historical events of the past and current developments Wikipedia users try to decodify and make sense of the contemporary developments that take place.

In addition to that, they examine and re-examine the Great Depression based on contemporary developments. The section "Comparison with the Great Recession" offers a comparative analysis between the two crises and, thus, represents the Great Depression in relation to the financial crisis of 2008. It is worth mentioning that a version of the Wikipedia article, "financial crisis of 2007-2008," started as: "The financial crisis of 2007–2008, also known as the global financial crisis and the 2008 financial crisis, was a severe worldwide economic crisis considered by many economists to have been the most serious financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, to which it is often compared."[78] As David Thelen and Roy Rosenzweig have noticed in their survey about how Americans understand the past, "by revisiting or reliving the past they [Americans] could reinterpret it as they unearthed new sources

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[75] Brian C. Keegan, "A History of Newswork on Wikipedia," *Proceedings of the 9th International Symposium on Open Collaboration* (August 2013): 1. See also Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia Revolution*, 219-220.

[76] Keegan, "A History of Newswork on Wikipedia."

[77] On the relation of present to history, see Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Our Broad Present. Time and Contemporary Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[78] That version of the article existed for several years, see "Financial crisis of 2007–2008," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Financial_crisis_of_2007%E2%80%932008&oldid=917966712. In the last year, the article has been changed and does not include that sentence any more.

but also as they experienced new needs in the present."[79] This is exactly how Wikipedians

engage with history. By looking at the present, they define and redefine historical knowledge

and, therefore, keep Wikipedia articles updated.

The users try to make sense of what happened in the past, express their historical

understandings of the Great Depression, share their thoughts, and try to reconstruct the past in a

neutral way. This does not mean that personal stories are not part of their engagement with

history. In 2009, some editors expressed their worries about the end of the Great Depression, as

it was defined in the article. During that time, the main article included the following sentence:

"America's Great Depression ended in 1941 with America's entry into World War II."[80] The user

"Jive Dadson" did not agree with the statement that the Second World War ended the Great

Depression, thus, the user intervened in the discussion to offer their own perspective on the topic.

"Jive Dadson" user wrote:

> That's absurd. It's an extreme example of Bastiat's broken window fallacy. The fact that people in the US
> were building bombs and bombers for destruction overseas did not bring prosperity to the US. How could
> it? Prosperity returned only after the soldiers did. Young men digging fox holes in North Africa and Europe
> did not improve the domestic economy. Ask my 90 year old mom. She used ration books to live hand-to-
> mouth while my father slept in the mud on Anzio Beach. Wanton destruction of goods and non-productive
> employment never have and never will bring prosperity. Perhaps the morons who dreamed up the Cash For
> Clunkers program read Wikipedia. If I sound disgusted, it's only because I am. Jive Dadson (talk) 02:52, 5
> August 2009 (UTC).[81]

The user challenged the argument that the Second World War brought the final solution to the

Great Depression by sharing his personal memories on Wikipedia. Specifically, "Jive Dadson"

referred to the story of their 90 years old mother, who used ration books to survive even during

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[79] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 201.
[80] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 4."
[81] Ibid.

the beginning of the Second World War. The memory of their mother seemed to contradict the version of the historical past that Wikipedia presented. In their discussion post, "Jive Dadson" also mentioned that their father was fighting in the battle of Anzio during the Second World War, so it would be hypocritical to present the participation of the US in the Second World War as the final solution to the Great Depression. For that user, writing about history does not only mean writing about the past but also giving honor to those who suffered from historical phenomena in the past. Writing about history on Wikipedia has a performative dimension. For the user, the argument that the Second World War signified the end of the Great Depression, constituted a disrespect to the memories of their mother and father, who suffered from the Great Depression and took part in the war. These memories, even if they are not historically accurate, reveal information – as Michael Frisch put it - about "how the past does or doesn't figure in our live, and what this in turn tells us about both history and ourselves."[82]

The user "Rjensen," a historian, and one of the most avid contributors to historical articles and the editor with the most edits in the article on the Great Depression, responded to "Jive Dadson:"[83]

> not absurd at all. Bastiat ASSUMES people are fully employed at all times. But what if only 80% of the people are fully employed at time 1 and 100% at time 2. That represents a huge jump in output. Furthermore some libertarians (like Higgs) assume that collective goods--like winning a war--are unmeasurable and thus unimportant. Observers at the time and since are agreed the American people placed a very high value on winning the war. They had a high priority on giving US soldiers the best planes, tanks, ships, uniforms, doctors, etc. They also had jobs and paychecks and could buy steak instead of beans. That's prosperity.Rjensen (talk) 03:24, 5 August 2009 (UTC)[84]

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[82] Michael H. Frisch, "The Memory of History," 9-23.
[83] For the page statistics, see "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Great_Depression. For the profile page of "Rjensen," see "User:Rjensen," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Rjensen.
[84] Ibid.

"Rjensen" challenged "Jive Dadson's" argument and pointed out that it is accurate to identify the end of the Great Depression with the involvement of the US in the Second World War, as the war increased the US's demand for goods. The discussion did not continue, and the page still mentions that the beginning of World War II ended the Great Depression.[85] The fact that Wikipedia users often share their memories to change how a historical event is represented is significant for how users engage with history and try to contribute to the production of historical knowledge, even if their memories are not historically accurate. Here, the concept of "postmemory," as it has been introduced by the scholar of comparative literature and gender studies, Marianne Hirsch, is useful and explains the relationship between generations and traumatic events that preceded their births.[86] According to Hirsch, the "transgenerational transmission of trauma" is not based on a recall of the past but on a constructive process characterized by "imaginative investment, projection, and creation."[87] That approach to the past seems to characterize Wikipedia users' relationship with the traumatic experience of the Great Depression.

In another discussion, an unregistered user shared their personal memories about how the government tried to face the economic effects of the Great Depression. The user created a discussion thread just to express their memories as witnesses of the past. The user wrote:

> (Added: Dad and Mom told us children stories about when the government (President FDR; in order to prop up food prices ordered) kerosene poured on potatoes then dumped shiploads into the ocean to prevent

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[85] See the current version of Wikipedia and, more specifically, the section "World War II and recovery," "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression.
[86] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29/1 (2008): 103-128.
[87] Ibid., 107. For more details on the concept of "postmemory," see Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After The Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

them from being eaten.) — Preceding unsigned comment added by

2607:FCC8:A306:7800:3C49:9BD5:4924:F22 (talk) 17:16, 12 December 2018 (UTC)[88]

Even if the comment does not make any sense historically, it shows that for many users Wikipedia constitutes a site, where they can place their memories aiming to make these memories part of the broader historical narrative. Wikipedia users appear to be "touched by history," as Alison Landsberg has smartly put it, or "moved by the past," as Eelco Runia has pointed out, and, thus, Wikipedians try to examine and re-examine their own personal stories in relation to how the historical event is represented in the main article.[89] Often, as in this case, the comments do not find any response, so the main article does not change. However, they reveal how users perceive the past and actively engage with that to produce historical knowledge.

In that way, the "talk pages" of Wikipedia do not constitute only arenas for editing battles about how to reconstruct a historical event but also -as Robert Wolff has argued – "sites of memory," in which users place their memories about the past.[90] Users' memories can challenge or confirm the representation of history in the main article. They can be historically accurate or not. They can influence how the past is represented in the main articles, but they can also stay only in the "talk pages." So, why do Wikipedia users share their personal memories about the past? In his famous article on history and memory, Pierre Nora refers to the different kinds of memories that exist and shape our relation to history. One of them is the "duty-memory." He writes: "The atomization of a general memory into a private one has given the obligation to remember a power of internal coercion. It gives everyone the necessity to remember and to

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[88] "Talk:Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Great_Depression.

[89] Alison Landsberg, *Engaging the Past*, 10, Eelco Runia, *Moved by the Past*, xii-xiv.

[90] Robert Wolff borrows the concept "sites of memory" from the famous work of Pierre Nora, see Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire," 7-24. Robert S. Wolff, "The Historian's Craft, Popular Memory, and Wikipedia," in *Writing History in the Digital Age*, 66, cited in Despoina Valatsou, *Ανάδυση νέων μνημονικών τόπων στο διαδίκτυο*.

protect the trappings of identity; when memory is no longer everywhere, it will not be anywhere unless one takes the responsibility to recapture it through individual means."[91] Nora's "duty-memory" offers a great explanation why Wikipedia users share their memories about a historical event in the "talk pages." There is an internal need to prevent specific aspects of the past from falling into oblivion. As the literature scholar, Andreas Huyssen, has argued, memory works as a "bulwark against obsolescence and disappearance" caused by the speed of age.[92] For Wikipedians, sharing their memories signifies a form of intervention in the past. The past seems reversible, as editors can change its representation on Wikipedia.

The media scholar, Christian Pentzold, has also studied Wikipedia as a "global memory place."[93] For Pentzold, Wikipedia is a "global memory place," where users can present and debate divergent points of view and produce a common knowledge that constitutes to the formation of collective memory.[94] As he writes, Wikipedia becomes "a place where memorable elements are negotiated, a place of the discursive fabrication of memory."[95] Based on the concept of "communicate memory" and "collective memory," Pentzold argued that Wikipedia's "talk pages" work as the "floating gap," between "fluid communicative and static collective memory" where different pages are formed.[96] Therefore, in the "talk pages" there is a construction of communicative recollections while in the articles a transition to forms of "cultural memory" take

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[91] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire," 16.
[92] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Past: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 23 cited in Haris Exertzoglou, *Δημόσια Ιστορία. Μια εισαγωγή* (Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις του Εικοστού Πρώτου, 2020), 117.
[93] Christian Pentzold, "Fixing the floating gap: The online encyclopaedia Wikipedia as a global memory place," *Memory Studies* 2, no. 2 (May 2009): 255-272. For Wikipedia as a memory place also see Jahna Ottenbacher, "Our News, Their Events: A Comparison of Archived Current Events on English and Greek Wikipedia," in *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration*, 49-67.
[94] Pentzold, "Fixing the floating gap," 263.
[95] Ibid., 264.
[96] Ibid.

place.[97] This is obvious in the examples mentioned above, but as I will show, it does not characterize only the page of the Great Depression but also other historical events.

However, Wikipedia is not only a site where people can place their memories and share their personal experiences. Wikipedia editors often look at the historical scholarship, they read academic books and paper to make sense of what happened in the past and produce historical knowledge. In 2013, a debate about when the Great Depression started, appeared in the discussion page of Wikipedia.

In August 2013, the user "Tfirey" edited the section "Start of the Great Depression" in the main article by writing that even if the US stock prices fell on October 29, 1929, the Great Depression had started earlier in the summer of 1929.[98] However, this editing change lasted only few hours, as the user "Binksternet," a very active editor in articles related to history, changed that sentence to: "Economic historians usually attribute the start of the Great Depression to the sudden devastating collapse of US stock market prices on October 29, 1929, known as Black Tuesday; some dispute this conclusion, and see the stock crash as a symptom, rather than a cause, of the Great Depression."[99] Several editing debates took place between the two users in the next days and the debate moved to the "talk page" of the article.

To prove that their argument about the start of the Great Depression was correct and based on reliable sources, the user "Binksternet" made an extensive discussion post, in which they mentioned when the encyclopedia Britannica places the start of the Great Depression and what several academics, experts in economic history and economics, such as Erich Rauchway,

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[97] Ibid.

[98] For the version of the article during that time, see "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=569738663#Start_of_the_Great_Depression.

[99] For the profile of the user "Binksternet," see "Binksternet," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Binksternet. For that version of the article, see "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=569764628#Start_of_the_Great_Depression.

Hamilton Cravens, Robert S. McElvaine, John Kenneth Galbraith, Dietmar Rothermund,

Nicholas Crafts, have argued about that topic.[100] Thus, the user concluded:

> I hold that general mainstream thought accepts the Wall Street Crash of 1929 as the psychological turning
>
> point which signaled the end of the Roaring 20s and start of the Great Depression. Binksternet (talk) 03:49,
>
> 24 August 2013 (UTC)[101]

The user "Rjensen" intervened in the discussion and wrote:

> I agree with Binksternet. The NBER series says that the HIGH POINT was in August 1929, with
>
> September and October indices slightly lower. That slight decline is not enough for a historian to date the
>
> GREAT depression. Something much more powerful was needed and the great majority of experts point to
>
> the stock market crash in October. Note that the slight slippage found in data that NBER later compiled was
>
> invisible at the time but the stock market was news worldwide and immediately affected calculations and
>
> confidence about the future. Rjensen (talk) 04:57, 24 August 2013 (UTC)[102]

However, the user "Tfirey" expressed their disagreement with that theory by arguing:

> Why do their have to be ideological crazies who troll on Wikipedia? Look, recessions start at declines from
>
> peaks--it's like car crashes, that start immediately following the last moment that there WASN'T an impact,
>
> not when the driver psychologically felt that he was in a crash. […] The official authority on US recessions
>
> dates the recession as starting in August. Output began declining in August. That's why economists
>
> consider the recession to have started in August. My entry notes the difference between what popular
>
> perception is and what economists say; your reverted version claims economists believe what the popular
>
> notion is, even though that's obviously false and your own quotes indicate that's false.
>
> Still, you know what? Stay with your crazy little false story. Hey, what's misleading the public? Personally,
>
> I don't have the time or inclination to fight little ideological crazies. — Preceding unsigned comment added
>
> by Tfirey (talk • contribs) 20:26, 29 August 2013 (UTC)[103]

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[100] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 5."
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.

"Binksternet" and "Rjsensen" responded to that comment by explaining their interpretation of the academic works they mentioned above:

> Imagine a situation in which an agreed-upon peak indicator hit its top point several years before a depression, then generally leveled off at a comfortably profitable place for many months before starting a big slide downward. In this hypothetical situation, that top point would not be considered the start of a depression, because following the top point was many months of good economic times. Also, after the downward slide hits bottom and begins to trend upward, people would still be experiencing difficult times, so a depression does not stop the moment the bottom is reached. This shows the fallacy of dating the Great Depression from only this or that economic indicator, and these factors are argued by economists. The Great Depression is larger than that; it is made up of many economic and also psychological factors. Binksternet (talk) 21:06, 29 August 2013 (UTC)
>
> Binksternet says it well. The "car crash" that Tfirey is concerned with happened in late october 1929 when a lot of metal got bent out of shape....not in September when the first skid marks appeared Rjensen (talk) 01:04, 30 August 2013 (UTC)[104]

The discussion ended at this point, and the sentence of "Binksternet" remained in the article. Even the current version of the article includes that sentence in the section "Start of the Great Depression."[105] The reliability of the sources that "Binksternet" cited, let the user make the appropriate edit in the article.

The engagement with academic scholarship and secondary sources characterizes the construction of the Great Depression article. In September 2015, a similar discussion took place and focused on whether a section of the article should be included or not. Specifically, the article included (and continues to include) a section on the role of women during the Great

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[104] Ibid.
[105] "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression#Start.

Depression.[106] The user "DrVentureWasRight" disagreed with the existence of a separate section on women and tried to change the article of the Great Depression by marking the section as inappropriate for an encyclopedic article.[107] Few days later, the user wrote in the "talk page:"

> This section seems to be really out of place. We don't really talk about the effects on any specific group or subgroup. I really reads (sic) like someone copied it out of a high school research paper. I recommend removing it from this page, although it might find a place on one of the country specific Great Depression pages. — Preceding unsigned comment added by DrVentureWasRight (talk • contribs) 21:45, 26 September 2015 (UTC)[108]

The user recommended the removal of the section, which caused a strong reaction from other involved editors. The editor "Rjensen" made a comment, in which "Rjensen" cited several academic works that engage with the experiences of women during the Great Depression. The user mentioned:

> Who is this "we" that does not want to talk about women?? Obviously some narrow economist who Is unaware of the wealth of reliable sources on the great depression. Fact is the RS in many fields are publishing books and articles and chapters dealing with the experience of women in the Great Depression. In simple economic terms, since the job market was gender stratified, the employment situation for women was entirely different than for men. Perhaps the critic does not think that men should be studied either? or poor people? Are the political implications are allowed to be mentioned, about the social and intellectual dimensions? Movies? Family roles? Fertility? Try browsing: 1) "'An Old Order Is Passing': The Rise of Applied Learning in University-Based Teacher Education during the Great Depression" D D'Amico - History of Education Quarterly 2015 2) "Population, Politics, and Unemployment Policy in the Great Depression" by M Cohen - Social Science History, 2014; 3) "The effects of the great recession on family structure and fertility" by A Cherlin, E Cumberworth, SP Morgan The ANNALS 2013 4) Mothers in the

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[106] For the version of page during that time, see "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=680317484#Role_of_women.
[107] See "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=682905927#Role_of_women.
[108] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 6," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Great_Depression/Archive_6#Role_of_Women_section.

fatherland: Women, the family and Nazi politics by C Koonz - 2013 5) The little girl who fought the great depression: Shirley Temple and 1930s America by JF Kasson - 2014 -6) "Lessons from history: Surviving old age during The Great Depression in the United States" by SH Matthews, RE Dunkle - Journal of aging studies 2013 7) "Banking crises and mortality during the Great Depression: evidence from US urban populations, 1929–1937" D Stuckler, C Meissner, P Fishback, (2012) 8) To Work and to Wed Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression by L Scharf - 1980; 9) "American Religion and the Great Depression" J Butler Church History, 2011; 10) "Women's work and economic crisis: some lessons of the Great Depression" by R Milkman - Review of Radical Political Economics 1976 - 11) "Surviving Tough Times: Saskatchewan Women Teachers in the Great Depression" by J Corman, C Ensslen - Saskatchewan History, 2012 etc etc. Rjensen (talk) 23:56, 26 September 2015 (UTC)[109]

In that extensive comment, "Rjensen" mentioned several academic works to make clear that this topic has been examined by historical scholarship, so it is also worth existing in the article on the Great Depression. "DrVentureWasRight" answered:

We is (sic) the Wikipedia community. Now, I didn't say we shouldn't talk about women. I said that it was tonally (sic) out of place in this article. We could have a section on the effects of various groups in the depression, but I suspect that would be highly dependent upon country and culture. We could also branch it off in to it's (sic) own page entirely. That could work, but there really isn't enough material here to make a good page. If you're interested in adding in more detail (sic) then making a page like 'Effects on Women in the Great Depression' could work well. DrVentureWasRight (talk) 06:54, 27 September 2015 (UTC)[110]

"Rjensen" responded to that comment:

The GD is important because of its impact on people. These people are all males?? I think not. Wiki reports what the RS say about the GD. The material is from an advanced scholarly study. Rjensen (talk) 07:32, 1 December 2015 (UTC)[111]

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[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

The debate ended at this point. A few years later, the user, "Rod57," expressed their agreement with the removal of the section, however, any editor responded to "Rod57" and the section on the role of women remains in the article even now.[112] Wikipedia users seem to contribute to the online encyclopedia not only to place their memories or write their own thoughts about history. They actively engage with academic scholarship, read books and papers, which are related to the topic they analyze. As René König argues, Wikipedia participants become experts through their contributions to the encyclopedia.[113] On Wikipedia, expertise and interest in a topic are strongly connected.[114] Wikipedia users start conducting research on a topic and become experts on it. By conducting research on a topic not covered in the article, the role of women in the Great Depression, the Wikipedia editors contribute to the growth and development of Wikipedia.

By following the academic developments of historical scholarship, Wikipedia editors try to keep Wikipedia's contents updated and often make them more inclusive. Several studies have correctly criticized Wikipedia for its gender gap both in contents and participants.[115] The example above does not challenge these studies but shows that academic scholarship plays a significant role in how Wikipedia users produce historical knowledge about the Great Depression. To better understand that example, we should place it into the broader framework of

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[112] Ibid.
[113] König, "Wikipedia. Between lay participation and elite knowledge representation," 164.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Dariusz Jemelniak, *Common Knowledge?*, Pnina Fichman and Noriko Hara, ed., *Global Wikipedia*, Nathaniel. Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness*, Julia Adams and Hannah Bruckner, "Wikipedia, Sociology, and the Promise of Big Data," *Big Data & Society* (July-December 2015): 1-5, Elizabeth Losh, Jacqueline Wernimont, Laura Wexler, Hong-An Wu, "Putting the Human Back into the Digital Humanities: Feminism, Generosity, and Mess," https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/cfe1b125-6917-4095-9d56-20487aa0b867#ch10, Julia Adams, Hannah Bruckner, and Cambria Naslund, "Who Counts as a Notable Sociologist on Wikipedia? Gender, Race, and the "Professor Test"," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 5 (2019): 1-14.

Wikipedia to face the critiques and become more diverse.[116] As Heather Ford has argued,

Wikipedia should be seen as a space where battles over gender, language, ideology take place.[117]

However, the effort of Wikipedians to keep up with academic developments and

Wikipedia's guidelines is not a simple process, it often creates intensive discussions and editing

debates. The nature of the sources that Wikipedia editors engage and accept, constitutes a

common topic for arguments and debates. Wikipedia users critically examine the sources that

they use to develop a historical article. Also, their perceptions of the sources reveal their broader

political and ideological beliefs. In December 2016, the user "Crosswords" edited the main

article on the Great Depression and more specifically the section "Economic indicators."[118] In

that section, there is a table that shows the change in industrial production, wholesale prices,

foreign trade, and unemployment for the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany

from 1929 to 1932.[119] However, the user "Crosswords," who wanted to show that the Soviet

Union did not only suffer from the Great Depression but managed to increase its production,

added to the table the Soviet Union by mentioning an increase of 85% in the industrial

production.[120] The data that the user "Crosswords" used, was taken from the website,

"www.marx2mao.com."[121] The next day, the users "Sagecandor" and "North Shoreman"

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[116] On the effort of Wikipedia to improve its coverage of topics related to art, feminism, and gender, see Siân Evans, et al., "What We Talk About When We Talk About Community," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/llx97ml5/release/2.

[117] Heather Ford, "Rise of the Underdog," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/fcgjp9ul/release/1.

[118] For the revision history of the page during that time, see "Great Depression: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&offset=&limit=500&action=history.

[119] For the version of the page, as it was before the edit, see "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=752041071#Economic_indicators. Even now, the section has the same form.

[120] For the page after the edit, see "Great Depression," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Great_Depression&oldid=753250524#cite_note-19.

[121] Ibid.

reverted the edit, challenged the reliability of the source, and marked it as a primary source, which is not accepted in Wikipedia articles.

Change in economic indicators 1929–32[18]

	United States	Great Britain	France	Germany
Industrial production	−46%	−23%	−24%	−41%
Wholesale prices	−32%	−33%	−34%	−29%
Foreign trade	−70%	−60%	−54%	−61%
Unemployment	+607%	+129%	+214%	+232%

Change in economic indicators 1929–32[18][19]

	United States	Great Britain	France	Germany	Soviet Union
Industrial production	−46%	−23%	−24%	−41%	+85%
Wholesale prices	−32%	−33%	−34%	−29%	
Foreign trade	−70%	−60%	−54%	−61%	
Unemployment	+607%	+129%	+214%	+232%	

After several editing debates between the two sides, the users created a discussion's thread in the "talk page" of the Great Depression to discuss that topic. [122] The user "Sagecandor" wrote:

> [..]
>
> Appears to be a primary source to some website: "www.marx2mao.com".
>
> Further, appears to be same book as this [7], writings by Joseph Stalin.
>
> Is this really a reliable source for the Great Depression ?
>
> Could this be an attempt at a spam link to: "www.marx2mao.com" ?
>
> Do we really want to rely on WP:PRIMARY reference links like this instead of focusing on
>
> WP:SECONDARY sources for this article?
>
> Sagecandor (talk) 01:27, 8 December 2016 (UTC)[123]

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[122] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 5."
[123] Ibid.

For "Sagecandor" the website "www.marx2mao.com" is not a reliable source of reference, as it is not only a primary source but refers to the writings of Joseph Stalin, a controversial personality in history. Thus, for "Sagecandor" the website is a biased source of historical knowledge that cannot be used in the article.

Another editor, the user "North Shoreman," an avid editor in historical articles and participant in WikiProject United States History and WikiProject Military History, argued:

> I can't see any value in the additional source. There is no page reference and it is only placed after a section head. The person wanting to add it needs to come here and explain what info the source is supporting and where in the source that info is. Tom (North Shoreman) (talk) 03:05, 8 December 2016 (UTC)[124]

A brief dialogue between the editors followed the comment:

> Thank you very much for your participation here on the talk page, North Shoreman. I agree with you it is just a bare link. No book title, missing author, missing page number, missing year of publication, missing any explanation whatsoever for why the asserted cite backs up that info and fails verification to allow future users to verify it. What step to take next regarding this? Sagecandor (talk) 03:07, 8 December 2016 (UTC)[125]

> I've deleted it and invited the originator to come here for discussion. At this point he/she appears to be approaching a 3RR violation. Tom (North Shoreman) (talk) 03:09, 8 December 2016 (UTC)[126]

> Okay I think I may have reverted twice myself and so that is yet another good reason to have talk page participation and why I'm refraining from making more edits at this point in time to this page. Sagecandor (talk) 03:13, 8 December 2016 (UTC)[127]

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[124] Ibid. For the page of the user, see "User:North Shoreman," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:North_Shoreman.
[125] "Talk:Great Depression/Archive 5."
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

Stalin faked a lot of numbers. 1) Bullard 2000: "There is no person in authority, from Stalin down, who would not sign a hundred pages of false statistics and think nothing of it." 2) Skillen (2016) "Real facts, honest statistics, disappeared." 3) Marco Carynnyk, et al (1988) "Stalin announced at the Seventeenth Party Congress in January 1934 that 89.8 million tons of grain had been produced in 1933. The State Statistical Commission has recently calculated that the true figure was 68.4 million tons." Rjensen (talk) 04:18, 8 December 2016 (UTC)[128]

Wow. That is very revealing information from those sources. Thank you ! Sagecandor (talk) 04:23, 8 December 2016 (UTC)[129]

As shown above, the user "Rjensen" joined and argued that a work written by Joseph Stalin cannot be reliable, as he "faked a lot of numbers" to misrepresent Soviet Union's economic situation.[130] That comment triggered the involvement of the user who first made the edit and added the Soviet Union to the table, the user "Crosswords," who argued:

yet you cant back up your own claims Rjensen with these accusations against Stalin. Fact is that the Soviet Union wasnt effected by the global financial crisis and under his lead the Soviet Union became an industrialized nation this is common knowledge that you can find everywhere in the west.--Crossswords (talk) 01:56, 12 December 2016 (UTC)[131]

"Rjensen" responded to that comment:

even the Russians today agree Stalin faked a lot of numbers. Rjensen (talk) 02:12, 12 December 2016 (UTC)[132]

The discussion ended at this point, as the involved editors had reached a consensus. The article on the Great Depression did not change anymore, as the users reverted the edit and erased the contribution of "Crosswords." The "sociotechnical" framework of Wikipedia with its specific

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[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.

guidelines and policies determines the agency and the editing activity of Wikipedians.[133] As Sabine Niederer and José van Dijck have argued, it is not only the human agency but "the technological tools and managerial dynamics that structure and maintain its contents."[134]

As shown above, different types of knowledge blend in the talk pages. Personal memories, theory, historiography, guidelines, and policies characterize Wikipedians' engagement with history and define the construction of the Great Depression. However, academic scholarship and compliance with Wikipedia's protocols and guidelines seem to play a strong role in the construction of the Great Depression. Personal experiences are limited and do not come from the Wikipedia editors themselves but from their ancestors (grandparents). They take place in the background of the article, on the "talk page," and do not determine the contents of the main article. As Eelco Runia has written, for a generation that has not participated in a traumatic event, commemoration or – in this case – writing about it means to deal with the absence of memories.[135] Wikipedians seem to approach and perceive the Great Depression as a distant past, a "zamani," which does not belong to the space of experience but to the space of historical scholarship. For that reason, the engagement with academic developments marks the interaction of Wikipedians with the history of the Great Depression.

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[133] For the term "sociotechnical" system of Wikipedia, see Sabine Niederer and José van Dijck, "Wisdom of the Crowd or technicity of the content?" For the "social interface," also see Jonah Bossewitch, John Frankfurt, and Alexander Sherman, with Robin D. G. Kelley, "Wiki Justice, Social Ergonomics, and Ethical Collaborations," in. *Wiki Writing,* 52.

[134] Ibid., 1368.

[135] Runia, *Moved by the Past*, 12.

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The Wikipedia page about the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was created in 2004 as a merge of two separate articles on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[136] The page has received 8,582 edits since 2004 and has 573,375 views in the last sixty days.[137] The "talk page" mentions that the contents of the article are controversial, so some contents may be in dispute.[138] The article has been rated as a "warfare good article" and has been listed as a "level-4 vital article in History."[139] The article has appeared in the top 25 reports two times, which means that the article was among the 25 most popular articles of the week.[140] Furthermore, it is a "featured topic," namely a good quality collection of inter-related articles, in the History of the Manhattan Project series.[141] To the development of the page several WikiProjects have contributed, such as the WikiProject Japan, the WikiProject Military History, the WikiProject United States History, the WikiProject United States, the WikiProject Death, and the WikiProject Environment.[142] In all these projects, the article is rated as an A-Class article.[143] It is worth mentioning that the article had been the subject of an academic course assignment supported by the Wiki Education Foundation.[144] The course was "Human Rights in Global History" and was taught at Xavier

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[136] Regarding the statistics of the page, see "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – page statistics," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki.

[137] Ibid.

[138] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid. For the top 25 report, see "Wikipedia:Top 25 Report," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Top_25_Report.

[141] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki." For the featured topics of the History of the Manhattan Project, see Wikipedia:Featured topics/History of the Manhattan Project, *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Featured_topics/History_of_the_Manhattan_Project. For what is a "featured topic," see "Wikipedia:Featured topics," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Featured_topics.

[142] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid.

University of Louisiana in the fall semester of 2018.[145] This collaboration between Wikipedia and academia constitutes a broader effort of Wikipedia to improve its contents and deal with the issue of equity, policy, and lack of new Wikipedians.[146]

The main article includes multiple sections on the background information of the bombings, the preparations, analysis of the bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, surrender of Japan and occupation, post-attack causalities, memorials, debates over bombings, etc.[147] The page consists of visual items, such as maps, documents, US army propaganda posters, leaflets dropped on Japan, and images that depict air raids on Japan and the casualties of the bombings, their subsequent effects on both people and the environment, and the memorials in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[148] Apart from the images, it is interesting that the page also includes three short footages, which show the Hiroshima ruins and survivors with burns and scars.[149] Another significant element of the page is a voice recording, in which Truman talks about the bombings of Hiroshima and describes it as a "military base."[150] All these textual, visual, and audio elements offer a high quality coverage of the bombings, according to Wikipedia's assessment criteria.

By looking behind the curtains, we see that extensive debates between Wikipedia editors have given that form to the main article. Since the creation of the article in 2004, several debates

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[145] For the course, see "Wikipedia:Wiki Ed/Xavier University of Louisiana/Human Rights in Global History -02 (Fall 2018)," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wiki_Ed/Xavier_University_of_Louisiana/Human_Rights_in_Global_History_-02_(Fall_2018).

[146] For the collaboration between Wikipedia and universities, see Ian A. Ramjohn and LiAnna L. Davis, "Equity, Policy, and Newcomers: Five Journeys from Wiki Education," in *Wikipedia @20,* https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/t0ldob7m/release/1, Robert E. Cummings, "The First Twenty Years of Teaching with Wikipedia: From Faculty Enemy to Faculty Enabler," in *Wikipedia @20*, https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/0e9c3f8e/release/1.

[147] "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

and discussions have appeared on the "talk page." The discussions about the atomic bombings are longer than those of the Great Depression. I will focus only on the most significant and extensive discussions, as they made more and more users take part and contribute to the development of the page.

The first and the most important topic, with which the involved editors engaged, was the broader character of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many participants were trying to make sense whether the atomic bombs were crimes against humanity or not, as Japan was ready to surrender, or the bombings were terroristic attacks against Japanese people, or genocides or massacres, or they saved thousands of lives by ending the war. All these different points of view caused debates and conflicts between the participants.

Since the creation of the page in June 2004, the article included a section named as "Debate over the decision to drop the bombs," in which different views on the atomic bombs were analyzed.[151] The section mentioned that for some historians the bombs caused the surrender of Japan, while for others, Japan was already defeated, so the bombs were not necessary, or Japan was willing to surrender but the US aimed at an unconditional surrender, or the US had hidden motives in dropping the bombs.[152] That version of the page was created mainly by the editor "Iseeaboar".[153] In July 2004, some users created a discussion thread in the "talk page" and started to discuss whether the bombings led to the surrender of Japan or Japan would have

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[151] For the version of the page during that time, see "Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&oldid=4050940.
[152] Ibid.
[153] For the revision history of the page, see "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&dir=prev&limit=500&action=history.

surrendered even without the bombings.[154] The discussion started when a user claimed that there

is a debate between historians on whether the second atomic bombing should have been dropped

to make Japan surrender or Japan would have surrendered anyway.[155] Specifically, an

anonymous user cited a link from the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media,

which is not valid now, to show the debate between the historians about the atomic bombs.[156]

That comment triggered the participation of other users in the discussion, who shared their own

understandings of the historical event. The users mentioned different theories about the dropping

of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and discussed potential "what ifs" to better

understand what happened in the past.[157]

However, their comments did not aim at any edit of the article, as the article included a

section on the existing debates about the atomic bombings. The users felt the need to discuss all

the possible scenarios by conducting their own secondary research and finding secondary sources

to support their arguments. The involved users shared their own beliefs about why the US

dropped the atomic bombs. Their goal was not to impose their own findings and explanations on

other users. Instead, they aimed to develop the section on the debates further by providing a more

detailed analysis with more sources.[158] In the next days, the users added more details to the

section by adding several sources that supported the different theories.[159] Gradually, the

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[154] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 1," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki/Archive_1.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid. Probably the link is the following and refers to a review of the book, *The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb*, written by Dennis D. Wainstock: "The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/schrag/wiki/index.php?title=The_Decision_to_Drop_the_Atomic_Bomb.

[157] For the "what if" in history, see Richard J. Evans, *Altered Pasts. Counterfactuals in History* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2013), Niall Ferguson, ed., *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (New York, NY: Books Groups, 1999).

[158] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 1."

[159] See the related edits in the revision history of the page, "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&dir=prev&limit=500&action=history.

discussion contributed to the development of the section, as the editors created two separate subsections, the "Opposition to use of atomic bombs" and "Support for use of atomic bombs."[160] The two subsections included extensive lists of those figures who supported or opposed to the use of atomic bombs with specific references to their works and arguments. In the subsection "Opposition to use of atomic bombs," there was a reference to the argument that the atomic bombs have considered as "crimes against humanity," "war crimes," and "acts of terrorism."[161]

Some months later, in January 2005, a new discussion thread appeared, in which some users expressed their disagreement with the statement that the atomic bombings were "acts of terrorism."[162] Specifically, the user "Philip Baird Shearer" wrote:

> and some people think that "it's turtles all the way down". This is a classic weasel worded sentence. Is there any agreement that in a declared war during the middle of the 20th century that states could commit terrorism against the enemy, because any military action against an enemy could be construed to be an attempt to terrorise (sic) them. Was there any legal definition in this area as to degree or type of action as to what constituted state terrorism in 1945? Philip Baird Shearer 03:15, 5 Jan 2005 (UTC)[163]

The comment of the user caused the reaction of the user, "Silverback," who argued:

> If there was a definition of terrorism during war at the time, the Atomic bombings would fit it. The intent was to end the war through terror. It wasn't the military damage done at Hiroshima and Nagasaki that ended the war. It was terrorism and a war crime and justified in the minds of those that ordered it, and probably even justifiable today although lack of respect for international law leaves it unamended to accomodate (sic) for such justifiable terror. Nagasaki though is more difficult to justify.--Silverback 05:31, 5 Jan 2005 (UTC)[164]

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[160] See for example that version of the page, "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&oldid=7153551#Debate_over_the_decision_to_drop_the_bombs.

[161] Ibid.

[162] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 3," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki/Archive_3.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

Another user got involved in the discussion and expressed their strong opposition to the use of "terrorism" to describe the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The user "Noel" wrote:

> The goal of terrorism (to the extent it has one - it's often just plain nihilism) is to induce psychological changes in the target population. That was not, AFAIK, the main goal of the atomic bombings, as much as they had any explicitly stated goals, other than furthering the surrender of Japan. I just had a 30-minute look through my reasonably extensive collection of books on the subject of the bombings, but I can't find anything on what explicit goals the US had - can you point to any? Noel (talk) 19:51, 6 Jan 2005 (UTC)[165]

The debate continued:

> A willingness to "surrender" is quite a psychological change in this particular target population. It destroyed any heroic visions of resistance to a long siege (sic) of their island, they weren't to be allowed that honor, they were to be incinerated like rats by a flame thrower. An offshore demonstration would have been spectacular, but might have left doubt about our moral willingness to use it. The Japanese were not afraid of fire bombings anymore, they thought their fire breaks prepared them to survive them. Perhaps the second bomb was to create in their minds the impression that they might not have the time to formulate a strategy for continuing the resistance against this weapon. Ashes can't think.--Silverback 00:37, 7 Jan 2005 (UTC)

> But it wasn't the population as a whole who were resisting surrender; rather, it was mostly the Army. Your comments, while certainly colourful (sic), don't answer my question: other than (overall) furthering the surrender of Japan, do you know of any documentation of exactly what the explicit goals of the US were in dropping the bombs? I.e. any details on how they hoped the bombings would accomplist (sic) this goal? I was rather surprised that I couldn't find anything on this point, despite a search. One would think that people getting ready to deploy a new weapon would have considered what it would bring them. Noel (talk) 01:19, 7 Jan 2005 (UTC)

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[165] Ibid.

Well, I have heard military targets cited retrospectively. The population as a whole was preparing to resist attack, with mobilized women and children training to kill with farm implements if need be. U.S. leadership definitely expected the dropping of the bombs would lead to surrender, it is a safe assumption that they did not think they had completely destroyed any capability that Japan had to resist. The dropping of the bombs was terrorism and the mass-murder of innocents, and quite possibly justified by the usual means, net lives saved. […].--Silverback 08:18, 7 Jan 2005 (UTC)[166]

As the discussion comments reveal, even if the article follows the policy of NPOV and refers to the theory that views the atomic bombings as terroristic attacks, users intervene in the discussion to share their own historical understandings and their beliefs about what happened in the past. The users make historical arguments to make their own perception of the past part of the main article. For that reason, the discussion about atomic bombings and terrorism continued with users citing legal precedents of the period, the Nuremberg charter, the Hague Convention, the resolutions of League of Nations, and the General Assembly of the United Nations to support their arguments and pursue the involved editors to change the main article.[167] The discussion continued for the next days, several debates between the users, took place, however they did not lead to any editing change within the article.

The policy of NPOV, as I analyzed it in the first chapter, motivates Wikipedia users to actively write about history and cover all the possible points of view about a historical event. This idea seems to be confirmed in the "talk page" of that article. Users try to shed light in all possible aspects of the past and provide a balanced historical narrative about a traumatic event. However, to integrate all the historical points of view, users should also look for secondary

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[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid, see the sections "Legal Precedents," "Discussion of legal precedents," "Wanton destruction," "A question about Hague IV," and "International Court of Justice."

sources, make reliable historical arguments, and convince other editors that their points worth a place to the main article.

Few months later, in August 2005, a similar discussion appeared in the "talk page," when the user "Uncle Ed," a regular contributor to Wikipedia, who has also served as a Mediator, an Admin, and a Bureaucrat on Wikipedia, wrote:

A Wall Street Journal (WSJ) opinion article put it this way:

The Japanese army was expected to fight to the last man, as it had during the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Since the ratio of Japanese to American combat fatalities ran about four to one, a mainland invasion could have resulted in millions of Japanese deaths—and that's not counting civilians. The March 1945 Tokyo fire raid killed about 100,000; such raids would have intensified had the war dragged on. The collective toll from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings is estimated at between 110,000 and 200,000. [3]

I did not see this argument represented in the Wikipedia article. Specifically, the claim that

dropping the two atomic bombs resulted in

substantially fewer Japanese military and civilian deaths

compared to the alternative.

Please do not misunderstand. I am not suggesting that our article agree with the WSJ writer. Merely that the article should mention his POV. It's one I've heard frequently, especially from those who agree that the US was on the "right side" in the war. Uncle Ed 15:56, August 5, 2005 (UTC)[168]

This is an example of how NPOV policy users' involvement in the production of historical knowledge. The user "Uncle Ed" has read an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, which argued that

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[168] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 4," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki/Archive_4#Imbalanced_arguments_on_justification. For the profile page of the user, see "User:Ed Poor," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Ed_Poor.

the dropping of the atomic bombs had the least possible victims that any attack could have. The user shared that argument by aiming to make it part of the section on the theories that support the atomic bombings. As the user clarifies, this does not mean that the main article should adopt that theory but to incorporate it as an existing point of view.

That comment caused the appearance of several other comments, most of them found the idea that a Japanese invasion was expected, extremely problematic. The users wrote:

> We have some difficulty with a source that says this outcome "was expected". Expected by whom? I have no problem with reporting a notable opinion to that effect, but use of the passive voice, as in the quotation from the Wall Street Journal, would be dubious. JamesMLane 16:44, 5 August 2005 (UTC)

> Expected by pretty much everybody with experience fighting the Japanese, I should think. There hadn't been a case when they hadn't fought to (virtually) the last man, and often ending with a mass suicide. But the invasion of Kyushu was no longer the likely alternative to using the bomb:
> "Even with the full ration of caution that any historian should apply anytime he ventures comments on paths history did not take, in this instance it is now clear that the long-held belief that Operation Olympic loomed as a certainty is mistaken. Truman's reluctant endorsement of the Olympic invasion at a meeting in June 1945 was based in key part on the fact that the Joint Chiefs had presented it as their unanimous recommendation. ... But this evidence also shows that the demise of Olympic came not because it was deemed unnecessary, but because it had become unthinkable."Why Truman Dropped the Bomb
> —wwoods 19:09, 5 August 2005 (UTC)

> James - see Operation Downfall (which is a featured article). It contains a rather extensive and very well documented list of casuality (sic) projections. →Raul654 00:35, August 6, 2005 (UTC)

> To make the argument Ed's referring to, you need to make two points: That without the bombings, there would have had to be an invasion, and that the invasion, if it had occurred, would have cost many lives. I think "expected by pretty much everybody" is true as to the second point but not the first. There shouldn't

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be any passage in the article that assumes that the bombings averted an invasion. For example, Ed's phrase

about the effect of the bombings "compared to the alternative" assumes that there was only one alternative.

JamesMLane 17:35, 6 August 2005 (UTC)[169]

As shown above, the user seemed to challenge the idea that an invasion of Japan was "expected"

and, thus, the atomic bombings aimed to prevent the attack from taking place. The debate

between the users about the "expected" character of a potential Japanese invasion made the user

"Taku," a user of Japanese ancestry and a Ph.D. in Mathematics, as mentioned in their profile

page, and one of the top editors of the page, edit the introduction of the article.[170] In the first

paragraph of the article, there was the following statement: "One of the primary reasons given

for the use of the bomb was that it would force Japan to surrender unconditionally, and make

the planned invasion of Japan unnecessary."[171] The user removed the "make the planned

invasion of Japan unnecessary."[172] The user "Raul654" intervened and reverted the edit multiple

times.[173] Thus, the editing conflict moved to the discussion page.

I removed this part from the intro: ", and make the planned invasion of Japan unnecessary." It is, I think,

controversial at best. I don't see why saying the primary reason is to force Japan to surrender is insufficient.

-- Taku 01:10, August 6, 2005 (UTC)[174]

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[169] Ibid.

[170] For the profile page of the user, see "User:TakuyaMurata," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:TakuyaMurata. For the top editors of the page, see "Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki.

[171] For the version of the page before the user's edit, see "Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&oldid=20378464.

[172] For the version of the page after the edit, see "Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&oldid=20378624.

[173] For the revision history of the page during that time, see "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&dir=prev&offset=200 50417113031%7C12433608&limit=500&action=history.

[174] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 4."

The user "Raul654" agreed with the unexpected character of the bombings and the following

debate between the users took place:

Erm, because the stated reasons were *explicetely* (sic) to avoid the invasion of Japan. Not mentiong (sic) it is a glaring omission (sic). →Raul654 01:17, August 6, 2005 (UTC)

Where can I find this explicitly stated reason? I know many people claim that the bomings (sic) saved many American soldiers. But that is different from saying (1) the primary reason is to force Japan to surrender and (2) doing so avoids the invasion. We don't have to make a causal connection between (1) and (2). -- Taku 01:26, August 6, 2005 (UTC)

Would you care to state a single way in which dropping the atomic bomb to force Japan to surrender is differet (sic) from dropping it to avoid the (imminent) invasion? →Raul654 01:30, August 6, 2005 (UTC)

Sorry for sounding rude, but I think it is you who have to give us a source. I am just suggesting that at least we wait until you provide one. I do agree with you but it is not necessarily an accepted theory. So we need a source to back that.

For example, one might say, rightly or not, that the invasion was not going to happen anyway so the bombing has nothing to do with the invasion.

Besides this, as I said above, why do we have to venture about the connection between the surrender and the invasion in the intro? Why is making the connection between the surrender and the bombing insufficient? in the way it was done before. --- Taku 01:48, August 6, 2005 (UTC)

"Stimson's crucial role in the use of the Atomic bombs against Japan began with Truman's accession. The policies and actions that brought a Japanse (sic) surrender without an apocalypic (sic) battle in the homeland are Stimson's legacy - in short, the use of the Atomic bomb, which was urged by Stimson, prevented the invasion of Japan. (John Ray Skates, the Invasion of Japan, 236) The point is so obvious that the author does not even state it directly. →Raul654 01:59, August 6, 2005 (UTC)

Also, to answer your 2nd question - because as I said above, not mentiong (sic) the impending invasion of Japan when talking about the use of the atomic bombs is a GLARING omission, almost as bad as the version of Adolf Hitler that didn't mention world war II in the introduction. →Raul654 02:01, August 6, 2005 (UTC)

No, no, this is what people are saying that the bombing prevented the invasion after World War II. I need an explicit statement as you claimed that states the bombing was going to be used to both (1) force the surrender and (2) avoid the invasion. Also for the second one, I don't think your analogy is right; as we had conflict, the links between the bombing, the surrender and the invasion are not necessarily clear. And I am saying that it would be sensitive for us to avoid the venture on this in intro.

I hate confrontation, but please pay attention to subtleties. The old intro says that the bombing was going to be used for the purpose of forcing the Japanese to surrender. In other words, it does not say it did force the surrender. I agree that, in retrospect, the surrender made the invasion unnecessary but there is a subtle but important difference between the stated reasons for the use of the bombing prior to the actual bombing and what happened afterward. And, in general, as it is a delicate issue why and how the Japanese surrendered, we should stay away from venturing in discussing this issue (Japan's surrender) on the intro of this article. -- Taku 02:07, August 6, 2005 (UTC)

Part of the justification was clearly to stem off an invasion. I think my version, which lists the possibility as well as notes that the bombings were and continue to be controversial.

In any event, you are way out of line with five reverts, claiming consensus when it is clearly you against five different editors. Knock it off. --Fastfission 02:31, 6 August 2005 (UTC)

Just for teh (sic) record, fastfission's qualified version of the intro is totally fine by me. →Raul654 02:44, August 6, 2005 (UTC)

I don't think the intro is a place to discuss those possibilities and controversies. Also, in wikipedia I don't think we accepts a new change because more people like the change than the others. There had been a

debate on intro before, and we had reached some consensus by now; I am saying that you cannot ignore that. -- Taku 02:36, August 6, 2005 (UTC)[175]

At this point, the discussion did not continue, and the page did not include the "unexpected" invasion of Japan in the introductory paragraph. This example is typical of how Wikipedia editors engage with secondary sources and adherence to Wikipedia policies to make historical arguments and, therefore, edit the Wikipedia articles appropriately. As mentioned above, Wikipedia users do not only use "talk page" to share their personal thoughts and memories, but to make historical arguments based on secondary sources and Wikipedia guidelines. Also, the constant intervention of users in the "talk pages" makes clear that Wikipedia articles are not final and stable written products, but they are always in a constant movement.

The secondary sources, with which Wikipedia users actively engage, do not include only articles, books, and papers but also visual media, such as images and videos. Wikipedians get involved in discussions and debates about what visual details they should add or remove from the article. In February 2006, the article contained several images that depicted topics related to the dropping of atomic bombs, such as the mushroom cloud from the nuclear explosion over Nagasaki, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Canada, a map of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the burns on the victims, destroyed buildings and landscapes, the Nagasaki Peace Park, and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial.[176] However, many users found the existence of so many pictures in the article exaggerated and brought that topic into the "talk page."[177] Specifically, the user "Ten Dead Chickens" or "TDC," one of the top editors of the article, wrote that "there are way too

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[175] Ibid.
[176] For a version of the page in January 2006, see "Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&oldid=37668033.
[177] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 6," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki/Archive_6#Too_many_pictures

many pictures in the current article" and suggested to reduce them.[178] An anonymous user

responded to that comment by adding:

> Anonymous: Yes, definitely (sic). Also, do people REALLY need to see the burns on that victim?
> Seriously, many schools in my area view this page. That picture (the first one under, "Japanese realization
> of the bombing") is just grisly.[179]

As mentioned above, the main article contained a picture that showed a Japanese victim of the

atomic bombings having burns in her body.[180] For the anonymous user, that picture did not serve

the educational aim of Wikipedia. Their comment made other editors express their own opinions

about the existence of these images in the article. Specifically, they wrote:

> Part of learning about atomic warfare is learning about what it can do. Those pictures are educational. We
> shouldn't censor ourselves. --AaronS 03:38, 16 February 2006 (UTC)
>
>
> I whole heartedly agree. I think it would be an absolute disservice to the users of Wikipedia and anyone
> beyond to not educate them on the atrocities of war by showing the effects of nuclear warfare. It can be
> very easy to disassociate mortality figures on a website from the actual pain and suffering caused as a result
> of these actions. It's not a game, after all. --User:alexthecheese 13:31, 20 February 2006 (GMT)
>
>
> Hm. When folks begin to speak of *atrocities* and *educating people*, I catch a hint of propaganda.
> Personally, I don't have anything against the photographs: they are presumably real, unlike some of the text
> material. But if their purpose is to *educate people*, well, I wonder about motives. This is not Hyde Park
> Corner, after all. --Cubdriver 13:50, 20 February 2006 (UTC)

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[178] Ibid.

[179] Ibid.

[180] For the image, see "File:Gisei32.jpg," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gisei32.jpg.

The purpose of an encyclopedia is to educate. There are nowhere near to many pictures. Still, two have been removed, namely two maps that seem very useful, so I suggest putting them back. DirkvdM 09:00, 21 February 2006 (UTC)

The purpose of an encyclopedia is not to shape opinions, which seems to be the kind of education that interests some contributors here. That said, the more photos the better. I trust the posters applauding photos of injured Hiroshima citizens would likewise endorse photographs of literal atrocities at Nanjing, on the Burma-Thai Death Railroad, and in the Bataan Death March for example. --Cubdriver 19:20, 21 February 2006 (UTC)

Cubdriver, it seems that you're being argumentative for the sake of being argumentative. There's a debate about the pictures in this article, and someone spoke generally about "the atrocities of war" and you go off on a tangent accusing people of spewing propaganda and questioning their motives. Someone else talks about *maps*, and you start throwing Japanese war atrocities into the mix. Why not wait until someone *actually* talks about making a POV change to the article before you start circling the wagons and shooting at POV injuns? KarlBunker 20:38, 21 February 2006 (UTC)

As I say, the more photos the better, but "educating people about the atrocities of war" is not their purpose, even if we make the debatable assumption that the atomic bombings *were* an atrocity. The photo originally under question showed radiation injuries; someone objected to it as distasteful; someone defended it as necessary to educate the lumpenproletariat. No, that's not why the photograph is valuable, and if it's there for that purpose, then it *ought* to come out. The one agenda is as dubious as the other, perhaps more so. --Cubdriver 21:42, 21 February 2006 (UTC)

I certainly agree with most of that. I would only suggest two things: 1) that it doesn't really matter what an editor's motivations are; it's the content that matters, and 2) that someone might use "the atrocities of war" simply to refer to "the really bad things that happen in a war", rather than making any accusation about the legitimacy of a particular act. KarlBunker 01:14, 22 February 2006 (UTC)

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The only picture we currently have of any of the victims (this one) is one which is often reprinted and is not

very disturbing at all, relatively speaking (looks like a bad sun burn). Personally I think one could make the

argument that there are not *enough* pictures of victims -- most of the pictures of the results of the bombing

are of empty cities and make it look as if people were all vaporized instantly, a conception about nuclear

war that downplays the actual long-term damage of nuclear warfare (a nice discussion of this by a historian

is in Spencer Weart's *Nuclear Fear*, for those interested). But personally I find the other victim

pictures a bit too graphic for an NPOV encyclopedia article, so I think the current one will have to do.

Personally I prefer the non-false colored version of the current one (I doubt the color choices are based in

any fact), but am not willing to battle back and forth over it. --Fastfission 02:51, 22 February 2006 (UTC)

Anonymous (Yes, same guy as before): Perhaps you could put a warning on those pictures (make them

links) and put them under a section with a warning that they may be disturbing?[181]

As shown in the discussion, for some users the picture with the burns should be removed, as it is

not educational but disturbing, but for others the picture is appropriate, as it presents the

atrocities of the atomic bombs and their effects on Japanese people. Finally, the picture with the

victim remained in the main article, and the user "Ten Dead Chickens," who had started the

discussion's thread, removed the pictures that depicted the maps of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[182]

Wikipedia users not only collect knowledge from books, papers, articles, and pictures

that they have found on the Internet, but also share items, photographs, or the broader historical

knowledge they have collected by visiting museums and historical sites. They try to make their

personal experiences from museums and historical sites part of the main article on Wikipedia. In

August 2007, the user "Aude" created a discussion thread to share their experience from their

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[181] Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 6."
[182] For the version of the article after the removal of the pictures, see "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&oldid=38781839.

visit to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum and the Nagasaki Peace Park.[183] More specifically,

the user wanted to share some photographs that they took during their visit in Nagasaki, to

improve the historical coverage of the article and, also, to add some more details about the

atomic bombings. The user "Aude" made three comments to show their willingness to contribute

to Wikipedia:

> I notice this page is protected, so definitely won't make any edits. I spent yesterday in Nagasaki, including
>
> time at the A-Bomb Museum and Peace Park. Have numerous pictures. When I have the time, will upload
>
> them to Commons for use here under cc-by-sa. Spent time last week in Hiroshima, including some time at
>
> the museum and peace park there, with many pictures. I'm heading back to Hiroshima this afternoon and
>
> will be there for a few more days. So, if there is anything else in Hiroshima that needs a picture, please say
>
> so.
>
> For now, my pictures (mainly of Nagasaki and Hiroshima) are on Flickr in this set:
>
> http://www.flickr.com/photos/kmf164/sets/72157601080401307/ I will try to take time later today to
>
> upload them to commons. Something here may be useful for this or other articles. --Aude (talk) 02:16, 10
>
> August 2007 (UTC)
>
> Also, I don't have time to look at the RFC in detail now, but notice it's about the death figures. The City of
>
> Nagasaki keeps official numbers on this. The current total for Nagasaki is 143,124. (I have a picture which
>
> shows this) I'll look again for numbers for Hiroshima. --Aude (talk) 02:20, 10 August 2007 (UTC)
>
> I'm looking at the booklet for the Nagasaki Peace Ceremony yesterday. It includes the Nagasaki Peace
>
> Declaration by Tomihisa Taue (Mayor of Nagasaki). It says "the intense heat rays and severe blast winds,
>
> together with enormous amounts of radiation, claimed 74,000 lives and inflicted terrible injuries on 75,000
>
> others" These are immediate deaths. When added together with deaths from a-bomb illnesses later, the total
>
> is 143,124. --Aude (talk) 06:15, 10 August 2007 (UTC)[184]

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[183] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 14," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki/Archive_14.
[184] Ibid.

The user "Aude" used their personal visit to Nagasaki to shed more light on the coverage of atomic bombs by adding photographs and providing information on controversial topics, such as the number of the victims. The user posted the following picture in the discussion, which came from the Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims and calculated the number of victims to 143,124 as of August 9, 2007.[185]
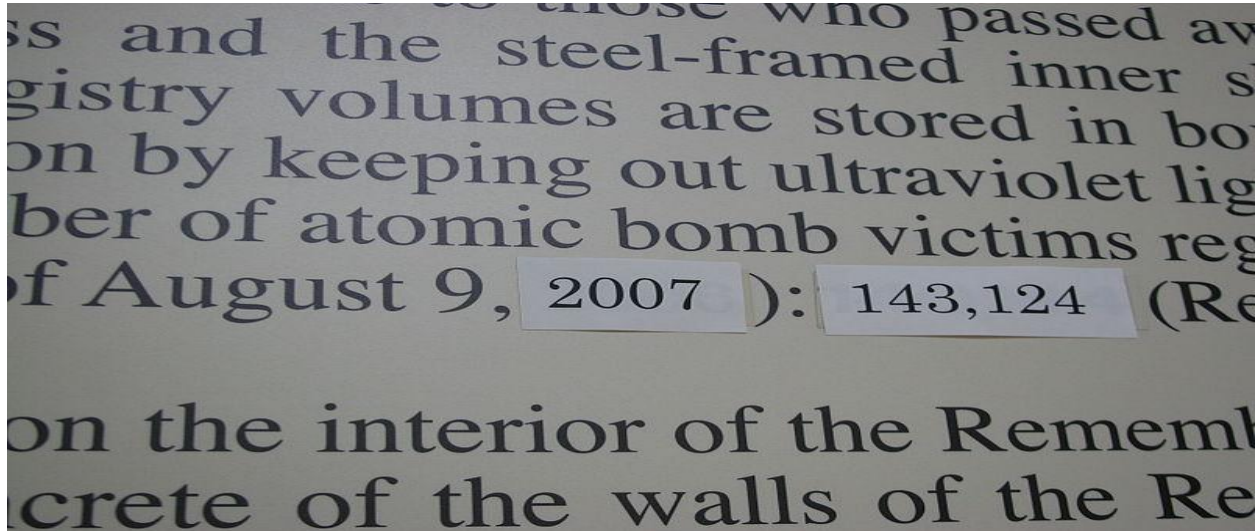
Since "Aude" posted that picture, many users started to participate in the discussion and accept or challenge the number of the victims that the picture showed. The discussion followed as:

> Does anyone else notice that the figure has changed, the tape is pretty obvious. How many times has it changed, and where did the new info come from to make the changes? Anynobody 05:03, 12 August 2007 (UTC)

> They added the number of past 12 months death of after-effects sufferers. I think they do this every year. Oda Mari 05:12, 12 August 2007 (UTC)

---

[185] Ibid. For the picture that the user "Aude" posted, see "File:Nagasaki deaths.jpg," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nagasaki_deaths.jpg.

The increasing victim count includes anyone who was in the city and has died, for any reason, since the bombing. Torturous Devastating Cudgel

It's the number of names in the registry, with 3,069 names added in the past year. These are people who died of radiation illnesses, and not other reasons. [20] --Aude (talk) 20:44, 14 August 2007 (UTC)

Does Japan have any scientific documentation that explains the basis for concluding that all the people they keep adding to this total really died from A-bomb-related causes? Is there any explanation as to why these numbers are so much higher than the numbers from RERF (an organization whose documentation is readily available for peer review)? Oralloy 08:34, 20 August 2007 (UTC)

I have a hard time believing that 62 years after the bombing, any death can be reliably attributed to radiation exposure.Torturous Devastating Cudgel 22:50, 14 August 2007 (UTC)

Both cities have their database. [21] and [22]. Oda Mari 10:09, 20 August 2007 (UTC)

This issue comes up often, every anniversary the mayors make speeches and the AP and Reuters report the number of Hibakusha who died the prior year as casualties of the atomic bomb. As Oralloy mentions above there's quite a discrepancy between RERF's > 428 deaths since 1950 and the various other figures for casualties due to radiation (i was half listening to HBO's new documentary the other night which claimed 160,000 fatalities from radiation since 1946.) It sure would be nice to find some kind of definitive statement and fill this hole in the article.—eric 21:35, 20 August 2007 (UTC)[186]

This discussion reveals how Wikipedia editors use even their personal experiences from travels abroad and visits to museums, to produce historical knowledge. Some of the involved editors did not accept the number of deaths easily or doubt on which victims this number includes. Another

[186] Ibid.

interesting point is that even if the user "Aude" has realized that the page was "protected" from edits and modifications during that time, they wanted to share the photographs from the Nagasaki Bomb Museum and the Nagasaki Peace Park. This means that Wikipedia users not only engage with history to place their own understandings of history in the main article, but they also feel the need to share and discuss their historical findings and thoughts. The "talk page" of Wikipedia article becomes a space, where editors define and redefine a historical event by (re)examining all its different aspects and all the available sources that will make editors offer better coverage.

By having a personal relation to a historical event or to related resources, Wikipedians present themselves as experts in a historical topic. In other words, Wikipedians claim that they have a more reliable knowledge than the other involved editors, thus their arguments can offer a better understanding of what happened in the past. In December 2008, the user "Jane McCann" created a discussion thread to criticize the article for following a western point of view. Specifically, the user mentioned:

> I think it is quite west-centric the way this article is arranged. I think it should have a { {Globalise} } label but I'm not sure where. --Jane McCann (talk) 21:12, 8 December 2008 (UTC)[187]

The user "Binksternet," who is one of the top editors of the article and frequently contributes to historical topics, questioned the critique of "Jane McCann" by writing:

> Specifically, what would you see changed? Binksternet (talk) 23:16, 8 December 2008 (UTC)[188]

These comments made an anonymous user to participate in the discussion, who argued:

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[187] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 18," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki/Archive_18.
[188] Ibid.

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> I speak Japanese and have been to the Hiroshima Bomb Museum in Hiroshima, and the majority of what is written in this article is similar or the same to the Japanese viewpoint. —Preceding unsigned comment added by 98.28.179.6 (talk) 01:15, 23 December 2008 (UTC)[189]

The anonymous user did not agree with the first comment that the analysis of the article follows a western point of view. The user challenged that idea with their knowledge of the Japanese language and their visit to Hiroshima Bomb Museum. The user shared their personal engagement with the Japanese culture to make clear that the article represents history in a similar or identical way as Japan represents the atomic bombings in the Hiroshima Bomb Museum.

Even if Wikipedia users do not have direct experiences from a historical event, as they were not alive, when the atomic bombings took place, their visits to museums, historical sites or other related spaces legitimize them to make historical arguments and pursue other involved editors on how to edit Wikipedia pages. The scholar of translation studies, Henry Jones has noticed a similar pattern in his article on the role of translation in the creation of Wikipedia content by examining the construction of the article on Paris, France of English-language Wikipedia.[190] For Jones, there are two different dimensions. On the one hand, there are many members, who because they live in or near Paris, subscribe most strongly to their own personal narratives of the place, based for the most part on their direct perceptions and lived experiences of their daily environment.[191] On the other hand, there are people from all over the world, some of them have never visited Paris, so often they think about the French capital from the Hollywood depictions and write about Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame Cathedral, Montmartre, etc.[192] The lived experience,

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[189] Ibid.

[190] Henry Jones, "Wikipedia,' Translation, and the Collaborative Production of Spatial Knowledge," 265.

[191] Ibid., 283.

[192] Ibid.

even if it is (re)mediated and not directly connected to the historical event, gives editors the authority to talk about the past and redefine its representation in Wikipedia.

In May 2013, the user "Ghostofnemo" edited the introduction of the article, which included information about the numbers of victims, and added the following sentence: "In contrast, the number of civilian victims of Japanese democide during the war has been estimated at 5,424,000, which does not include military deaths."[193] The user wanted to show that it is only the US that killed thousands people with the dropping of atomic bombs, but Japan killed even more victims in the past. When that sentence appeared in the article, other editors reverted the edit immediately.[194] The user "Ghostofnemo" remade the same edit, other editors deleted it, and a debate started on the "talk page" of the article.

Specifically, in the discussion page, the user "Ghostofnemo" created a thread with the title "Irrelevant to compare deaths caused by Japanese occupations?" and wrote:

> An editor deleted a line comparing the death tolls from the atomic bombings with the civilian (non-military) death toll caused by the Japanese occupations of other countries (more than 5 million). Here is the diff of the deletion:http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&diff=553648763&oldid=553601701 What do other editors think? It seems relevant to me, and necessary for a neutral point of view, because looking at the deaths of the atomic bomb victims in isolation gives an unbalanced view of historical events. Ghostofnemo (talk) 07:15, 6 May 2013 (UTC)
>
> If an article on the battle of the Little Big Horn only mentioned the losses of General Custer's men, and didn't mention the invasion and massacres of native Americans leading up to the battle, it would give

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[193] For the version of the page after the edit, see "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&oldid=553601701.

[194] For the revision history of the page in May 2013, see "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&offset=20131012033813%7C576811411&limit=500&action=history.

readers a distorted picture of the conflict - i.e. that the U.S. soldiers were massacred for no apparent reason.

Wow, I just checked that article and it doesn't mention anything about the conflicts leading up to the battle!

Wikipedia, got to love it. Ghostofnemo (talk) 12:14, 6 May 2013 (UTC)[195]

The user "Nick-D," one of the top editors of the article and a member of the WikiProject Military History, strongly disagreed with that edit and argued that the comparison between the deaths caused by Japan and the atomic bombs does not make any sense.[196] Specifically, the user wrote:

I agree with the removal of this material - it's not necessary, and comparing all the deaths caused by Japan with the deaths caused by these two attacks (which formed only part of the highly destructive campaign against Japanese cities) is not sensible. The goal of the attacks was to force the Japanese to surrender, and not to somehow balance the ledger of fatalities. If someone was to add material to the Nanking Massacre article comparing the deaths there with those which resulted from the Allied attacks on Japan it would (I hope) also be removed on these grounds. Nick-D (talk) 12:23, 6 May 2013 (UTC)[197]

The user "Ghostofnemo" pointed out that the comparison provides more context on the dropping of atomic bombs, and thus, it should be placed in the main article. The user argued:

The 5 million is far short of all the deaths caused by Japanese forces during the war! That is only civilians who were massacred. To not mentioned those deaths is to obscure the background to the event. Mentioning those deaths also puts the number of deaths into perspective. Ghostofnemo (talk) 12:36, 6 May 2013 (UTC)[198]

The user "Boundarylayer," another top editor of the page, gave a different perspective to the discussion. For them, the material should not be placed in the introduction of the article but maybe in a separate section.[199] "Boundarylayer" wrote:

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[195] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 21," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki/Archive_21.

[196] For the profile page of the user, see "User:Nick-D," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Nick-D.

[197] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 21."

[198] Ibid.

[199] For the profile page of the user, see "User:Boundarylayer," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Boundarylayer.

I agree with Ghostofnemo that it is important material to give readers a feel for the over all context of the event, that is, to understand the state of warfare at that time. However it clearly has no place in the intro, and although it should be in the article, it should be placed further down in its own category, or in the Debate of the Bombings page, rather than shoe horned into the introduction. In respect to Nick-D's point and analogy, its on egg shells, the Nanking massacre came before any major allied attacks on Japan, therefore did not affect it unless someone in Japan built a time machine. However, I think I know what he is driving at, he opposes the material on the grounds that it may appear more suited to a list of civilian deaths in war page. However although it would undoubtedly also be a good contribution to such a page, because the majority of these democide deaths perpetrated by Japan occured (sic) before the nuclear bombings, it is a piece of the puzzle to quickly convey to a reader, how could someone justify ordering such a thing(a nuclear attack). Boundarylayer (talk) 16:00, 29 May 2013 (UTC)[200]

"Binksternet," intervened and agreed that the comparison should not be placed in the introduction of the article, as the numbers are very "simplistic" and do not provide any context. [201] The user wrote:

Yes, the information is useful in the article body but not in the introduction. It would be simplistic to try and establish a tit-for-tat relationship between the number of deaths caused by militant Japan and the deaths caused by the atomic bombs, but certainly the Allies were very much aware of how deadly Japan's aggression had been. The numbers by themselves provide little context, so it would be helpful to refer to analysis from a well-known historian to connect the dots for the reader. Binksternet (talk) 16:59, 29 May 2013 (UTC)[202]

"Nick-D" responded by posting an extensive comment:

No, that's not what I'm getting at at (sic) all I'm afraid. I don't think that we need to include figures on the number of deaths the Japanese were responsible for here because it's simply not relevant to the topic of the article, and encourages false comparisons. There's a huge literature on why the US dropped the atomic bombs, and the decision to do so had almost nothing to do with the number of people the Japanese had

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[200] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 21."
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.

killed: the focus was almost entirely on the hope that the bombs would end the war and avoid the expected

huge number of American casualties which would result from the invasion of the Japanese home islands.

The US wasn't seeking revenge, and didn't decide that the wickedness of Japan's policies made the atomic

bombings morally permissible, it just wanted to shock the Japanese leadership into admitting that the

country was defeated. Much of the literature on the bombings also notes the change in the US

Government's attitude to bombing over the war, starting from a strong emphasis on precision bombing to

avoid civilian casualties, and slowly moving towards an acceptance of area attacks which deliberately

targeted civilians. To a significant degree, the atomic bombings were seen as a continuation of the huge

raids which had destroyed Tokyo and most of Japan's other cities in the final months of the war (though

there was always a realization (sic) that destroying entire cities with a single bomb was a significant

escalation of these attacks). Similarly, the great majority of people in the Japanese cities had nothing to do

with the war crimes and killings committed by Japanese forces, so to imply a connection is false. To the

extent that there was a debate over the comparative morality of the bombings, it took place after the war,

and is better covered in the Debate over the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki article. Nick-

D (talk) 23:45, 29 May 2013 (UTC)[203]

The debate became even more intense when "Ghostofnemo" wrote that there is a tendency in

Japan to ignore the victims killed by the Japanese and only remember the death caused by

Americans. For the user, Wikipedia should present the "reality" of both countries. Specifically,

the user "Ghostofnemo" argued:

I think it's relevant to mention the victims of Japan's military in this article to put the death toll from the

atomic bombings into context. In Japan, there is a tendency to ONLY focus on the victims of the atomic

bombings, and to COMPLETELY overlook the much higher death tolls inflicted on civilians during

Japanese occupations of other countries. Japan, innocent victim, America, evil slaughterers of civilians.

The reality, which Wikipedia should reflect, is that both countries are guilty of committing huge war

crimes. Ghostofnemo (talk) 04:38, 30 May 2013 (UTC)[204]

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[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.

That argument inspired the user "Nick-D" to use his personal engagement with the history of

Japan and their visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in order to question

"Ghostofnemo's" argument. "Nick-D" pointed out:

> From what I saw during my visit to Japan and the works I've read about Japanese perspectives of the war,
> your claim that Japanese people generally believe that their country did nothing wrong and were 'victims' is
> not at all correct (the much-visited Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum is very clear on the point of
> Japanese misconduct, for example). Nick-D (talk) 04:49, 30 May 2013 (UTC)[205]

"Ghostofnemo" made some comments to that post to express their disagreement and pointed out

the lack of reference to the US victims that Japanese soldiers killed during WWII. The debate

ended and the "Ghostofnemo's" edit was permanently removed from the article.

A similar incident took place in December 2016, when a debate started on the "talk page"

and challenged the placement of a picture in the main article.[206] The picture depicted the atomic

cloud over Nagasaki.[207] The user "Boundarylayer" that I also mentioned above, challenged the

historical accuracy of the picture, as the cloud did not look like the cloud seen in the film

footage.[208] For the user, that cloud was either city fire clouds or a post-detonation fire.[209]

"Boundarylayer" agued:

> This cloud is at a, far-too-low-an-altitude to convince me that it is indeed the cap of the mushroom cloud,
> that was generated by the detonation of the Fat Man Gadget. As the cloud cap in this photo has massive
> turbulent-surface-features which do NOT match those seen in the widely circulated film footage of the
> Nagasaki/fat man explosion. In the more authoritive (sic) film footage, at this low an altitude, the

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[205] Ibid.

[206] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 23," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021,
 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki/Archive_23.

[207] For the picture, see "File:Atomic cloud over Nagasaki from Koyagi-jima.jpeg," *Wikipedia*, January 10, 2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Atomic_cloud_over_Nagasaki_from_Koyagi-jima.jpeg. For the version of the
page before the discussion, see "Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10,
2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Atomic_bombings_of_Hiroshima_and_Nagasaki&oldid=755212172.

[208] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 23."

[209] Ibid.

fireball/mushroom cloud-cap was completely smooth in comparison to this photo. Now, while the film

footage of the cloud does eventually depict the cloud taking on a turbulent cloud-cap, crucially, this

occurred at a much much higher altitude than what this "koyagi-jima" photograph depicts. A very strong

reference is going to be needed to convince me that this is indeed the "mushroom cloud". I strongly suspect

that it is actually; either (A) city fire clouds, given the sheer improbability that the camera-man had actually

been sitting there, camera-in-hand, ready to snap the mushroom cloud. OR (B)The photo could also

conceivably be of a post Fat Man fire-induced-detonation in one of the supporting, mitsubishi-weapons-

factory chemical explosive works. The Japanese used a lot of picric acid instead of TNT in WWII and the

former is even more prone to "cook-off"(thermal induced detonation) even when encased in steel shells.

Although I can imagine that we should have a crater to point to, as the proverbial smoking gun, if this post-

detonation hypothesis at Nagasaki were the case.Boundarylayer (talk) 15:48, 18 December 2016 (UTC)[210]

The user "Hawkeye7," the editor with the most edits to the page and a historian with a Ph.D. in

military history, answered:

> Per the image information, which is where we always list the source for a photo caption, the image and its
>
> caption is from the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. Now, I understand what you are saying, but under
>
> our rules, it is WP:OR, and the onus falls on you to supply a WP:RS backing up your suspicions.
>
> Hawkeye7 (talk) 21:34, 17 December 2016 (UTC).[211]

The user clarified that the picture is a finding of secondary research, so it follows all Wikipedia's

guidelines and, more specifically, comes from the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum.[212] In other

words, the picture constitutes a reliable historical source. The user "Nick-D" referred again to

their visit to Japan, to support the use of the source in the article. The user wrote:

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[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid. For the profile page of the user "Hawkeye7," see "User:Hawkeye7," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Hawkeye7.

[212] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 23."

There's a photo of a similar view of Hiroshima following the bomb taken from Kure at the Kure Maritime Museum (aka the Yamato Museum). Unfortunately I didn't take a photo of the caption. Nick-D (talk) 22:38, 17 December 2016 (UTC).[213]

The user "Boundarylayer" offered an extensive reply by questioning the role of museums as an always reliable source of historical knowledge.[214] In a part of their answer, the user mentioned:

> Look, it is pretty obvious this photo is incorrectly labelled. Moreover it fails basic logical timing. Are we really going to take it on face value that someone was standing with a 1930-40s camera, ready to snap the mushroom cloud of the Nagasaki bomb, during the brief few seconds it was this low to the ground? Really? I'm incredulous. If the photo were of the mushroom cloud-stem, I wouldn't be so skeptical, but it fairly clearly is of a cloud-cap. In any case, the museums have been corrected numerous times pushing photos that are clearly mis-identified. We've already detailed in the article how the corresponding Hiroshima museum was wrong twice already, when it came to 2 separate photographs. So the museums are not exactly a reliable source when it comes to photograph identification, are they? However I understand wiki-rules and thus I will try and see if I can generate a WP:RS. More on that below. […][215]

Wikipedia editors do not passively consume history, even if it comes from an academic or an institutional place. They actively engage with what they find either digitally or physically. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen have pointed out that Americans trust eyewitnesses more than television or movies and feel close to the past in museums, because the artifacts seem authentic, and feel unconnected to the past in history classrooms.[216] In the examples mentioned above, Wikipedians' engagement with history is not a one-dimensional process. Museums and historical sites provide Wikipedians with information about the past and legitimize them to make historical arguments. However, Wikipedians bring their thoughts and arguments into the discussion. They

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[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*.

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receive feedback from their fellow Wikipedians, get involved in debates, and thus construct a historical article.

The debate continued by "Nick-D" asking "Boundarylayer" for sources that prove their claim. The user "Boundarylayer" replied:

> […] From my own research, browsing the Nagasaki museum. They state the photo was taken 15 mins post detonation, photographed at Koyagi jima(that's about 12 km South-West^ of the Nagasaki hypocenter). By cameraman Hiromichi Matsuda. […] Now, I don't know how familiar (sic) you are with nuclear detonations, or mushroom clouds, but if you are a bit rusty: For devices of this yield range(~20 kiloton) and under perfectly calm surface wind conditions, the cloud reaches its max height of ~ 8 km in about 5 minutes and then begins to rapidly lose its shape when approaching around the 10 minute mark. After 20 mins it is totally unrecognizable, with the mark-1 eyeball, as ever having been a mushroom cloud. […] So the actual "atomic cloud", would've been diffuse and well out of frame when he captured the scene *over* Nagaski. While no firestorm at Nagasaki occurred(unless you're author Lynn Eden) the fires were still pretty intense^^ as city-fires go and the city did burn down over about a day or so. This cloud is likely to be from those conventional fires. […]
>
> Honestly, it is pretty apparent that the 2 Japanese museums leave a lot to be desired when it comes to honestly conveying the facts, they seem obsessed with not doing a damn (sic) bit of research. Which is almost criminal in its sloppiness...and just think, someone is actually getting paid to work there?...Jesus wept.[217]

The user not only challenged the validity of the picture but also the role of the museum in the production of historical knowledge. The user did not accept how the Japanese museums contextualize the source but went even further and conducted research to explain what the picture showed. The other involved editors seemed to agree with the analysis and the sources that "Boundarylayer" cited. Thus, the discussion ended, and the editors removed the picture permanently.

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[217] "Talk:Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki/Archive 23."

On Wikipedia, there is not only one form of engagement with the past, but multiple ways. In all these levels of engagement, users' agency is activated. The past is always in constant discussion and negotiation. Benjamin Filene has written about the "outsider history-makers," who work outside museums and universities and engage with history based on their enthusiasm, and "for them the past is not remote and dead but a comfortable companion."[218] Even if Filene refers to non-digital agents, such as genealogists, reenactors, and heritage tourism developers, Wikipedians fit in that framework and become "outsider history-makers," who look for academic sources, share their experiences from their visits to museums and historical sites, post photos and claim their expertise in a historical topic. Other Wikipedians often challenge them, question the reliability of their arguments, ask for more sources and more reliable historical arguments, and therefore construct a historical narrative.

However, as in the case of the Great Depression, the atomic bombs do not allow Wikipedia editors to share direct experiences from the historical event but only from the (re)mediated reality of museums and historical sites. Wikipedians have access to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki through secondary sources - both written and visual – and personal visits to related museums exhibitions and historical sites. The historical past of Hiroshima and Nagasaki seems distant and, thus, personal memories or experiences of Wikipedians do not characterize how Wikipedians perceive history and aim to write about it. Wikipedia editors stand critically toward the historical event and get involved in discussions and debates about its representation in Wikipedia. Their engagement is mainly the result of secondary research and not of personal reflection.

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[218] Benjamin Filene, "Passionate Histories: 'Outsider' History-Makers and What They Teach Us," *Public Historian* 34 (2012): 12. Rosenzweig and Thelen make a similar point for those engaging with history outside schools. For them, history in the classroom was dead and gone, see Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 110-113.

Chapter 4: Reconstructing the Recent Past on Wikipedia: The Vietnam War and

September 11 attacks

In this chapter, I will explore the articles on Vietnam War and September 11 attacks to examine how Wikipedians engage with history, while they create historical narratives about the recent past. As I will show in the next lines, Wikipedians approach the history of the Vietnam War and the September 11 attacks in a more personal and emotional way than in the articles of the Great Depression and the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This does not mean that these two articles are products of personal reflection. Instead, there is a combination of multiple methods and approaches that lead to the production of historical knowledge. However, the "talk pages" of the two case studies reveal that the past of the Vietnam War and the September 11 attacks encourages Wikipedians to express their memories and experiences, which they try to integrate into the historical narrative of the two articles. This is significant, as it shows how editors engage with a more recent event of the United States history, how they make sense of the past while they try to contribute to the production of historical knowledge, and which of their contributions end up in the main articles.

The Vietnam War

A major traumatic event in modern US history is Vietnam War. The Wikipedia article on the Vietnam War was created in November 2001 and has been constantly edited.[1] It has been ranked as a level-4 vital article in History, it was a "good articles" nominee, but it did not

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[1] "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021,
https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Vietnam_War.

manage to meet the "good article criteria."[2] Several Wikiprojects have been involved in the

editing of the article, such as the WikiProject Military History, WikiProject Cold War,

WikiProject History, WikiProject Socialism, WikiProject Vietnam, WikiProject Soviet Union,

WikiProject Russia, WikiProject Southeast Asia, WikiProject Laos, WikiProject United States,

WikiProject United States History, and WikiProject Australia.[3] The article is also supported by

two more projects, the Wikipedia Version 1.0 Editorial Team, which aims to publish articles for

offline use and the Pritzker Military Library WikiProject, which is responsible for improving

articles related to the Pritzker Military Museum & Library in Chicago.[4] All these WikiProjects

have rated the article as a C-class article, which means that there is room for further

improvement.[5]

     The main article is very extensive and covers different aspects of the Vietnam War. It

contains an introductory section and some information on the historical background of the war,

and then multiple sections on the history of Vietnam and the United States from the 1950s to

1960s.[6] Like most Wikipedia articles, the page of Vietnam War contains tables boxes with the

belligerent countries, dates, and locations of battles, results, commanders and leaders, strength,

casualties, and losses, several pictures, maps, short films, and at the end of the page an extensive

bibliography.[7]

     The discussion behind the article is also very long and there are discussion posts since the

creation of the article in 2001.[8] As in all the previous articles, the discussion is diverse and refers

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[2] "Talk:Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Vietnam_War.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid. For these two projects, see "Wikipedia:Version 1.0 Editorial Team," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Version_1.0_Editorial_Team. "Wikipedia:GLAM/Pritzker," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/Pritzker.
[5] "Talk:Vietnam War."
[6] "Vietnam War."
[7] Ibid.
[8] "Talk:Vietnam War."

to several topics. Nevertheless, there are some themes, to which the involved editors have paid more attention and have focused their editing activity. The most popular discussion topic is the defeat of the U.S. in the Vietnam War, as some Wikipedians have expressed their doubts on whether the war was a victory or a defeat and even if it was a defeat, it was a military defeat or a political defeat.

In November 2006, the main article on the Vietnam War mentioned that the Vietnam War constituted a political defeat for the U.S. and a military victory for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.[9] An anonymous user interpreted this statement as the war was not only a political defeat for the U.S. but also a military defeat. Therefore, the user created a discussion thread, named it "American Defeat?," and wrote:

> I notice the article once said 'political defeat' and now 'Political and military' defeat in the war box, US won every single engagement of the war apart from the earlier Vietcong vicotories (sic) that fueled the US intervention.[10]

The user "RM Gillespie," one of the top editors of the article with several awarded barnstars for their contribution to the Vietnam War, responded:

> Every single engagement of the war? Perhaps you have never heard of the fall of the Ashau SF border camp? Or the loss of Kham Duc - the largest American defeat of the conflict? RM Gillespie 01:41, 5 November 2006 (UTC)[11]

While that debate was taking place, the involved editors were editing the article of Vietnam War.[12] On December 28, 2006, the user "Cripipper," a significant editor of the article

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[9] For the version of the article in early November 2006, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=87388601.

[10] "Talk:Vietnam War/Archive 6," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Vietnam_War/Archive_6#American_Defeat?.

[11] Ibid. For the page of the user "RM Gillespie," see "User:RM Gillespie," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:RM_Gillespie.

[12] For the revision history of the page between November 2006 and January 2007, see "Vietnam War: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020,

with several contributions, edited the result of the Vietnam War in the inbox of the article and added that the war was both a "political defeat for the U.S." and a "strategic military defeat for the U.S."[13]

However, in the discussion page the debate continued. More and more users were taking part in the discussion. For some editors, the war was a political defeat for the U.S. and a military defeat for the South Vietnam.[14] For other editors, the reunification of North and South Vietnam under a communist regime and the withdrawal of US troops signified both a political and military defeat.[15] For the user "Corporaljohny," the withdrawal of US military forces from the Vietnam War did not mean a military defeat, as it was result of Congress pull of funding. The user argued:

> A military defeat would have meant that the US Military Forces would have been annihilated or surrendered. They were withdrawn as a result of Congress pulling the funding for them. This is not a Military Defeat, but a political one. I have corrected the battlebox. Corporaljohnny 19:38, 5 January 2007 (UTC)[16]

The user "Corporaljohny" not only left that comment in the discussion page, but also changed the article. The user deleted the sentence "military strategic defeat for U.S." from the info box of the main page.[17] After some days, "Cripipper" intervened again and added to the info box that the Vietnam War resulted in a "political and strategic defeat for the U.S."[18] In the discussion, "Cripipper" also replied to "Corporaljohny" by writing:

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https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&dir=prev&offset=20061109120123%7C86697610&limit=500&action=history.
[13] For the version of the article after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=96912331.
[14] "Talk:Vietnam War/Archive 6."
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] For the version of the article after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=98702739.
[18] For the version of the article after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=98856916.

U.S. troops were not withdrawn because of Congress pulling the funding for them. They were withdrawn as part of Nixon's 'Vietnamization' plan. Cripipper 16:16, 8 January 2007 (UTC)[19]

Following the same line of thinking, the user, "Heave Metal Cellist," added:

Congress withdrew funding because everyone had realized that the war was a stalemate, and that the US wasn't winning. Consensus has already been reached on this issue; the war was a strategic defeat as well. I have corrected the battlebox to the status of the war that we agreed on back in December.[20]

The involved users made some more posts in the "talk page," but the main article did not receive any more editing changes.

In the same period, an anonymous user created a related discussion thread titled as "Political defeat for US (?)," in which the user expressed their strong opposition to the characterization of US defeat as "political."[21] The user wrote:

I notice this article refers to the war as being a "political defeat" for the U.S. A number of commentators these days refer to the U.S. defeat as "political," and not military as well. I do not believe this is the case. Make no mistake, this war was a military defeat for the U.S. Just because the VC didn't follow the Western "rules" of classic military conflict doesn't mean that they didn't prevail militarily. Guerrilla warfare is every bit as valid a form of war as any classic Western military doctrine. […][22]

For the user, the article seemed to misrepresent the outcome of the Vietnam War and follow a biased, Western-centric point of view, which goes against the main principles of Wikipedia. The user added:

[…] Additionally, if you're going to label this war as a "political," and not military defeat for the U.S., then you could really say the same for many other wars throughout history. For example, you could say that the German defeat in World War I was a "political" defeat (as strikes and political turbulence on their homefront played a major role in their defeat). Same thing goes for World War II. If Hitler had simply

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[19] "Talk:Vietnam War/Archive 6."
[20] Ibid.
[21] "Talk:Vietnam War/Archive 6," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Vietnam_War/Archive_6#Political_defeat_for_US(?).
[22] Ibid.

allowed his generals to run the war and had not meddled, then the Germans would have probably

prevailed.[23]

The comment motivated other editors to engage with that issue and write their own

interpretations. The user "Dan4J" agreed with that statement and asked the involved editors to

review this position.[24] Another user intervened and argued:

> No matter what you do, no matter how you want to lable (sic) it, when you leave, you lose. Period. If not
>
> emotionally attached, it should not be a difficult concept to understand. --Factus 09:59, 5 February 2007
>
> (UTC)[25]

The user "Factus" made an interesting point. They argued that the use of the term

"political defeat" to describe the result of the Vietnam War reveals an emotional bond with the

Vietnam War and makes clear that the history of the Vietnam War is not represented neutrally on

the Wikipedia page. As shown in the first chapter, emotions and personal points of view do not

comply with Wikipedia guidelines and policies. For "Factus," the use of "political defeat" shows

an emotional attachment to the past that favors the U.S. position in the war and does not present

a balanced historical narrative.

At the same time, a similar discussion thread appeared on the "talk page" with the title

"Strategic Military Defeat for the US?" in which some users argued that the Vietnam War was a

"political loss" but not military as the US won all the related battles.[26] Other editors intervened in

the discussion and the debate continued. Their arguments were very similar to those mentioned

above. In the meanwhile, on January 13, 2007, the user "Hanzohattori" edited the article and

removed that the Vietnam War was a "political and military-strategic defeat for the U.S" from

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] "Talk:Vietnam War/Archive 7," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Vietnam_War/Archive_7#Strategic_Military_defeat_for_the_US?!.

the infobox.[27] Thus, the article included only that the war signified a "military victory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam over Republic of Vietnam forces in 1975."[28] There were no references to the U.S. A few days later, the user "Cripipper" edited again the article and added that the war was a "political defeat for United States."[29]

However, the debate did not end. Some months later, a discussion thread titled "The outcome was not simply 'Defeat for the US and Allies'," appeared on the "talk page" of the article and continued the debate about whether the result of the Vietnam War was a military or political defeat.[30] An anonymous user tried to explain that the Vietnam War cannot be regarded and represented as a military defeat, as the US managed to accomplish all its objectives.[31] That statement caused several reactions from other editors, who intervened in the discussion. The user "Mmx1" expressed their disagreement by arguing:

> And what is the difference between military defeat and political defeat? The purpose of military force is to serve political ends. Whether South Vietnam fell because of the generals or politicians is irrelevant; in the end NVA tanks were still rolling through Saigon. Calling it a "tactical" victory may let you pat yourself on the back for a job well done but it's irrelevant if it fails to uphold our strategic aims - which it did. -- Mmx1 01:50, 23 May 2007 (UTC)[32]

The user "I stand on land" replied:

> Military objectives are not always the same as political ones. Our far reaching political objective was the securing of the area to stem the spread of communism. The military objective of the Vietnam war was to stop the North Vietnamese forces from overrunning South Vietnam. The military objectives were on a

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[27] For the version of the article after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=100493932.
[28] Ibid.
[29] For the version of the article after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=104626199.
[30] "Talk:Vietnam War/Archive 9," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Vietnam_War/Archive_9#The_outcome_was_not_simply_%22Defeat_for_the_US_and_Allies%22.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

tactical and strategic level, and once completed, were counted successful. Tactically, we were successful until we felt it no longer necessary to hold a military presence. There's no rationale to suggest that the military was anything but successful until the disengagement; the point at which it was determined the objectives were met. By the logic in the last paragraph, the US lost world war I because we did not politically create stability in Germany. I stand on land 02:44, 23 May 2007 (UTC)[33]

The debates continued with Wikipedia users getting involved in the discussion and expressing their own historical understandings about the outcome of Vietnam War. While the debate was taking place, several editors started to edit again the article on Vietnam War and, more specifically, the info box within the article.[34] On May 10, 2007, the user "El C" removed the term "political" from the "United States defeat. "[35] Thus, the article referred that the Vietnam War resulted just in the "United States defeat." Few days later, the user "Kobalt64" added that the outcome of the Vietnam War was a "decisive defeat of United States and allied armed forces."[36]One hour later, the user "Hughstew, the top editor of the article and a holder of a Master degree in History, as mentioned in their profile page, deleted the term "decisive" and changed the sentence to "defeat of United States and Allies."[37] On May 19, the user "I stand on land," made a radical change in the article. The user added to the infobox that the outcome of Vietnam War was a "strategic defeat for US and Allies" and a "tactical victory for US and

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[33] Ibid.

[34] For the revision history of the page between May and June 2007, see "Vietnam War: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&dir=prev&offset=20070416071040%7C123189569&limit=500&action=history.

[35] For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=129729089.

[36] For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=131467469.

[37] For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=131475001. For the profile page of the user, see "User:Hughstew," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Hughstew. For the top editors of the page, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Vietnam_War.

Allies."[38] Immediately, the user "Sohelpme" deleted the "tactical victory for US and Allies" from the infobox and changed the result into "overall defeat for US and Allies."[39] One day later, on May 20, 2007, the user "Hughstew" removed the term "overall" from the "defeat" claiming that this term does not make any sense.[40] The editing of the article continued, and on June 3, 2007, the user "kaliqx" added the term "political" to the "defeat for the US and Allies" and mentioned that the Vietnam War also resulted in the "withdrawal of American military personnel."[41] The next day, the user "Hughstew" removed the term "political" by claiming that the use of the word "political" is biased and represented a "POV."[42] The same user also argued that the official history of the U.S. army does not present that view. One day later, the user "Kaliqx" edited again this time deleting the whole sentence, "Defeat for the US and Allies."[43] A few hours later, the user "Hughstew" removed the edit and reverted the older version of the article.[44] On June 12, 2007, the user "Onetwo1" removed the whole sentence "Defeat for the US and Allies" and the debate ended at this point.[45]

Of course, after a while, the debate about the result of the Vietnam War continued and changed several times until the current version of the page. Since 2007, the article's infobox does not have any reference to whether the Vietnam War was a defeat, military or political, for the

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38 For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=131946032.
39 For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=132067371.
40 For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=132139246.
41 For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=135510565.
42 For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=135737888.
43 For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=136274067.
44 For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=136516693.
45 For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=137640001.

United States. In 2011, in a discussion thread named "Not Stating USA was defeated is POV" several Wikipedians argued that the lack of reference to the defeat of the US in the Vietnam War constitutes a clear violence of POV, as the U.S. did not manage to meet their objectives.[46] Other Wikipedians replied that the U.S. did not lose the war, as Americans left before the defeat of the South Vietnamese.[47] The debate about the outcome of the Vietnam War did not continue any more. Now, the current version of article includes that the Vietnam War resulted in the "North Vietnamese and Viet Cong/PRG victory," the "withdrawal of U.S. coalition's forces from Vietnam," "Communist forces take power in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos," "Reunification of Vietnam," "Start of the boat people and refugee crises," "Start of the Cambodian genocide and the third Indochina War."[48]

What I explored above is an example of a long and extensive debate about whether the war resulted in a defeat of the U.S., military, or political. The conflicts between Wikipedia users were not only about how a historical event should be represented in Wikipedia but how the involved editors should deal with a traumatic historical event and present it in a balanced and neutral way, as Wikipedia guidelines allow. On the one hand, some editors could not accept the U.S. defeat in the Vietnam War, so they saw the practice of editing as a chance to change or re-examine what happened in the past. On the other hand, some editors followed Wikipedia's guidelines more closely, engaged with academic works, and tried to represent history in a non-biased way. However, for both sides, Wikipedia becomes a space, where history does not belong

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[46] "Talk:Vietnam War/Archive 18," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Vietnam_War/Archive_18#Not_stating_USA_was_defeated_is_POV.
[47] Ibid.
[48] "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War.

to the past but is always present and negotiable. Wikipedia gives the opportunity to the public not only to narrate the past, but to reconstruct it and perform it.[49]

In the last decades, several studies have examined the neutrality of Wikipedia's contents and many of them have criticized Wikipedia for its gender bias and the lack of women-related content. As also shown in the example of the Great Depression, these critiques have forced Wikipedia editors to pay more attention to gender-related issues and make Wikipedia's contents more inclusive. A related incident took place in the "talk page" of the Vietnam War when a user wrote:

> Hello! As part of a gender equity project for my college course, I would like to add a section to the Vietnam War article entitled "American Women in Vietnam." While the existing article as a whole is very rich in detail, I think that Wikipedia users would benefit from my contribution. After conducting extensive research, I have prepared a section that I feel is appropriate. The section includes information about the jobs that women held in Vietnam while on active duty and also briefly explores the dynamics between men and women serving in Vietnam. I feel the addition of a women's section would complement the existing article and provide a more complete picture of the Vietnam War. Goldsphinx (talk) 18:42, 27 April 2011 (UTC)[50]

In the framework of collaboration between Wikipedia and educational institutions, the user wanted to share their project on the role of American women in the Vietnam War.[51] In that way, the user thought that they can contribute to the development of the article and make the coverage of the topic even more inclusive by adding a section on a neglected area of the Vietnam War. However, all users did not agree with that suggestion. The user "Owain the 1st" wrote:

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[49] On the performative dimension of the past, see J. Winter, "The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity," in *Performing the Past. Memory, History and Identity in Europe*, ed. K. Tilmans, F. van Vree and J. Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 11-23. Jerome de. Groot, "Invitation to Historians," *Rethinking History* 18 (2014): 599-612.
[50] "Talk:Vietnam War/Archive 19," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Vietnam_War/Archive_19#American_Women_in_Vietnam.
[51] On the collaboration between Wikipedia and academia, see Ian A. Ramjohn and LiAnna L. Davis, "Equity, Policy, and Newcomers: Five Journeys from Wiki Education."

Why just American women?Not going to bother with Vietnamese women? I do not agree with just a section for American women. If you want to put a section in about women then include them all or do not bother.This article already suffers from too much from the American side and does not need any more I believe. Owain the 1st (talk) 18:51, 27 April 2011 (UTC)[52]

An interesting dialogue followed that comment, in which several users expressed their own thoughts about a potential section on the role of women in the Vietnam War:

Goldsphinx, I would suggest that you place the material here on the talk page so that we may see what you are talking about.

⋙–Berean–Hunter—▶ ((⊕)) 18:56, 27 April 2011 (UTC)

Not only that, but if it's original research it might not belong here.Intothatdarkness (talk) 20:04, 27 April 2011 (UTC)

Not only that, but the mention of "active duty" suggests that this is limited to American Women serving in the military. I'm not female, but I spent the years of '64-'72 in Vietnam as a US govt contractor and can observe from my experience there (though I can't presently cite reliable supporting sources for this) that a fair number of nonmilitary women from the US and elsewhere also spent time in Vietnam in various capacities during the VN War years. Wtmitchell (talk) (earlier Boracay Bill) 09:39, 28 April 2011 (UTC)

Quite so. You had women from the Red Cross, USO, USAID I think had some, embassy staff, and missionaries working in SVN, and that's just from the US.Intothatdarkness (talk) 14:31, 28 April 2011 (UTC)[53]

The user "Wtmitchell," who is one of the top editors of the article, used their personal memory from their involvement in the Vietnam War to confirm that several nonmilitary

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[52] "Talk:Vietnam War/Archive 19."
[53] Ibid.

American women took part in the war.[54] It is interesting that on the one hand, Wikipedia editors used academic secondary sources to provide a balanced and impartial historical narrative on the Vietnam War, and on the other hand, their personal experiences are present in the discussion and often determine how they approach history. It is even more interesting that the other involved users seemed to be convinced by the comment of "Wtmitchell." Specifically, they wrote in the discussion thread:

> If this can be writen in a NPOV manner and covers all sides of the story then yes (but it might be better as a seperate lined articel. Slatersteven (talk) 14:39, 28 April 2011 (UTC)

> I realize that women held a variety of positions during the Vietnam War, and that they all deserve to be covered. However, my hope is that my addition to this article may serve as a starting place to open up discussion rather than act as an end-all authority. I now see that my title may be misleading- my section is specifically about female nurses serving in Vietnam, so I will change the title to clarify this. As for the role that Vietnamese women played in the war, I agree that it too is deserving of recognition. However, as I am not an expert on Vietnamese women, I will leave it to others better informed than myself to make their own contributions regarding this topic. Goldsphinx (talk) 16:12, 28 April 2011 (UTC)

> Great! Show us what you've got.
> ≫–Berean–Hunter—► ((⊕)) 16:17, 28 April 2011 (UTC)

> If you want to put your piece in then go ahead but title it like women in the Vietnam war or something like that then people can add stuff about Vietnamese women as well.Good luck.Owain the 1st (talk) 16:19, 28 April 2011 (UTC)[55]

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[54] For the top editors of the article, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Vietnam_War.
[55] Ibid.

Therefore, the user "Goldsphinx" attached a section on American Nurses in Vietnam accompanied by a short bibliography. The involved users gave feedback to the user, made comments on the section, and suggested improvements to the length, prose, and structure of the proposed section. Finally, on April 28, 2011, when the discussion went over, all the involved editors started creating a section named "Women in Vietnam," to which they added "Goldsphinx" piece.[56] The editors did not stop at this point, but they continued to investigate the topic. In the next two days, they added a piece on the participation of Vietnamese women in the war, which they developed further gradually.[57] In the next few years, the editors added one more subsection on the role of women journalists, who were reporting the war.[58]

In the examples analyzed above, Wikipedia becomes a digital space, where Wikipedians place and share their memories and experiences about the Vietnam War. At the same time, Wikipedia becomes a place, where users cite the academic works that they have read and make historical arguments based on their sources. The coexistence of personal memories and lived experiences of the recent past with secondary sources challenges the idea of Wikipedia that its content is only the result of secondary research. Instead, it complicates the process of historical knowledge production. However, it is evident that the transformation of discussions into historical knowledge in the main article goes through a process of gatekeeping, in which some

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[56] For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=426408049#Women_in_Vietnam.

[57] For the version of the page after the edit, see "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&oldid=426803808#Women_in_Vietnam. For the revision history of the article during April and May 2011, see "Vietnam War: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vietnam_War&offset=20110519085733%7C429851833&limit=500&action=history.

[58] See the current version of the article "Vietnam War," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War.

more experienced editors check the validity of the proposed edits and then they confirm or reject them.

As shown above, all users aim to change the historical narrative about the Vietnam War, as it was represented in the main article. They share their interpretations and understandings of the historical event and try to convince their fellows that their points are worth a place on the main page. It seems that Wikipedia blurs the famous distinction of Hayden White between the "practical past" and the "historical past."[59] According to White, the "historical past" is the past historians try to study scientifically, while the "practical past" is a past as a space of experience. The latter has practical and political use in the present. On Wikipedia, there is a dialogue between the "practical" and the "historical" past. The two pasts are not in contrast but coexist and determine users' engagement with history and the production of historical knowledge. Of course, in the "talk pages," there is an emphasis on the "practical past," the aspects of the past, in which most users are interested and bring into the discussion. While in the main article, there is the "historical past," a product of discussions, debates, guidelines, policies, and historical arguments. Nevertheless, both pages are in a constant dialogue. They redefine each other. The edits in the main article cause debates and the debates result in edits. The debates force users to intervene in the discussion and share their personal experiences. These experiences often become the starting point for further research in secondary works that will help users shape their historical arguments and reconstruct the past according to Wikipedia's guidelines. In the "talk page" of the Vietnam War, personal memories, and experiences from the past blend with interpretations of secondary sources and define Wikipedians' effort to produce historical narratives.

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[59] Hayden White, "The Practical Past," *Historein* 10 (2010): 10-19, Hayden White, "Politics, History and the Practical Past," *Storia della Storiografia* 61 (2012): 127-134.

The September 11 attacks

The September 11 attacks is the last Wikipedia article that I will analyze in this chapter. It refers to a widely known traumatic event of modern US history. The page was created on November 11, 2001 and has been constantly updated until now.[60] The Wikipedia community lists the article as a "level-4 vital article in History."[61] The article is also part of multiple WikiProjects, such as the WikiProject International relations, WikiProject Islam, WikiProject Military history, WikiProject Terrorism, WikiProject United States, WikiProject United States history, etc.[62] There is a separate WikiProject that focuses on the September 11 attacks, the WikiProject September 11, 2001.[63] Regarding the rating of the article, it is a "former featured article" and has been listed as a "History good article."[64] Lastly, the article has appeared ten times in the report about the top twenty-five articles of the week.[65]

The main article offers a complete coverage of the attacks. Its contents include some more general information on the historical context, in which they took place, and there are more specialized sections in the attacks, the aftermath, the effects, investigations, memorials, etc.[66] Images, videos, and graphs coexist and contribute to the coverage of September 11 attacks.[67] An interesting characteristic of the main article is that almost every section has a hyperlink-reference to a separate article that analyze the topic more extensively. For example, the section on the

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[60] "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2020, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/September_11_attacks.
[61] "Talk:September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:September_11_attacks.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid. For the "History good articles," see "Wikipedia:Good articles/History," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Good_articles/History.
[65] "Talk:September 11 attacks." For the top 25 report, see "Wikipedia:Top 25 Report," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Top_25_Report.
[66] "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks.
[67] Ibid.

attacks has a hyperlink to the Wikipedia article "Timeline for the day of the September 11 attacks" and the section on the memorials for 9/11 attacks to the article "Memorials and services for the September 11 attacks."[68] This shows how extensively the editors have analyzed the topic and, thus, they have created separate articles, in which they provide a more detailed coverage of each related sub-topic. The discussion page of the article is the longest of all the other examined case studies, which is probably because the 9/11 attacks belong to the recent past and thus more people have lived experiences of this day. The article covers multiple topics. Two of the most frequently discussed topics, that I will analyze in this section, are whether the September 11 attacks were terroristic or not and whether personal memories and experiences about the 9/11 attacks can have a place in the article.[69]

At the beginning of the article's creation, the editors started to discuss what is terrorism, what makes these attacks terroristic, and, more importantly, whether these attacks are terroristic. This happened because the first sentences of the main page mentioned that the September 11 attacks are "the deadliest terrorist attack in human history."[70] So, many users took part in the discussion and tried to find other deadly terroristic events that took place in human history and to understand why the September 11 attacks are considered the deadliest attack according to Wikipedia. I cite an example of that discussion:

> Can anyone think of deadlier terrorist attacks? I have trouble imagining one. Wars, battles, and
> government-driven massacres have killed more people in one day, but nothing that could be reasonably
> described as a terrorist incident. Correct? --The Cunctator

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[68] Ibid.

[69] There was also discussion on the conspiracy theories related to 9/11 attacks. That discussion soon resulted in the creation of separate Wikipedia article, see "9/11 conspiracy theories," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9/11_conspiracy_theories.

[70] For the version of the article in September 2002, see "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=343551.

I think that it may go to the definition of "terrorist", which is notoriously problematic. Are government-driven massacres terrorist attacks? I'm inclined to say that they are, since a major purpose is to instill fear in the remaining population; "state terrorism" is not an oxymoron to me. Others will disagree, of course. So in any case, in order to be impartial on the state terrorism issue, we would have to say "deadliest non-state terrorist incident".

I made the change when I did specifically because I realized (sic) that I no longer saw US news media describing the attack as the worst ever, only as the worst in the US. Perhaps they were simply being cautious, but should we not be as cautious? Ultimately, I think that the burden of proof rests on those making the claim, and I didn't see any attempt to justify it on the talk page; if I had, I'd have added to that discussion first. But I may have missed something, so let me know.— Toby 01:55 Sep 29, 2002 (UTC)

Unless you can provide an example of a deadlier terrorist attack, I am reverting it to deadliest in the "world". –rmhermen

I can't imagine why you think the burden of proof lies with me. It would be one thing if most other sources agreed with you. But they don't; outside of right-wing literature, I usually see only phrases like "deadliest terrorist attack in US history" or "deadliest act of terrorism on US soil". It would be one thing if I were saying ‹What most people think that they know isn't necessarily so.›. But I'm not; instead, you're the one that's advocating a stronger statement than the other media are making.
In an attempt to do your research for you, I looked for historical surveys of terrorist incidents with death tolls, as well as for examples of deadlier terrorist incidents. I found nothing useful either way. So perhaps the other news media simply don't know. Well, fine, but we don't know either. We can't just make up information since we suspect that it goes one way rather than the other. Since you are advocating making claims that you don't know to be true, while I am not, I say that you should provide a reference to a comprehensive survey that ranks this attack deadliest before putting such a phrase in. This is nothing more than simple intellectual integrity, on the part of all of us. — Toby 06:02 Oct 29, 2002 (UTC)"

[…]

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"Some people claim that it was the deadliest terrorist attack in the world."

Can somebody point me to a deadlier terrorist attack that ever took place? –mav

depends on your definition of terrorism im sure...Vera Cruz

Exactly. And on what you consider a single attack. And on whether you consider indirect deaths as counting. Perhaps "many people" would be more acceptable? -Martin

Based on our own definition at terrorism. –mav

I'll go check out our definition, but for a discussion of deadlier attacks, Noam Chomsky, for example, argues that the attack on the Sudanese pharmaceutical plant had a far greater death toll in total, so it depends on your definition of terrorism and how you count the deaths. (3 edit conflicts so far.) DanKeshet

"Terrorism refers to the systemic or calculated use of violence or the threat of violence, against the civilian population, to instill fear in an audience for purposes of obtaining political goals"
The holocaust would do then. Note that terrorism has an entire section on "Problems with the definition"... -Martin

Using this definition, Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing, was the greatest terrorist attacks (calculated use of violence against the civilian population, to instill fear in an audience of obtaining political goals) 62.212.110.113 10:29 4 Jul 2003 (UTC)"[71]

This is a part of an extensive discussion. However, that part is representative of how Wikipedia users started to make sense of what was the character of the September 11 attacks, whether they were the deadliest attacks in human history, and what features made the attacks

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[71] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 2," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:September_11_attacks/Archive_2.

terroristic. By doing that, the users were trying to understand the attacks and, more significantly, to decide on how they should represent them in the article. To better codify what happened in the past, they compare the September 11 attacks with other events of contemporary US history.

In January 2004, another discussion started in the "talk page" and focused on whether the word "terrorism" constitutes point of view (POV). During that time, the article had as sub-title "The September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks."[72] Thus, several users started to discuss whether this term is appropriate for the historical representation of 9/11 or violates the neutrality of Wikipedia. Specifically, the user "Kingsturtle" wrote:

> Yes, the events of September 11, 2001 were heinous (sic) and caused great pain and hardship. Nevertheless, the term terrorist is POV. The definition changes through time, and can be debated. President Reagan said it best: "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." He said this when defending the actions of people he supported who were accused of being terrorists. Terrible acts of this kind that you support, you can call freedom fighting. The word terrorist can only exist with a POV.
>
> I realize it is difficult to change all the related pages, but they should really all be renamed September 11, 2001 attacks.
>
> P.S. No, I do not think the attackers were freedom fighters. But I don't think they were terrorists either. Terrorist is a label placed. Kingturtle 01:55, 3 Jan 2004 (UTC)"[73]
>
> For that user, the term terrorism signified a POV, so the editors should avoid it. Other users responded to that comment by writing:
>
> "OK, so what what (sic) would you call the ,er, attackers? And , also, what would your definition of the word terrorist be? Arno
>
> This is bizarre--I've never actually heard anyone (outside Wikipedia) argue that they weren't terrorists. Purposely killing civilians on a large scale is a fairly canonical example of terrorism. I've heard people

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[72] "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021,
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=2072923.
[73] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 2."

claim that the terrorism was justified, but never that it wasn't terrorism at all. --Delirium 20:01, 15 Jan 2004 (UTC)

Do we want to change Bombing of Dresden in World War II to Terrorist bombing of Dresden in World War II? The Fellowship of the Troll 22:49, 16 Jan 2004 (UTC)"[74]

The other involved users did not seem to agree with the "Kingturtle's" suggestion. For some of them, it was more than obvious that the attacks were terroristic, while others compared the 9/11 attacks with other historical events of the past to show that the term can be used in other case studies. The discussion continued in January 2004, as more and more users were taking part in the "talk page" to discuss whether the attacks are "terroristic" and even if they are, whether the article should have the term "terrorist" in its sub-title. I cite the following excerpt from the discussion that took place, which is indicative of the users' arguments:

"You may not move this page w/o moving the associated talk page and fixing the many double redirects linking to the new article. Why singular, not plural? The phrase "September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks" is the overwhelming convention used. Please make your case before moving and move it properly if you do, or it will be moved back again. --Jiang 23:26, 14 Jan 2004 (UTC)

See above. "Terrorist" has taken on an inherently negative meaning, just like the word "murder". It is not a simple technical term. If we were to talk about "Israeli terrorism" when Israel bombs civilian centres (sic) in the occupied territories, people would object too. So please move it back. --Wik 14:52, Jan 15, 2004 (UTC)

I don't see why that's a problem. Murdering an office-building full of civilians is a canonical example of terrorism. The fact that that has inherently negative connotations is hardly surprising, as most people consider killing civilian inhabitants of an office building an inherently bad thing. Are you going to argue that we can't say Charles Manson had anything to do with murder now, because that would be

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[74] Ibid.

characterizing him in an inherently negative way? Should we neutrally say that he caused the lives of some people to end? --Delirium 19:58, 15 Jan 2004 (UTC)

We can't pass off moral judgments as fact, even if they are held by "most people". Some people do justify those attacks, so we can't use language that implies condemnation. Those who justify it don't call it terrorism. If this article is not moved, anyone might as well describe Israeli or U.S. military actions as (state) terrorism. Remember the U.S. killed some 3,000 civilians in Afghanistan alone, and an additional 10,000 in Iraq. --Wik 20:56, Jan 15, 2004 (UTC)

So we can't call Charles Manson a murderer either, because that implies condemnation? I don't see the difference. In this case, it's held by nearly all people. Even Iran calls it "terrorism" (they imply the US brought it on itself, but still use the term "terrorism"). "State terrorism", by contrast, is far more controversial. --Delirium 21:48, 15 Jan 2004 (UTC)

We are to report facts, not make moral judgments. Why call Charles Manson a murderer and not George W. Bush, who is responsible for many more killings? We should only report factually who killed whom, and let the readers make their own moral judgment. --Wik 22:17, Jan 15, 2004 (UTC)

What do those who disagree with the label "terrorist" call these attacks then? I don't see how these attacks don't meet our definition of terrorism - "calculated use of violence or the threat of violence, against the civilian population, usually for the purpose of obtaining political or religious goals." --Jiang 21:46, 15 Jan 2004 (UTC)

Simply "attacks". The title "September 11, 2001 Attacks" is absolutely sufficient and unambiguous. I think "our" definition of terrorism is incomplete, missing the inherent negativism. The term is not used in this merely technical sense; the actual "terrorists" rarely see themselves as "terrorists". --Wik 22:17, Jan 15, 2004 (UTC)

Al-Jazeera uses "terrorist" [4]. Can you show me links of how the Arab/leftist media refers to these attacks? Here's Merriam-Webster's definition: "the systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion" and terror: "1 : a state of intense fear 2 a : one that inspires fear : SCOURGE b : a frightening aspect <the terrors of invasion> c : a cause of anxiety : WORRY d : an appalling person or thing; especially : BRAT 3 : REIGN OF TERROR 4 : violence (as bombing) committed by groups in order to intimidate a population or government into granting their demands <insurrection and revolutionary terror>" What's wrong with this definition? --Jiang 23:03, 15 Jan 2004 (UTC)

Well, many don't use the word "terrorist". Just do a Google search for "September 11 attacks". What's wrong with the definition is that it misses the fact that people only call those actions terrorism that they want to condemn and not those that they support. I wouldn't mind if we were to use your definition consistently, but I have a feeling you may be the first to protest when Israeli or U.S. actions were to be described as terrorist. --Wik 23:39, Jan 15, 2004 (UTC)

Sure many people don't use the word "terrorist", but more people do. I would like us to use a term commonly used elsewhere. Proof that the other name is common must be given.
Whenever a state's action is deemed 'terrorist', we should acknowledge the claim that it is state terrorism. I find it only derogatory for states to be "terrorist" when they have armed forces at their disposal, removing the necessity to attack civilian targets to make their voice heard. Calling an organization "terrorist" only has negative connotations in that attacking and frightening civilians is wrong, not because the word is obscene or inaccurate (sic). --Jiang 01:41, 16 Jan 2004 (UTC)[75]

The discussion continued and focused more on the use of the term "terrorist" in the subtitle of the article. It is interesting that even if for the most involved editors the attacks constituted a terroristic act, they were not sure that they should start the article by pointing out its terroristic character. For that reason, the users created a poll about the usage of the word

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[75] Ibid.

"terrorist" in the sub-title of the article. All the users voted, and the result of the poll showed that the article should refer to the attacks as "September 11, 2001 attacks."[76] Many users clarified that this does not mean that the attacks were not terrorist, but that it does not make any sense to start the article in that way.[77] At the end of January 2004, the term "terrorist" had been removed from the introductory sentence of the article.[78]

The debate did not end at this point but continued in the next months. Even if the sub-title remained as the users voted, several users also removed the term "terrorist" from the introductory description of the article. Other users responded to that action and added it again.[79] On March 14, 2004, the user "KingTurtle" removed the term "terrorist" from the description and, the next day, the user "Cecropia" revered the edit. As the users could not reach a consensus, they created a discussion thread on the "talk page" named "Deleting Terrorist."[80] The user "Cecropia" wrote:

> I'm surprised at KingTurtle, an admin, removing the word "terrorist" from the description of the 9/11 attacks as POV. I don't even think the terrorists themselves think the attacks (at least the 3000 non-combtanat (sic) civilians killed in the WTC attack) weren't terror attacks. What were they then. If these attacks aren't terrorist we should simply delete the entry under terrorism in Wikipedia, and give it a REDIRECT to newspeak. Cecropia 00:28, 15 Mar 2004 (UTC)

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[76] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 3," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:September_11_attacks/Archive_3#Article_Title.

[77] Ibid.

[78] For how the article was at the end of January 2004, see "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=2290545. For the revision history of the article in January 2004, see "September 11 attacks: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&dir=prev&limit=500&action=history and "September 11 attacks: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&dir=prev&offset=20040116211858%7C2168401&limit=500&action=history.

[79] For the revision history of the article from January to March 2004, while "edit wars" were taking place, see "September 11 attacks: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&dir=prev&offset=20040116211858%7C2168401&limit=500&action=history.

[80] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 7," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:September_11_attacks/Archive_7#Deleting_terrorist.

Soon the user "KingTurtle" and other involved users joined in the discussion and argued:

"I totally support your revert. If premeditated mass murder of innocent civilians isn't terrorism, nothing is. You are correct that Al Qaeda itself views 9/11 as terrorism-- a somehow justified terrorism. If KingTurtle wants to join them in sanctioning it he is free to do so, but he shouldn't turn language upside down in the process. JDG 02:11, 15 Mar 2004 (UTC)

The word terrorist was removed from the title of this article and it should be removed from the first paragraph of the article as well. The word terrorist is POV, IMHO. You ask me what were they (sic) then and my reply is they were attacks. Why do we need any adjective in front of the word "attacks"? The people working on the terrorism article can't come up with an easy definition of the term. The word is loaded with meanings and submeanings. Kingturtle 02:30, 15 Mar 2004 (UTC)

Therefore you think that maybe they weren't terrorist attacks? The fact isn't POV, only the label is. So you think a NPOV encyclopedia should avoid an obvious truth that some consider controversial—that's a POV in itself. For that matter calling it a "suicide" attack is POV and politically freighted. Death to the perpetrators was an "effect", not a motivation, as is true suicide. Why not call them a "homicide" attack as some do? As I said, newspeak. Cecropia 02:54, 15 Mar 2004 (UTC)
I concur, this is precisely the nonsense that I feared. Terrorist is not some evil word not be (sic) to be uttered, and it mist (sic) be used in the articl (sic). Arno 06:14, 15 Mar 2004 (UTC)

Placing a value-judgement adjective in front of a noun does not represent an obvious truth. There is no reason to place such an adjective. You won't believe it, but calling any attack a terrorist attack is newspeak. When asked why he supported the terrorist attacks of the Contras, Ronald Reagan said they weren't terrorists, they were freedom fighters. So we get to pick and choose which is which, depending on what side they are on. As I said, our fellow wikipedians cannot even come up with a fair definition on terrorism. I'd rather call this article 9/11 - IMHO that is the most NPOV title we could have. Kingturtle 06:43, 15 Mar 2004 (UTC)[81]

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[81] Ibid.

This is just a part of the discussion that followed, but it is representative on why the users could not reach consensus about the use of that term. Some editors were trying to follow the guidelines of Wikipedia about the NPOV, so for them term "terrorist" was not neutral and signified a violation of NPOV. For others, the 9/11 attacks were terrorist attacks, so the representation of "truth" cannot be a POV. At the end of the discussion, the article continued to contain the term "terrorist" in its introductory description.

Few months later, in November 2004, the discussion about "terrorism" started again in the "talk page" and became more intense, when the user "Rebroad" edited the article and added the term "Freedom fighter" close to the term "terrorist."[82] Other editors reverted "Rebroad's" edit, so the debate moved to the "talk page." "Rebroad" argued that if the editors of the article use the term "terrorism," they should also use the term "Freedom fighters" to show all the different perspectives on the agents of the historical event. [83] In that way, the article will follow the NPOV policy of Wikipedia. Several users reacted to that comment by writing:

> Terrorist in this instance is describing the attacks, which were unquestionably, methodologically, an act of terrorism. "Freedom fighter" is a POV label for the attackers themselves. One is factual, and the other is a point of view, and in any case not appropriate where you inserted it because it does not modify "people", it modifies "action". Graft 16:16, 25 Nov 2004 (UTC)

> Thanks for your input. I think most people agree that both Terrorist and Freedom fighters are the same thing, but the phrases are opposing POV. They both have a cause, and the innocent people that die are

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[82] For the revision history of the article in November 2004, see "September 11 attacks: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&offset=20050208032811%7C10054462&limit=500&action=history. For the article after the edit by "Rebroad," see "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=7847793.
[83] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 11," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:September_11_attacks/Archive_11#%22Terrorist%22,_%22terrorism%22_and_%22freedom_fighter%22.

victims as well as "collateral damage". Every act of harm can be viewed in this way. Every bomb. Every

cause. It just requires you to look at it from a different perspective. For some people that can be quite hard

to do. --Rebroad 19:16, 25 Nov 2004 (UTC)

[…]

Rebroad, please stop the vandalism of this article. You inserted this morning that it was a "terrorist/freedom

fighter" attack. This article is returned as the first item on a Google search for "September 11, 2001

attacks": see [2] You make Wikipedia look stupid with edits like that. I could understand the strong feelings

if this was some kind of borderline incident, but it was an anonymous attack intended to kill thousands of

non-combatants (using other civilians are weapons!) in order to spread fear throughout America and many

other parts of the world. It was the Platonic form of terrorism. Slim 13:21, Nov 26, 2004 (UTC)[84]

Among all these comments, one of the most intriguing is written by "JesseG," who

offered a different perspective on why the term "Freedom fighters" cannot have a place in the

article and on the broader role of Wikipedia. The user argued:

I find this whole business of calling these terrorists "freedom fighters" to be offensive. Calling the al-Qaida

terrorists who murdered thousands of people on that day freedom fighters is disrespectful to the memory of

those innocent people who died in the attacks. Calling these people freedom fighters allows the illusion to

be formed that what the hijackers did wasn't really that bad. But refusing to call the terrorists anything other

than terrorists sends the message that what these people did was indeed a horrible crime against humanity.

JesseG 05:21, Dec 26, 2004 (UTC)[85]

The user pointed out that if Wikipedians do not use the term "terrorist" for the September

11 attacks but the term "Freedom fighters," they will disrespect the memory of the victims, who

died in the attacks. The user saw Wikipedia as a virtual "site of memory," in which editors

should not only write about what happened in the past but give respect to the victims of the

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

past.[86] For that reason, Wikipedia articles are significant for the users, because they are not only pages with information about the past but determine how the readers will remember the past. At the same time, the guidelines and policies of Wikipedia enhance a non-emotional understanding of the past and promote the neutrality of historical knowledge. Therefore, the user "WhispherToMe," an experienced editor and one of the top contributors to the article, replied:

> We are an encyclopedia, not a memorial site, JesseG. We must report in an NPOV manner and let the reader come to his or her conclusions. WhisperToMe 05:33, 26 Dec 2004 (UTC)[87]

This is the main challenge for Wikipedia users to write about history by sharing their personal experiences and understandings of history but also try to follow all the existing policies that Wikipedia has established. The debate ended, few more discussion threads appeared in the following years, nevertheless even the current version of the September 11 attacks includes the term "terrorist," not in its sub-title, but in its introductory description.[88]

The contemporary and traumatic character of the September 11 attacks made many users to see the related Wikipedia article as a memory site, in which the involved editors can honor the memory of the victims. On September 11, 2011, the third anniversary of the attacks, the user "Rickyrab" created a discussion thread titled "In Memorium" and wrote in the "talk page:"

> To the about three thousand folks, sixteen palm trees (in the Winter Garden), countless other living things, etc., that perished on 9/11/2001, I dedicate this section in your memory. Amen. — Rickyrab | Talk 20:55, 11 September 2005 (UTC)[89]

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86 For the term "site of memory," see Wolff, "The Historian's Craft, Popular Memory, and Wikipedia," 66. The term comes from the work of Pierre Nora, see Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire."
87 Ibid. For the top editors of the article, see "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/September_11_attacks. For the profile page of the user "WhisperToMe," see "User:WhisperToMe," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:WhisperToMe.
88 See "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks.
89 "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 13," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:September_11_attacks/Archive_13#In_Memorium.

The user, who is a "Veteran Editor" of Wikipedia and is from New York, viewed Wikipedia as a

space, in which Wikipedians not only write about what happened in the past but also

commemorate the memory of those who died during the 9/11 attacks.[90]

Of course, any discussion post on Wikipedia aims to change the main article and how it

covers the related event. During the same period, some editors started to demand the inclusion of

memorials in the article. In 2004, the main article did not have any section on the existing

memorials but only some hyperlink-references to online memorial sites and to the article

"Memorials and services for the September 11 attacks," which contained lists of the existing

memorials of the victims.[91] The editors realized that lack and in the same year a discussion

thread titled "Memorials" appeared on the "talk page."[92] In the discussion thread, the user,

Ground broken," proposed the inclusion of the related memorials in the main article. "Ground

broken" wrote:

> Several memorials are discussed in this article (sic). Of course there are many more around the world,
>
> particularly in the communities surrounding Manhattan where many of the dead had lived. Perhaps there
>
> should be a page where these memorials can be listed. For example:
>
> -- "Postcards," Staten Island, NY -- Architect Masayuki Sono designed this memorial on the St. George
>
> waterfront overlooking New York Harbor. The monument consists of twin white monoliths that bend apart
>
> like doves' wings. Between them are plaques dedicated to the 258 Staten Islanders lost on September 11,
>
> 2001. Each plaque bears a silouette (sic) designed to resemble the honoree. Standing between the wings of
>
> the monument, one looks out over the harbor at the site of the missing towers. Ground broken, September
>
> 11, 2003; dedicated, September 11, 2004.[93]

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[90] For the profile of the user, see "User:Rickyrab," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Rickyrab.

[91] For the version of the article "September 11 attacks" in September 2004, see "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=5813754. For the separate article on memorials, see "Memorials and services for the September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorials_and_services_for_the_September_11_attacks.

[92] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 13."

[93] Ibid.

The editor urged other involved users to consider all memorials that exist in the communities close to Manhattan and include them in the main article. However, the post did not attract the attention of more users, so the discussion ended there.

One year later, some users started to edit the article and added a section on the memorials of the victims.[94] The section included information on the existing memorials, such as America's Heroes Memorial within the Pentagon, but also planned memorials, such as the outdoor Pentagon Memorial and the World Trade Center site.[95] The editors were constantly adding more and more information to the section. Nevertheless, in September 2006, a user asked on the "talk page" if Wikipedia administrators have any plan to "make a memorial page for the events of that tragic day."[96] The user "Goldbez," one of the top editors of the article, replied that "there is already one" referring to a memorial Wiki focused on 9/11 attack that existed during that time, but now it has been permanently removed.[97] Specifically, "Goldbez" wrote:

> There already is one, http://sep11.wikipedia.org but it's in constant danger of being removed. --Golbez 19:44, 7 September 2006 (UTC)"[98]

An interesting comment followed that post. The user "Nymichael" mentioned:

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[94] For the revision history of the article between September and November 2005, see "September 11 attacks: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&offset=20051106013913%7C27492931&limit=500&action=history. For the first version of the article after the edit, see "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=23380500#Memorials.

[95] For example, see the version of the article on January 3, 2006, "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=33679603#Memorials.

[96] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 21," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:September_11_attacks/Archive_21#Memorial.

[97] Ibid. For the top editors of the article, see "September 11 attacks," accessed February 14, 2021, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/September_11_attacks. For the 9/11 Memorial Wiki and why it has been removed permanently, see Brian C. Keegan, "A History of Newswork on Wikipedia," 1-10.

[98] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 21."

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"Living at 8th St & Broadway, highest point between Empire State Building and WTC, photos we took from the rooftop, Ground Zero, Union Square and Washington Sq Park are at newyorkpix.com, added the link for a first hand view from the frozen zone. Nymichael 08:59, 11 September 2006 (UTC)[99]

The user seemed willing to share their own photographs that took from their house close to where the 9/11 attacks took place and, in that way, contribute to a better representation of the topic in the main article. However, the discussion did not continue.

In July 2007, a related discussion appeared and was even more intense, when the user "Haemo," another top editor of the article, wrote on the "talk page" that the section on memorials needs more pictures, as the topic is not complete and well-covered.[100] The user cited some pictures that show the Tribute in Light and asked the other involved editors, which of the pictures they should place into the main article.[101] "Haemo" also removed a picture of the World Trade Center Cross, because, as they claimed, it is not a memorial.[102] Instead, "Haemo" suggested picture of the America's Heroes Memorial.[103] The user "Aude," a significant contributor to the article, replied:

Excellent work. Possibly, the section could stand to be shorter with details in the subarticle (sic). But, the subarticle (sic) is a mess now and is in serious need of work. Things to note in the section and/or subarticle (sic) (1) there's a temporary Flight 93 memorial [Added] (2) last September, the Tribute WTC 9/11 Visitor Center opened. [6] The center includes exhibits, and they organize guided tours (3) The WTC Memorial Foundation organized the "9/11 and the American Landscape: Photographs by Jonathan Hyman" exhibition in 7 World Trade Center last September/October. [7] (4) I don't have a source for it right now, but a lot of progress has been made in construction of the outdoor memorial at the Pentagon. I don't think it's officially

[99] Ibid.
[100] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 31," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:September_11_attacks/Archive_31#Actual_editing_-_%22Memorials%22_section.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.

scheduled to be complete until next year, but think it will be finished sooner. It's not easy to get a photo of

the memorial construction, but maybe. I have uploaded a couple more photos for the subarticle (sic), but

I'm fine with using the America's Heroes Memorial photo here. --Aude (talk) 14:42, 21 July 2007 (UTC)[104]

Thus, "Haemo" added a photo of the Flight 93 temporary memorial to the section on memorials

and removed a photo placed by the user "John Manuel," which showed a memorial from Jersey

City facing the former location of the Twin Towers.[105] However, that edit caused the reaction of

the user "John Manuel," who argued:

To give the respect to the victims, survivors and to the significance, that is increasing with the past of time,

we need to add a gallery to this article, in which it can be "portrayed", the different memorials, all of them

are very important and deserve to be mentioned and their picture shown in this page. John Manuel-02:14,

23 July 2007 (UTC)[106]

It is very interesting that "John Manuel" also perceived editing as a practice that "gives respect to

the victims and survivors" of the 9/11 attacks and, for that reason, all the existing memorials

should be mentioned on the page. Nevertheless, the user "Haemo" offered a different perspective

on the existence of many pictures in the article and their placement in the Wikipedia article

"Memorials and services for the September 11 attacks," which is devoted to that thematic area.

Specifically, the user wrote:

Any gallery would be on the September 11, 2001 attack memorials and services subpage, not this one. The

image you keep re-adding is not exactly appropriate for this page -- it's of a minor, non-permanent

memorial which is not mentioned in the article. This page already has too many pictures, and three in that

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[104] Ibid.

[105] For the revision history of the article in July 2007, see "September 11 attacks: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&offset=20071031213143%7C168382204&limit=500&action=history. For the version of the article with the photo of "John Manuel," see "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=145783292#Memorials. For the version of the article after the edit of "Haemo," see "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=146636871#Memorials.

[106] "Talk:September 11 attacks/Archive 31."

small space is too many. I know you like the image, because you took it, and it's a nice picture, but this isn't the right place for it. --Haemo 03:56, 23 July 2007 (UTC)[107]

The user "John Manuel" responded:

It is not only that is nice, it is substantial because shows where once the tower were. Those flags and every single item belongs (sic) to that catastrophe. Probably, you sought this from TV, I was there, right in Manhattan and I experienced and lost friends who had children which I played with in the park. The photo, (sic) means the whole a lot for many people. I observe that you has (sic) put another photo, it is OK. The section is about "Memorials" and this photo reminds the reader exactly of the location of the towers. We are in disagreement (sic) at this point. It is OK too. Your POV is respected, it doesn't mean that we should follow it. I suggest to cool (sic) it off for a while and then comeback to this point. If the article has "too much" photos then as in the WP:MOS (Which it doesn't explicitly states how much is too much) a gallery is recommended. Another photo that can be included is this:

Let us respect the significance of this horrendous episode in our history by continue working together in spite of our disagreements.

Remember, let time talk to us, well greetings, and happy editing John Manuel-14:19, 23 July 2007 (UTC)[108]

"John Manuel" shared again their personal experience, that they lived in Manhattan and has lost friends from the attacks. For "John Manuel" the photos of memorials constituted a sign

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[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.

of honor to the victims of 9/11. The discussion did not continue, as the user "Haemo" disagreed with that point. "Haemo" argued that they "don't need more photos of memorials" and the photo that already exists is representative of the 9/11 attacks.[109] "John Manuel" replied again:

> Haemo, thank you for explaining your reasons, it is fine to disagree; […] Do you think that knowing and experiencing the pain of the disappearance of one of my friends who left his two children and wife alone forever, it is also "silly"? Now, about your temporal statement. No matter who long will pass this will remain in my soul, I have never cope nor I will be able to. […] You and nobody will change that. The view is explicit, see again the photo of the plaque and you will perhaps understand why that view will be forever in our memories. At least of those who experienced at first hand the horrible event. […] You probably will need to excuse me, because incidentally, for me this is not silly at all. It is a strong remembrance not only of that event but the responsibilities ahead and the almost complete change of the world order. Now, you seem a little obsessed with this, as I suggested to you let the time flow; there are other issues to improve in Wikipedia I am sure you know. Thank you again for your response but I disagree with you, with my cognitive and emotional will. Have an enjoyable editing time. -01:48, 24 July 2007 (UTC)[110]

"John Manuel" expressed their strong disagreement with "Haemo" by pointing out their emotional bond with that historical event and the responsibilities that the user has to the victims of the attacks. These responsibilities do not have to do only with the past but with the future, namely, with how September 11 attacks will be represented in the Wikipedia article. The representation of that historical event on Wikipedia will determine what the readers of Wikipedia will learn about it.

"Haemo" continued the debate by arguing that Wikipedia is not a memorial site but an encyclopedia, so emotions should not have a place in the article. The user argued:

> You seem a little bit too emotionally invested in this to edit an encyclopedia article about this -- perhaps you should try contributing to some of the memorial Wikis that exist online. I can't say anything about your

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[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

personal pain, your memories, or what you feel about the events. However, from an encyclopedic

perspective, they're not exactly relevant here. Wikipedia is not a memorial; your reasons for keeping this

image might be very important to you, but from an encyclopedic perspective they are not appropriate or

productive. --Haemo 01:56, 24 July 2007 (UTC)[111]

"John Manuel" replied:

That is according to Haemo's views, correct? I ask you for waiting but you couldn't do this. Why can't you?

because you are emotionally invested truly in this too. Thats (sic) is why you recurrently come here, the

other case is because you have other motives rather than contribute to this encyclopedia, I challenge you as

you have done above, to go to other wikis or other pages and leave this up to other users. I bet you cannot

because you are too involved on this subject for some reason. I tell you what you could do, go edit some art

articles. It will give you a fresh start. However if you want to state here then do not judge anybody's

motivations. Are you an overseer? Judge? Well in here you are an editor? Let go to your peer-review. You

will learn eventually to do this in here. I promise. John Manuel-13:08, 24 July 2007 (UTC)[112]

The debate between the two editors seemed to focus more on the emotional motives of the users

for their engagement with the article. "Haemo" criticized "John Manuel" for being "too

emotionally invested" in the topic, so their edits are not appropriate and neutral. On the other

hand, "John Manuel" argued that the affective motives and their personal experience with the

9/11 events should not underestimate their contributions. Instead, the purpose of the editors

should be the commemoration of the victims of the attacks.

The debate continued, as more users intervened in the discussion and supported

"Haemo's" idea to include more pictures in the other article, "Memorials and services for the

September 11 attacks."[113] While this discussion was taking place in the

"talk page," the users "Aude," "Haemo," and "John Manuel" were editing the article by adding

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[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.

and removing pictures.[114] At the end of July and for the next months, the section on memorials included only the image of "The Tribute in Light."[115] The current version of the section still contains "The Tribute in Light" and has also added an image that shows "The Last Column" removed from the World Trade Center site and displayed at the 9/11 Museum.[116]

The examples above reveal the complexity of writing and representing the September 11 attacks on Wikipedia. Many users are emotionally engaged with the traumatic historical event and view editing as a practice to commemorate the past and memories of the victim. Wikipedia users are affected by the presence of the past, and as the philosopher of history, Eelco Runia, has put it, we should not be afraid of having "ourselves affected by the past."[117] For Runia, it is very difficult to achieve the presence of the past.[118] As he has explained, it is not the story itself that causes the presence of the past but the different ways in which the past affects and forces someone to rewrite the story about himself or about a nation.[119] Wikipedia users are affected and "moved by the past," because they are enabled by Wikipedia to think and write about history, to agree and disagree about how a historical event should be represented in its main articles. This is also what the historian Jörn Rüsen has mentioned. For Rüsen, emotions play a fundamental role in how we make sense of the past and more importantly in how try to historicize the past.[120] Emotions help us perceive the past as something that needs interpretation, and in that way, the past can become historical knowledge.[121] This is how Wikipedia users try to approach the

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[114] "September 11 attacks: Revision history."

[115] For the version of the article at the end of July 2007, see "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=September_11_attacks&oldid=147909121#Memorials.

[116] See "September 11 attacks," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 14, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks#Memorials.

[117] Eelco Runia, *Moved by the Past*, 88-89.

[118] Ibid., 92.

[119] Ibid., 93.

[120] Jörn Rüsen, "Emotional Forces in Historical Thinking: Some Metahistorical Reflections and the Case of Mourning," *Historein* 8 (2009): 41-53.

[121] Ibid., 44.

September 11 attacks and produce historical knowledge. The traumatic past is present in Wikipedia discussions and forces users to think, write and re-write about the September 11 attacks.

However, Wikipedians' memories and personal experiences from the past seem to stay only in the "talk pages" and not determine the representation of the event in the main article. As Brian Keegan has mentioned in his study on how Wikipedia responded to the 9/11 attacks, Wikipedia managed to exclude the 9/11 memorial-related content as "unencyclopedic."[122] It is worth mentioning that in 2003 the Wikimedia Foundation hosted the Memorial Wiki Project that aimed to provide more information on the personal experiences and memorials related to 9/11 attacks.[123] However, for several users, the purpose of the project was ahistorical, non-NPOV, and personal.[124] Thus, in 2005 the project became inactive and gradually closed.[125] The same approach characterized the Wikipedia article of 9/11 attacks. Many editors argued that they should include memorial pages for each victim separately by adding information about victims' personal experiences, but Wikipedia privileged its encyclopedic character over its commemorative.[126]

Keegan's point seems to be confirmed in the examples mentioned. However, this point should not underestimate Wikipedia users' engagement with history. The main article, which is the final product of writing and editing, is under constant debates, discussions, and negotiations. The engagement of Wikipedians with the September 11 attacks is more personal and emotional than then other three case studies.[127] Even if Wikipedians' memories and experiences about 9/11

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[122] Brian C. Keegan, "A History of Newswork on Wikipedia," 1.

[123] Ibid., 3.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid., 6.

[127] On the engagement of Americans with the national trauma of September 11 attacks, see Marita Sturken, *Memory, Kitch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

attacks stay only in the "talk pages," they reveal important information on how users approach the past and aim to reconstruct it. In addition to that, even if a user does not manage to change the final product, the user can begin a discussion thread and their comment can at least be part of the "talk page." In that way, even if their contributions will not change the main article, they can open a window for further discussion, debates, and reexamination. Thus, Wikipedia users can see themselves as part of the broader editing process on Wikipedia.[128]

History in constant motion: From the distant to the recent past

The four case studies reveal the different ways that Wikipedia users approach the past when they write about history. Wikipedians do not contribute to the production of historical knowledge by compiling more and more information as traditional encyclopedias used to do but engage with the past in multiple ways, by conducting their own (secondary) research, reading books, searching for historical information on the web, visiting museums and historical sites, participating in historical events, and sharing their personal perspectives about history. In all case studies, we can detect some of those methods of producing history. However, there are significant differences between the examined case studies. In the "talk pages" of the Great Depression and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Wikipedians' engagement with academic scholarship determines the discussions about history, while their personal memories and experiences are limited and play a lesser role. On the other hand, in the articles on the Vietnam War and September 11 attacks, personal experiences and memories have a pivotal role in the discussions and shape Wikipedians' contributions.

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[128] Nina Simon describes a similar experience in a participatory museum's exhibition, see Nina Simon, "Participatory Design and the Future of Museums," in *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, 24-25.

Of course, this does mean that the articles of the Vietnam War and September 11 attacks are products of personal reflection on history. Even these two case studies are a blend of dialogue, compliance with the guidelines, engagement with academic works and popular historical forms, personal experiences and memories of the past. This happens because Wikipedians' personal reflections on the past do not stand alone. They confront the policy of NPOV, which often causes further discussions and debates on how historical knowledge should be represented on Wikipedia. Even if Wikipedia users seem "touched" or "affected" by the recent past, they try to present a balanced historical narrative that will shed light on all the related aspects of the past.[129] Many Wikipedia users share their own interpretations of a historical event in the "talk page" of the articles, but their contributions do not result in the editing of the main articles. This does not mean that their comments are not important. Instead, their comments reveal how Wikipedians perceive the past, how they try to approach it, what information they want to include or exclude in the article, and what visual elements they should add or remove. In that process, the determinant factor is users' relation to history. In the distant past, the "zamani," Wikipedians' engagement is more academic and scientific, while in the recent past, the "sasha," express their memories and historical understandings more freely. Those two different types of the past determine how Wikipedians make "sense of history."[130]

In 1951, the novelist William Faulkner wrote the famous phrase: "The past is never dead. It is not even the past."[131] On Wikipedia, the past is not dead, is not even the past, because it is in constant motion, it always changes, it includes and excludes historical information. The past moves from the recent present to the distant past, from the "sasha" to "zamani." That movement

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[129] For the term "touched by the past," see Landsberg, *Engaging the Past*, 10. For the term "affected by the past," see Eelco Runia, *Moved by the Past*, 88-89.
[130] For the term "sense of history," see David Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 6.
[131] William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011).

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also changes the way a historical event is represented on Wikipedia. Does this happen only on Wikipedia? Definitely not. It is part of the epistemology of historical scholarship. But on Wikipedia, the motion of history is visible, we not only see the final historical product, which is never final as it constantly changes, but the whole process behind it. We see what happens in the forefront of historical knowledge production, in the main article, and what happens in the backstage, in the "talk page." We detect the history of a historical article and how these changes take place. Were these changes the result of a broader consensus or an "edit war?" Were they the result of Wikipedia guidelines or personal engagement with the past? How do editors make sense of the past while they try to contribute to the production of historical knowledge? Wikipedia "talk pages" shed light on these questions and reveal all the levels of users' engagement with history. As Roy Rosenzweig has put it, the success of Wikipedia does not lie in the accuracy of its published content during that time but in its ability to edit its contents constantly.[132] Wikipedia articles are in constant change. As Rosenzweig writes, Wikipedia seems like a first draft of history but is open to constant revisions.[133]

By whom does history get in motion? By "a bunch of nobodies," to borrow from Andrew Lih.[134] All these users, some of them were mentioned above, share their authority about history and contribute to the production of historical knowledge. Many of them share their opinions and arguments about history in the discussion threads, but few of them manage to edit the main article and, therefore, change the representation of a historical event on Wikipedia. The discussions in the "talk pages" move faster than the editing process of the main article. This

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[132] Roy Rosenzweig, "Wikipedia: Can History Be Open Source?" 135 cited in Sabine Niederer and José van Dijck, "Wisdom of the Crowd or technicity of the content? Wikipedia as a sociotechnical system," *new media & society* 12/8 (2010): 1375.
[133] Rosenzweig, "Wikipedia: Can History Be Open Source?" 136.
[134] Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia Revolution*.

seems logical to an important extent, as the "talk pages" offer space for discussion and debates, and a part of which can end up in the main entry. However, all the involved users manage to share their authority to some extent, even this is the "talk page" or the main article. Wikipedia seems to embody what Michael Frisch has coined as "shared authority," an influential term in public history.[135] Frisch called oral and public historians to not just extract knowledge from the public or just communicate historical knowledge to the public.[136] Instead, Frisch suggested the development of a dialogue between the historian and the public, which will advance a democratized shared historical consciousness and encourage more participation in debates about history.[137] Do we notice that on Wikipedia? I think yes. Wikipedia users, even if they have historical education or just an interest in history, collaborate, agree, and disagree to produce historical knowledge. Nevertheless, Wikipedia users do not base their contributions only on their personal memories, as Robert Wolff has argued, but on a combination of different things, memories, experiences, political beliefs, academic works, and historical information available on the Web. [138] The way Wikipedians engage with history depends on the position of the historical events in the lives of editors, namely the extent to which Wikipedians have developed lived experiences and memories from the past. The more recent the past is, the more personal the reflections of Wikipedians are.

Michael Frisch also made another significant point. He argued that historical authority should not serve anymore as an instrument of power and hierarchy.[139] On Wikipedia, the authority is not the academic historian, that Frisch had in his mind, when he wrote his book, but

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[135] Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority*.
[136] Ibid., xxii
[137] Ibid.
[138] Robert S. Wolff, "The Historian's Craft, Popular Memory, and Wikipedia," 66.
[139] Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, xx.

anyone with an interest in history or in the topic of the article. This does not mean that on Wikipedia there are not structures of power and hierarchy that determine the nature of historical knowledge. These structures significantly explain how the engagement with history in the "talk pages" can result in editing changes in the main article. The only way to reveal these structures of power is to shed light on the profile pages of the Wikipedia users themselves. Thus, we will better understand, which users make most edits in an article, who these users are, and what their characteristics are. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: A Network Analysis of Wikipedia Editors' Engagement with History: Interests, Identities, Power, and Hierarchy

The English Wikipedia constitutes a huge project, which includes a million articles written by millions of editors.[1] It would be impossible to understand and explore how Wikipedians produce historical knowledge without examining Wikipedia in a large scale. In this chapter, I study Wikipedia as a network of interaction between editors and pages. My goal is to investigate the characteristics of Wikipedia users who contribute to pages related to history, the volume of edits they make, their interests, experiences, and education, which make them take part in the Wikipedia community and produce historical knowledge. As the media scholar, Jose van Dijck has argued, Wikipedia's success lies in the fact that it can mobilize different types of users to contribute to its contents.[2] What are the characteristics of those users and how are their characteristics related to their engagement with history? By applying a network analysis of Wikipedians' editing historical articles, I detect repeating patterns that reveal why Wikipedia editors decide to contribute to pages related to history and what characteristics those editors have.[3] If we assume that each Wikipedia page is a network in which several editors participate, is

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[1] "English Wikipedia," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Wikipedia.
[2] Jose van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity. A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 136.
[3] For the use of networks in the humanities, see Ruth Ahnert, Sebastien E. Ahnert, Catherine Nicole Coleman, and Scott B. Weingart, *The Network Turn*, David Easley and Jon Kleinberg, ed., *Networks, Crowds, and Markets: Reasoning About a Highly Connected World. Cambridge* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Roberto Franzosi and John W. Mohr, "New Directions in Formalization and Historical Analysis," *Theory and Society* 26, 2/3 (1997): 133–60. For some examples of network analysis in the humanities, see Ruth Ahnert and Sebastian Ahnert, "Protestant Letter Networks in the Reign of Mary I: A Quantitative Approach," *English Literary History* 82/1 (Spring 2015): 1-33, Ruth Ahnert, "Maps Versus Networks," in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Brill Open E-Book Collection, 2016), 130-157, Roberto Franzosi, Gianluca De Fazio, and Stefania Vicari, "Ways of Measuring Agency: An Application of Quantitative Narrative Analysis to Lynchings in Georgia (1875—1930)," *Sociological Methodology* 42 (August 2012): 1–42, Shin-Kap Han, "The Other Ride of Paul Revere: The Brokerage Role in the Making of the American Revolution," *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 14/2 (2009): 143-162.

it a balanced and symmetrical network? Or are there few users, who monopolize the creation and

editing of historical articles? As the philosopher Bruno Latour has put it, networks can shed light

on how a group of people or community is formulated; they reveal the common things and

elements that contribute to the formation of a group.[4] In this chapter, I argue that the production

of historical knowledge is produced through power and hierarchy. By studying multiple

Wikipedia pages as networks, I explore the interests of Wikipedia editors, who engage with

articles related to history, and their identities as they are promoted within the Wikipedia

community. At the same time, by examining the number of edits Wikipedians make and the

centrality of Wikipedia editors within a network, I argue that the most experienced editors and

some non-human agents define the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia to a

significant extent.

To answer those questions, I have selected three categories related to modern United

States history, "History of organizations based in the United States," "History of science and

technology in the United States," and "LGBT history in the United States."[5] All three categories

belong to the Wikiproject United States, a collaborative project of Wikipedians who aim to

improve coverage of topics related to the United States, such as culture, economy, geography,

health, history, etc.[6] I focused on the project category of history and chose those three categories

as samples for my research. Instead of choosing random Wikipedia pages related to modern US

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[4] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[5] For the three categories, see "Category:History of organizations based in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:History_of_organizations_based_in_the_United_States, "Category:History of science and technology in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:History_of_science_and_technology_in_the_United_States, "Category:LGBT history in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:LGBT_history_in_the_United_States.

[6] For the WikiProject United States, see "Wikipedia:WikiProject United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_United_States.

history, I followed the structure and logic of how Wikipedia topically organizes its pages by category. Each category consists of multiple pages and form an organic collective of loosely affiliated pages. I viewed each category as an actual network of editors. The category, "History of organizations based in the United States" includes twenty-two pages, the category "History of science and technology in the United States" has forty-nine pages, and the category "LGBT history in the United States" has seventy-one pages. All three categories represent completely different research interests and fields of history and, thus, I can better detect similarities and differences in Wikipedia editors' engagement with history.

The topics of the pages of each category vary significantly. The category "History of organizations based in the United States" includes pages that range from the "History of the Industrial Workers of the World" and "History of the Democratic Party" to the "History of the San Francisco Police Department" and "History of the Alcoholics Anonymous."[7] The category "History of science and technology in the United States" consists of pages such as "Technological and industrial history of the United States," "The Machine in the Garden," and "Electro-Dynamic Light Company."[8] The last category has pages, which range from "Gay pride" "and "LGBT culture in Philadelphia" to "Larry Craig scandal" and "International Pronouns Day."[9] So, many pages are often loosely connected with each other thematically, but this is how Wikipedia has categorized its contents related to modern United States history.

In each category, I extracted the names of the top twenty editors of each page and the numbers of edits they have made to each page. The top editors are based on the number of edits they have made to each page and should not be confused with the top authors, who are measured

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[7] "Category:History of organizations based in the United States."
[8] "Category:History of science and technology in the United States."
[9] "Category:LGBT history in the United States."

by character count. Wikipedia provides these data in the portal of "page statistics," which exists

in each article.[10] I did that process automatically by using a script, which gathered the top twenty

editors of every page and the numbers of their edits.[11] Then, I manually assigned attributes to

each Wikipedia editor by visiting their profile pages.[12] That process could not take place

automatically, as the profile pages required close reading and interpretation. According to the

information, editors have on their profile pages, I collected data on their education, interests, and

experience. This information worked as Bruno Latour's traces, things that people generate about

their identities and actions.[13] Specifically, I examined if they have any educational background,

undergraduate or graduate degrees in history, if they are interested in history as a subject of

knowledge, if they are interested in the specific topic they edit, such as science, technology,

LGBTQ, or the topic of the article itself, and if they are experienced users. As Wikipedia does

not include any information on what discerns an experienced from an inexperienced user, I

decided to set as a criterion for the experienced users the editing of ten different articles. Also, I

extracted information about editors' experiences and interests from the "view history" portal of

each profile page, which reveals past activities of editors within the Wikipedia community.[14] For

example, if an editor was making constant contributions to articles related to history, they were

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[10] For example, see the "page statistics" of a Wikipedia page, "Science and technology in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://xtools.wmflabs.org/articleinfo/en.wikipedia.org/Science_and_technology_in_the_United_States#top-editors.
[11] By creating a script written in the Python programming language, I automatically scrapped the names of the top twenty editors and the number of their edits from all pages of each Wikipedia category. For example, I applied the script to the category "History of organizations based in the United States" and it imported the names of top twenty editors and the number of their edits from each Wikipedia page that belongs to this category.
[12] For example, see the profile page of the user "Settler," "User:Settler," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Settler.
[13] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.
[14] For example, see "User:Settler: Revision history," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=User:Settler&action=history.

marked as experienced and interested in history editors for the network analysis. Or if an editor had several barnstars and awards from Wikipedia, it meant that the editor is an experienced user.

In their profile pages, some editors mentioned the reasons why they are involved in Wikipedia, their studies, interests, their awards for their contributions, how long they have been participating in Wikipedia, and even more personal information. However, many editors did not include any information about their lives, activities, and interests, even if they had contributed to multiple pages. Some of them were also banned from Wikipedia, so there was not available information about their role and activities within the community. Wikipedia defines its bans as "formal prohibition from editing some or all Wikipedia pages, or a formal prohibition from making certain types of edits on Wikipedia pages."[15] Bans can have a specific or unspecified duration.[16] On the one hand, this lack of information prevents us from having a complete picture of all editors' characteristics. On the other hand, the available data reveal the frequency with which Wikipedia editors appear within a category, their position within a category, the number of edits they make, and their relation to history and the broader thematic topic they edit. Since I collected all the data and assigned them attributes (interest in history, interest in topic, education in history, experience), I imported the data to Gephi, a visualization and exploration software for graphs and networks.[17]

In the Wikipedia community, there are editors and pages, while in networks there are nodes and edges. A network is a "set of relationships between objects or entities."[18] Nodes are

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[15] "Wikipedia:Banning policy," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Banning_policy.

[16] Ibid.

[17] On Gephi and its usage for network analysis, see Ruth Ahnert et al., *The Network Turn*, 64.

[18] Ruth Ahnert, "Maps Versus Networks," in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Brill Open E-Book Collection, 2016), 131.

groups of objects or entities, and their relationships are edges.[19] In this study, Wikipedia editors

will be the nodes and the connections between the editors, who contribute to the creation and

development of a Wikipedia page, are the edges. In other words, the edges represent a

connection of one editor with another editor, and that such connection is established by the fact

they both edited the same page. Measuring the connections between Wikipedia editors helps us

understand the number of edits editors have made to each page, the importance of specific

individuals, the most active and well-connected within a network. As Ruth Ahnert and Sebastien

Ahnert have mentioned in their study on networks, "A network is a collection of links, which can

be combined into a myriad of possible paths. The measurement of these paths is a crucial way of

establishing the ranked importance of the people in that network."[20] Therefore, network analysis

is also political, it reveals the dynamics of power.[21] In the case study of Wikipedia, some

experienced editors are responsible for making most contributions to Wikipedia articles and

some non-human agents have the highest numbers of connections within a Wikipedia network,

and therefore, determine the production of historical knowledge.

Exploring Wikipedia editors' interests and identities

Each Wikipedia page constitutes a network with nodes and edges and each page is part of

a broader network of a Wikipedia category. In this study, I have named each category as

category-network and the involved Wikipedia pages as pages-networks. The aim of this section

is to explore the factors and interests that motivate Wikipedia editors to engage with the

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[19] Ibid. On networks and their characteristics, see Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013), 213, Scott B. Weingart, "Demystifying Networks," *The Scottbot Irregular*, accessed December 1, 2021, http://www.scottbot.net/HIAL/index.html@p=6279.html, Elijah Meeks,. "More Networks in the Humanities or Did books have DNA?" *Digital Humanities Specialist*, accessed December 1, 2021, https://dhs.stanford.edu/visualization/more-networks/.

[20] Ruth Ahnert and Sebastian Ahnert, "Protestant Letter Networks," 12.

[21] Ruth Ahnert et al., *The Network Turn*, 40.

production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia. By examining three different historical categories of Wikipedia and multiple Wikipedia pages, I detect both the interests that Wikipedians, who write historical articles, have and encourage them to produce historical knowledge. In turn, the interests of Wikipedia editors reveal useful information on the identities that editors promote within the Wikipedia community and the broader perception of "history" in this digital and public space.[22] The main argument of this section is that the Wikipedia users, who edit articles related to history, identify themselves more with the topic they edit, than with history as a field or category of interest. At the same time, the education of Wikipedians in history does not seem to play any role in their engagement with articles related to history.

The figure 1 is a visualized network of the Wikipedia category "History of organizations based in the United States." This category includes twenty-two pages-networks. The visualization of networks is always result of specific choices and assumptions. The network in figure 1 emphasizes the nodes-editors with the highest number of edits within the category. The bigger the node is, the higher is the number of edits the node has made. Same for the color. The lighter the blue of node is, the higher is the number of edits the node has made, and vice versa. As shown in the network, not all editors make an equal number of contributions within the category. There are significant differences in the number of edits Wikipedians make. Even if we zoom in the network and see a page-network more closely (figures 2 and 3), we notice that some of the involved users have made a higher proportion of contributions than the other editors.[23] In this section, I detect the editors with the higher number of edits, their interests and identities that

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[22] On how identities work in online communities, see Amy Bruckman, *Should You Believe Wikipedia?*, 118-159.
[23] The pages-networks are distinguishable because they have a high number of exclusive editors despite the smaller number of editors shared with other clusters.

encourage them to produce historical knowledge, and finally their centrality within each category-network.

By looking again at the broader category-network (figure 1), three editors seem to be the top editors of the category. The users "Rjensen," "Settler," and "Richard Myers" appear to be the editors with most contributions, with more than two hundred edits each user. Then, the users "AHC300," "Hourick," "Chris Light," and "207.232.97.13" follow with a lower number of edits, more than one hundred edits each one. Why do those users make most edits? First, it is the topic they edit. "Rjensen," "Settler," and "AHC300" are involved with the creation and editing of the pages "History of the Democratic Party" and "History of the Republican Party." "Richard Myers" contributes to the "History of the Industrial Workers of the World," "Hourick" to the "History of the Houston Police Department," "Chris Light" to the "History of the National Park Service," and "207.232.97.13" to the "History of Alcoholics Anonymous." All those pages seem represent more popular topics, which are central in modern United States history, especially the "History of the Democratic Party" and the "History of the Republican Party." Furthermore, those topics are broader than for example the "History of the National Register of Historic Places" or the "History of the Texas Ranger Division." The more popular and broader the topics are, the more edits they seem to attract. That reason can also be related to the process of consensus-making. The most popular and central topics within a category can attract more editors, who can also present different perspectives and points of view. Therefore, some editors need to constantly intervene and make the appropriate edits in the page. However, that reason cannot be detected and visualized in a network.

Figure 1 - History of organizations based in the United States; color – lighter color means more edits and darker color means fewer edits; node size – number of edits
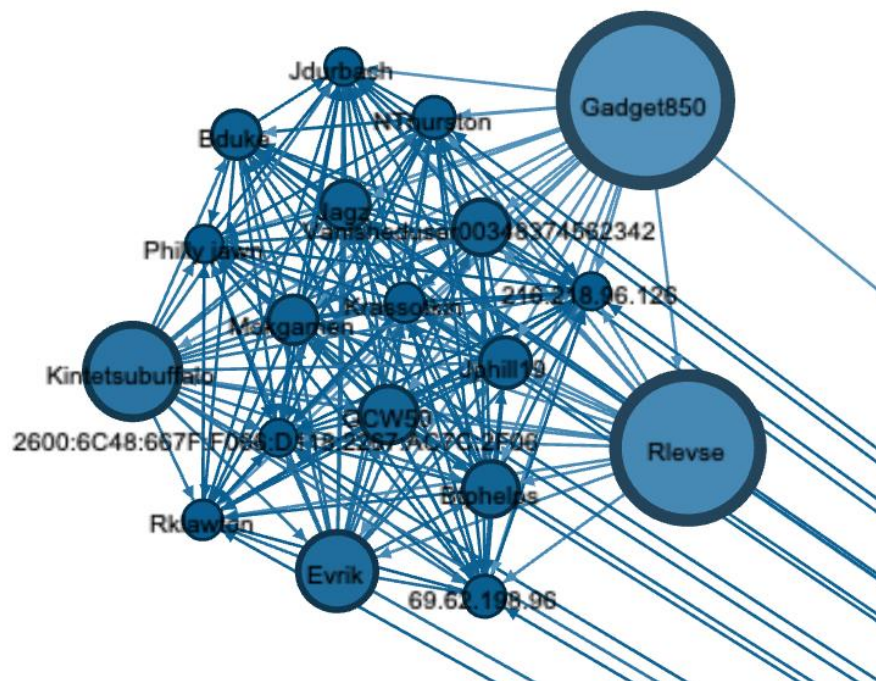
Figure 2 - History of the Boy Scouts of America/History of organizations based in the United States; color – lighter color means more edits and darker color means fewer edits; node size – number of edits
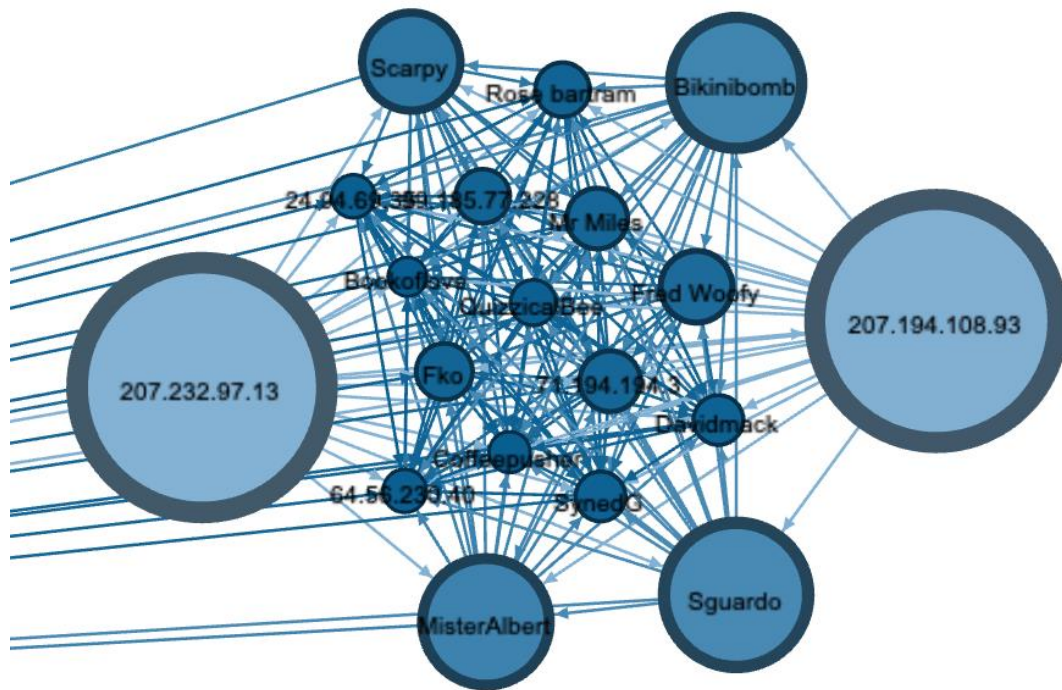
Figure 3 - History of Alcoholics Anonymous/History of organizations based in the United States; color – lighter color means more edits and darker color means fewer edits; node size – number of edits

The second reason has to do with the characteristics of Wikipedia editors. In figure 4, we see how many editors are interested in the topic they edit. Those displayed with light blue color are interested in the topic they, those with orange color do not include any information about their interests, and those displayed with pink are not interested in the topic. Almost sixty-five percent of the editors do not include any information about their interests, thirty-three percent are interested, and two percent are not. Even if most users do not clarify their interests in the Wikipedia community, it is more than clear that the editors with the higher numbers of edits present an interest in the topic to which they have chosen to contribute. As shown in figure 4, "Rjensen," "Settler," "Hourick," "Richard Myers," "Chris Light," and "207.232.97.13" are all

interested in the topic they edit. Only "AHC300" is orange, as they do not claim any information about their interests.

Figure 4 – History of organizations based in the United States; color – light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits

However, this pattern does not characterize only the editors with most contributions. If we zoom in a smaller page-networks of the category, we will notice the same pattern. In figure 5, we see the page "History of the New York City Bar Association." The editors with most edits, "Pattonnh" and "66.104.196.194," have an interest in the topic they edit. The other editors of the network do not include information in their profiles and one user is not interested at all. The same happens in the page, "History of the San Francisco Police Department," in figure 6. "Hank Chapot," the top editor of the page, is interested in the topic, the rest editors are either interested in the topic or they do not have information about their interests. The same pattern characterizes even smaller networks, in which the difference between the top editor and the rest editors is not that high, as in figures 7 and 8.
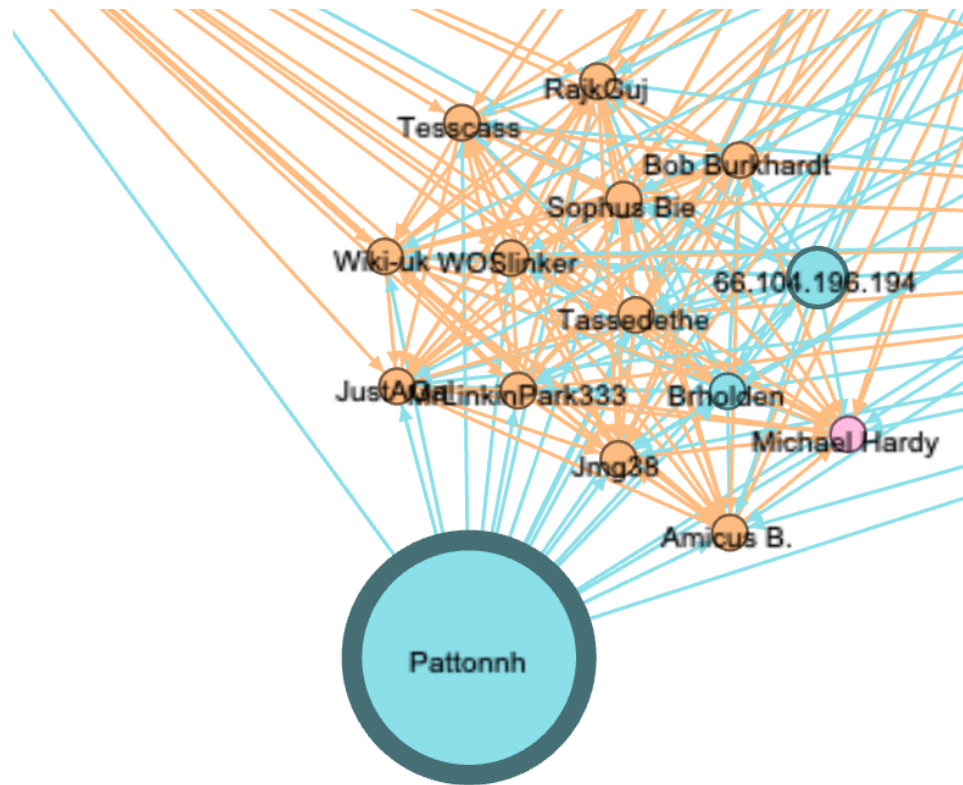
Figure 5 - History of the New York City Bar Association/History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits

Figure 6 - History of the San Francisco Police Department/ History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits

Figure 7 - History of the United States Army National Guard/ History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits
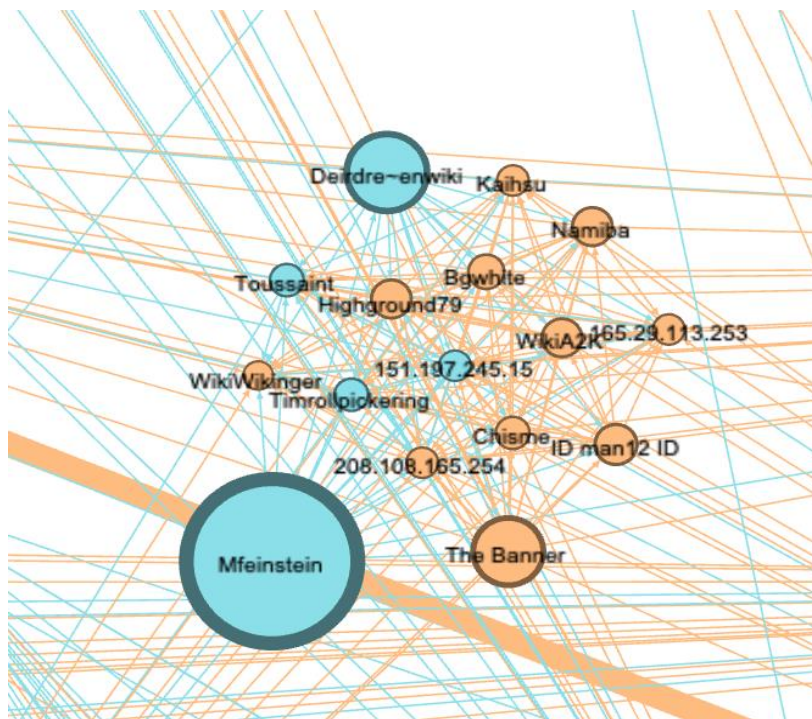
Figure 8 - History of the Green Party of the United States/ History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits

Therefore, the interest in the topic seems to determine the number of edits that editors make. Of course, the more popular the theme of a page is, the higher is the number of edits the page attracts. But even in pages, which refer to more specialized thematic areas, the editors with most edits appear to be interested in the topic they edit. The top editors are not only interested in what they edit but they also keep an active profile page, in which they refer to their research interests within the Wikipedia community.

Even if we look at the category of "History of Science and Technology in the United States," which has a completely different thematic area than the previous case study, the same results appear. Five editors are the top editors of the category, four of the five show their interest in the topic they have chosen to develop (figures 9 and 10).
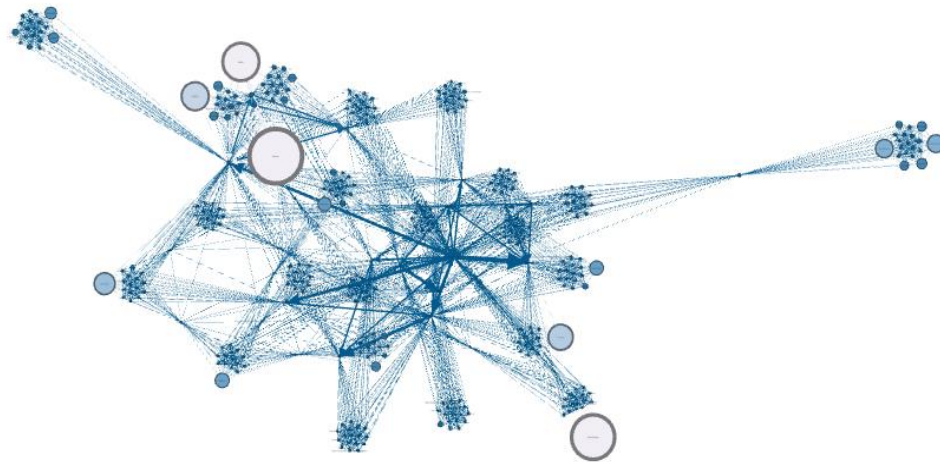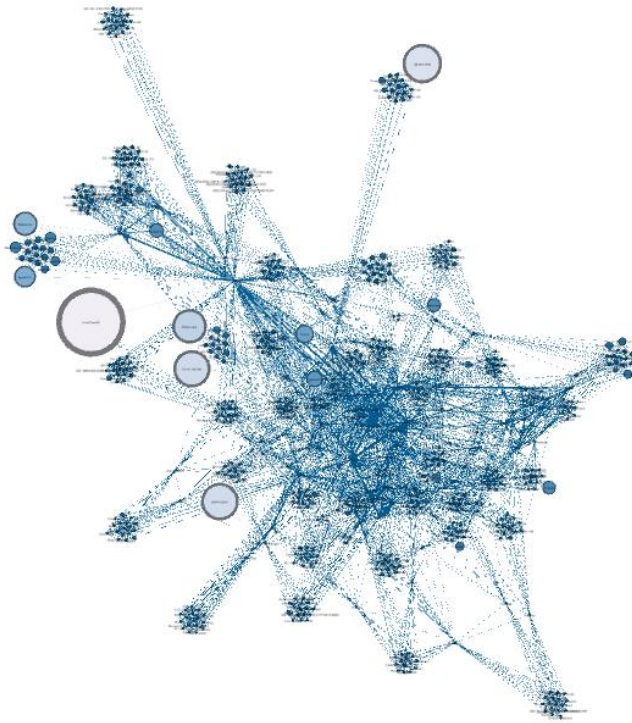
Figure 9 - History of Science and Technology in the United States; color – lighter color means more edits and darker color means fewer edits; node size – number of edits

Figure 10 - History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits

Figure 11 - West Nile virus in the United States/History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits

When we zoom in smaller pages-network (figures 11 and 12), we see again the same pattern. On most pages, the editor with the highest number of contributions, is interested in the topic they edit. The same results appear when we look at the category "LGBT history in the United States" (figure 13). In this network, eight editors have more than one hundred edits, as the category of LGBT history has more pages than the other two categories. Also, the category includes topics that can be regarded as more controversial than the articles of the other two categories. The more controversial the pages are, the higher the engagement of editors is, while they try to reach a consensus. In figure 14, we detect the same pattern regarding the interest of editors in the topic they edit. All the top editors of the category-network are interested in the

topic they contribute. Even if we zoom in and see the networks-pages closer, we see the same

results in most cases (figures 15, 16, and 17).
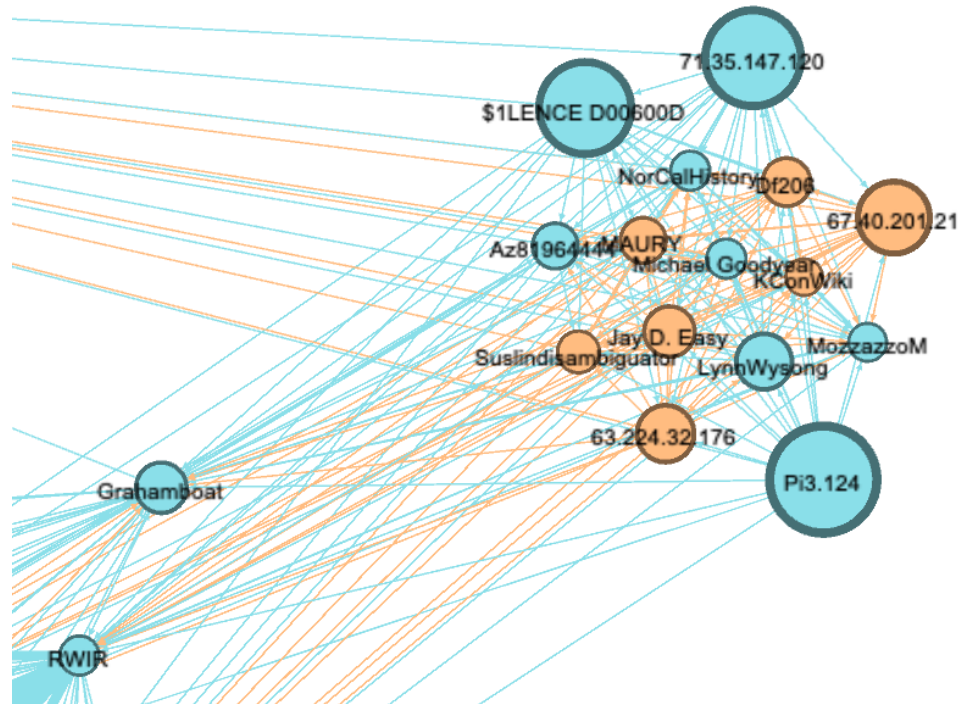
Figure 12 - United States Exploring Expedition/History of Science and Technology in the United States;
color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink
means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits

Figure 13 - LGBT history in the United States; color – lighter color means more edits and darker color means fewer edits; node size – number of edits
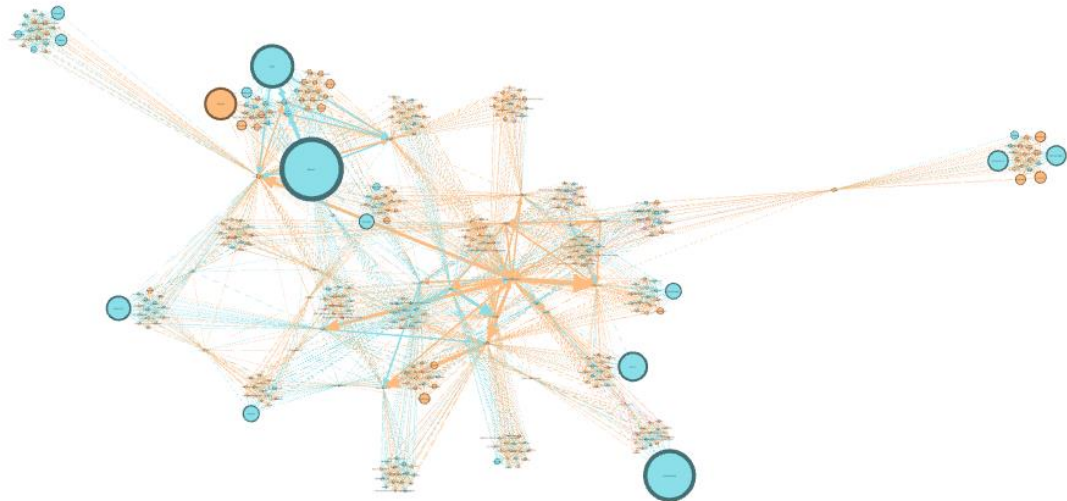
Figure 14 - LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits
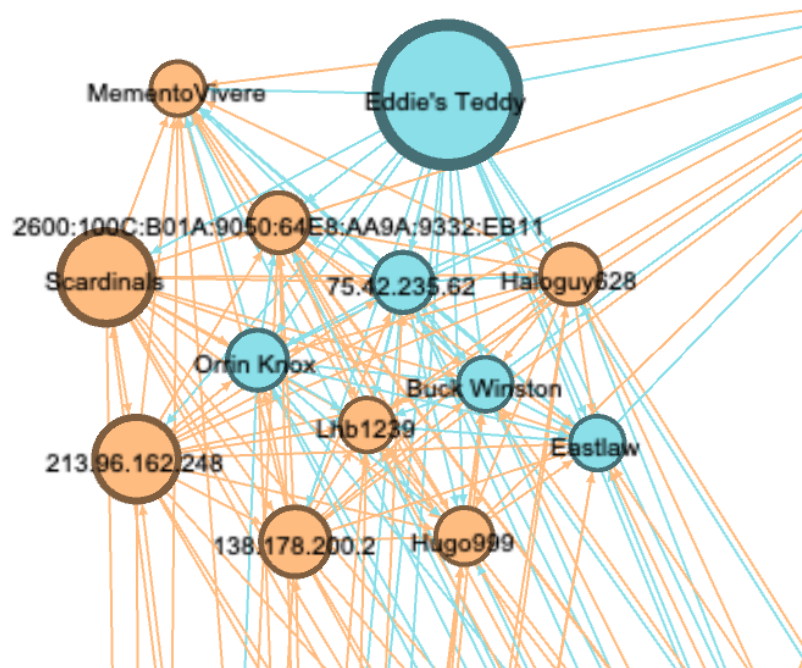
Figure 15 - United States Navy dog handler hazing scandal/LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits
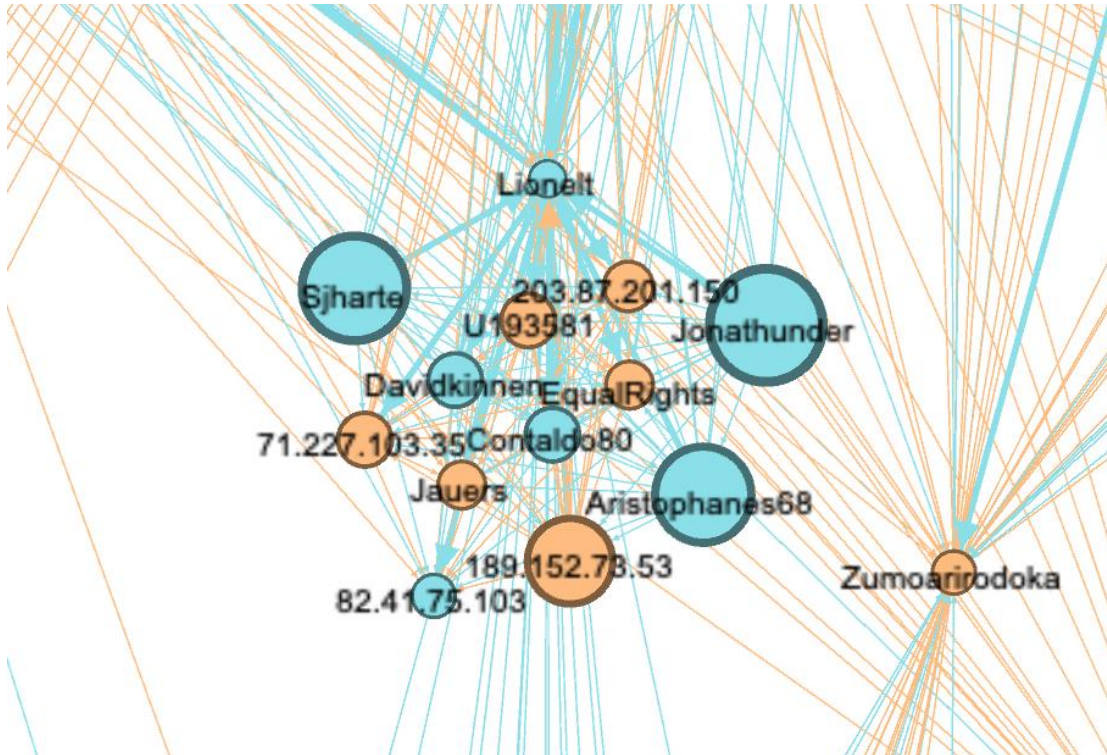
Figure 16 - Metropolitan Community Church/LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits

Figure 17 - Arizona SB 1062 /LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – number of edits

It is evident that most top editors in each category are highly interested in the topic, to which they contribute. Overall, in all three examined categories-networks thirty-five percent of editors are interested in the topic they edit and almost all the editors with the highest number of contributions are interested in the topic. It is the topic itself, which drives and mobilizes Wikipedia editors to engage with the creation and editing of Wikipedia pages related to history. What about other factors, such as interest in history or education in history? Do those factors encourage Wikipedia users to contribute to Wikipedia?

Figure 18 shows the users who are interested in history. The editors who are interested in history, are displayed with light blue, those who are not interested are displayed in pink, and those who do not include any information about their interest in history are displayed in orange.
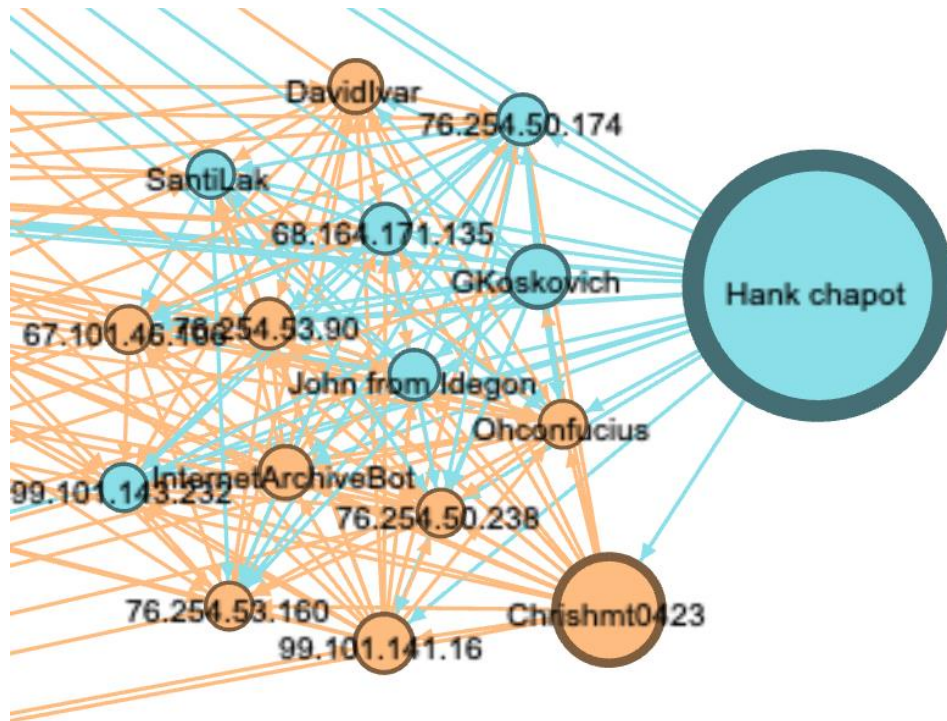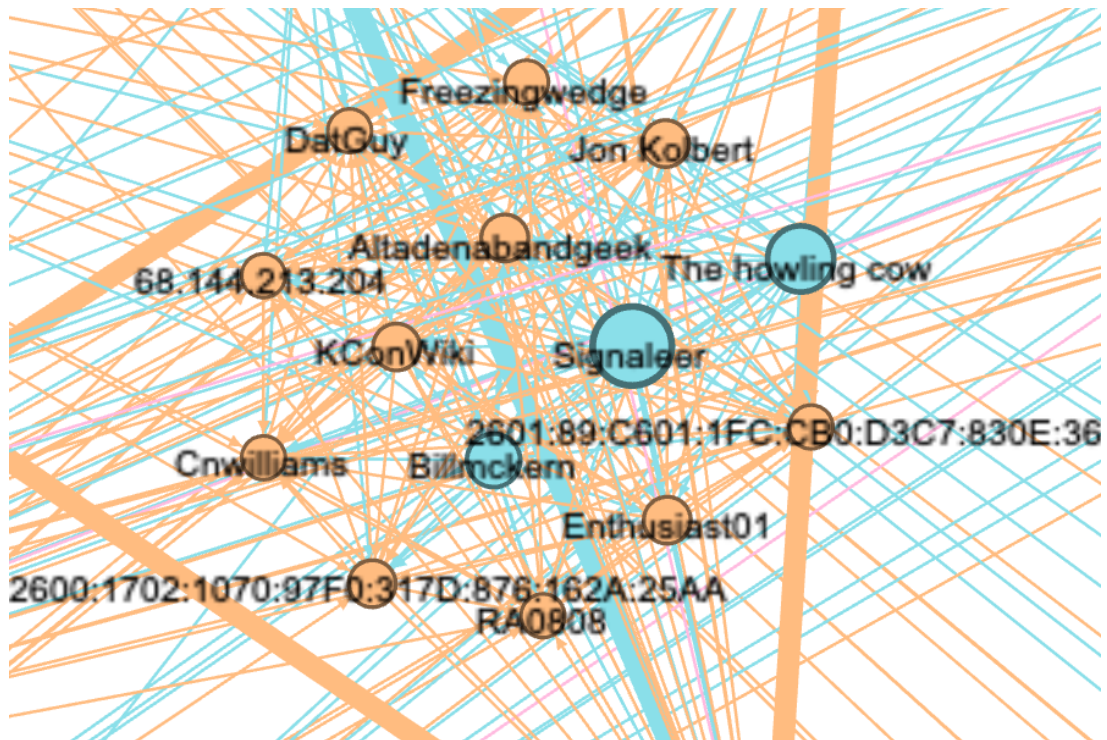
Figure 18 - History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits

Less than half of the editors, who are interested in topic, are interested in history. Specifically, in the category, "History of organizations based in the United States," thirteen percent of the editors are interested in history, while thirty-three percent are interested in the topic (figure 18). Of the seven top editors of the category, three are interested in history. The rest just mention that they are interested in the topic they edit. Similar results appear in the other two categories. In the category "History of science and technology," eighteen percent of editors are interested in history, while thirty-five percent are interested in the topic (figure 19). Of the five top editors, three are interested in history. In the category "LGBT history in the United States," eighteen percent of editors are interested in history and thirty-eight percent are interested in the topic (figure 20). Of the eight top editors of the category, two are interested in history. The users identify themselves more with the topic itself than with history as a field or category of interest.

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This point is interesting as it reveals how the concept of "history" is perceived within the Wikipedia community. The fact that many Wikipedia users create and edit historical pages, while they seem to be interested only in the topic with which they engage and not interested in history shows the need for a retheorization of "history" in this digital and public space. Wikipedians' identification with the topic and history reminds Roseznwieg and Thelen's work, *The Presence of the Past*, in which the past was present in the interviews but not "history" as it was defined in the academic textbooks. [24] Interviewees associated "history" with a boring class and "the past" with a volume of information that help them with their lives. Wikipedia's distinction between the topic and history is similar to Hayden White's distinction between the "historical past" and the "practical past."[25] On Wikipedia, the topic serves as the "practical past" that has a political and practical use in the present and encourages most Wikipedia editors to create and edit historical articles. History seems to become the "historical past," a more scientific and distant past, which motivate fewer editors to engage with Wikipedia's historical contents.

However, as we have seen in the previous chapters both past coexist within the Wikipedia community and define users' engagement and the production of historical knowledge. Even if history is not the most significant factor that encourages Wikipedians to create and edit articles, it mobilizes a great number of editors at an important extent. By looking closer at the pages-networks, we notice that in most cases there are few editors, who are interested in history, but most of them have a significant number of contributions. Of course, there are pages-networks in which no one is interested in history, but in most cases, there will be at least one editor interested in history. These patterns appear in all three categories (figures 21-28).

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[24] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 9.
[25] Hayden White, "The Practical Past," *Historein* 10 (2010): 10-19, Hayden White, "Politics, History and the Practical Past," *Storia della Storiografia* 61 (2012): 127-134.
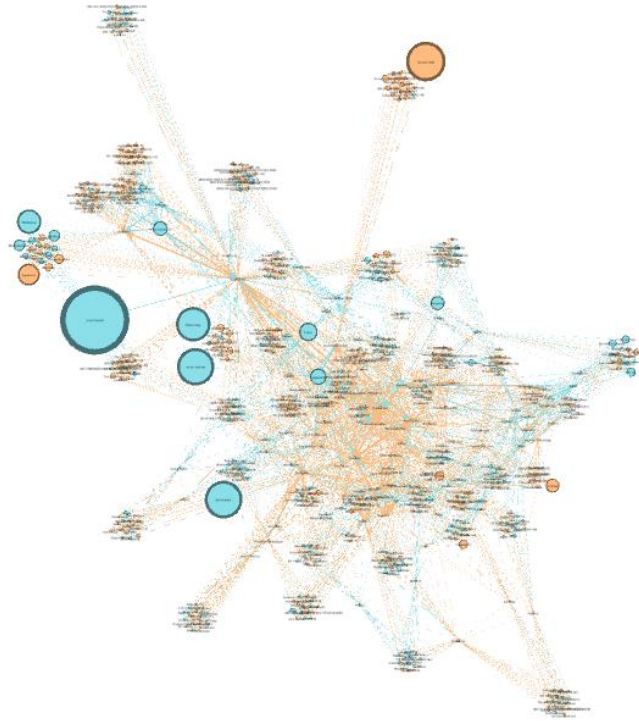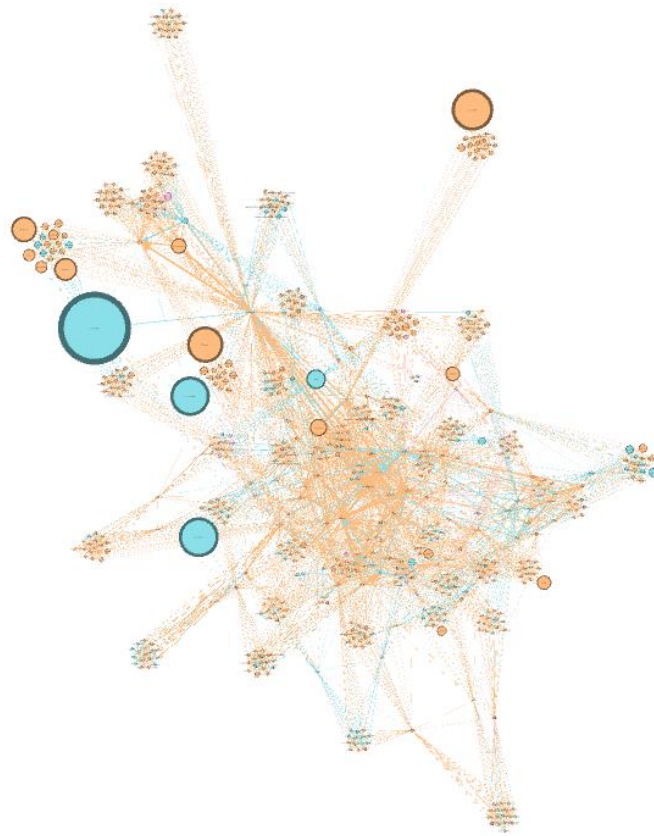
Figure 19 - History of science and technology in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits
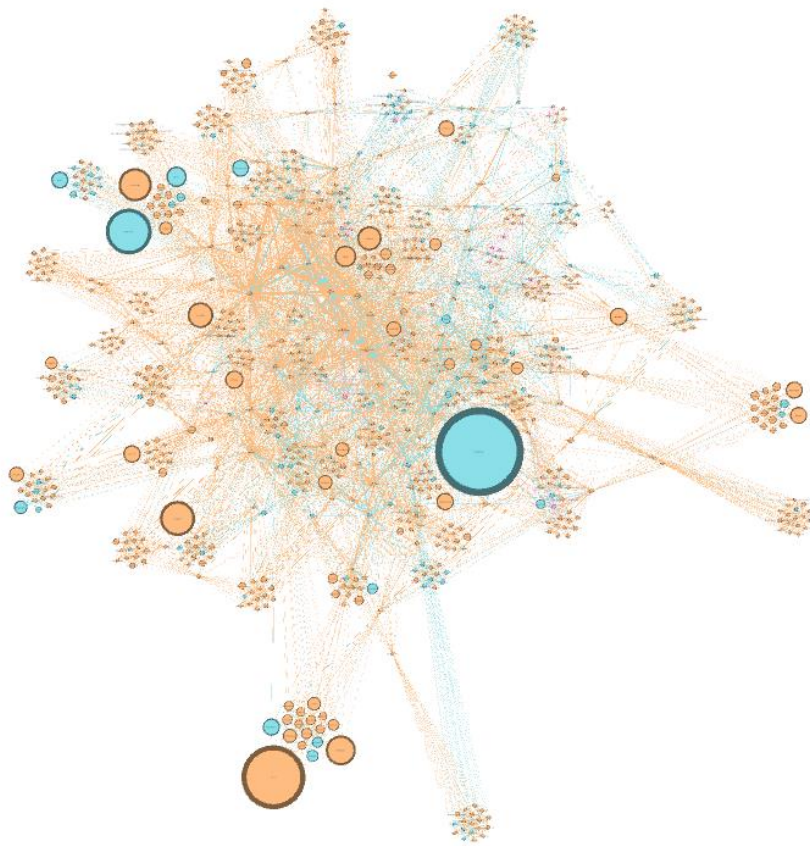
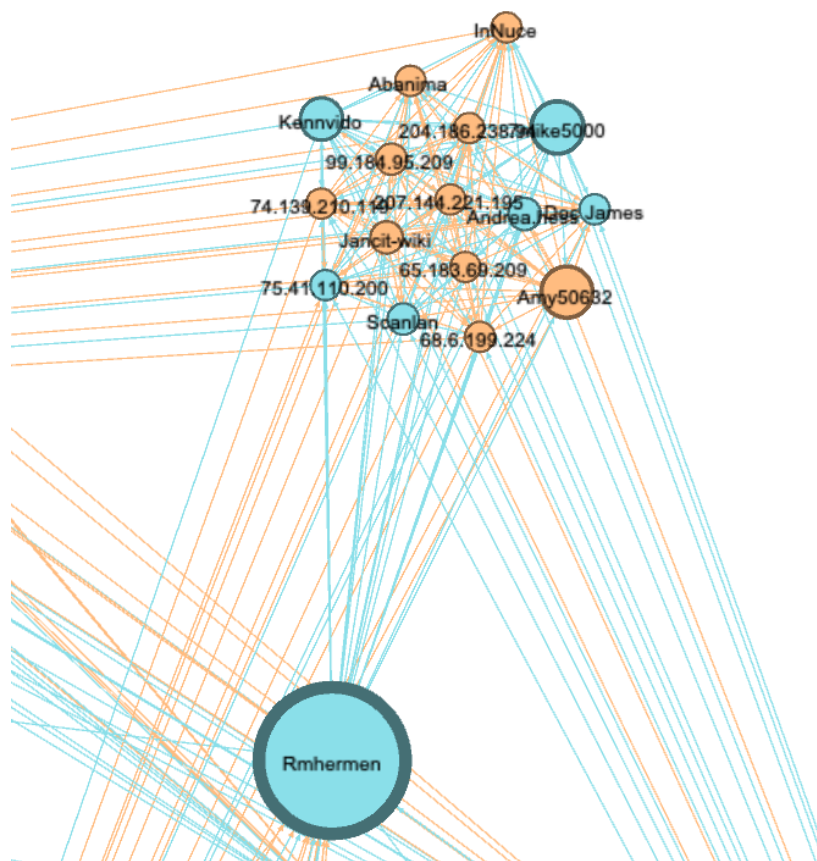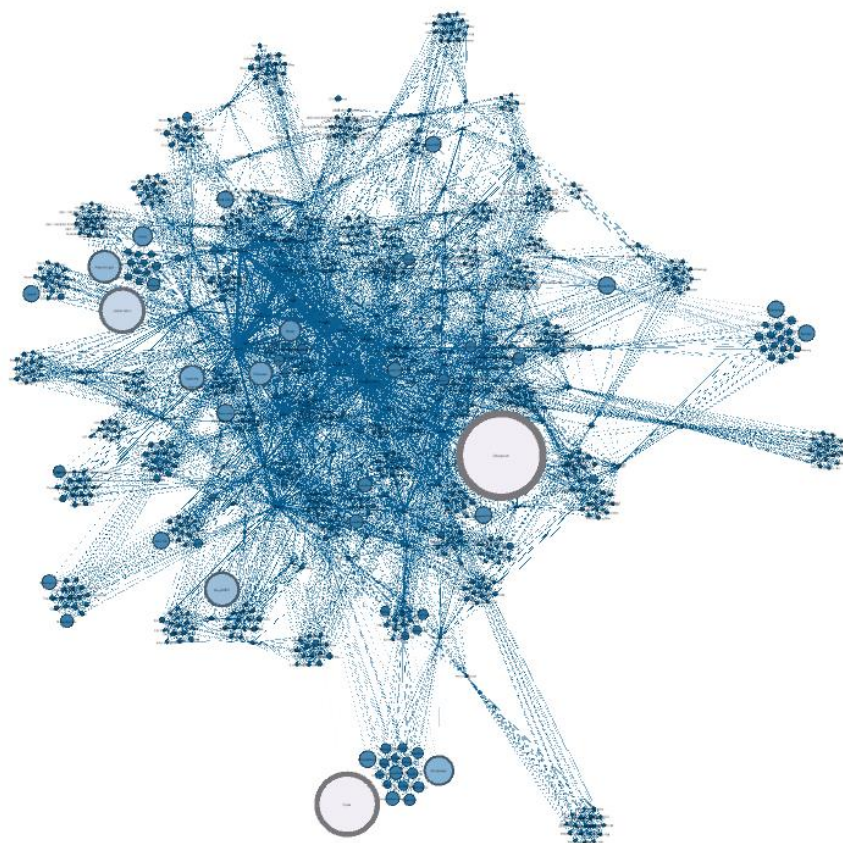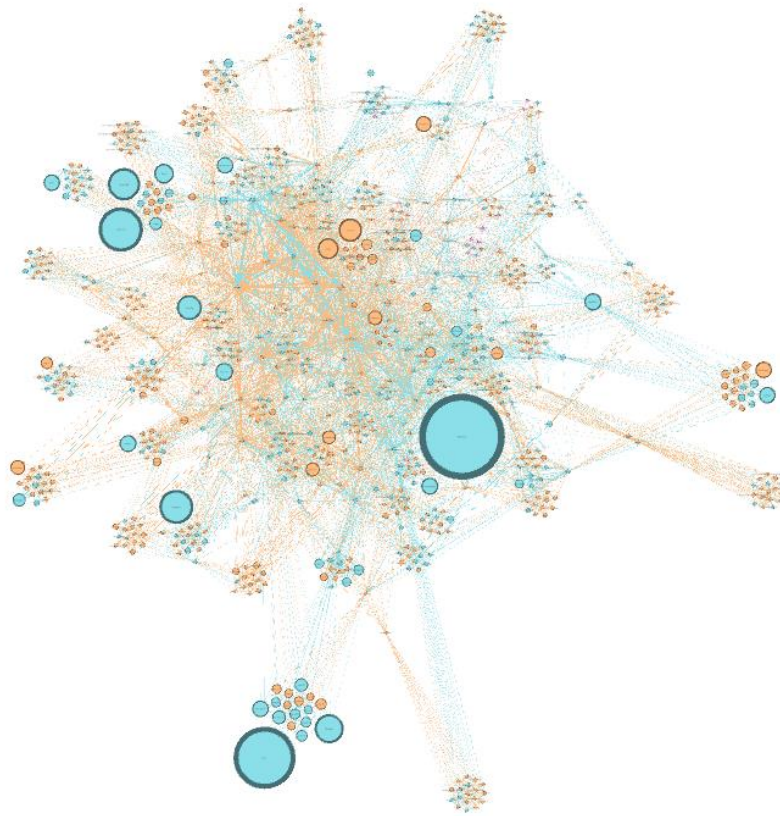Figure 20 - LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits
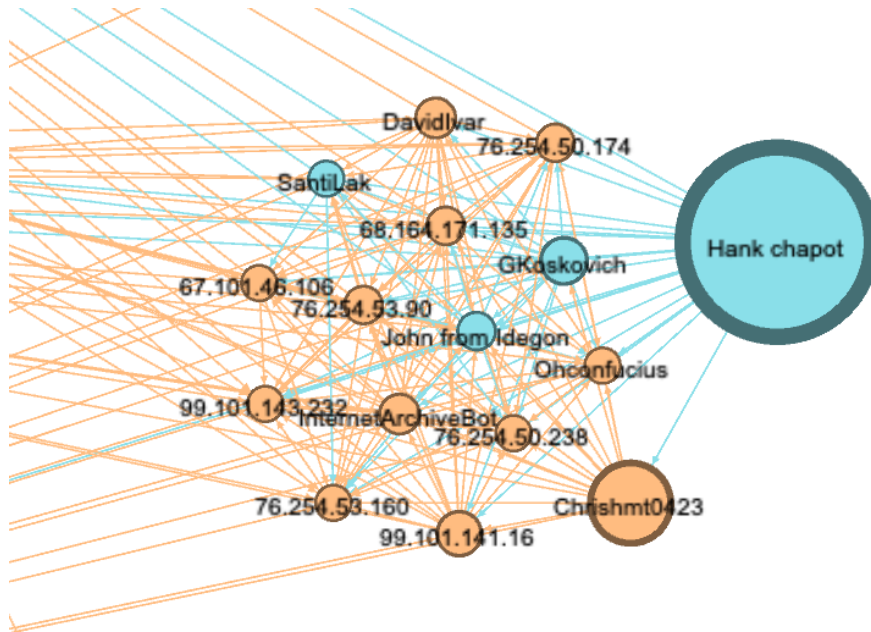
Figure 21 - History of the San Francisco Police Department/History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits
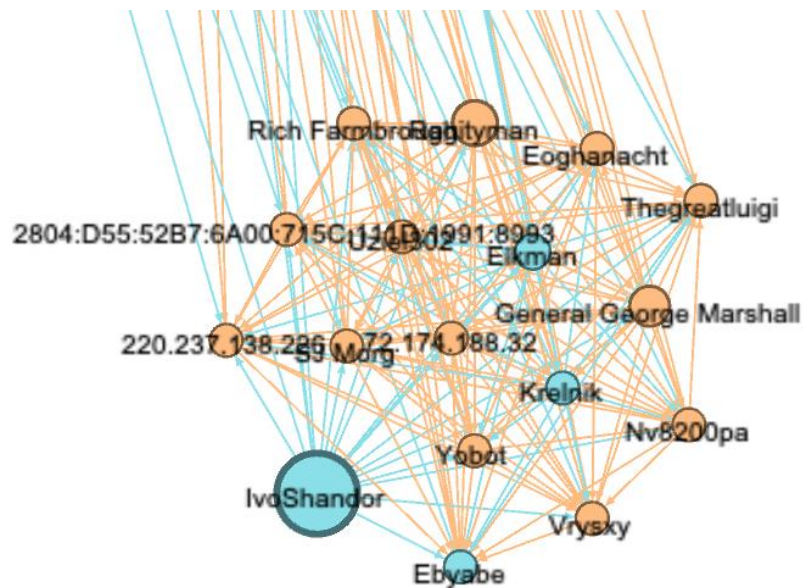
Figure 22 - History of the National Register of Historic Places/History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits
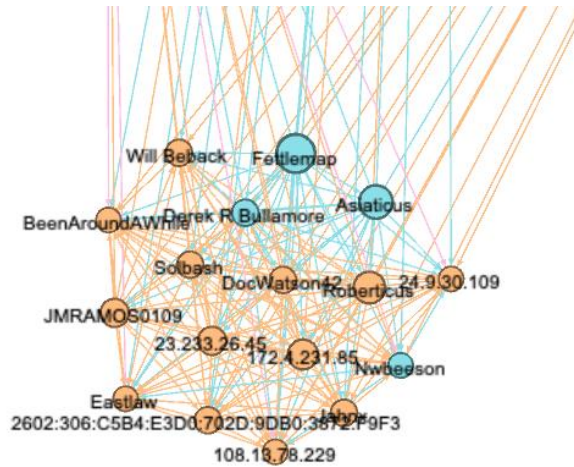
Figure 23 - History of the Los Angeles Police Department/History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits
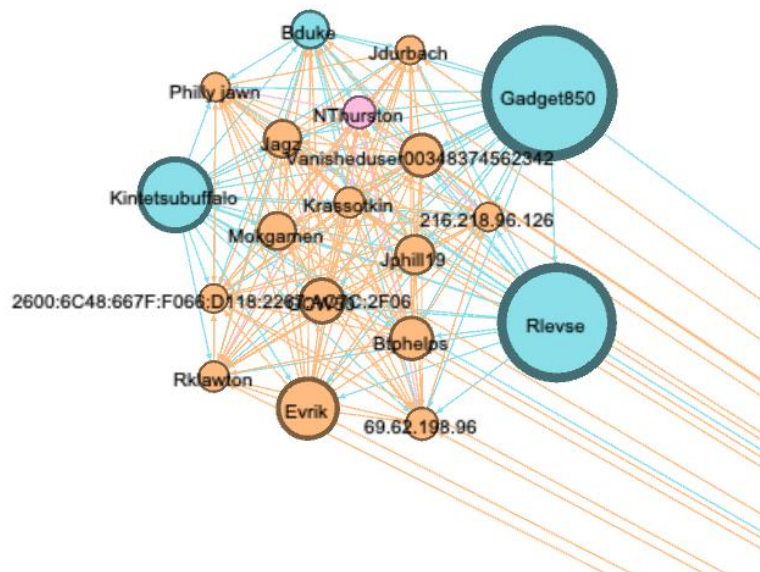
Figure 24 - History of the Boy Scouts of America/History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits
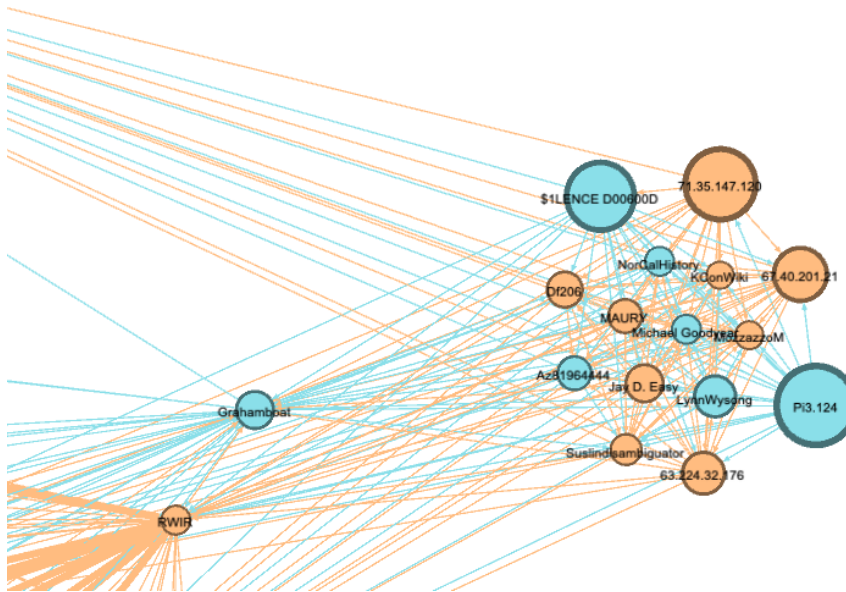
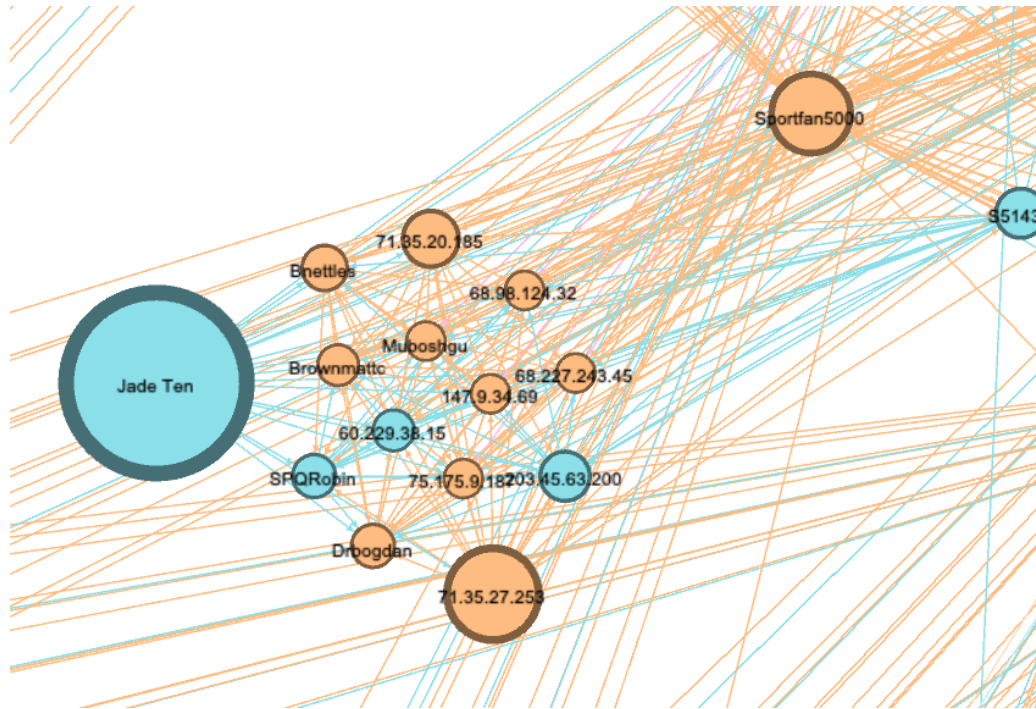Figure 25 - United States Exploring Expedition/History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits

Figure 26 - Science and technology in the United States/History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits

Figure 27 - The Machine in the Garden/History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits
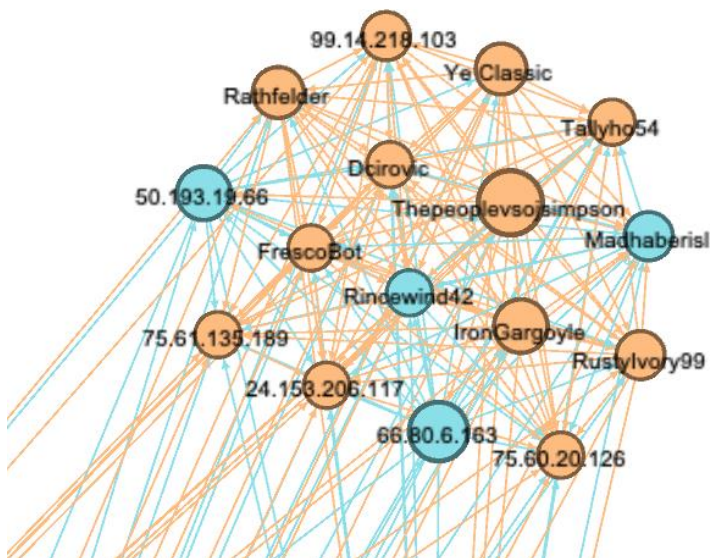
Figure 28 - Horizon Services/LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits
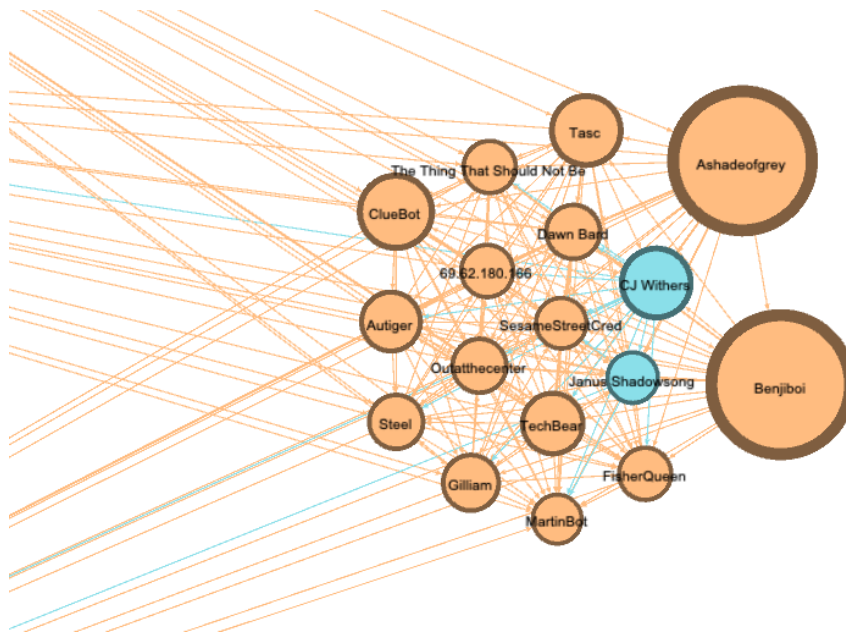
Figure 29 - Gay pride/LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits

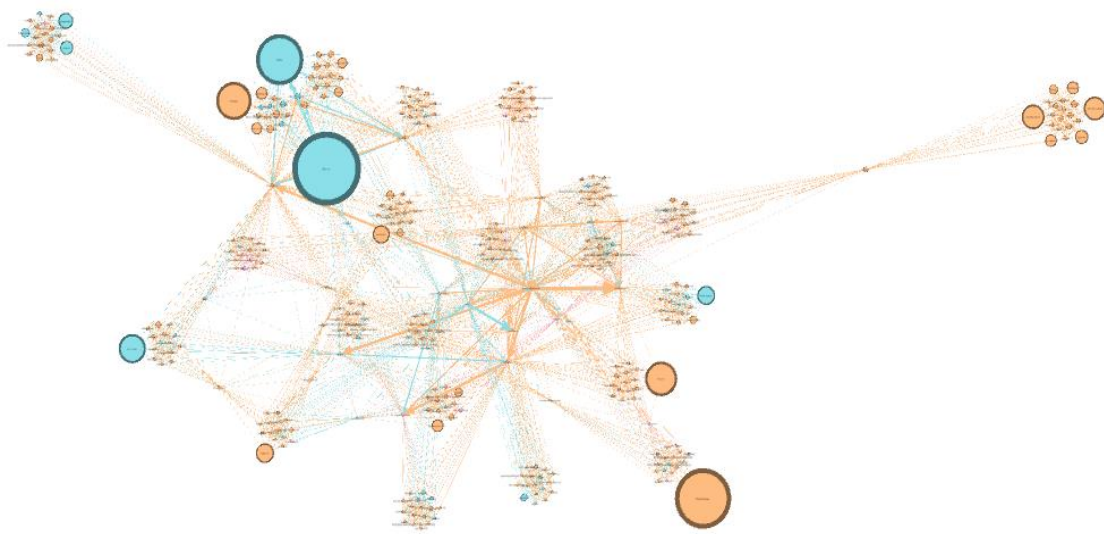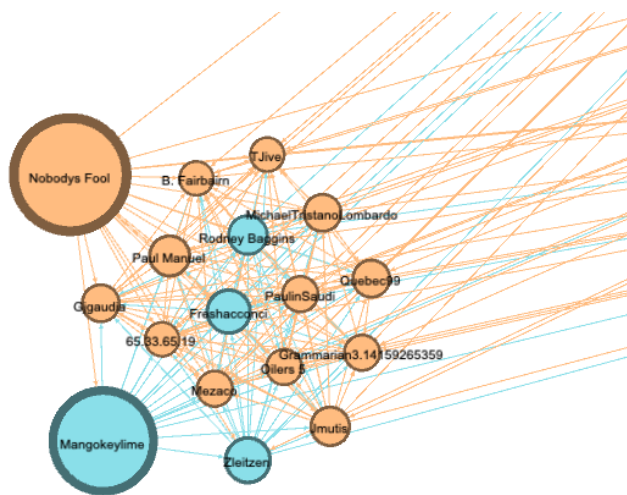Figure 30 - Mariel boatlift/LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – number of edits

In their profile pages, many editors also include information about their educational

background. In every category, only two percent of Wikipedia editors have references to their

educational backgrounds. Specifically, in the category "History of organizations based in the

United States," two percent of editors claim that they have studied history either in

undergraduate or graduate level (displayed with pink), seven percent have studied a subject or

field different than history (light blue), and ninety percent do not include any information about

their education (orange) (figure 31).
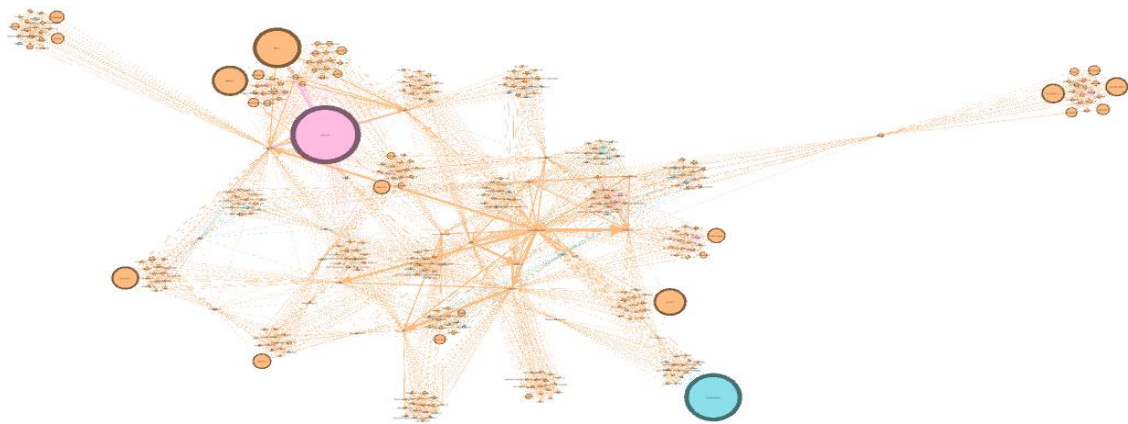
Figure 31 - History of organizations based in the United States; color – pink color means educated in history, light blue means educated in a field or subject different than history, and orange color means no available information; node size – number of edits

In the category, "History of Science and Technology in the United States," less than one percent

of editors have education in history, six percent do have in a different field, and ninety-three do

not include information about their educational background (figure 32).
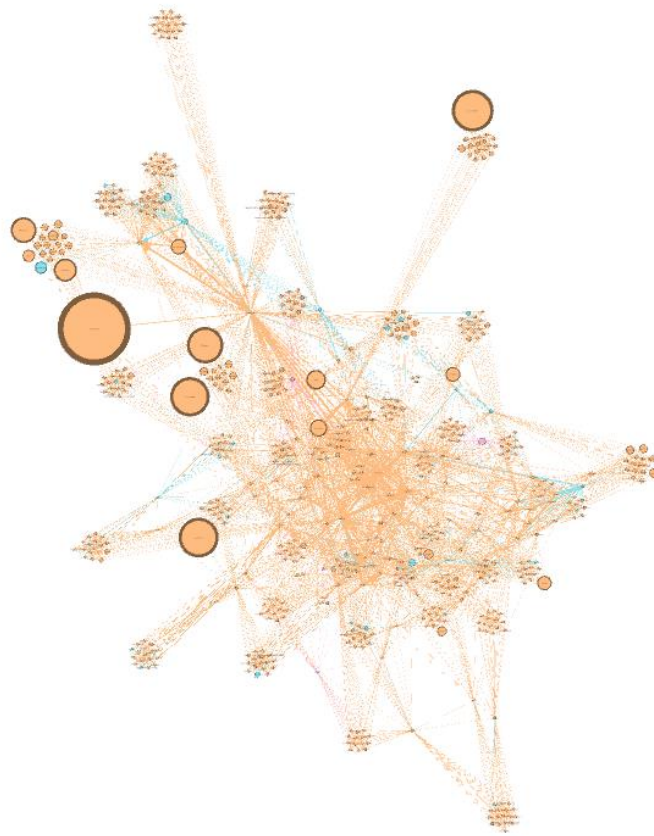
Figure 32 - History of Science and Technology in the United States; color – pink color means educated in history, light blue means educated in a field or subject different than history, and orange color means no available information; node size – number of edits

In "LGBT history in the United States," one percent of users have studied history, three percent has studied any other field, and ninety-six percent have not any information about their studies (figure 33).
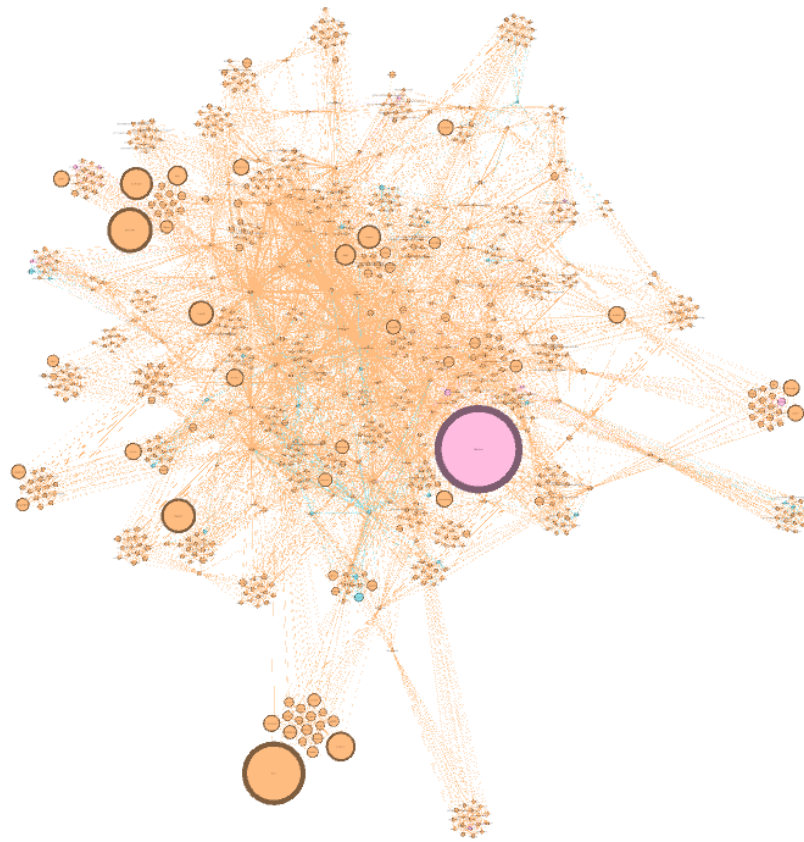
Figure 33 - LGBT history in the United States; color – pink color means educated in history, light blue means educated in a field or subject different than history, and orange color means no available information; node size – number of edits

Almost all Wikipedians do not include any information about their degrees and the studies they have done. Education does not play any role in users' engagement with history, and even more significantly, education does not define the identity of most Wikipedians. It is worth mentioning that even the editors, who have studied a different field, seem more than those, who have studied history. That happens in all three categories. Their fields can be close to history, such as literature, political science, sociology, anthropology, but even in that case, studies in history do not seem to shape users' participation in Wikipedia. It is the interests Wikipedians have in the topic they edit that defines users' engagement with history and shape their virtual identities on Wikipedia. The interest in history is also significant, as it determines users'

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participation within the Wikipedia community to a great extent. Education appears to be the least factor that encourages Wikipedians to write about history. Education is pre-fixed, while Wikipedia identities are fluid, they are determined by users themselves and not by the studies they have done or the degree they have earned. Wikipedia constitutes a digital and public space, in which editors can unfold their interests and not just their skills or knowledge obtained from their educational training. The interests of Wikipedians can constantly change and therefore allow users to present themselves as they want within the Wikipedia community and, even more importantly, to become experts in the areas they are passionate about.

Robots, veterans, and newbies

The interest in the topic and, in history to a lesser extent, encourages most Wikipedia users to create and edit Wikipedia articles. However, the action of some agents within a network-category remains unknown. What happens to the users, who are neither interested in the topic they edit nor in history? Why do they edit Wikipedia articles about history? How do they get engaged with the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia? To answer these questions, we should think about the digital setup of Wikipedia and the existence of non-human agents within a network of engagement and interactions. In this section, by looking at the centrality of Wikipedia editors within a category-network, I reveal the structures of power that determine the different roles of Wikipedia editors and define the production of historical knowledge.[26]

In the previous section, the size of nodes was based on the number of their contributions in the three categories-networks. Most of them are interested either in the topic or in history. But what about the rest? Let look at the networks again but this time let visualize the nodes according

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[26] For a broader analysis of the social roles of people in online communities, see Amy S. Bruckman, *Should you Believe Wikipedia?*, 24-27.

to their centrality within each category-network, namely, according to the number of editors' connections (edges). Different results appear. In the category-network, "History of organizations based in the United States," the most central editors are different from those with a high number of contributions. In figure 34, the editors with the highest number of connections (edges) are displayed with a larger node and a light pink color. The editors with more connections are the editors who appear in more pages. In other words, the editors with more connections are those who have edited more pages.

Figure 34 - History of organizations based in the United States; color – lighter color means higher number of connections (edges) edits and darker color means less connections; node size – network centrality

By looking the network 34 closer, we notice that the editors with the most connections are: the "InternetArchiveBot," the "ClueBot NG," the "Cydebot," "Tim!," "Monkbot," and "Srich32977." Then, the editors "Illegitimate Barrister," "AnomieBOT," "KolbertBot," "GreenC bot," and "Hmains" follow. It is more than obvious that most of those editors have a common characteristic. They are bots. According to Wikipedia, a bot "is an automated tool that carries out

repetitive and mundane tasks to maintain the 54,264,985 pages of the English Wikipedia."[27] The communication scholar Randall Livingstone has defined Wikipedia bots as "a program or script that carries out an often tedious or repetitive tasks for its creator."[28] They are created in the python programming language by Wikipedia users and some of the bots have the same user namespace and talk pages on Wikipedia.[29] Some bot operators use photographs and descriptions to anthropomorphize their bots.[30] The first bots appeared on Wikipedia in late 2001, but in 2002 bots started to have an active role on Wikipedia.[31] Wikipedia has established bot policies to control its bots.[32] As Jose van Dijck has explained, there are two types of bots, the editing or coauthoring bots and non-editing or administrative bots.[33] The administrative bots are very common on Wikipedia. They are responsible for performing policing tasks, such as blocking spam and detecting vandalism, etc. The coauthoring bots are tasked with creating and writing articles about specific topics, but they are not very common on Wikipedia.[34]

Even though bots have their own user pages, they do not include information about their interests in topic or history and their education.[35] Thus, they were displayed as unknown actors in the networks above. They do not make many edits, only few to each page, but they are the most central actors within a category-network. They appear in most pages. In figures 35 and 36, we see that the more central editors are bots and, thus, they are displayed as unknown actors

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[27] "Wikipedia:Bots," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Bots. On a history of Wikipedia bots, see "Wikipedia:History of Wikipedia bots," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:History_of_Wikipedia_bots.

[28] Randall Livingstone. "Immaterial Editors: Bots and Bot Policies Across Global Wikipedia," in *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration*, 7.

[29] Ibid., 10.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 12. Jose van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity*, 137.

[32] Livingstone. "Immaterial Editors," 12 and 17. On the bot policy of the English Wikipedia, see "Wikipedia:Bot policy," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Bot_policy.

[33] Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity*, 138.

[34] Ibid., 138-139.

[35] Ibid, 137.

(orange) and not as interested in topic or history (light blue). Only "Tim!," "Illegitimate Barrister," and "Hmains," who are human actors, are displayed as interested in history or/and topic.

In the category, "History of Science and Technology in the United States," the most central editors are "Monkbot," "Citation bot," "ClueBot NG," InternetArchiveBot," "Rjwilmsi," and "RjwilmsiBot." Then, there are "SmackBot," "Cydebot," "Bender the Bot," "Yobot," and "Hmains" (figure 37). The most central editors are bots. Almost the same bots that appear in the category, "History of organizations based in the United States." Only two actors are human, the "Rjwilmsi" and "Hmains." The latter also appeared in the previous category. In figures 38 and 39, we see that the bots are marked as unknown regarding their interest in topic or history and that "Rjwilmsi" and "Hmains" are interested in both history and technology.
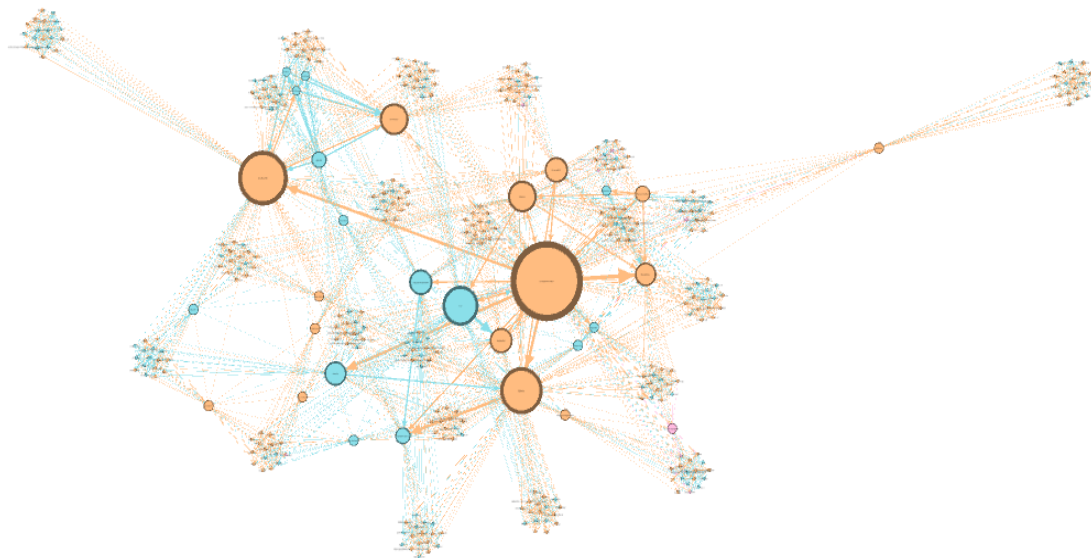
Figure 35 - History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – network centrality
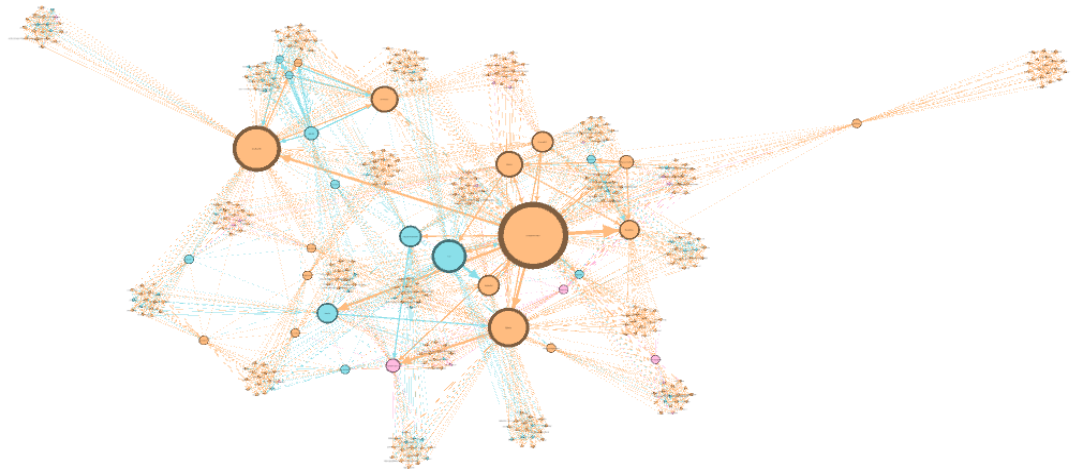
Figure 36 - History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – network centrality
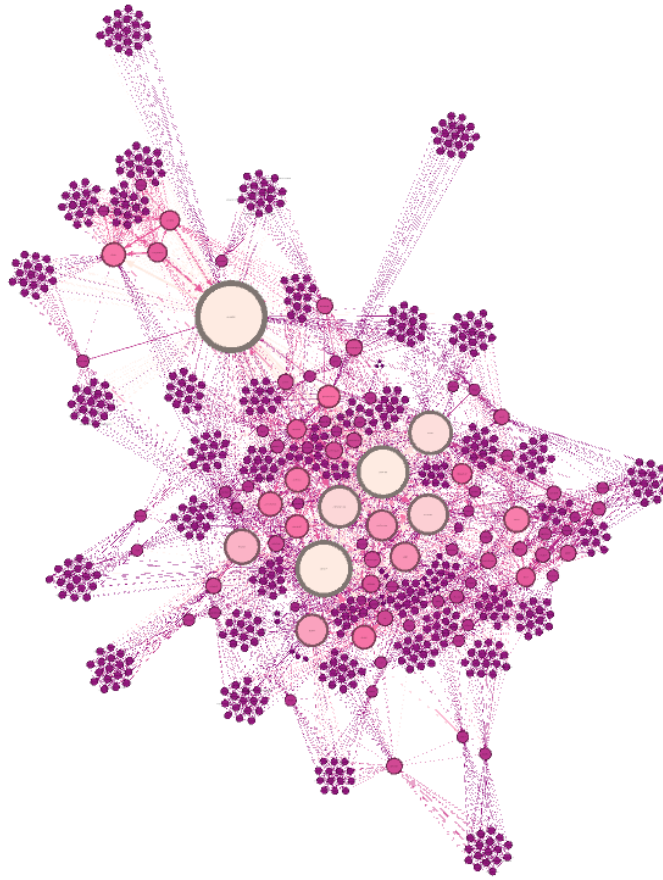
Figure 37 - History of Science and Technology in the United States; color – lighter color means higher number of connections (edges) edits and darker color means less connections; node size – network centrality
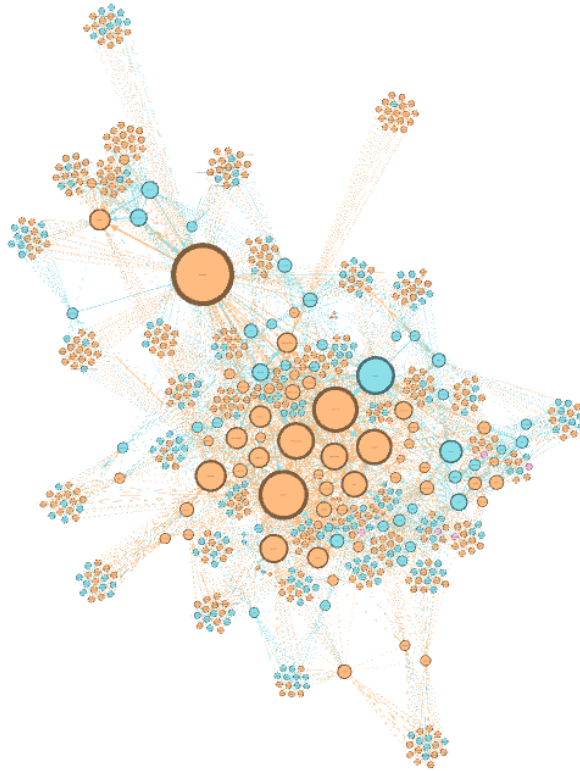
Figure 38 - History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – network centrality
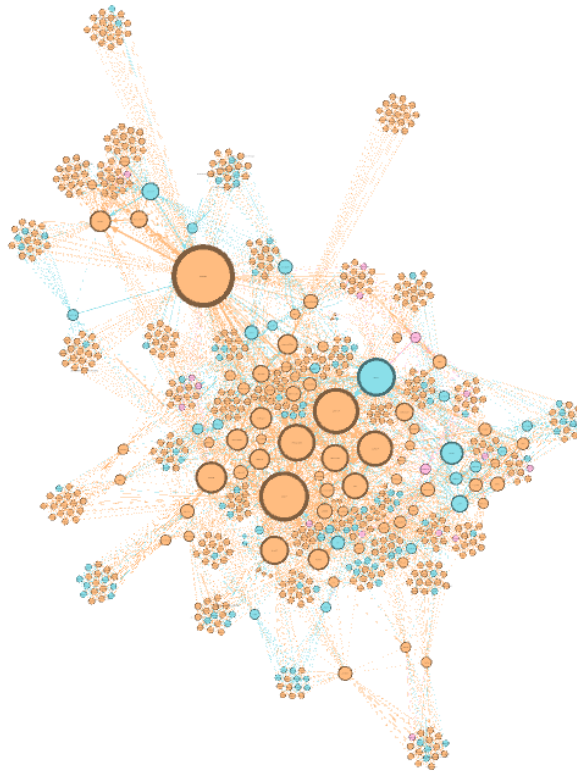
Figure 39 - History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – network centrality

The same results appear in the category, "LGBT history in the United States" (figure 40). The more central actors of the network are the "InternetArchiveBot," "Monkbot," "Bender the bot," "AnomieBOT," "SmackBot," and "Citation bot." "Treker," "GreenC bot," "Varnent," "Wikignome0529," "Bmclaughlin9," and "Bearcat" have slightly fewer connections. Again, most of them are robots. As figures 41 and 42 show, bots are unknown and displayed in orange. The central human-actors of the network are interested either in topic or history. Specifically, "Treker" and Varnent" are interested both in the topic and history, "Bearcat" and "Wikignome0529" are interested only in the topic, while "Bmclaughlin9" does not include adequate information on their profile page. It is interesting that the user "Hmains," who appears in the other two categories-networks, is also a central editor in that network-category.

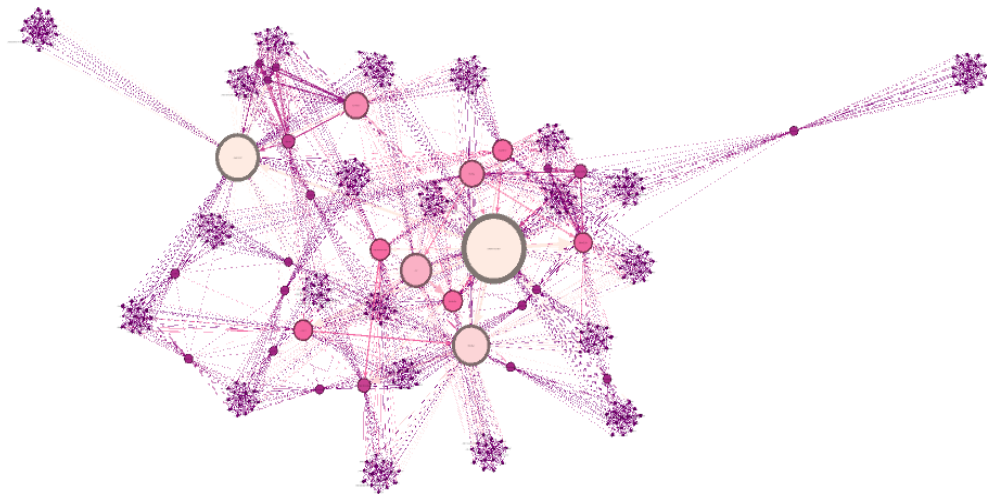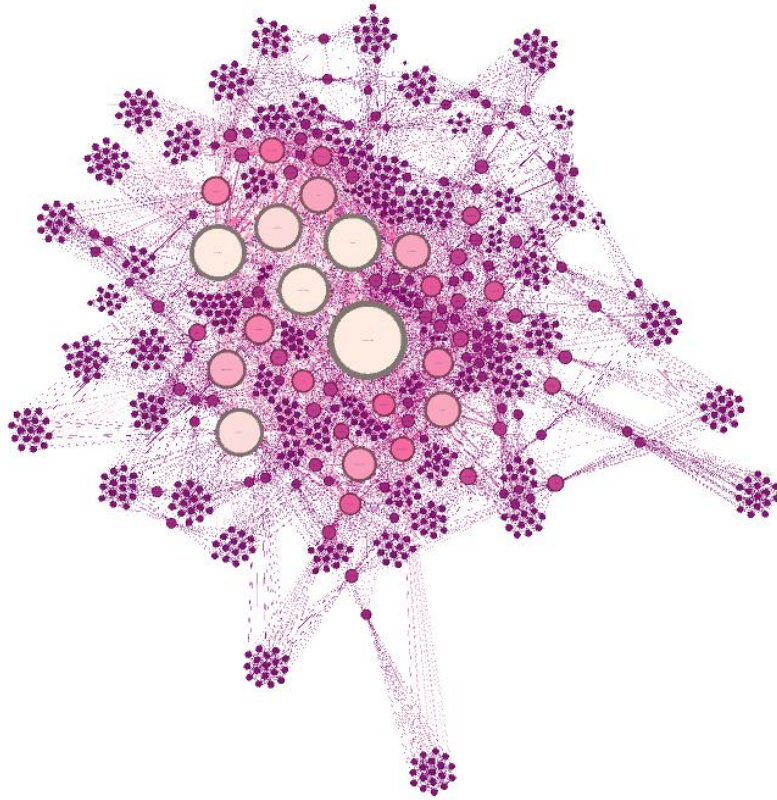Figure 40 - LGBT history in the United States; color – lighter color means higher number of connections (edges) edits and darker color means less connections; node size – network centrality
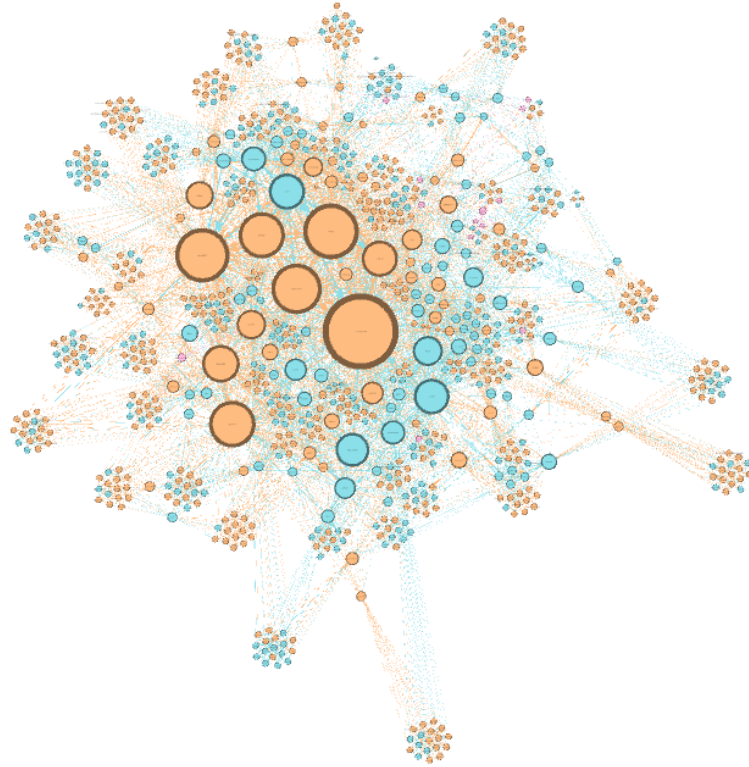
Figure 41 - LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in the topic they edit, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in the topic; node size – network centrality
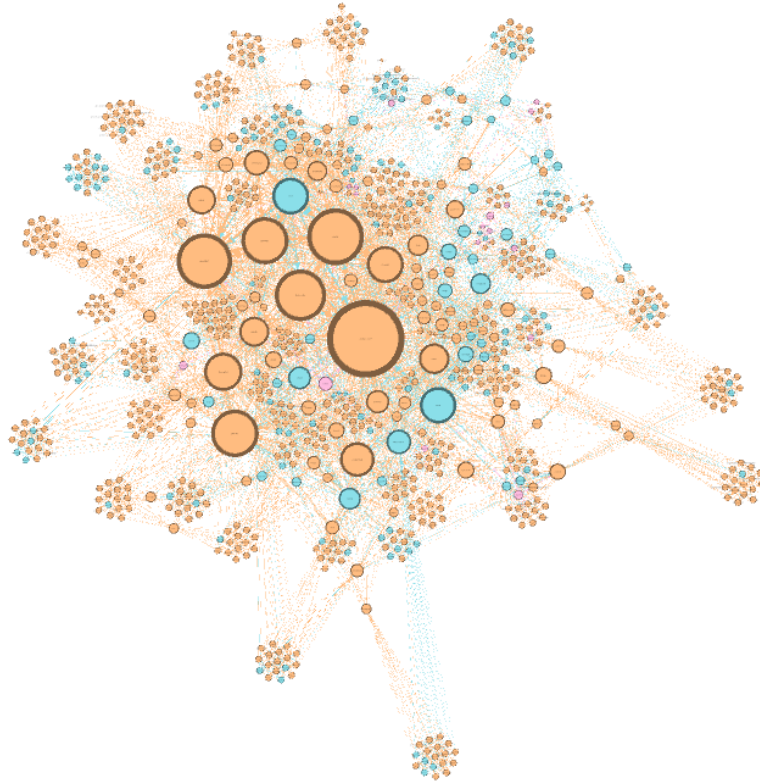
Figure 42 - LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means interested in history, orange color means no available information, and pink means not interested in history; node size – network centrality

By looking at the centrality of the editors within a category, we detect two main points.

First, we cannot understand how Wikipedians produce historical knowledge without the role of robots.[36] The networks shown above make clear that bots are the most central actors in a network, as they have the highest number of connections. As Nathaniel Tkacz has pointed out, Wikipedia cannot be understood without its materiality, which is important for an organization apparatus and includes its serves, software, and code, operating systems, web browsers, computers, devices, screens, keyboards, etc.[37] Bots are one of the most important materials of

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[36] On the role of bots in the social media universe, see Tony Veale and Mike Cook, *Twitterbots. Making Machines that Make Meaning* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: The MIT Press, 2018).

[37] Nathaniel Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness*, 111.

Wikipedia.[38] As shown in the networks above, they constitute the most central agents within a category-network and have connections to multiple pages. They do not include any information about their interests and education, so they cannot be easily classified, but without them the categories-networks cannot even exist. They are not central only within one network-category but appears in all three categories, which are completely different thematically and randomly chosen. This means that those non-human actors do not only have most connections in a network, but they also determine the production of historical knowledge at a great extent. Even if they are not the editors with the highest number of contributions, they appear in all three categories. They make few edits but almost in every page. While editors interested in topic or history make more edits but in fewer pages. Randall Livingstone's argument that bots are not just programs and lines of code but a significant population of influence in a "sociotechnical" network of actors, is more than evident in the networks above.[39]

Second, bots are assigned with multiple editing and administrative tasks that are essential for the production of historical knowledge. Bruno Latour was one of the first scholars in the humanities, who argued that in a network there are human and non-human subjects (machines).[40] For him, the challenge is to investigate how these agents relate to each other and what is their role in a network. In 2008, when Wikipedia became bigger, it also aimed to be more consistent with its articles to check the spelling, grammar, or punctuation of all articles. That was the major reason why Wikipedia started to introduce bots.[41] In all three categories, bots seem to have significant administrative tasks. The "InternetArchiveBot" is one of the most central non-human

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[38] Ibid. For the bots in Wikipedia, also see Randall M. Livingstone, "Population automation: An interview with Wikipedia bot pioneer Ram-Man," *First Monday* 21/1 (2016), https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v21i1.6027.
[39] Livingstone. "Immaterial Editors," 10.
[40] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.
[41] Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia Revolution*, 99.

agents within the three networks. Its role is to identify and replace broken external links and make improvements to references on Wikipedia.[42] It was developed by the user "Cyberpower678" and now is funded by the Internet Archive.[43] The "ClueBot NG" is central in one of the three networks and is an anti-vandal bot, which detect and reverts vandalism quickly and automatically.[44] It is created and maintained by a team of Wikipedia users.[45] "Cydebot," also central in two of the three categories, is the "Cydebot," which is tasked with "moving and deleting categories and updating listified pages of categories."[46] "Monkbot," central in two of the three categories, makes coding edits that are tedious to do manually and is operated by the user "Trappist the monk."[47]

  Another significant bot is the "AnomieBOT," which is devoted to various tasks, such as "removing pages from categories where the pages do not meet the page inclusion criteria," "removing flag icons from infoboxes and layout templates per community consensus," updating crosslinks when content is archives, etc.[48] It uses multiple accounts, such as "AnomieBOTII," "AnomieBOT III," etc. and is operated by the user "Anomie."[49] It is central in two of the three networks. "KolbertBot" is tasked with the conversion of HTTP external links to HTTPS for compatible websites.[50] That conversion helps protect data integrity and user privacy.[51] "KolbertBot" is central in one of the three networks and is run by "Jon Kolbert." GreenC bot" is

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[42] "User:InternetArchiveBot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:InternetArchiveBot, "InternetArchiveBot," *Wikimedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/InternetArchiveBot.
[43] "User:InternetArchiveBot."
[44] "User:ClueBot NG," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:ClueBot_NG.
[45] Ibid.
[46] "User:Cydebot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Cydebot.
[47] "User:Monkbot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Monkbot.
[48] "User:AnomieBOT," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:AnomieBOT.
[49] Ibid.
[50] "User:KolbertBot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:KolbertBot.
[51] Ibid.

central in two of the three categories and is responsible for multiple technical tasks, such as fixing cites, creating reports, adding maintenance tags to pages on-demand, etc.[52] It is operated by the user "GreenC."[53] Another important bot is the "Citation bot," also central in two networks, and is tasked to check Wikipedia's articles references, add digital object identifiers (DOIs) to references, other identifiers (PMIDs, ISBNs), links to open access repositories, and fix formatting errors.[54] It is operated by "Smith609."[55] The "RjwilmsiBot," central in one category, has various tasks, such as tagging redirects, complete fields of news citations, creating redirects, correcting parameter names in citations templates, etc.[56] It is run by the user "Rjwilmsi."[57] Another central bot in two categories is the "SmackBot," which is operated by "Rich Farmbrough" and has various tasks, such as correcting grammar and spelling mistakes, replacing birth dates and death dates in infoboxes, replacing start dates and end dates, etc.[58] There are two more bots, "Bender the Bot" and "Yobot." The former is responsible for the conversion of existing external links on Wikipedia, from an unencrypted to an encrypted transport protocol for privacy, integrity, and authentication reasons.[59] It is operated by "bender235" and is central in two of the three case studies.[60] The latter is central in one network and is operated by the user "Magioladitis."[61] It has multiple purposes but it is mainly focused on the categorization of individuals in categories regarding the year, date, and place of their birth/date, the time period in

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[52] "User:GreenC bot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:GreenC_bot.
[53] Ibid.
[54] "User:Citation bot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Citation_bot.
[55] Ibid.
[56] "User:RjwilmsiBot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:RjwilmsiBot.
[57] Ibid.
[58] "User:Helpful Pixie Bot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Helpful_Pixie_Bot. This link is redirection from the page of "SmackBot."
[59] "User:Bender the Bot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Bender_the_Bot.
[60] Ibid.
[61] "User:Yobot," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Yobot.

which they lived, their profession, etc.[62] Those are just the most central bots of the three networks-categories. There are also other bots, which do not have that many connections in a network but are important for the development of Wikipedia pages.

As the roles of the bots reveal, on Wikipedia there are users, who are interested either in the specific topic they have decided to create/develop or in history as a broader field. Their interest in topic or history encourages them to participate in Wikipedia community, spend time, and contribute to the production of historical knowledge. Those users are mainly the editors with the highest number of contributions. However, the production of historical knowledge does not take place in an empty box. It is not only result of interests and passions for specific topics and fields of knowledge but is also formed in a "sociotechnical" and "technomanagerial" digital environment.[63] The major representatives of that environments are the bots of Wikipedia along with its several policies and guidelines. As Jose van Dijck has put it, bots are "content agents," they actively engage with Wikipedia's contents.[64] The networks above do not only confirm Dijck's point but also make clear how central bots are for the existence of a Wikipedia category-network. The bots have administrative roles, they do not make the highest number of edits that the editors interested in the topic/history make in each page. Instead, they make few administrative contributions but in almost each page of a category. While the editors interested in the topic/history write and develop the article further by adding content to it, bots are tasked with technical aspects, they check grammar and spelling mistakes, revert vandalism, categorize articles, upload images, check references and citations. The engagement of three different types of editors allows Wikipedians to make different types of contributions to the articles. As the

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[62] Ibid.

[63] For the term "sociotechnical," see Livingstone. "Immaterial Editors," 10. For the term "technomanagerial," see Sabine Niederer and José van Dijck, "Wisdom of the Crowd or technicity of the content?" 1369.

[64] Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity*, 139.

Wikipedia user, "Ram-Man," operator of bots, has put it, a bot is "like the miner who produces the raw materials while some other architect/artist/builder turns it into something beautiful."[65] The architect/artists/builders are the editors, who are interested in the topic or in history and make the highest number of edits in a category-network.

However, there is an important characteristic, which is strongly connected to power and hierarchy and is easily detected on Wikipedia, the experience. In other words, the category of editors, who are interested in topic/history, is vague. The understanding of bots' roles is clear. Bots do not have personal information, as they are non-human agents. But what about all those editors interested in topic/history or not? What are the characteristics of those users? Unfortunately, most Wikipedians do not include adequate information about their gender, ethnicity, working position, etc. They fill their profile pages with details that they want to present to the public community of Wikipedia. Nevertheless, there is a common characteristic that most editors include in their profile pages or even if they do not include it, it is easily detected. It is their editing experience within the Wikipedia community. Experience is also a vague term, as it is not defined by Wikipedia. For that reason, I have defined as experienced editors, users with contributions to more than ten different Wikipedia pages. In the figures 43-54, we see how many editors are experienced and inexperienced in the three networks-categories.

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[65] Livingstone, "Population automation."
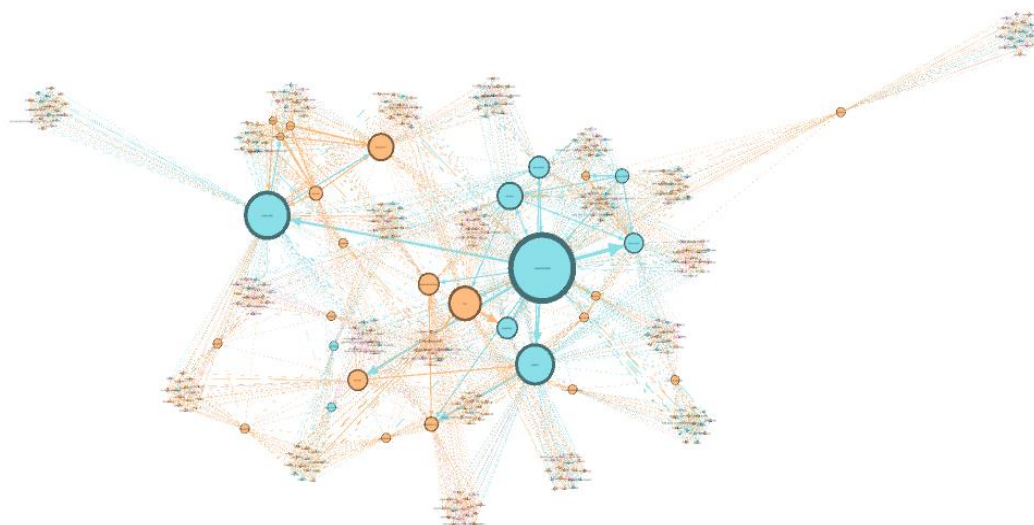
Figure 43 - History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality

In figure 43, we see that almost sixty-two percent of the editors in the category, "History of organization based in the United States," are experienced and are displayed with orange. Twenty-three do not have any information about their experience and are displayed in light blue. Fifteen percent are not experienced editors, namely, they have edited less than ten different Wikipedia pages and are displayed in pink in the network. As figure 43 reveals, most users with unknown information about their experience are bots, as they are the most central editors in the network. Some of them are also blocked, retired, or unregistered users, who do not show the history of their editing activities on their profile pages. Regarding editors, who are experienced, some of them are also central in the network, but mainly, as figure 44 shows, the experienced editors are those with the higher number of edits. The network in figure 44 does not focus on the centrality of nodes, as figure 43 does, but on the number of contributions. The users with a significant number of edits are almost always experienced users.

Those who are inexperienced editors constitute an important number of editors in the network-category. The results are more interesting, if we zoom in the network-pages that exist within the broader network-category. In almost every page-network, there are few inexperienced users, who have made couple of edits (figures 45-47).
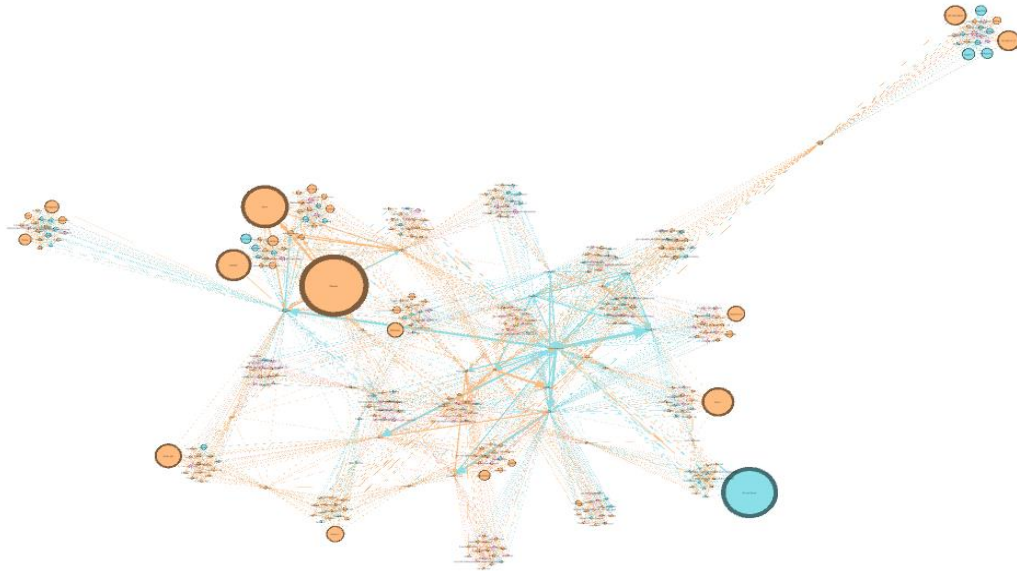
Figure 44 - History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality
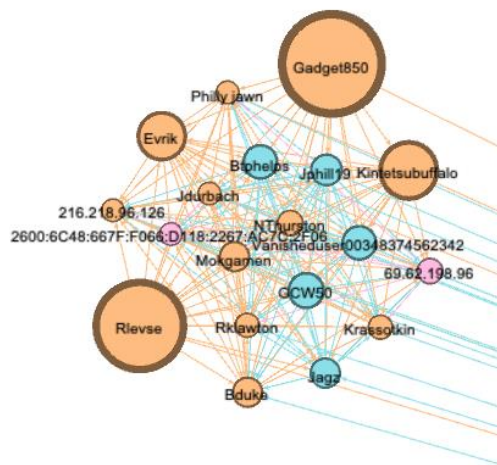
Figure 45 - History of the Boy Scouts of America/ History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality
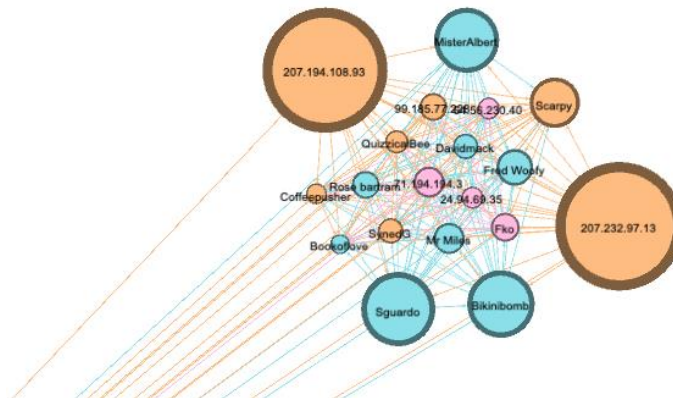
Figure 46 - History of Alcoholics Anonymous/ History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality
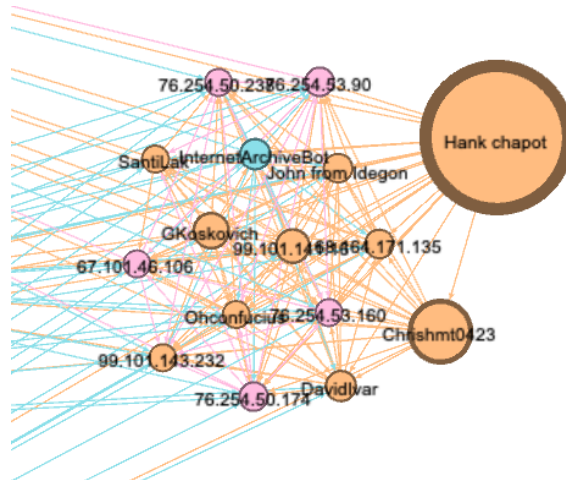
Figure 47 - History of the San Francisco Police Department/ History of organizations based in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality
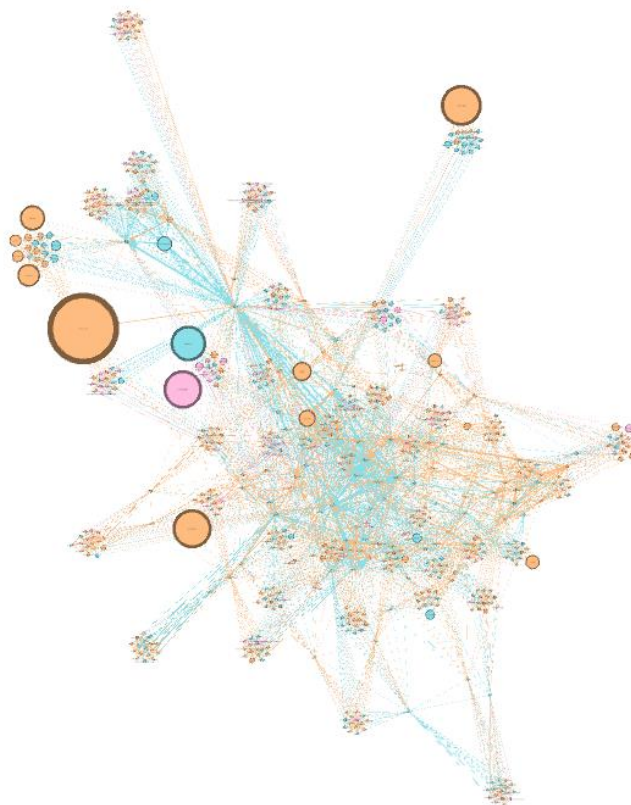
Figure 48 - History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality

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The same results appear in the other two categories. In the category, "History of Science and Technology in the United States," fifty-six percent of editors are experienced, thirty percent are unknown, and fourteen percent are inexperienced (figure 48). Most top editors are experienced and in almost every page there are few inexperienced users, who make few contributions (figures 49-51). The same happens in the "LGBT history in the United States," fifty percent of the involved editors are experienced, thirty-six are unknown, and fourteen percent are inexperienced (figure 52). Also, most top editors are experienced, and few inexperienced editors exist in every network-page (figures 53-54).
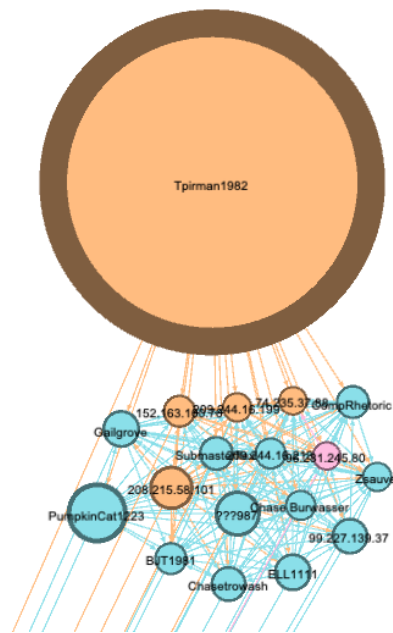
Figure 49 - History of street lighting in the United States/History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality
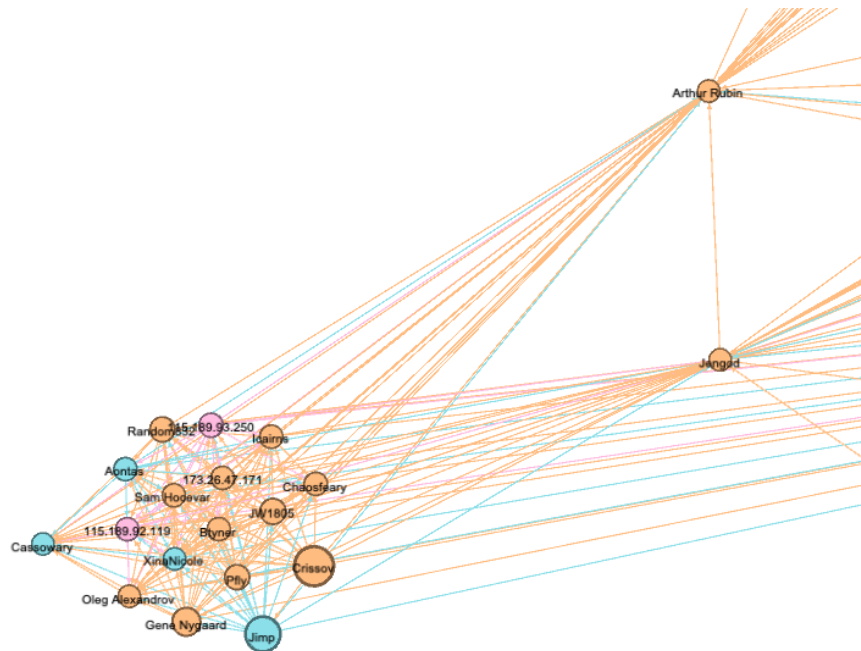
Figure 50 - Plan for Establishing Uniformity in the Coinage, Weights, and Measures of the United States/History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality
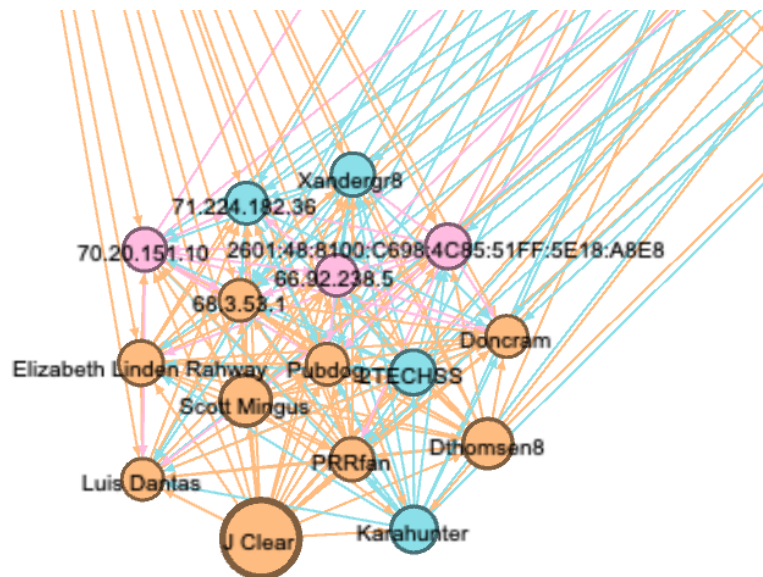
Figure 51 - Phoenix Iron Works (Phoenixville, Pennsylvania)/History of Science and Technology in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality
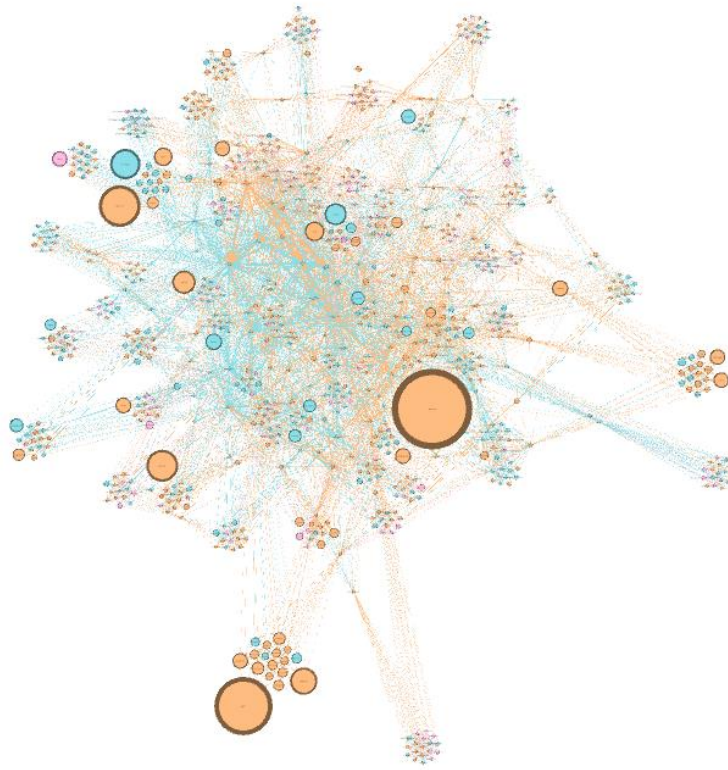
Figure 52 – LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality
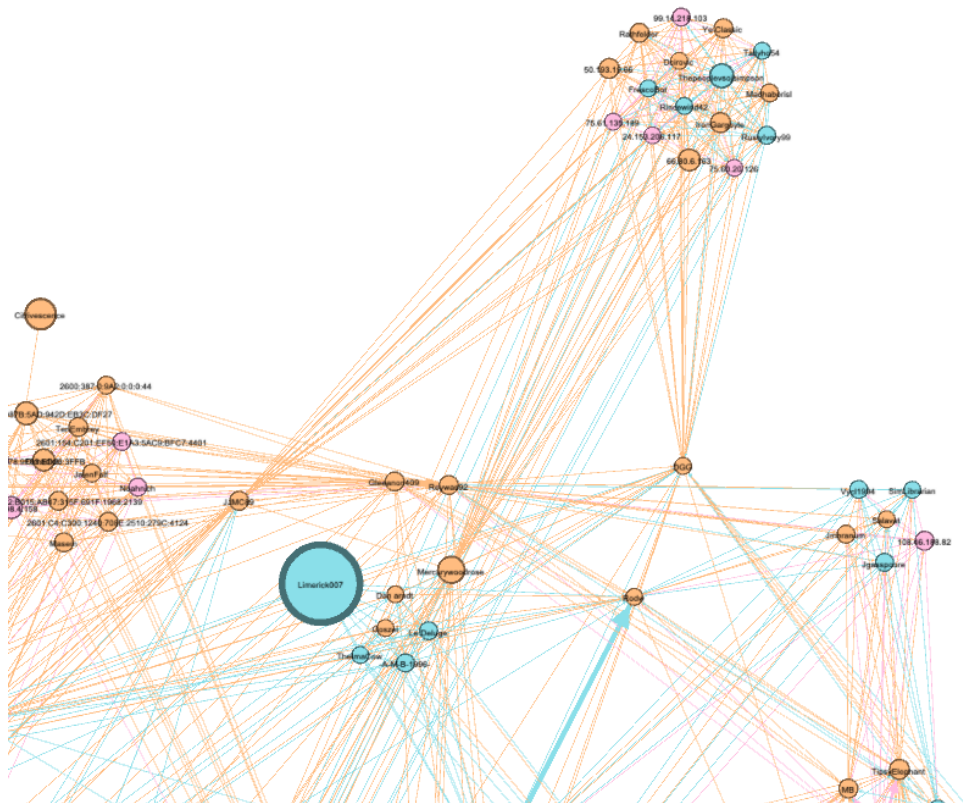
Figure 53 - Multiple pages-networks/LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality
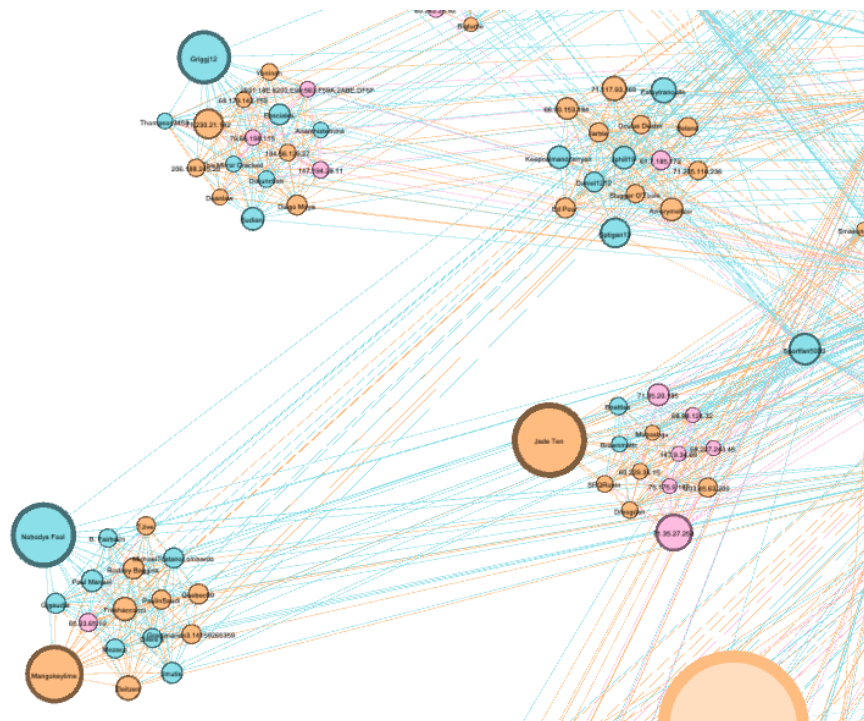
Figure 54 - Multiple pages-networks/LGBT history in the United States; color - light blue means no available information, orange color means experienced editors, and pink means not experienced editors; node size – network centrality

What does this repetitive pattern show about the editors of Wikipedia? It makes clear that there are three kinds of editors on Wikipedia, veterans, robots, and newbies. The former are experienced editors, interested either in the topic they edit or in history as a field of knowledge, and are responsible for making most contributions to Wikipedia. Then, bots, which make few contributions in total but appear in a category-network more frequently than any other actors. Therefore, bots are the most central editors; they have the highest number of connections (edges) in a network. Their role is mostly technical and administrative but crucial for the existence of the network. Lastly, a bunch of editors, who do not have any long editing experience within the Wikipedia community and are motivated by their interest in a topic or history. They make few contributions on every page, and they are not central within the network. They engage with Wikipedia for first time or only to make edits in a specific article or broader thematic topic.

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Those three kinds of editors coexist, collaborate, agree, and disagree, share their thoughts, follow rules and policies, compete each other, and try to seek consensus to produce historical knowledge.

Nevertheless, the networks shown above made also clear that on Wikipedia not all agents have the same centrality or the same number of edits in a category-network. Historical knowledge is not just a product of collaboration and public discussion but result of hierarchy and power. We saw that few human actors appear in multiple pages within a category and even a central editor, the user "Hmains" across three completely different and randomly selected categories. What does it mean for the democratic character of Wikipedia? Few Wikipedians seem to make a high number of contributions to each Wikipedia page, while the rest involved editors make a significantly lower number. At the same time, few editors are central actors in the categories-networks, as they appear more frequently in the network by edit multiple pages of a category. Those two types of editors seem to control most part of historical knowledge production on Wikipedia.

The fact that the same patterns appear across three completely different categories-networks related to history confirms the idea that we cannot understand Wikipedia without its technological "materiality" or "digitality."[66] Wikipedia is not only an encyclopedic community of people but also "sociotechnical system" that allows specific engagements with historical knowledge.[67] As Bruno Latour has argued it is not only the social aspects but also the technologies that redefine people's actions.[68] Wikipedia's "sociotechnical system" encourages a

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[66] For the term "materiality" and how it is connected to Wikipedia, see, Nathaniel Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness*, 111. For the term "digitality," see Niels Brügger, *The Archived Web: Doing History in the Digital Age*. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018), 5.
[67] Livingstone. "Immaterial Editors," 10.
[68] Latour, Reassembling the Social.

bunch of new editors to write about history for the first time and at the same time, it creates bots to keep Wikipedia articles under a specific form and quality. That system allows few editors to dominate the networks-categories by performing a high number of contributions or appearing more frequently in the networks and thus having the most connections. Those human and non-human editors determine the production of historical knowledge to a significant extent. Therefore, on the one hand, Wikipedia offers a public space where users are able to present themselves as they want, identify, and develop their interests, and become experts in the historical areas, in which they are interested.[69] On the other hand, Wikipedia is a "sociotechnical" system of power and hierarchy, which determines the production of historical knowledge. In that system, all Wikipedians, experienced or inexperienced, can write about history, but they do not have the same power to make their contributions part of the main entry, as the most central editors have.

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[69] On the expertise of Wikipedians and related problems that have occurred, see Dariusz Jemelniak, *Common Knowledge?*, 105-115.

Chapter 5: From Consumers to Producers of History: Wikipedia Editors on their Engagement with the Production of Historical Knowledge

All the Wikipedia pages analyzed in the previous chapters are results of Wikipedia users' engagement with history. The examination of that engagement depends on the lenses that we focus on it. The application of quantitative or qualitative approaches led to multiple results and different arguments in the previous sections. However, it would be impossible to understand how historical knowledge is produced on Wikipedia without asking its main protagonists, Wikipedia editors. In this chapter, I investigate the experience of Wikipedians, who create and edit historical pages on Wikipedia. As the previous chapters focused on the comments of Wikipedia editors in the "talk pages" of Wikipedia articles or their data on their profile pages, the research of this section is based on an online survey. The chapter aims to ask the editors themselves how and why they get involved in the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia.

Specifically, the chapter provides an overview of Wikipedia users' engagement with history, their editing experiences, the reasons why they edit, their historical interests, their criteria to edit or create a historical page, their personal relation with the historical topics they edit, their educational background, their collaboration with other editors, and their activity within the -history related - WikiProjects. The results of the survey and the stories that participants shared in their answers reveal four main arguments about Wikipedia editors' engagement with historical knowledge. First, Wikipedia users do not perceive editing or writing about history on Wikipedia just as an activity to collect and disseminate historical knowledge. Instead, they see their editing activity more dynamically, as an enjoyable and pleasurable practice that allows them to explore the past and in turn to provide a better history to the public by writing, reading,

and researching historical topics they are passionate about. Second, Wikipedia users choose to edit or create historical pages related to topics, which they are interested in and curious to explore further. Their predetermined knowledge about a subject does not determine what historical topics they will edit or create. Instead, factors such as the significance of a historical topic, the existing errors in an article, the availability of sources, and the lack of information in the contents of the article seem to define their editing choices to an important extent. Third, most Wikipedians have a personal relation to the past they decide to investigate further. The past has an intimate meaning in their lives and encourages them to transform it into history. Fourth, for most editors, the production of historical knowledge is the result of collaborative work, but that collaboration is not only limited to the space of WikiProjects; it also includes the space of the articles they edit and the related "talk pages."

In the historiography of public history, there is a tendency to view the public as a consumer of historical information or as a passive receptor of historical changes that take place. This perception of the public has underestimated the active agency of the public in the construction of history. At the same time, the historiography of Wikipedia itself has ignored the role of Wikipedians in the process of historical knowledge production to an important extent and has mainly focused on the results of that process, Wikipedia's contents. This chapter shifts its focus from the consumers to the producers of history, and in this case study, the Wikipedia editors, who constantly create and update Wikipedia's articles, and have transformed Wikipedia into a public and digital source of knowledge. By studying the stories of Wikipedians, this chapter examines how and why Wikipedia editors contribute to the production of historical knowledge.

Design and methodology of survey

Like Wikipedia itself methodology for this survey was participatory and collaborative. Multiple steps have been followed both in the design of the survey and the recruitment of participants. The initial plan was to recruit Wikipedia editors, who were members of the WikiProject United States History.[1] The WikiProject United States History has 92 active participants and 23 inactive participants.[2] As Wikipedia clarifies, WikiProjects are groups of people, who collaborate to improve Wikipedia by focusing on a specific thematic topic area, task, or part of the encyclopedia.[3] The WikiProject United States History is dedicated to improving the coverage of topics on United States history.[4] The idea was to focus on editors of Wikipedia pages related to the history of the United States, as the topics that have been covered in the previous chapters, the Great Depression, Vietnam War, Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and September 11 attacks, are associated with the history of the United States. Also, the plan was to follow the structure and logic of Wikipedia in how I will recruit participants for the survey, and the WikiProjects constituted concrete communities of editors interested in specific historical topics and thematic areas.

The survey included the following open-ended questions: 1. How long have you been an editor on Wikipedia? 2. Why do you write about history on Wikipedia? 3. What are your historical interests in Wikipedia? 4. What are the criteria you choose to create/edit a specific historical page on Wikipedia? 5. Do you have any personal relation/identification with the topics that you choose to edit? 6. Do you have any educational background in history or other related

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[1] "Wikipedia:WikiProject United States History," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_United_States_History.
[2] Ibid.
[3] "Wikipedia:WikiProject," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject.
[4] "Wikipedia:WikiProject United States History."

fields? 7. How does your participation in the WikiProject work? How do you collaborate with other Wikipedians and members of the WikiProject? Because of the IRB restrictions, the survey was limited only to participants, who reside in the United States and are 18 years of age or older.

Regarding the process of recruitment, I created a Wikipedia account and started to share the survey link by posting it as a message to the "talk pages" of the WikiProject's members and to the "talk page" of the WikiProject itself. In the next two weeks, few users responded to the survey, almost 20 participants out of the 92 active members. At the same time, some users communicated with me and informed me that the WikiProject United States History is not that active and suggested me to look for most active WikiProjects related to history, such as the WikiProject Military History and the WikiProject Women in Red. The WikiProject Military History covers topics related to military history, while the WikiProject Women in Red covers topics on women's biographies, issues, and works. [5]

As the response rate continued to remain low and I realized that there were more active WikiProjects, which also covered themes related to United States History, I decided to change the target group of recruitment and to recruit members of the WikiProject Military History and WikiProject Women in Red. In the next two weeks, almost 80 Wikipedia editors from the WikiProject Military History and WikiProject Women in Red took the survey and answered all the questions. In total, 100 editors responded to the survey since I sent the first messages to the members of the WikiProject United States History.

Reagrding the limitations of this study, to take the survey the participate should reside in the United States and should not be older than 65 years old. The recruitment limitation to only

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[5] See "Wikipedia:WikiProject Military history," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Military_history, "Wikipedia:WikiProject Women in Red," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Women_in_Red.

US-citizens was result of the IRB review process that the survey went through. Even if, according to Wikipedia, most editors (twenty percent) reside in the United States, there are many editors from Europe, Asia, Russia, Latin America, etc.[6] However, the inclusion of on-US citizens would make the research process for that chapter far more complicated, as it would require the approval of multiple agencies, which are responsible for the protection of human subjects in different locations.

Experience, education, and historical interests of Wikipedia editors

Before we go any further and explore why and how Wikipedia editors engage with the production of historical knowledge, it is necessary to look at the demographics of respondents, as they reveal significant information on the profiles of the respondents and their relation to Wikipedia. More specifically two of the questions I asked the participants how long they actively write on Wikipedia, if they have an educational background in history or any other related fields, and what are their historical interests on Wikipedia. These three questions help us better understand the respondents of the survey and reveal useful information about the editing experience of Wikipedians and their relation to history as a research subject. Table 1 illustrates that 44 users have been editing Wikipedia for 8-15 years, 21 users for 4-7 years, 18 users for more than 16 years, and 16 users from a few months to 3 years. Taking into account that Wikipedia was created in 2001, table 1 makes clear that most participants of the survey are experienced editors. Almost 62 users out of the 99 respondents have been engaging with the production of knowledge on Wikipedia for more than eight years.

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[6] Regarding the demographics of Wikipedia users, see "Wikipedia:Wikipedians/Demographics," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedians/Demographics.

Another question that was asked to the respondents of the survey was if they have any educational background in history or any other related fields. As table 2 shows, from the 99 participants, 40 Wikipedians responded that they do have a degree in History, undergraduate and graduate degree, or at least they have a minor in it. 38 editors have not studied History at any educational level and 21 have studied a related field, which belongs to the humanities or social sciences, such as Political Science, Literature, Sociology, Anthropology, etc. At first glance, it seems unexpected that the largest amount of the respondents has studied History academically. One potential explanation for that result is that those who had studied History, were more aware of how historical research takes place, and thus they took the survey. Another explanation can be that a significant number of editors who are also members of WikiProjects related to history have an educational background in History. However, if we sum the two other categories, those who haven't studied history and those who have studied a related field, are 59 editors. Almost 60% of the respondents do not have any education in History, but they are interested in history and are devoted to the coverage of historical topics on Wikipedia.

Another important characteristic of the respondents is that they have multiple historical interests, in different historical topics, areas, chronological periods, and geographies. This is a significant difference with the historical production in academia, where historians are specialized in a specific chronological period and geographical area. Also, academic historians have studied history professionally and they are not used to collaborate with people, who have not studied history or any other related field, to produce historical scholarship. As table 3.1 and 3.2 report, Wikipedia editors have a great variety of historical topics and themes. Apparently, most editors are interested in US History, Military History, and Women's History, as those areas correspond to the WikiProjects, in which most respondents participate. However, their historical interests are

not only limited to those three categories but also include multiple thematic areas, ranging from political history, local history, Art history to Japanese history, African American history, and Sports history. These categories appeared in the participants' responses and showed how Wikipedians expressed their historical interests and tried to classify them into broader thematic areas.

Based on the four tables, we can conclude that most participants of the survey edit articles on Wikipedia between 8 and 15 years, have not studied History academically, and are mostly interested in US History, Military History, and Women's History as a result of the WikiProjects, in which they are involved. It does not seem that there is any connection between their education and the historical interests they pursue on Wikipedia. Their responses about their interests revealed a great variety of historical topics and themes, while their responses about their education showed that most editors haven't studied History at an undergraduate or graduate level.

Table 1
How long have you been an editor on Wikipedia?

1. 0-3 years – 16 users
2. 4-7 years – 21 users
3. 8-15 years – 44 users
4. 16 + years – 18 users

Table 2
Do you have any educational background in History or any other related fields?

1. Yes – 40 users
2. No – 38 users
3. Related field – 21 users

Table 3.1
What are your historical interests on Wikipedia?

1. US History – 27 users
2. Military History – 20 users
3. Women's History – 13 users
4. Political History – 9 users
5. Biographies – 8 users
6. World War II – 7 users
7. Ancient History – 6 users
8. Social History – 6 users
9. Local History – 5 users
10. Art History – 4 users
11. British History – 4 users
12. Early Modern History – 4 users
13. European History – 4 users
14. History of Religion – 4 users
15. History of the Middle East – 4 users
16. Japanese History – 4 users
17. Medieval History – 4 users
18. World War I – 4 users
19. African History – 3 users
20. Archaeology – 3 users
21. Asian History – 3 users
22. Chinese History – 3 users
23. German History – 3 users
24. Native American History – 3 users
25. Sports History – 3 users
26. African American History – 2 users
27. Cultural History – 2 users
28. Diplomatic History – 2 users
29. History of Communism – 2 users
30. History of Natural Disasters – 2 users
31. History of Science – 2 users
32. History of the Balkans – 2 users
33. History of the Byzantine Empire – 2 users
34. Islamic History – 2 users
35. Islamic History – 2 users
36. Labor History – 2 users
37. Romanian History – 2 users
38. Caribbean History – 1 user
39. Economic History – 1 user
40. Ethiopian History – 1 user
41. French History – 1 user
42. Geological History – 1 user

Table 3.2
What are your historical interests on Wikipedia?

43. History of Animals – 1 user
44. History of Crimes – 1 user
45. History of Explorations – 1 user
46. History of Literature – 1 user
47. History of Migration – 1 user
48. History of spaceflight – 1 user
49. History of the American Left – 1 user
50. History of the Mongol Empire – 1 user
51. History of the Ottoman Empire – 1user
52. History of Uniforms – 1 user
53. Indian History – 1 user
54. Korean History – 1 user
55. Legal History – 1 user
56. Music History – 1 user
57. Naval History – 1 user
58. Nicaraguan History – 1 user
59. Rural History – 1 user
60. Russian History – 1 user
61. Urban History – 1 user
62. Vietnam War – 1 user

Reasons for writing about History on Wikipedia

An obvious but - unfortunately - neglected question about Wikipedia editors' involvement with the production of historical knowledge is why they spend their time and write about history on Wikipedia. To have a better sense of how historical knowledge is produced on Wikipedia, we should understand the reasons why Wikipedians decide to write about history.

To the question about why you write about history on Wikipedia, the largest number of respondents answered that they enjoy reading, writing, and doing research about history. That response appeared in 58 comments of Wikipedians. "I love learning, research and writing, and WP gives me the opportunity to do all three," a Wikipedia user mentioned. The user continued:

"When I was in college and would get an assignment to do a research paper, I would go to the library and start that very day. Plus, I'm good at it." Another participant wrote: "I enjoy it, I like to get good history out there." "I enjoy writing non-fiction and doing research. Wikipeadia (sic) has been a productive outlet for those hobbies which seems like it benefits others. I also like the idea that my work sees the light of day," a Wikipedia user interested in biographies added. Engaging with history on Wikipedia appears an enjoyable activity that allows editors to read, write, and conduct research about history. It allows them to unfold their historical interests and investigate more historical topics and themes. As a Wikipedian explained: "Because I like to read about history. I like researching historical topics and sharing historical information that is not available on Wikipedia." Following the same line of thinking, two other editors argued: "I write about history on Wikipedia as I enjoy it," "I enjoy studying and writing about history in my spare time," two other editors pointed out. The largest number of the respondents engage with history because they enjoy multiple aspects of historical knowledge production, such as writing, editing, and researching historical topics. As an editor greatly put it: "I find it enjoyable to research long-forgotten settlements, and (sic) bring them back to life."

The practice of editing and creating historical pages on Wikipedia seems also an entertaining and pleasurable activity. "From a young age I have enjoyed history very much. When other kids were outside playing, or inside playing video games, I was reading, consuming historical knowledge before I was even in middle school. I am not sure why it is so pleasureable (sic) and entertaining to learn about and discuss history, but nevertheless my interest in history is very high. This is why I both contribute to and read history on Wikipedia," wrote a Wikipedia editor. "It's fun, i (sic) learn things, and I help others learn," mentioned another user. "Its (sic) one of my favorite subjects. I love to learn how people in the past were very much like us,"

argued another Wikipedia user. Their involvement in the production of historical knowledge appears a fun activity, a hobby with which Wikipedians love to engage. "I've been personally interested in history since middle school. Wikipedia editing about history is thus an extension of my hobby...," a Wikipedia editor explained. Editing or creating historical articles on Wikipedia constitutes a manifestation of the passion that many Wikipedians have for history. "I'm drawn to editing topics I'm interested in, and history has long been a passion of mine," wrote a Wikipedia user. Wikipedia provides a public space, where users can pursue their passions and engage with what they love. That appears in many responses. Many participants used terms, such as "love," hobby," "fun," "entertaining," passion," "enjoy." As an editor described their engagement with history: "I have no means by which to publish a book easily and with Wikipedia I can use my love of history […],". "History is a subject I love to study, and it is an opportunity to make the knowledge more widely available to people," wrote another editor.

Wikipedia users write about history on Wikipedia not only because it is a fun and pleasurable activity that they love to do, but also because they want to provide better history on Wikipedia. That reason appeared in 37 comments and constituted the second most frequent factor to take part in the production of history on Wikipedia. For many users, history on Wikipedia needs corrections and updates, and, therefore, they engage with historical articles to provide better historical knowledge about the past to the public. Many users expressed the need to correct the past, expand, and represent it in a better way. As an editor mentioned: "Sometimes I see history that is either so sparse or so bad I feel a compelling need to either expand it or correct it." "I feel strongly that people should have free access to accurate and properly sourced information," another user reported. As professional historians do, Wikipedia editors participate in the production of historical knowledge to fill in gaps that exist in their areas of specialization.

They detect inaccuracies and misrepresentations of information, and they decide to edit historical articles or create new ones. "I started because I found some wild inaccuracies in my area of specialization (US Air Force and predecessors) unit histories. I continued primarily because of the incompleteness of articles in this area," clarified a Wikipedia user. "I started off just casually cleaning up incorrect or poorly substantiated material on Wikipedia that irked me and gradually became a regular contributor," explained a Wikipedia editor. "I started by writing about things that were not in Wikipedia or were not well covered. I continue to fill in blanks and improve references," another user added. One of the most interesting answers came from an editor, who wrote: "I believe that a complete and accurate understanding of history is essential to being a good citizen." For the user, providing a better history on Wikipedia and having access to it is essential for someone to be a good citizen. In many responses, good knowledge of history does not only mean a good understanding of the past but also a better awareness of the present. Wikipedians feel obliged to produce an accurate, complete, based on reliable sources of historical knowledge.

However, providing better history does not only signify that the historical knowledge will be more accurate, but also that it will offer a more balanced historical narrative about the past. In other words, for many Wikipedians better history means non-biased historical articles. As a Wikipedia editor wrote about their engagement with historical writing on Wikipedia, "I specifically work to reduce systematic biases and increase Wikipedia's coverage of historically marginalized groups." "(I write) to redress the imbalance of writing on women's history," another editor added. Those editors see their participation in Wikipedia as a practice to redress the bias about women's history, indigenous people's history, the history of social minorities, the history of the non-western world, and other neglected historical topics. As an editor responded,

"(I write on Wikipedia) to reduce the load of BS, usually political, but sometimes based on gender, ethnicity, etc." Another editor described: "I want to encourage more understanding of topics often dismissed or overlooked, like Indigenous history, women's history, the history of defunct institutions, rural society, etc." Another editor, who writes about Japanese history on Wikipedia, pointed out: "I felt I was helping contribute to combatting Eurocentrism and so forth." The problems that characterize Wikipedia articles, such as bias, gender imbalance, Eurocentrism, etc. do not make users leave the project. Instead, they motivate them to remain active and provide a better history of the past. As a user put it: "The history of my region is poorly represented, and largely written from the perspective of the coloniser (sic), not the people whose history it is. So it's important for me to make this better, in some small way."

The third reason why Wikipedia editors decide to write about history on Wikipedia is to make history more accessible to the public. It is not only important to produce accurate historical knowledge about the past but also to share it with the public. Wikipedia provides that opportunity, as it is a digital public space, to which anyone can have access. By considering the value of that opportunity, Wikipedians engage with history to both produce and disseminate knowledge to a broader audience. That reason appeared in 21 comments. "To pass on what I know," wrote an editor of Wikipedia. "I write about history to make the knowledge I receive as a graduate student accessible to as many people as possible (for free, online). I believe that this is an important step in making formerly "gatekept" knowledge more freely accessible," another editor added. "I feel like I should share the knowledge I have, and in turn help others find the information they are looking for," "In order to inform a wider audience about interesting, often obscure, details and events," explained two editors. The significance of making history accessible to the public is obvious in many comments. Editors see Wikipedia as a digital space

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where they can place their histories and disseminate them to the public. As an editor put it: "I want to be a part of something greater than myself." "Once something is on Wikipedia, it is also much easier to find (than, say, in an old book or newspaper article), so I'll also write with the hope it makes historical information more accessible to others," another user added. Wikipedians are aware that the historical knowledge they will produce will be stored in a digital and public encyclopedia, which is daily visited by millions of users. Therefore, they will make "[…] the historical record available for public consumption."

Preventing history from getting lost or being forgotten constitutes the fourth reason why Wikipedians participate in the production of history. For 13 respondents, history on Wikipedia cannot be easily get lost, as it is placed in a digital space that the public can constantly visit. For that reason, Wikipedians seem to feel obliged to produce historical knowledge and store it on Wikipedia, as they want to prevent the past from falling into oblivion. As an editor argued: "I am a skilled, experienced, retired writer and I want to add new historical entries to Wikipedia, specifically about women who made a difference in their time but are in danger of having their stories lost if they are not added to Wiki." Writing about history on Wikipedia signifies a way to honor the memory of people who died in the past and their stories should not be lost, especially those who belong to social minorities and communities underrepresented on Wikipedia, such as women, black people, indigenous people, labor workers, immigrants, etc. "I feel that often people forget where we come from if the information isn't easy to access. I try to also write about BIPOC history since that history isn't as recorded/in our collective concious (sic)," an editor added. "It's a way of paying back the working-class people of Britain who paid for my education," another editor argued.

For many Wikipedia users, the production of history on Wikipedia plays an important role in what people will learn from history and remember about the past. Wikipedia "helps us remember people and events that deserve to be documented," an editor noticed. "I feel like every ship did it's bit for country (sic) and deserves to not be forgotten, no matter how insignificant it may seem," argued another editor. Wikipedia works as a space where users can contribute to the preservation and remembrance of the past. In that way, the public will learn about the past and will not repeat the mistakes of the past in the future. As a Wikipedia editor pointed out: "I would like to report that it is from some high ideals in the service of humanity, perhaps from Santayana's idea that 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it'…" Many editors expressed the need to write about histories that should not get lost or be forgotten. The online encyclopedia offers them the opportunity to collect and disseminate the histories of the past, so they will not "get lost to eternity," as a user mentioned.

Writing about history on Wikipedia does not only mean shedding light on distanced events of the past but also investigating historical topics and themes strongly connected to the lives of Wikipedia editors. That reason appeared in 6 comments. Some editors see Wikipedia as a chance to explore their family history and learn more about their intimate pasts. "I am interest (sic) in an ancestor, Lord Alfred Milner," argued a Wikipedian. Another editor described their engagement with historical writing on Wikipedia as: "I found it a useful means to apply knowledge (sic) I had gained in the course of researching family history, and then to continue learning and extend my curiosity and knowledge to new areas." It is not only the history of their families but also the broader historical events in which their families have been involved. "My father was a World War II combat vet. I became interested in history at a young age, especially World War II. I started reading about the war; causes and courses," explained another editor.

Their personal experiences of the past lead some Wikipedians to investigate the past further and transform their experiences and memories into historical knowledge. "I used to fly combat in an airplane with about the same performance as World War I aircraft. This led me to write about WWI aces, as well as the so-called Laotian Civil War," an editor user illustrated.

The responses of Wikipedia users illuminate that for most Wikipedians writing about history on Wikipedia constitutes an enjoyable and pleasurable activity, which includes the practices of reading, writing, doing research, and learning about history. This means that Wikipedia allows users to find their research interests, read and write about topics they enjoy and love to learn about. In addition to that, many Wikipedians see writing about history as an activity to provide more complete, less biased, and accurate historical knowledge to the public. They do not only want to write about the past but to provide a more inclusive historical narrative about the past. They perceive their engagement with history as a way to better educate all the visitors of the encyclopedia and therefore prevent multiple historical stories from getting lost or being forgotten.

Table 4
Why do you write about history on Wikipedia?

1. Enjoy reading, writing, and researching history – 58 comments
2. Provide better history on Wikipedia – 37 comments
3. Make history more accessible to the public – 21 comments
4. Prevent history from getting lost or being forgotten – 13 comments
5. Conduct research on their personal and family history – 6 comments

Criteria of Wikipedians to create or edit a historical article

In the section above, I investigated the reasons why Wikipedia editors write about history on Wikipedia. This question focused on the broader engagement of Wikipedia users with history on Wikipedia and did not shed light on the criteria Wikipedia editors have when they choose to

edit or create specific historical pages. This section explores the criteria of Wikipedians when they decide to approach a historical topic on Wikipedia, how and why they choose a historical theme from other areas.

The most common criterion (39 comments) appeared their personal interest in the topic they edit or create. In most responses, Wikipedians argued that they choose a topic based on whether they have an interest in it. In many comments, personal interest seems a broader and umbrella term that determines the first encounter of Wikipedians with the themes they want to investigate more. "Generally something I have an interest in," wrote an editor. "I am usually working on one article (sic) and I will read something in my research that I am I want to (sic) learn more about. I will look to see if there is a Wikipedia article, and if not, I will put that subject on a list. I also read books and get ideas," explained an editor. "Anything that interests me," "They are interesting to me," "It is of interest to me. I wish to read about it," "If they are about a topic I am interested in […]," "The only criteria I have is that it grabs my interest," "I find the topic interesting enough to sink time into it," are some of the most frequent responses. That criterion characterizes most editors' decisions on what to examine and study on Wikipedia. However, personal interest is a vague term and does not reveal a lot of information on Wikipedia editors' editing choices.

The significance and notability of the topic is the second most frequent criterion. It appeared in 26 comments. For many editors, the topic they will cover should be important. As some editors mentioned in their responses, to start writing about the topic they consider: "Is this topic "noteworthy"?", "Does it meet notability guidelines," "[…] if the subject of the article meets the general notablility (sic) guidelines," "Does it have broader importance: for example, is the event or person a "model" for some other place or person?", "Notability is always

considered." "I choose to write articles on topics that do not currently have an article, and are topics that I feel are significant or particularly notable," an editor pointed out. The criterion of notability complies with the notability policy of Wikipedia, which means that editors should create a new article about a topic that is significant.[7]

The third most frequent criterion to edit or create a page is to correct existing errors and misinformation that exist in a Wikipedia article. That criterion appeared in 24 responses. For example, an editor, interested in military history, argued that they start editing an article, "if it needs more information," or "if it needs better sources or a piece of information needs to be backed up by a source." Many editors take advantage of Wikipedia's feature to allow the constant revision of its contents. In that way, they become engaged with the production of historical knowledge by trying to improve the contents of Wikipedia articles. Similar answers were also given by other participants. "I chose to devote time to two pages of women who wrote Latin […] because their pages were either very incomplete or missing some info that I could fill in based on my area of expertise (Latin/classical languages)," added an editor interested in women's history. "If the page looks sparse and needs some help or doesn't exist. Sometimes there will be a lot of unsourced information that I notice that I feel needs a lot of help and always use my own words and/or quoted material with inline references in order to improve the article," described another user. All these users approach a historical article because they want to improve its contents about history, develop its historical narrative further, add more and better sources. However, they are not only limited to the inclusion of more information. They are also devoted to technical tasks, such as the correction of spelling and grammar mistakes. As an editor explained: "I usually rewrite existing articles that are badly out of date, have a recognizable bias,

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[7] For more information on the policy of notability, see: "Wikipedia:Notability," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability.

contain error, are under or badly referenced, contain original research, that kind of thing. […] I'm a remodeler, not a builder. If an article is in bad shape, I'm there." "I leave the major revisions to those with the time to do that. I only rarely make any large edits anymore. Mostly its (sic) fixing typos, misspellings, clumsy grammar, and the like," wrote a Wikipedia user.

Wikipedia editors can edit or create a historical page if they do have adequate sources to support their historical arguments. The availability of sources was the fourth criterion and appeared in 22 comments. "Availability of high-quality sources (good newspaper articles or peer-reviewed journals) that strike my personal interest," argued an editor about their criteria to edit a historical article. A similar response was given by an editor interested in women's history, "I look for good reference material, for good causes that these women pursued, for women outside the U.S. (mostly), for interesting stores that make for an interesting entry." Another user devoted to the coverage of historical weather events wrote, "have plenty of information on subject (sic), be on some type of historical archive, and have interviews with people or documentation such as images of the event." Another editor gave a more detailed answer about the availability of sources as a criterion to edit a Wikipedia page: "Finding good sources. We often prefer historical works written by professional historians, but they are not always available. Then we might have to rely on a variety of primary sources (administrator reports, travelogues, etc.) and sift them to find the highights (sic). Another problem is when history is contested, even by professional historians. Then Wikipedia guidelines requires (sic) we present all viewpoints. Finding the right balance between them requires judgement (sic)." The availability of verifiable sources is also one of the policies of Wikipedia. According to that policy, the articles on Wikipedia should be based on verifiable sources and published information.[8] Wikipedia editors

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[8] For the policy of verifiability, see: "Wikipedia:Verifiability," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 10, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability.

seem to follow that policy and the availability of sources appears a significant prerequisite for editors to start editing an article. Wikipedia does not allow editors to conduct original research, so they should have secondary sources to study a topic further and produce historical knowledge.[9]

The fifth criterion of Wikipedians to choose an article for editing is because they want to investigate neglected historical events, topics, and figures of the past. It appeared in 20 responses. "I like to create/edit pages on events or people who are important but either neglected or misinterpreted in modern discourse," wrote an editor interested in the history of the Balkans. "[…] most often when I realize there is a huge gap of knowledge that screams out to be filled," clarified another editor. Following a similar line of thinking, another Wikipedia user noticed: "I'll usually write about a person or subject I consider to be 'missing' from Wikipedia." Editors look at the gaps that exist in Wikipedia and aim to fill them in by adding more articles or updating the existing ones.

The least frequent criterion (10 comments) is the knowledge that Wikipedians already have of a topic. "The main subject is something I've very knowledgeable about, so I will sometimes click through wiki-links to see what needs doing," wrote an editor. "Some amount of background knowledge of the topic," added another user. It is apparent that only a few Wikipedians chose to edit or create a historical page based on the knowledge they already have about a thematic area, research subject, or period. This is interesting, as it makes clear that editors prefer to find a topic in which they are interested and passionate about and explore further by reading and writing about it rather than just transmitting the knowledge that they already have acquired. They see Wikipedia as a space from which they want both to learn about the past and

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[9] For the policy of no original research, see "Wikipedia:No original research," *Wikipedia,* accessed January 10, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No_original_research.

produce history. Their knowledge about a subject does not determine what pages they will edit or create on Wikipedia. It is their curiosity, their personal interest in a topic, and their willingness to investigate it more that define their editing choices to a great extent. Then, the significance of a historical topic, the existing errors in an article, the availability of sources, and the broader epistemological gaps are factors that make editors choose what historical article they will develop further.

Table 5
What are the criteria you choose to create or edit a historical page on Wikipedia?

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1. Personal interest in the topic – 39 comments
2. Significance/notability – 26 comments
3. Correcting existing errors and misinformation in the Wikipedia articles – 24 comments
4. Availability of sources – 22 comments
5. Neglected historical events, topics, figures, etc. – 20 comments
6. Knowledge of the subject – 10 comments

Personal relation to historical topics that Wikipedians write

Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the reasons why Wikipedia users write about history and the criteria they use to choose a topic for editing. Based on their comments, they seem to have developed multiple perceptions of history and different perspectives about what needs coverage on Wikipedia. One more question that the participants of the survey were also asked was if they have any personal connection to the historical topics they choose to edit or create. Most of them answered that they do have a personal association with the historical articles they edit or create. As table 3 shows, 58 users admitted their relation to the historical topics, with which they engage, while 37 users rejected any personal association with the articles they edit. Table 3 provides an overview of whether they have a personal connection to the past or not.

Nevertheless, their comments are not just yes or no answers but reveal crucial information on how editors encounter the past and the role that history plays in their personal lives.

"I served in the U.S. military in Korea for several years as a Korean linguist. I was ignorant and naive back then, and didn't think much about why I was there until after I left. After I left the peninsula, I found myself wondering about the conditions that led to the Korean War and ultimately my arrival in Korea. That curiosity drove me to study Korean history," added a Wikipedia editor interested in Korean history. This is not an exceptional response to the question. Many editors are influenced by a personal experience from their past, which forces them to investigate it more and make it part of Wikipedia's historical knowledge. "I spent 30 years in the Army Medical Department, 20 years of it as a trained military medical historian. I served in two of the organizations whose articles I worked on […]," wrote an editor interested in military history. Another user interested in - related to military history - topics added: "I come from an extensive military family (36 members). I myself am military of 3 years and a former cadet of 6 years." In a similar line of thinking, another editor argued: "My father fought in the Second World War, and I've made a couple of minor edits to events in which he participated. My edits are based on sources other than "stuff my dad told me"." It is not only the connection of themselves to a historical event of the past but also their families' experiences that make some editors interested in a topic they edit. As a user, who writes about the history of World War II, added: "Numerous family (sic) fought in the Second World War. As part of my family research, I study the Second World War. This links into what and why I edit on the wiki."

Wikipedia editors do not only edit articles based on their personal connection to a specific event of the past. Their identities and personal beliefs are also factors that make them choose topics for further development. "I'm a woman who wonders why women's history isn't

better covered," wrote a user. "My person(al) relation is only through my studies and that I identify as a woman," added another user interested in women's history." "I am a woman and I like to edit articles on women's history. The two cultures I enjoy editing the most are Roman history and Norse history, probably because I'm half Spanish half Swedish," added another editor. Gendered and national identities determine Wikipedians' encounter with history and their engagement with Wikipedia. Their identities define the historical topics, to which they contribute. As an editor interested in women's and indigenous history wrote: "I'm a woman who attended a women's college, so that played a part in that specific interest […] I'm Bahamian-American and I live near two federal tribal reservations. I speak Irish, so I read a lot of Irish-language media and get information from there that I want to share," answered an editor. The identities of Wikipedians are formed and influenced by experiences of the past, which are crucial for how they perceive historical knowledge and want to produce and disseminate it to the public.

However, it is not only their identities but also their personal beliefs that shape their historical interests within the Wikipedia community. For example, an editor interested in the history of socialism and communism pointed out: "As a communist, learning about the history of the socialist movement is a useful tool in being able to apply methods and practices that could help affect material change in my society." Another editor responded in similarly: "I was once a major-party candidate (unsuccessful) for the state legislature, and I edit about legislators and legislatures. I am an official in my union, and I edit about labor history. I'm left-of-center by American standards, and I edit about the history of the American left. I used to work in my state's revenue department, and I edit articles about some tax-avoidance schemes and scams." Ideologies and personal beliefs are vivid and present in the lives of editors and, thus, define their historical interests on Wikipedia.

Another form that their personal relation to the past takes is their connection to the place they were born, grew up, or have lived. "Yes, I often write about Australian topics, and I am Australian," responded an editor. "I often edit pages on local landmarks that are geographically close to me because I have some background knowledge on the topic already, and know where to find reliable sources," explained another editor. It is only about the place where people come from or live but also the places have visited. "I've gone on vacations just to take photos of places, which I add to Wikipedia articles, answered an editor interested in the history of United States cities. "I have lived in Japan so that connects me to topics on Japan.," another editor interested in Japanese history noticed. "My only personal connections with most of the subjects that I write about are geographical in nature, as they are related to a place that I have lived or am familiar with (Maryland, D.C., Virginia, West Virginia, etc.)," a user added. Wikipedia editors seem fascinated to cover historical topics related to places they have lived or visited. Both the knowledge and the personal memories they have from their connections to those places affect them and make them interested in developing more related Wikipedia articles. "It's my history, my region's history," as an editor put it.

Another manifestation of Wikipedians' personal relation to the topics they edit or create is their family history or, more broadly, the history of their relatives. Experiences and memories that have marked their family history make them devoted to the coverage of related topics. Apparently, the examination of those topics will help them to better explore the history of their ancestors, create a historical entry on Wikipedia or improve an existing one, and, thus, honor the memory of their families. As a Wikipedian illustrated: "In some cases, I have relatives who were participants as soldiers in World War II battles to which I have made minor edits. While studying abroad in Greece, I met an elderly relative who remembered Allied bombing raids against the

occupying Axis forces during World War II that killed Greek civilians, several of whom she knew personally. (That particular bombing is not documented in any academic sources I can find, but it appears in Greek and English-language blog sources -- one of the reasons that I do not always dismiss blog references, although I prefer other sources when possible). […] So, I would say that yes, my family background and my choices of what to study early in life have perhaps affected what I am most interested in and capable of writing about now, but I don't necessarily have to personally identify with a topic in order to contribute something." The problem of sources is also evident in other users, who want to cover topics related to their family history but cannot find reliable sources: "So far I have rarely edited articles on topics that are somehow related to my ancestors, mainly due to the lack of access to reliable sources. I will definitively try to do so if the opportunity arises, as I see this as an opportunity to honor them." Editors interested in their families' history try to keep a balance between their personal connection to the topics and an accurate historical narrative. They try to find reliable sources, as Wikipedia demands, and produce non-biased historical knowledge about those topics. As an editor argued: "When it comes to genealogy or history that my ancestors were involved in, I will try to contribute as best as I can. I try to avoid bias and to be as clear as possible in whatever personal only connected articles I work on." "Because I had been working quite intensively in family history, I had read histories of places and times where family members had been. I worked to introduce such updated information into relevant articles on Wikipedia," another editor responded. The fact that some Wikipedians have a personal association with the pages they edit, does not prevent them from writing about them. However, they try to make the related edits and contributions within the appropriate framework that Wikipedia has created.

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Even though Wikipedians' personal relation to the topics they edit did not appear in the previous sections, tables 3 and 4, when respondents were asked whether they have a personal association with the topics they edit, most of them answered yes. Because of Wikipedia policies and guidelines, personal association with the topics that Wikipedians edit, is not allowed. So, probably many of them hide it when they argued about the reasons why they write about history on Wikipedia or their criteria to edit/create a historical article.

At the same time, it is apparent that the past has a significant presence in the lives of Wikipedians. This presence of the past can take multiple forms, a direct experience from the past, a family memory related to the past, their identities, personal beliefs, the places where they have lived or visited, the history of their families, and their ancestors. This point seems to comply with the study of Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, who showed that the past has an intimate presence in the lives of American people.[10] This presence makes Americans turn to the past to answer questions of the present, such as where they come from, where they are going, who they are, and how they want to be remembered.[11] Rosenzweig and Thelen's argument characterizes how Wikipedia editors understand the past and engage with it to produce historical knowledge.

However, in Rosenzweig and Thelen's work, the interviewees feel close to the past when they are in museums or family gatherings, because there they can identify themselves in the past and sustain personal relationships.[12] On Wikipedia this does not happen. Editors are members of a digital and impersonal community, often they don't know each other personally or probably they have never met with their co-editors, there are not authentic artifacts of the past, and

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[10] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen. *The Presence of the Past*, 9.
[11] Ibid., 12.
[12] Ibid., 12, 40.

personal relations to the topics they edit are not encouraged by Wikipedia. Nevertheless, Wikipedians' responses reveal that they go beyond what Wikipedia encourages, develop personal connections to historical topics they want to examine further, and even more significantly, they do not only turn to the past to understand themselves and build relationships but to contribute to the production of historical knowledge. This seems to be more attuned to what the historian, Benjamin Filene, has argued about the "outsider history-makers" (genealogists, reenactors, heritage tourism developers), who view the past as a living and emotional resource that makes them create passionate histories.[13] Therefore, on Wikipedia, the presence of the past is not an individualistic matter, as it leads to the collective actions of providing better history and making historical knowledge more accessible to the public.

Table 6
Do you have any personal relation/association with the topics that you choose to edit?

1. Yes – 58 users
2. No – 37 users

A collaborative production of historical knowledge

All the participants of the study are members of three WikiProjects, the WikiProject United States History, the WikiProject Military History, and the WikiProject Women in Red, or at least this was what Wikipedia showed and how the recruitment process took place. Another question respondents were asked was how their participation in the WikiProjects works when they edit or create a historical article on Wikipedia. Do they write alone and independently? Do they collaborate with other Wikipedians or other members of the WikiProjects? Based on their

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[13] Benjamin Filene, "Passionate Histories: 'Outsider' History-Makers and What They Teach Us," 11

responses, I created tables 7 and 8 and tried to explore how their engagement with the production of historical knowledge takes place. According to table 7, most Wikipedians (40 users) edit alone, 25 users edit as members of the WikiProject, in which they participate, and 18 users edit both independently and as members of a WikiProject.

These results illustrate that even though Wikipedia promotes the WikiProjects as groups of contributors "who want to work together as a team to improve Wikipedia," they do not practically serve that purpose at least for most Wikipedians.[14] Many respondents mentioned that "seldom, if ever" they make edits through a WikiProject or that mostly work by themselves. "Mostly on my own with references I have or that are available online," "mostly solo, with some collaboration with other editors," "mostly solo, collaboration online," "I usually am pretty independent and do not collaborate with anyone," "I tend to do things on my own," "I tend not to collaborate," "I generally do not collaborate directly with other project members," are some of the answers the respondents gave to describe their non-participation in WikiProject and the independent character of their editing activities. WikiProjects seem to work as communities of people, who share common interests in historical topics and themes, but not as groups of people, who work together and edit articles collaboratively. As two editors put it: "I am a member of some projects, but so far in my experience there isn't really that much direct collaboration," "I am more of a "lone wolf" and do not collaborate. I have joined some groups, but I don't see much of a community that motivates me to make frequent edits."

On the other hand, some editors who actively participate in WikiProjects and their responses revealed useful information on the role of WikiProjects in the production of historical

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[14] "Wikipedia:WikiProject."

knowledge. An editor, probably a member of the WikiProject United States History, offered a detailed observation on their participation in the WikiProject:

> My participation in WikiProject United States History has been limited to tagging relevant article talk pages so that those pages will be linked with the WikiProject, and can therefore be patrolled, rated for classification and importance, and monitored by more active users in the project. Most of the articles that I write fall within the topic of United States History, so I ensure they include the template for this WikiProject on their talk pages. I tend to write about United States History articles, and then ensure that they are properly linked with this WikiProject. In addition, as part of my participation in WikiProject West Virginia, I classify and rate the importance of West Virginia-related articles, and add the WikiProject United States template (and classification and rating) where appropriate. I find that the WikiProjects are especially helpful for prioritizing article improvement based on their importance and significance, and being able to monitor activity across a broad array of articles of related interest (i.e. articles for deletion, etc.)

A similar experience was shared by another editor, a member of the WikiProject Military History:

> The most active WikiProject of which I am a member is WikiProject Military History, and I've been a member of it since the year I joined Wikipedia. I currently serve as a "coordinator" for the project, which is an informal leadership position decided annually by vote. Most intra-project collaboration involves sharing general advice with one another, or offering minor suggestions such as what template might best fit an article. Since "military history" is such a broad subject area, members will specialize, so sometimes if I an encounter (for example) a US Civil War subject that I think needs improvement, I'll point it out to one of our members who is really knowledgeable in that area and ask for their help or advice. People will come to me for questions on Cold War African military history. As a project coordinator, I do have some additional responsibilities such as conducting formal reviews of other editors' content for internal quality ratings (any editor can do this, but the coordinators are expected to help more in this respect). […]

In many comments, WikiProjects appear as communities of people, who share common interests, review, rate, and classify articles of the project, discuss problems with other members, ask for

advice and suggestions. Of course, those activities can result in collaborative editing, but this does not seem to characterize the engagement of most Wikipedians.

Even though WikiProjects do not appear mainly as collaborative spaces, it drew my attention that most Wikipedians seemed to be arguing that their editing activities are not solitary but collaborative. According to table 8, 39 users reported that their engagement with the production of history on Wikipedia is the result of collaborative work. 24 users found their involvement solitary, and 13 users argued that their engagement can be both collaborative and solitary depending on the circumstances. Most participants explained that they often collaborate with other Wikipedians, when they edit an entry on Wikipedia, but their collaboration takes place in the article they edit or in the related "talk pages" of the article, not only in the communities of WikiProjects. This does not mean that from the 39 users who saw their work on Wikipedia collaborative, many editors do not often collaborate with other members of WikiProjects. Instead, it shows that many Wikipedians work together in the framework of the article they try to improve. As a Wikipedia editor described: "Most of my direct and most intensive collaboration has been done outside the project, however, and this usually happens by chance, when I stumble across another editor who happens to be interested in improving the same article I'm working on." That approach seems to be evident in many comments. For example, many respondents mentioned: "My collaboration generally involves a few other editors on specific articles or topics," "We use the talk page and notify other editors for discussions, and participation can be anything from minor edits to creating new pages," etc.

The main point here is that the process of historical knowledge production on Wikipedia is collaborative for most editors, but as the responses of Wikipedians revealed, it is not only limited to the communities of WikiProjects that Wikipedia has established. Instead, editors seem

to work on their own, choosing articles based on their historical interests and their intimate connections to the past. They collaborate with other Wikipedians, while they work on the same article and often use the WikiProjects to find resources about their historical inquiries, ask for suggestions, or share their worries.

Four characteristics appear in Wikipedia editors' comments and define their involvement with history. First, for most Wikipedians, writing about history on Wikipedia signifies a fun, enjoyable, and pleasurable activity. They contribute to the production of history because they enjoy the practices of reading, writing, doing research, and learning about the past. They pursue their historical interests and become experts in historical areas and topics. At the same time, many Wikipedians engage with the production of history, because they want to provide a more complete, less biased, and accurate historical narrative to the public. They take advantage of Wikipedia's digital and public character to store their histories and disseminate them to the public. Therefore, they educate the visitors of Wikipedia and prevent the past from getting lost or being forgotten. Second, Wikipedia editors decide to create or edit a historical page on a topic, which they are interested in and passionate to explore further. Their prefabricated knowledge about a subject does not define their editing choices. Instead, it is their curiosity, their personal interest, and their willingness to examine the topic further and deeper.

Third, Wikipedians turn to the past, because it has a significant presence in their lives. The presence of the past can take multiple forms, a direct experience from the past, a family memory related to the past, their identities, personal beliefs, the places where they have lived or visited, the history of their families, and their ancestors. All these dynamic relations to the past make clear that most Wikipedians have personal connections to the topics, which they want to explore further and make part of Wikipedia. However, they hesitate to make that clear in their

responses about why they engage with history on Wikipedia and what are their criteria to edit a

page. Fourth, writing about history on Wikipedia is mainly a collaborative practice but that

collaboration does not take place only within the existing WikiProjects, it also includes the

articles they edit and their related discussion pages.

Table 7
Do you edit articles as a part of the WikiProject or do you edit independently?

1. Editing alone – 40 users
2. In a WikiProject – 25 users
3. Both – 18 users

Table 8
Is editing on Wikipedia the result of collaboration or solitary work?

1. Collaborative – 39 users
2. Solitary – 24 users
3. Both – 13 users

<center>**Conclusion**</center>

In 2021, the American Historical Association published a study on how the American public perceives and understands the past.[1] The study was based on a national survey of 1,816 people and signified the most current overview of the public's view on history since the landmark work of Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, published in 1998.[2] According to AHA's study, 46% of respondents turn to Wikipedia to learn about history and acquire a historical understanding of the past. Wikipedia was ranked higher than other historical activities, such as "Historic site visit," "Museum visit," "Genealogy work," "Social media," "Podcast/radio program," "History lecture," and "History-related video game." Almost half of the respondents argued that they use Wikipedia as a source of historical knowledge. These findings combined with Wikipedia's partnership with the most central search engine in the digital world, Google, and other digital assistants, such as Siri and Alexa, make clear how crucial is the role of Wikipedia in how the public learns about history and makes sense of the past.[3]

Wikipedia is not only significant because people constantly visit its contents and consume historical knowledge but also because it allows the public to get actively involved in the production of its contents. In the digital world, many projects have tried to use the model of Wikipedia and apply it for other purposes.[4] Even academic digital history projects, digital

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[1] Pete Burkholder and Dana Schaffer, "A Snapshot of the Public's Views on History," *Perspectives on History*, accessed February 25, 2022, https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2021/a-snapshot-of-the-publics-views-on-history-national-poll-offers-valuable-insights-for-historians-and-advocates.

[2] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen. *The Presence of the Past.*

[3] For more information on Wikipedia's collaboration with Google, Siri, and Alexa, see Heather Ford, "Rise of the Underdog."

[4] For example, some attempts of Wikimedia Foundation to use the Wikipedia model for other projects have failed. See Adrienne Lafrance, "The Problem With WikiTribune," *The Atlantic*, April 25, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/04/wikipedia-the-newspaper/524211/ and Gian Volpicelli, "Wikipedia's Jimmy Wales wanted to save journalism. He didn't," *Wired*, April 16, 2019, https://www.wired.co.uk/article/jimmy-wales-is-having-another-crack-at-wikitribune.

heritage and museum projects have been created according to the technologies and the

crowdsourcing model of Wikipedia. However, most of them have failed to become self-regulated

communities, as Wikipedia does.[5] Only Wikipedia has managed to become a successful platform

based on the model of crowdsourcing, without advertisements, and keeping its contents free.

Wikipedia includes 40 million articles in 293 languages and, according to the web traffic

analysis company, Alexa, Wikipedia constitutes the 12th most visited website worldwide.[6] That

dimension of Wikipedia illustrates the significance of the public within the Wikipedia

community. Wikipedia editors are the agents, who have managed to make Wikipedia a self-

regulated community and a public source of historical knowledge, which is dominant in the

digital world and determine people's encounter with history to an important extent.

This dissertation examined those two dimensions of Wikipedia. On the one hand, it shed

light on Wikipedia's setup, its guidelines, methods, policies, and structures of power that shape

historical knowledge production. On the other hand, this study placed Wikipedia editors at the

center of historical inquiry and investigated how they view history and why they contribute to

the production of historical knowledge. By following multiple methodologies and using different

kinds of data, such as Wikipedians' comments, personal data, and survey responses, this project

focused on the dynamic role of Wikipedia editors and examined their involvement in the creation

and editing of Wikipedia articles related to history. This dissertation presents Wikipedia as a

digital and public space that allows users to engage with the past actively and creatively by

discussing it in the related "talk pages." This does not mean that all discussions result in editing

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[5] For a specific crowdsourcing project and its failure, see: Shawn Graham, Guy Massie, and Nadine Feuerherm, "The HeritageCrowd Project: A Case Study in Crowdsourcing Public History," 228.

[6] "Wikipedia:Size comparisons," *Wikipedia*, accessed October 10, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Size_comparisons, "The top 500 sites on the web," *Alexa*, accessed August 15, 2020, https://www.alexa.com/topsites.

changes in the main entry, as the transformation of discussions to historical knowledge goes through a process of control and bureaucracy that Wikipedia has established. In this process, some more experienced editors have a more powerful position than others. In other words, the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia seems like a filter, in which editors pour their memories, experiences, emotions, personal stories, and academic scholarship. All those flow through the "sociotechnical" system of Wikipedia and result in the creation or editing of a Wikipedia article.

Specifically, in Chapter 1, I explored how Wikipedia has managed to become a self-regulated community and a public space where people can discuss, create, and edit historical articles. The digital structure of Wikipedia including its policies, guidelines, hierarchy, and sub-communities encourages dynamic participation in Wikipedia and an active engagement with the production of historical knowledge. At the same time, Wikipedia creates a multilayered system of bureaucracy and surveillance that does not allow all users to have the same power within the Wikipedia community and, thus, determine the production of historical knowledge in the same way.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I used four different case studies that refer to traumatic events of modern United States history, the Great Depression, the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Vietnam War, and the September 11 attacks, to examine the agency of Wikipedia users and their engagement with the production of history. I showed that the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia is a complex process, in which Wikipedia editors do not just write about history, but they actively engage with the past by agreeing and disagreeing about history, reading books and articles, sharing their personal memories, giving justice into the past, and preventing the past from falling into oblivion. Wikipedians do not only write about history

based on their memories or on passive consumption of popular forms of history but on a combination of personal experiences, academic scholarship, and Wikipedia guidelines. However, the four case studies revealed differences in Wikipedians' engagement with history. In the first two case studies, which belong to the distant past of Wikipedia, lived experience played a lesser role, and interpretation of scholarship played a stronger role. In the other two case studies that seem to belong to the recent past, editors used more of their direct experiences from the past and tried to make them part of the broader historical narrative.

In Chapter 4, I applied a quantitative approach to Wikipedians' involvement with the production of historical knowledge and examined the Wikipedia community as a network, in which editors are the nodes and the connections between the editors, who contribute to the creation and development of a Wikipedia page, are the edges. By measuring those connections, I revealed the structures of power and hierarchy that shape the production of history on Wikipedia to an important extent. I also showed the interests of Wikipedia editors, who edit articles related to history, and their identities as they are promoted within the Wikipedia community. I argued that few experienced editors, veterans, and some non-human agents, bots, are responsible for the creation of the most part of the Wikipedia articles. Those two kinds of editors control the production of historical knowledge to an important extent.

In Chapter 5, I conducted an online survey with Wikipedia editors, who create and edit articles related to history. By placing the voices of Wikipedians at the center of my research, I presented an overview of Wikipedia users' engagement with history, their editing experiences, the reasons why they edit, their historical interests, their criteria to edit or create a historical page, their personal relation with the historical topics they edit, their educational background, their collaboration with other editors, and their activity within the -history related - WikiProjects.

Apart from the main results of this study, the dissertation contributed to the historiography of public and digital history by investigating one of the most central public and digital sources of historical knowledge that has been neglected by historians. A better understanding of how history is constructed on Wikipedia and why Wikipedia constitutes a successful crowdsourcing project that both attracts the public and produces a historical narrative can help both academic historians and practitioners in museums, exhibitions, and organizations to design more successful digital history and public history projects. At the same time, the dissertation filled an important gap in the historiography of public history that has seen the public more as a consumer of history rather than as an active producer of history.[7] It did not view the public as a single thing, instead, it showed the multiple publics of Wikipedia, their interests, their education, their different roles in the production of historical knowledge, and their multiple relations to the past.[8] By exploring Wikipedians' stories and experiences from their involvement in Wikipedia, this study tried to follow David Dean's suggestion for a public history that will not only be for and about the public but also by and with the public.[9] As the librarian, Phoebe Ayers has wonderfully put it: "When I look at a Wikipedia article, I see the people behind it – the generous, quirky, enthusiastic souls that write and curate Wikipedia."[10]

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[7] For a more detailed analysis of how the public has appeared in the historiography of public history, see Petros Apostolopoulos, "What is the Public of Public History? Between the Public Sphere and Public Agency," Joanna Wojdon and Dorota Wiśniewka, ed. *Public in Public History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2022).

[8] On the use of "publics" instead of "public," see David Dean, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Public History*, 3-4.

[9] David Dean, "Publics, Public Historians, and Participatory Public History," in *Public in Public History*, ed. Joanna Wojdon and Dorota Wiśniewka (New York and London: Routledge, 2022), 2-3.

[10] Phoebe Ayers, "Wikipedia and Libraries."

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