# Undergraduates and Librarians and Wikipedia! Oh My!

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## Wikipedia and Library Instruction

- Provides a joint teaching tool for both disciplinary instructors and librarians
- Fosters connections amongst librarians, teaching faculty, and students
- Students are given real world experience with results that are valued more than 'busywork' assignments
- Contributes to a larger scholarly community
- Exposes unique library collections and materials to a wider audience
- Challenges students to defend their work outside the classroom environment
- Explains why Wikipedia is not always a trusted source, and how to effectively use it for research

## Why Wikipedia?

Simply put, Wikipedia is where the users are. Rather than waiting and wishing that the users will come to you, we need to go to where the users are already visiting.

**Demographics of Wikipedia users**

*The percentage of adult internet users in each group who look for information on Wikipedia. Internet users account for 79% of the American adult population.*

| Total | 53% |
|---|---|
| Men | 56 |
| Women | 50 |
| **Age** | |
| 18-29 | 62 |
| 30-49 | 52 |
| 50-64 | 49 |
| 65+ | 33 |
| **Race/Ethnicity** | |
| White, non-Hispanic | 55 |
| Black, non-Hispanic (n=85) | 43 |
| Hispanic (n=61) | 40 |
| **Household Income** | |
| Less than $30,000 | 44 |
| $30,000-$49,999 | 49 |
| $50,000-$74,999 | 63 |
| $75,000+ | 61 |
| **Education level** | |
| Less than High School (n=46) | 30 |
| High School Diploma | 41 |
| Some College | 52 |
| College+ | 69 |
| **Home internet connection type** | |
| Dial-up (n=76) | 26 |
| Broadband | 59 |

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 29-May 30, 2010 Spring Change Assessment Survey. N=852 internet users age 18 and older.

Wikipedia is user created, and some users have intense feelings about certain subjects. The interaction that this can create between student and Wikipedian led to many interesting conversations on the "Talk" pages and amongst the students. None of the students in the class had any prior experience creating or editing Wikipedia articles. Most had used it for research or to find basic information quickly. Wikipedia gives an instant interaction with the reader of the information, which is important for Journalism students to have.

## Assignment

**Timeline:**

1 80 minute instruction session. Teaching Wikipedia basics about editing and authoring. A refresher on library resources and research, with an emphasis on Journalism resources.

1 week to create a stub article in Wikipedia.

3 weeks to create the full article.

1 week for additional revisions to the article based on feedback.

**Topics:**

The class of 18 students was given a list of 20 potential topics to create articles for, along with a brief introduction to some of these topics. They were also allowed to select any other topic that did not have a Wikipedia article and was of interest to them. The preselected topics were chosen for various reasons, including questions or problems that might arise from them.

**Specifics:**

The students were tasked to create a high quality, neutral article with images incorporated which conformed to all Wikipedia guidelines.

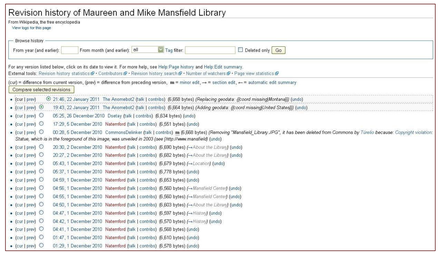
**Examples:**

Students were given examples of both good and bad articles in Wikipedia, and how to not make the same mistakes. They were also given ideas about what to do if and/or when their articles were questioned by other users.

## Monitoring

One of the benefits of using Wikipedia is that the instructors, librarians, and students can monitor each change that is made to each article from its creation forward.

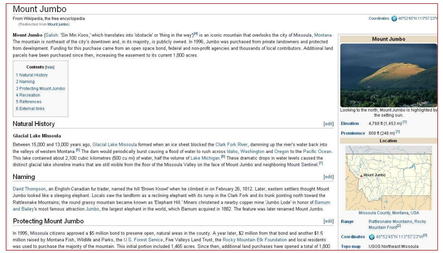
Different versions of the article can also be compared to one another, which is important when other users are capable of making changes to what the student originally wrote.




## Creation

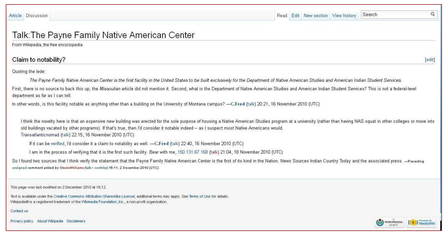
Students went through the tutorials that Wikipedia provides about article creation. However, most students simply found a page for a similar article, which was done well, and copied the layout, format, and subjects.

The student that created the article for Mount Jumbo, a large feature in the Missoula landscape, copied the layout from the Mt. Everest Wikipedia page, which ended up adding more geographical information than she had originally planned for her article.




## Defense

Students had to be able to demonstrate why their topics were important to a broad audience. Many students believe that if a topic is important to them, then it should be important to everyone. Having to defend why an article is notable added another layer to the project, and was a benefit to the journalism students. A few of the topics were chosen for the students with the idea that the 'claim to notability' argument would arise from other Wikipedians.




## Unexpected Copyright Lessons

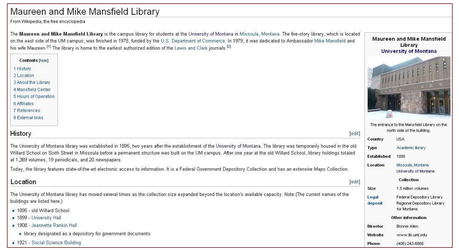
An unexpected lesson about who holds the copyright to images and to objects within the images arose as the result of one of the photographs taken by a student for his article about the Mansfield Library.

Another Wikipedia user objected to the fact that the creator of the statue in this picture had not given permission for this picture to be used. The statue is Maureen and Mike Mansfield, for whom the Library building is named. After having several exchanges with this user, the student eventually changed the image to one that did not include the statue.

## Additional Benefits

•Allows you to highlight local features or locations on campus, in your city or in your state. These pages are also more likely to be additionally edited by local Wikipedia users and could potentially start a dialogue.

•Increases awareness about local features on the web and in the community, as Wikipedia articles are usually one of the top results in Google.




## Outcomes

- 18 new or updated pages on Wikipedia, most about local or campus interests
- Students were engaged
- Students were introduced to the Archives and Special Collections portion of the library
- Partnership between the library and School of Journalism that will continue
- New understandings about copyright issues for the students
- Increased ability to research and write a truly neutral article

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