HOW TO USE WIKIPEDIA... CRITICALLY?

A digital literacy-enhancing workshop designed for KS4 pupils,
hosted by the University of Manchester

Aims

Wikipedia is the world's favourite online encyclopedia: the site contains by far the most comprehensive collection of knowledge and millions of internet users consult its pages every day. However, there are widespread misconceptions about Wikipedia's reliability as an information source. To what extent can we trust an encyclopedia written entirely by anonymous volunteers?

This interactive KS4 workshop aims to:

- challenge participants' previous assumptions regarding Wikipedia
- empower participants with a deeper understanding of how Wikipedia content is written, who by and why
- equip participants with strategies they can deploy to use Wikipedia more critically in their own learning

Workshop leaders

- Dr Henry Jones (henry.jones@manchester.ac.uk), Lecturer in Translation Studies at the University of Manchester and Principal Investigator on the WikiAltMed project
- Dr Gustavo Góngora-Goloubintseff (G.Gongora-Goloubintseff@gold.ac.uk), Associate Lecturer in Translation Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London

Proposed format

This workshop is offered as a single-day, on-campus event, following the schedule below:

9.30am	Arrival on campus
9.45am	Orientation and introductions
10am-12noon	Workshop (sections 1, 2 and 3)
12noon-12.45pm	Lunch (bring packed lunches)
12.45pm-1.30pm	Campus tour with UG student ambassadors
1.30pm-2.30pm	Workshop (sections 4 and 5)

On completion of the workshop, all students will receive a certificate of participation.

Workshop overview

Section 1: What is Wikipedia?

- This section uses an ice-breaker activity to elicit students' previous conceptions of Wikipedia as an online knowledge resource, exploring its genre, size, popularity and history.

Section 2: How is Wikipedia written?

- In this section, students are introduced to key features of the wiki software used to build Wikipedia.
- We also explore the fundamental principles of Neutral Point of View, Verifiability and No Original Research that the Wikipedia editing community have developed to facilitate the encyclopedia building process.
- Through a close-reading activity, students are trained to spot Wikipedia content that fails to adhere to these core community principles.

Section 3: Who writes Wikipedia content?

- This section highlights the uniqueness of Wikipedia as a volunteer-built resource: we examine the many advantages of this model for knowledge production, as well as the significant challenges posed.
- In particular, we explore biases in the quantity and quality of information presented on Wikipedia that result from gender, ethnic and linguistic inequalities in the Wikipedia volunteer editing community.

Section 4: Why do people write Wikipedia content?

- In this section, students gain a deeper understanding of the variety of motivations that prompt contributors to volunteer their time, skills and effort to creating Wikipedia content: from altruism to activism, community-building to trolling.
- Students are encouraged to reflect on the implications of these diverse motivations for their own use of the encyclopedia.

Section 5: How to use Wikipedia… critically?

- This final section summarises the key takeaways for the session as a whole, providing students with a set of strategies that they can deploy to use Wikipedia content more critically in their own learning.