

Edit This! Enhancing Collaborative Public Programming through Wikipedia Events

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Abstract:

Eastern Washington University's innovative practice of engaging the university community with primary source materials through a drop-in Wikipedia editing event has increased familiarity with and interest in these materials and in the collaborative authoring experience. This event produced stronger community engagement for EWU's archives and special collections, both with campus partners who helped plan and conduct the event, and with members of the campus community who participated.

Unlike the more common practice of using Wikipedia to drive traffic to digital collections, EWU's event focused on providing hands-on experience with primary sources, as well as with a collaborative content platform. The event allowed undergraduate and graduate students to engage with a variety of source types including photographs, correspondence, maps, yearbooks, institutional histories and newspapers. Materials were introduced in the creative, open-ended environment of a public programming event, as opposed to a more traditional class instruction session. The event provided the opportunity to build research and analytical skills, especially for undergraduates.

EWU's long-term goals were to develop student awareness of and interest in the kinds of materials traditionally housed in archives and special collections, as well as to provide students with the opportunity to produce publicly-accessible content. Participants developed an understanding of an historical event through evaluation of primary sources, and engaged in jointly authoring a Wikipedia article meant for a global audience. This kind of collaborative knowledge creation is an significant 21st century communications skill with applicability beyond higher education.

This poster shares a vision for how to conduct similar events in archives and cultural heritage institutions, as well as indicating new practices and methods of assessment that EWU hopes to implement at future events.

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