Edit This!

Enhancing Collaborative Public Programming through Wikipedia Events

Starting a Wikipedia editing event can seem intimidating, but these steps will serve as a brief guide to get an event rolling at your institution.

1. Organize a 3-6 person team of archivists, librarians, historians and/or student employees who will be responsible for the majority of the organizing and facilitation. Either recruit at least one person comfortable with Wikipedia's conventions and markup, or else ask a member of your team to develop familiarity with Wikipedia before the event.

2. Identify campus or community partners including student organizations, faculty, local historical societies, and anyone else that might be interested in working on this project.

3. Choose a topic. A compelling topic that draws on interesting materials housed at your institution (or a community partner's institution) is integral to the success of the event, and soliciting input from student organizations can be critical to making a good choice.

4. Divide the work of identifying (and, where necessary, making scans or physical facsimiles of) documentary material for use at your event: this involves not just materials from manuscript collections, but also print and electronic materials available via your institution or even the free web.

5. Task one or more team members with building an online guide for your event. The guide can help advertise the event in advance, while also providing editing tips, links to online documents, and even some useful historical context for participants at the event itself.

6. Chose a highly visible location for the event to attract passers-by, and schedule the space for 4 to 6 hours to give participants plenty of opportunities to drop by between their other obligations. Make sure the space can easily be equipped with technology, since you'll want a big screen for displaying the article in process, and multiple laptops for participants to use for editing.

7. Market the event fiercely on social media, hang posters, ask faculty to encourage their students to attend, connect with local service or fraternal organizations, engage your institution's marketing team, and reach out to your campus or local newspaper.

8. Offer refreshments at the event! This definitely poses challenges, especially in traditional archival spaces. If it can be made possible, however, it will certainly increase participation, as well as creating the atmosphere of fun and collaboration that helps the event succeed.

9. Ensure that staff are present during the event to answer questions and encourage participation. Schedule yourselves so that there's always at least one expert in archival materials and one "Wikipedia expert" available for troubleshooting.

10. After the event, designate someone to do Wikipedia cleanup -- fixing citations, smoothing out language, proof-reading, etc. Ideally, that person should submit the article for review so that it can be included in Wikipedia's "Did you know?" feature on the encyclopedia's main page.

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Links from EWU Events

- Online guide for EWU's 2016 event: http://research.ewu.edu/allredevent
- Online guide for EWU's 2017 event: http://research.ewu.edu/thefiresofeastern
- The article written from scratch at EWU's 2016 event: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Reese
- The two articles written from scratch at EWU's 2017 event:
    - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1891_State_Normal_School_at_Cheney_fire
    - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1912_State_Normal_School_at_Cheney_fire
- Campus newspaper article about the 2016 event: http://easterneronline.com/37056/eagle-life/william-red-reese-continues-educating-ewu-students/
- Campus newspaper article about the 2017 event: http://easterneronline.com/39400/news/eastern-fires-a-wikipedia-editing/

Further Reading

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