

Proof of Existence: Methods for Adding Archival Resources to Wikipedia

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Abstract:

This presentation will discuss the potentials for applying primary resources from archives to Wikipedia entries. During the past 10 years, information organizations have increasingly become hosts to edit-a-thons at their institutions in an effort to reveal a new history to include voices that have traditionally been excluded on platforms such as Wikipedia. These events often focus on the diversity of the editors attending as well as the diversity of the Wikipedia content being created. However, this effort is hindered by Wikipedia's rule that a page must contain published, reliable secondary resources such as textbooks and newspapers. This narrow scope eliminates the potential for many pages to be created, even when rich primary material exists in archival collections that have the potential to increase the opportunity for new scholarship and connections to be made. Without an online presence, minority histories will continue to be unrepresented until academic research is done and secondary resources are published.

In this forum, Vigor will present an exploratory case study for including archival materials in Wikipedia entries as a way to both increase the diversity of voices and histories represented online, and the types of resources accepted to support an entry. Vigor will share her preliminary findings, discuss the importance of primary resources being accepted as proof, and solicit feedback on alternative methods to update Wikipedia.

About the Author:

Emily Vigor is the Collections Archivist at the Environmental Design Archives at the University of California, Berkeley, where she processes collections documenting the built environment of Northern California. Vigor is motivated to increase the diversity of voices contributing to and histories represented in the historical record, and is inspired by the work of ArchiteXX and Art+Feminism. She served as chair of the Society of American Archivists Architecture Records Section from 2015-2016, and is part of a taskforce exploring the unique needs of born-digital design files facing degradation due to proprietary software restrictions. Vigor holds a BS in Sociology from Cal Poly, SLO, an MA in Art History from Richmond University in London, and an MLIS from San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science. She lives in Oakland with an architect and a chatty cat named Nanuq.