

## Advancing Feminism Online

### *Online Tools, Visibility, and Women in Classics*

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**ABSTRACT** Can online tools address gender bias in classics? Through two case studies, this article explores the use of crowd-sourcing in order to develop digital tools that amplify women and provide them with a firmer online identity. The first, Wikipedia.org, is already entrenched in the popular research realm, and the second, WOA (Women of Ancient History), is currently being developed as a reference tool. Wikipedia.org is the most influential source of knowledge in the world, but it has a stubborn gender bias against women. This distortion is particularly evident in the field of classics, where prior to 2017 only 7% of biographies of classicists featured women. Here, 'classics' is an inclusive term, and is broadly conceived to include the field of Late Antiquity. This short article details how the *Women's Classical Committee* (UK)'s Wikipedia editing initiative, #WCCWiki, and the development of WOA, have successfully increased the visibility of women online. Consequently, it offers a model to mobilize change with few physical or financial resources, but rather facilitated by digital tools and social media. Through digital feminist activism, there is the potential to reverse the gender skew of classicists online and in the public discourse, while also creating an inclusive space that is professional, proactive, and accessible to all. **KEYWORDS** Wikipedia, women, online, classics, activism, digital humanities, geographic information systems, network analysis, gender bias

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### INTRODUCTION

The antecedents of current efforts to make women classicists and ancient historians (broadly understood as those who study the period between 1200 BCE and 800 CE) more visible online originate in the early years of the internet, with movements to render women and gender more digitally accessible. Primary among these was the nascence of *Diotima: Materials for the Study of Women and Gender in the Ancient World*. In 1995, the site was launched by Ross Scaife and Suzanne Bonefas, who developed its extensive online resources for the next 15 years. The site was part of the broader "digital turn" within the field of classics that sought to provide access to more ancient primary resources,

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scholarship, translation, and images in an effort to demystify the discipline and make it more accessible.

Yet the development of established digital approaches to the classics alone was not to be a savior for women within the field. As Alex McAuley noted recently: “The digital sphere—and thus digital humanities by association—remains torn between an aspiration for its utopian potential and the dystopic reality of online sexism and the digital invisibility of women.”<sup>1</sup> However, there were pivotal lessons to be learned from the project management, methods, and publication habits of many early digital humanities projects within classics such as the *Perseus Project* or the *The Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri* (DDBDP). By adopting their model of collaboration and underscoring the relationship between openness and power that has been embedded within these digital humanities projects, not only the women of antiquity but also the women who study antiquity can achieve a greater degree of representation.<sup>2</sup> Two case studies make evident these ideals in practice: the first focuses on the expansion of Wikipedia entries for women classicists, and the second highlights the creation of a reference tool that aggregates, cites, and then geolocates women classicists.

Partly because of the unavoidable necessity for language that categorises, this article uses the terminology of classics, classicist, and ancient history, but as facilitative and expansive rather than delimiting and exclusionary. This reflects the intention behind the naming of WOAAH and the membership of the *Women’s Classical Committee* (WCC), which is not restricted only to classicists in the traditional sense, as concerned with the languages and literatures of Greek and Roman antiquity. The WCC serves a community beyond higher education, and is constituted of those within diverse fields of scholarship, including but not limited to late antiquity, early medieval history, archaeology, ancient philosophy, art history, reception, papyrology, numismatics, theology, and gender and sexuality. The WCC recognises the importance of ensuring the highest levels of inclusivity possible, and the organisation has more work to do, not only in terms of academic identities. Combatting professional anxieties of inauthenticity that locate bodies as peripheral and not central (“I am not a ‘real’ classicist”) is essential in challenging the hierarchy that values research chronologically closer to Augustus than

1. Alex McAuley, “Seeing Through The Fog: Digital Problems and Solutions for Studying Ancient Women,” *First Monday* [Online] 20.4 (2015). Accessed 29 January 2018. <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/5467>.

2. Elton Barker, “All Mod Cons: Power, Openness and Text in a Digital Turn,” in *Classics in the Modern World: A ‘Democratic Turn’?*, ed. Lorna Hardwick and Stephen Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 411–426.

Constantine, or that uses coins rather than texts as material evidence. The hazard of falling down the interstitial cracks will remain until there are similar organisations for each discipline listed above. But the issues of visibility, representation, and digital resources are broadly united across disciplines by the urgency of gender. Our activism is more effective if it is unified, and in anticipation of a Women’s Late Ancient Committee, the label of “classics” needs to be owned.<sup>3</sup>

Since antiquity, the creation of voluntary organizations such as *collegia* or *thiasoi* have empowered and provided agency to those lacking social representation or protection. As the digital cosmos expands and presents new dangers (e.g. harassment) and opportunities (e.g. representation and access), the role of academic organizations explicitly focused on women remains necessary. In the United Kingdom, the *Women’s Classical Committee* (WCC) is an active group that supports women who teach, research, and study classical subjects, and promotes feminist and gender-informed perspectives in classics.<sup>4</sup> The WCC seeks to foster the positive representation of women online, including English-language Wikipedia, where systemic gender bias remains an intractable problem. Regular “Editathons” organised by members of the WCC, particularly Emma Bridges, Claire Millington, Kate Cook, and Victoria Leonard, help to improve the visibility of women classicists. The WCC’s online presence extends beyond Wikipedia; the organisation is enabled in all of its activities by free and readily accessible online tools. The WCC’s ongoing initiative that tackles the gender skew on English-language Wikipedia demonstrates how other groups might also mobilize change with few physical resources but facilitated by free digital tools and social media. Moreover, the WCC’s Wikipedia initiative simultaneously underscores the need to link similar digital projects dedicated to promoting the visibility of women in classics online through the representation that comes with citation.

#### **GENDERED KNOWLEDGE ONLINE**

Wikipedia.org is the most influential source of information in the world. The online, community-based encyclopedia has more than five million articles in English, with an average of 800 new articles created every day, and more than

3. Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I’m No Longer Talking To White People About Race* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 223, ends her important book with a call to action, emphasising consensus as an ideal that will never be achieved, and that activism cannot wait for unity. Waiting for a consensus of identity is therefore an obstacle to progress.

4. For the full aims of the WCC, see “Home: The WCC,” *Women’s Classical Committee*. Accessed 10 April 2017. <http://wcc-uk.blogs.sas.ac.uk/>.

thirty million registered users.<sup>5</sup> It receives more traffic than Yahoo.com, Amazon.com, and Twitter.com.<sup>6</sup> Writing history is, therefore, easier than ever before. But the online community-based encyclopaedia is not a self-generating mass of neutral and reliable knowledge. It is created by people writing collaboratively all over the world. As a result, it reflects not only what people know, but also how they think about it, and what they think is important. Along with facts and figures, these implicit value judgements are also written into Wikipedia, determining what is represented and how. Although there is no significant gender difference in readership, the gender gap in Wikipedia editors is well known: in 2011, less than 15% were women.<sup>7</sup> In an attempt to reverse what has been described as one of the starkest gender gaps in contemporary culture,<sup>8</sup> the Wikimedia Foundation, the organisation that runs Wikipedia, set itself a target in 2011 of having 25% of contributors identifying as female by 2015.<sup>9</sup> This target was not reached.<sup>10</sup> The majority of editors in English remain white and male.<sup>11</sup>

Fundamentally, this bias determines what is included and excluded in Wikipedia, and how articles are written.<sup>12</sup> Content is skewed by the lack of female participation. Where women are included on Wikipedia, their lives and achievements are often articulated in relation to men. Entries on women are frequently acutely gendered: women are depicted as wives, daughters, or

5. "Statistics," *Wikipedia*. Accessed 6 April 2017. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Statistics>; Project Page "Wikipedia:Statistics," *Wikipedia*. Accessed 6 April 2017. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Statistics>.

6. "The Top 500 Sites on the Web," *Alexa*. Accessed 6 April 2017. <http://www.alexa.com/topsites>.

7. Noam Cohen, "Define Gender Gap? Look Up Wikimedia's Contributor List," *The New York Times*. 30 January 2011. Accessed 26 April 2017. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/business/media/3link.html>.

8. Kat Stoeffel, "Closing Wikipedia's Gender Gap – Reluctantly," *The Cut*. 11 February 2014. Accessed 10 April 2017. <http://nymag.com/thecut/2014/02/closing-wikipedias-gender-gap-reluctantly.html>.

9. Nicole Torres, "Why Do So Few Women Edit Wikipedia?," *Harvard Business Review*. 2 June 2016. Date accessed 26 April 2017. <https://hbr.org/2016/06/why-do-so-few-women-edit-wikipedia>.

10. Jenny Kleeman, "The Wikipedia Wars: Does it Matter if Our Biggest Source of Knowledge is Written By Men?," *New Statesmen*. 26 May 2015. Accessed 10 April 2017. <http://www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2015/05/wikipedia-has-colossal-problem-women-dont-edit-it>.

11. "Wikipedia: Systemic bias," *Wikipedia*. Accessed 23 April 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia: Systemic\\_bias#Englishspeaking\\_editors\\_from\\_Anglophone\\_countries\\_dominate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia: Systemic_bias#Englishspeaking_editors_from_Anglophone_countries_dominate); Deanna Zandt, "Yes, Wikipedia Is Sexist – That's Why It Needs You," *Forbes*. 26 April 2013. Accessed 23 April 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/deannazandt/2013/04/26/yes-wikipedia-is-sexist-thats-why-it-needs-you/#4c3a7c2c64bf>.

12. See the example highlighted by Jenny Kleeman of the lists constructed on Wikipedia for female poets and pornographic actresses. Kleeman, "The Wikipedia Wars," 2015.

mothers of a male subject, and articles are dominated by language that emphasizes gender like “woman,” “female,” or “lady.”<sup>13</sup> The gender bias means that only 16.9% of the 1.5 million biographies on the English Wikipedia feature women.<sup>14</sup> This partiality is reflected in the representation of classicists: an estimate found that in mid-2016 only around 7% of biographies of classicists featured women.<sup>15</sup>

## FEMINIST ACTIVISM ONLINE

The WCC’s targeted activism complements wider initiatives within Wikipedia to increase the representation of women, including the WikiProject “Women in Red” and “100 Women,” run in conjunction with the BBC.<sup>16</sup> The WCC held its first “Editathon” in January 2017 at the Institute of Classical Studies in London. Supported by trainers from Wikimedia UK like Kelly Foster, the event began the process of improving the visibility of female classical scholars on Wikipedia. Around 20 participants attended, including academics, Wikimedia volunteers, librarians, students, and publishers, both in person and remotely via Skype. Contributors helped to produce high-quality reference material to boost

13. Claudia Wagner, Eduardo Graells-Garrido, David Garcia and Filippo Menczer, “Women Through the Glass Ceiling: Gender Asymmetries in Wikipedia,” *EPJ Data Science*, vol. 5 (2016) 1–24. <https://epjdatascience.springeropen.com/articles/10.1140/epjds/s13688-016-0066-4>; Claudia Wagner, David Garcia, Mohsen Jadidi, and Markus Strohmaier, “It’s a Man’s Wikipedia? Assessing Gender Inequality in an Online Encyclopedia,” *Proceedings of the Ninth International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, (2015): 454–63. For an example of sexist editorial practice on Wikipedia, see Amanda Filipacchi, “Wikipedia’s Sexism toward Female Novelists,” *The New York Times*. 24 April 2013. Accessed 26 April 2017. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/opinion/sunday/wikipedias-sexism-toward-female-novelists.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/opinion/sunday/wikipedias-sexism-toward-female-novelists.html?_r=0).

14. “Gender by Language,” *Wikidata Human Gender Indicators (WHGI)*. Accessed 23 April 2017. <http://whgi.wmflabs.org/gender-by-language.html>.

15. There were 134 biographies of male classicists compared with 9 biographies of female classicists.

16. For “Women in Red,” see “Wikipedia:WikiProject Women in Red,” *Wikipedia*. Accessed 11 April 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject\\_Women\\_in\\_Red](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Women_in_Red); for “100 Women,” see “100 Women (BBC),” *Wikipedia*. Accessed 11 April 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/100\\_Women\\_%28BBC%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/100_Women_%28BBC%29); for a well-documented example of a feminist Wikipedia editathon on a much larger scale, see Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, “Editing for Equality: The Outcomes of the Art +Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-Thons,” *Art Documentation. Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2015), 194–203. “Whose Knowledge?” is a campaign aiming to correct the skewed representations of knowledge online; see <https://whoseknowledge.org/>. Accessed 19 March 2018. The WCC’s activism was partly inspired by similar initiatives organised by TrowelBlazers, an organisation dedicated addressing gender disparity in the fields of palaeontology, geology and archaeology; see Tori Herridge, “Wikipedia Gets the TrowelBlazers Treatment at the NHM,” *Toriherridge*. 6 November 2013. Accessed 23 April 2017. <https://toriherridge.com/2013/11/06/wikipedia-gets-the-trowelblazers-treatment-at-the-nhm/>.

the online presence of scholars who had been under-represented or absent from Wikipedia.

Three Wikipedia articles were expanded and sixteen articles were created, providing new information on significant female classicists like Professor Dorothy Tarrant, the first female Professor of Greek in the UK.<sup>17</sup> The article included details of her early life and education, professional career, and scholarship. Despite a significant career, the classicist Dr. Miriam T. Griffin did not have a dedicated Wikipedia page, and was only mentioned on the site as the wife of fellow classicist Jasper Griffin. Dr. Griffin may have been a tutor in ancient history at the University of Oxford since 1967 and the author of 10 books and 61 entries in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, but she had no intrinsic presence on Wikipedia. This was rectified by Leen Van Broeck during the WCC editathon by the creation of her dedicated page.<sup>18</sup>

The editathon provided attendees with a supportive introduction to editing Wikipedia, in most cases for the first time. It helped to raise awareness about the male skew that dominates the information found on Wikipedia, and gave people the tools to challenge this imbalance. Through the WCC's initiative 28 articles have been created or improved, and one in four biographies of classicists now features a woman.<sup>19</sup> Five of the articles have appeared on Wikipedia's front page (in the "Did You Know" section).<sup>20</sup> The event alone doubled the representation of women classical scholars on English-language Wikipedia. From 2017, the WCC has held monthly remote editing sessions alongside physical training sessions, creating or improving around more than

17. See the WCC project page on Wikipedia: "Wikipedia:Women's Classical Committee," *Wikipedia*. Accessed 10 April 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Women%27s\\_Classical\\_Committee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Women%27s_Classical_Committee); see "Dorothy Tarrant," *Wikipedia*. Accessed 11 April 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy\\_Tarrant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Tarrant). Tarrant's article is currently locked for editing until 2 February 2019 following a debate about the reference to Tarrant as "emerita" or "emeritus." See the Talk Page: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Dorothy\\_Tarrant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Dorothy_Tarrant); accessed 19 March 2018.

18. See "Miriam T. Griffin," *Wikipedia*. Accessed 23 April 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miriam\\_T.\\_Griffin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miriam_T._Griffin).

19. The gender gap visualisation tool shows that there are 37 biographies on women and 97 on men. "Gender Gap on Wikidata for Classical Scholar," *Dicare*. Accessed 23 April 2017. [http://tools.dicare.org/gaps/gender.php?kpi=humans&year\\_start=1600&year\\_end=2017&country=0&occupation=2468727&threshold=1&dump=2017-04-10&sort=total](http://tools.dicare.org/gaps/gender.php?kpi=humans&year_start=1600&year_end=2017&country=0&occupation=2468727&threshold=1&dump=2017-04-10&sort=total).

20. The articles include: Amy Richlin, Beryl Rawson, Dorothy Tarrant, Miriam Griffin, and Susanna Elm. See "Pageviews Analysis" 2017 for a graph which shows how many people consulted these articles whilst they were on the front page. "Pageviews Analysis," *Wmf labs*. Accessed 23 April 2017. [https://tools.wmf.org/pageviews/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&rang=latest-90&pages=Amy\\_Richlin|Beryl\\_Rawson|Dorothy\\_Tarrant|Miriam\\_Griffin|Susanna\\_Elm](https://tools.wmf.org/pageviews/?project=en.wikipedia.org&platform=all-access&agent=user&rang=latest-90&pages=Amy_Richlin|Beryl_Rawson|Dorothy_Tarrant|Miriam_Griffin|Susanna_Elm).

75 pages for women classicists, including late antique specialists such as Susanna Elm, Kate Cooper, Judith Herrin, Elizabeth A. Clark, Averil Cameron, Amy Richlin, Judith P. Hallett, and Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz. The pages created or improved through this initiative have been viewed more than 750,000 times between January 2017 and February 2018, a statistic that demonstrates how dramatically the visibility of women in classics has been increased.<sup>21</sup> But there are 100 existing articles on women in classics listed on #WCCWiki's Project Page that need to be expanded or improved, and 57 articles that need to be created.<sup>22</sup>

### WOAH: WOMEN OF ANCIENT HISTORY

Female empowerment and representation is predicated in part on the knowledge and use of networks, a fact exemplified within the field of late antique studies, wherein there are far more female ancient historians than within earlier Mediterranean history (1200 BCE-200 CE). Within the field of digital humanities, methodologies of representation have meant that projects are themselves amplified through an approach to citation called Linked Open Data (LOD); when linked data is focused on the ancient world, it is called Linked Ancient World Data (LAWD).<sup>23</sup> The practice of linking openly accessible data through replicable citation practices, stable URL addresses, and hyperlinks that allow traffic to flow forward and backward is part of what allows Wikipedia to guide viewers to areas of interest. It is also one way that Wikipedia editing sessions can connect reference entries to actual publications and create a networked web of women that are "discoverable."<sup>24</sup> It was with these same ideals in mind that the

21. This data was gathered in March 2018 by Jason Evans, Wikimedian in Residence at the National Library of Wales, using the statistics tool "TreeViews" (<https://tools.wmflabs.org/glamtools/treewiews/>). Pages created or edited by the #WCCWiki initiative are tagged using the category "Articles created or improved during Women's Classical Committee Wikipedia events" so that progress can be more easily tracked. Accessed 27 March 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Articles\\_created\\_or\\_improved\\_during\\_Women%27s\\_Classical\\_Committee\\_Wikipedia\\_events](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Articles_created_or_improved_during_Women%27s_Classical_Committee_Wikipedia_events). Victoria Leonard is very grateful to Jason Evans for his invaluable expertise and support in the data collection.

22. See the WCC project page on Wikipedia: "Wikipedia:Women's Classical Committee," *Wikipedia*. Accessed 20 March 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Women%27s\\_Classical\\_Committee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Women%27s_Classical_Committee).

23. Tom Elliott, Sebastian Heath and John Muccigrosso, "Current Practice in Linked Open Data for the Ancient World," *ISAW Papers* [Institute for the Study of the Ancient World] 7 (2014). <http://dlib.nyu.edu/awdl/isaw/isaw-papers/7/>. Accessed 17 March 2018.

24. The importance of women being "discoverable" online is crucial: "...URLs on Wikipedia, as on the rest of the internet, allow for content to be discovered, and the availability of a link (or not) means 'the difference between someone being a name and idea and someone being a full person,'...Even when they are at the center of the story, women's roles are forgotten." Eileen Guo, "Inside the Fight to Change

WOAH (Women of Ancient History) database was developed in order to allow the organizers of conferences and lecture series, editors, tenure review boards, and even media producers to locate women within the field of ancient history who specialize in certain subfields such as epigraphy, archaeology, economic history, or Late Antiquity.<sup>25</sup> Just as in the WCC's Wikipedia editing initiative, there was a foundational belief that digital representation could anchor and promote the visibility of these and future women. It might also serve to combat the prevalence in classics of conference panels and lecture series made entirely of men. WOAHA is a digital tool with a discursive and powerful statement: women do exist within ancient history.

The need for WOAHA became evident in 2016 at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Classical Studies and the Archaeological Institute of America in San Francisco. There, a number of all male panels were held that were either created by chance (i.e. through blind abstract submission practices) or through invited panels. When Sarah Bond asked many of the men on these panels how they had come to be organized and why they consisted of all men, the typical answers from panel organizers tended to be that they had simply asked their friends and that they did not know of any women who studied subfield X or subject Y (particularly within the subfields of economic and military history). The practice of dependency on closed amicitia networks is certainly seen within the field of classics, but it is endemic within the humanities more broadly. In early March of 2018, Harvard historian Niall Ferguson excused his convening of a conference with thirty white males by saying: "I have no doubt that there are many talented female historians whom I should have invited. I reproach myself for not knowing them and not having done more to get to know them. If any good has come of all this negative publicity, perhaps I shall now get to know them."<sup>26</sup> The WOAHA database and map allows individuals like Ferguson not to have to "know" women in order to find them to serve on conference panels, judge tenure applications, or review manuscripts.

While WOAHA initially depended on crowd-sourced information from hundreds of women and men on an open-access Microsoft Excel sheet, numerous

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Wikipedia's Gender Problem," *Inverse*. Accessed 19 March 2018. <https://www.inverse.com/article/39999-wikipedias-women-editors>.

25. "Women of Ancient History: A Crowd-Sourced List of Female Ancient Historians." Accessed 19 March 2018. <http://woah.lib.uiowa.edu/>.

26. Maya Salam, "Stanford History Event Was 'Too White and Too Male,' Organizer Admits." *The New York Times*, 17 March 2018. Accessed 18 March 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/us/stanford-conference-white-males.html>.



WOMEN OF ANCIENT HISTORY  
A crowdsourced list of female ancient historians

**EXPLORE**

Copy CSV Excel PDF Print SHOW 25 ENTRIES SEARCH

First	Last	Position	Affiliation	Research Interests	Website
Karen	Acton	Assistant Professor	Washington University in St. Louis	Roman Imperial history, Roman numismatics	<a href="https://classics.artsandscis.wustl.edu/karen-acton">https://classics.artsandscis.wustl.edu/karen-acton</a>
Patricia	Ahearne-Kool	Assistant Professor	University of Minnesota	Second Temple Judaism, Ptolemaic Egypt, Ptolemaic religion, Diaspora Judaism, and Second Temple Jewish literature	<a href="https://people.cs.umn.edu/library/prof/patriciaahearne.htm">https://people.cs.umn.edu/library/prof/patriciaahearne.htm</a>
Mika	Ahuvia	Assistant Professor	University of Washington	Late antique Jewish history, magical texts, liturgical poetry, mystical literature	<a href="http://www.history.washington.edu/portfolios/mika-ahuvia/">http://www.history.washington.edu/portfolios/mika-ahuvia/</a>
Lindsay	Allen	Lecturer in Greek and Near Eastern History	King's College London	Achaemenid Persia, pre-Islamic Iran, modern reception of ancient near east	<a href="http://www.kcl.ac.uk/nearstudies/people/classics/people/academic/ldallen/index.aspx">http://www.kcl.ac.uk/nearstudies/people/classics/people/academic/ldallen/index.aspx</a>
Zoë	Archibald	Senior Lecturer	University of Liverpool, UK	Ancient economies, Thrace	<a href="https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/archaeology-classics-and-egyptology/staff/zoee-archibald/">https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/archaeology-classics-and-egyptology/staff/zoee-archibald/</a>
Valentina	Arena	Reader in Roman History	University College London	Roman Republic, political thought, oratory	<a href="https://www.ucl.ac.uk/history/people/academic-staff/valentina-arena">https://www.ucl.ac.uk/history/people/academic-staff/valentina-arena</a>
Carol	Atack	Post-doctoral Research Associate	Oxford	Classical Greek and Hellenistic political history, Greek or classical thought, Greek historiography	<a href="http://www.classics.ox.ac.uk/about/attack.html">http://www.classics.ox.ac.uk/about/attack.html</a>
Leanne	Babitz	Professor	University of British Columbia	Roman law and spatiality, Tacitus, courtroom	<a href="http://orn.library.ubc.ca/people/leanne-babitz/">http://orn.library.ubc.ca/people/leanne-babitz/</a>

FIGURE 1. Screenshot of the entries within the database of women ancient historians included within WOA.H.lib.uiowa.edu. They can be searched or downloaded in various file types.

student research assistants at the University of Iowa have checked, added to, and updated the entries over the past two years. The project has branched off and been replicated in other disciplines, increasing the visibility of women in those fields. Jacqueline Whitt, an associate professor at the Army War College, has created a list for women broadly engaged in studying military history. Additionally, the new “Women of Islamic Studies” list is gaining steam, bringing together women who define themselves as scholars of Islamic history. The project, the methodology, and the code for WOA.H were designed to be easily replicable and open-access so that any group that wishes to amplify and organize representation for underrepresented groups may do so even with limited digital humanities knowledge.

WOA.H is not itself a panacea to the problem of under-representation in the field of ancient history, and certainly does not address all of the issues that surround creating a diverse and inclusive discipline. Because WOA.H was crowdsourced rather than directly created by each listed participant, the creators of WOA.H did not feel comfortable inquiring as to categories addressing race, ethnicity, or class, and placed no set parameters as to who could identify as an ancient historian (e.g. by setting degree qualifications). We acknowledge that diversity in terms of race is an important consideration for visible academic activities such as panels, conferences, and editorial colleges; however, after several conferences on this issue with people of color, the WOA.H team felt that it was

not our place to assign racial identities. Moreover, a major concern was that the list might be used by groups to target people of color, particularly in the fraught social and political environment of 2018.

In terms of next steps, WOAHP will grow as we integrate more network analysis into the project to show how female advisors function to attract and encourage the integration of more women within a given academic field. One of the pivotal ways that late antique Mediterranean studies will play a part in this update is by analysing the data for student-advisor networks connected to female scholars such as Elizabeth A. Clark (Emerita, Duke University) and Laura Nasrallah (Professor, Harvard Divinity School). This data already suggests that female mentorship encourages the inclusion of more women within the field, a fact which can be visualized through powerful network analysis software. Edward Keogh, a classics graduate student at the University of Iowa, is using Gephi, an open-source network analysis and visualization tool, in order to visualize these networks. As we move forward to develop and then to connect our project with each Wikipedia article for individual women in the database, we hope to become a part of the larger landscape of digital feminist classics online. In our experience, digital humanities tools like wikis and databases can indeed create a compelling argument through data that is difficult to ignore. It also provides evidence to reverse the perception of women as peripheral or lacking representation, building confidence and solidarity between isolated individuals within classics.

#### **ONLINE NETWORKING TOOLS AND WIKIPEDIA EDITING**

A pivotal key to representation is maintenance, an altogether less appealing part of the digital humanities, but one that is imperative to sustain and grow digital initiatives. The WCC organises monthly remote editing sessions and sporadic training sessions. As well as Skype, which connected the first Wikipedia training session with contributors as far away from London as Argentina, online tools are essential to this initiative. Through an active and popular Twitter account (@womeninclassics) and Facebook page (@womensclassicalcommittee) as well as a dedicated and regularly updated website, the WCC publicizes editing events and activities, advertising when Wikipedia pages are created or edited with the hashtag #WCCWiki.<sup>27</sup> Using the social network tool Storify, the

27. For the WCC's website see <https://wcc-uk.blogs.sas.ac.uk/>. Accessed 19 March 2018.

tweets from the first training day have been collated.<sup>28</sup> Blogs, Vlogs, and YouTube videos raise awareness of the initiative and encourage future participation.<sup>29</sup> The initiative has successfully inspired a similar movement in medieval studies, where a group at King's College London led by Fran Allfrey and Beth Whalley held a Wikipedia editathon and roundtable on 28 March 2018 to celebrate medieval women and women in medieval studies. Like #WCCWiki, the hashtag #MedievalWiki was essential in encouraging collaboration and participation. The group followed the WCC model in developing a dedicated Wordpress website, using Eventbrite to manage the event, and providing training for physical and remote participants.<sup>30</sup> #WCCWiki has gained momentum enough to reach beyond social media and succeed onto a wider platform and different medium, contributing to a broader conversation about women, visibility, and equality in higher education.<sup>31</sup>

#### ONLINE NETWORKING TOOLS AND THE WCC

The WCC is run entirely through the dedicated work of volunteers, and the economic capacity and scale of the organisation is diminutive in relative contrast to the task of challenging systemic bias faced by women in academia. But the potential for mobilising change has been transformed by free and accessible online tools. This is important because accessibility is essential to inclusivity. The WCC's activism is mainly online: the physical community only

28. "Women in Classical Studies, Editathon in London." January 2017. Accessed 7 April 2017. [https://storify.com/jscammel/women-in-classical-studies-editathon-in-london?utm\\_campaign=website&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_medium=email](https://storify.com/jscammel/women-in-classical-studies-editathon-in-london?utm_campaign=website&utm_source=email&utm_medium=email).

29. See Leen Van Broek, "Women's Classical Committee Wikipedia Editathon - 23 January 2017," *Roman Wafflings*. 25 January 2017. <http://romanwafflings.blogspot.co.uk/2017/01/my-most-recent-but-not-so-recent-blog.html#!/2017/01/my-most-recent-but-not-so-recent-blog.html>; Emma Bridges, Victoria Leonard, and Claire Millington, "Editing a Fairer Wikipedia: The Women's Classical Committee Editathon," *Classics and Social Justice*. 1 February 2017. Accessed 26 April, 2017. <https://classicsocialjustice.wordpress.com/2017/02/01/editing-a-fairer-wikipedia-the-womens-classical-committee-editathon/>. Ellie Mackin, "Women's Classical Committee Wikipedia Editing Day!," *YouTube*. 25 January 2017. Accessed 26 April 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAWxTPZZNrg>. Wikimedia, "Women in Classical Studies Editathon," *YouTube*. 24 January 2017. Date accessed 26 April 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jiuiaj87ZzM>, 2017.

30. See #medievalwiki. Accessed 20 March 2018. <https://twitter.com/search?f=tweets&vertical=default&q=%23medievalwiki&src=typd>. For the website, see <https://medievalwomenwiki.wordpress.com/>. Accessed 20 March 2018. For the Eventbrite booking page, see <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/medieval-women-modern-readers-wikipedia-edit-a-thon-tickets-43019678015>. Accessed 20 March 2018.

31. Victoria Leonard, "How We Doubled the Representation of Female Classical Scholars on Wikipedia," *Times Higher Education*, 11 June 2017, 32–3.

sporadically comes together at events, and then participation is largely extended through online tools like Skype and Twitter.<sup>32</sup> The team makes good use of digital resources: the collaboration tool Slack facilitates the exchange of knowledge and discussion between committee members; Doodle polls structure voting; Google Docs enables co-authoring of research outputs; Skype connects participants remotely in events and meetings; and events are organised using the event promotion tool Eventbrite. Although now hosted elsewhere, the website and blog for the WCC were established using the free website creation tool Wordpress.com. The WCC conducted a survey of the field of classics in its inauguration year using Google Surveys.<sup>33</sup> Ten years ago such an organisation could not have operated in the same way, and could not have effected change at the same speed or scale.<sup>34</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Online culture is pervaded by harassment and systemic bias against women.<sup>35</sup> But the WCC has been able to create a popular and professional feminist online space, largely without trolls or vitriolic opposition, which facilitates interaction and awareness-raising as well as direct activism like Wikipedia editing. At least online, making history feminist has never been so easy, and has never had so much potential for change. Editing Wikipedia is free, straightforward, and instant, as are digital tools like WOAAH. The Welsh-language Wikipedia (Cywiki) currently has more biographies of women than men, a circumstance

32. For example, the hashtag #WCCWiki gives continual visibility and impact with little effort, maintaining the WCC's presence in between real-world events. It also helps to reach out beyond the UK constituency, enabling a global conversation even though the WCC is locally focused. Its impact can be demonstrated by this #WCCWiki tweet about Annie Rogers, the first woman to achieve first-class honours in Latin and Greek at the University of Oxford: <https://twitter.com/tigerlilyrocks/status/970293619256160258>. Accessed 3 April 2018. The tweet made 29,103 Impressions and 1,148 Total Engagements.

33. For the results of the survey, see Victoria Leonard, Irene Salvo, Kate Cook, and Amy Russell, "Analysis of Findings – The WCC Survey," *CUCD Bulletin*. Accessed 26 April 2017. <http://cucd.blogs.sas.ac.uk/files/2015/01/Analysis-of-Findings-The-WCC-Survey.pdf>.

34. The capacity and pace of change is facilitated by the use of the same online tools by analogous organisations, such as the *Women's Classical Caucus*: <http://wccaucus.org/>; [https://twitter.com/wcc\\_outreach](https://twitter.com/wcc_outreach); <https://en-gb.facebook.com/wccaucus/> (accessed 19 March 2018); the *Women's Network of the Classical Association of Canada*: <https://womensnetworkcac.wordpress.com/>; <https://www.facebook.com/womensnetworkcac/> (accessed 19 March 2018); and the *Australasian Women in Ancient World Studies*: <https://socawaws.wordpress.com/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Australasian-Women-in-Ancient-World-Studies-138694966208936/> (accessed 19 March 2018).

35. Sarah Sobieraj, "Bitch, Slut, Skank, Cunt: Patterned Resistance to Women's Visibility in Digital Publics," *Information, Communication and Society* (2017): 1–15.

largely achieved through editathons.<sup>36</sup> But there is more to do. If you are employed as a “professor,” at least according to the technical understanding of the title in the UK, you automatically meet the notability requirements on Wikipedia; and yet 59 per cent of UK female professors of classics have no representation on Wikipedia.<sup>37</sup> At the time of writing, Professor Leslie Brubaker, an expert on Byzantine art history at the University of Birmingham, is mentioned only on her husband’s Wikipedia page.<sup>38</sup> Path-breaking late antique historians such as Lellia Cracco Ruggini, Charlotte Roueché, and Émilienne Demougeot have scant or no representation on English-language Wikipedia. While reversing Wikipedia’s gender skew may seem like an insurmountable task, breaking it down makes it much easier to achieve. The online activism of the WCC and those who contribute to crowd-sourced databases like WOAHS together offer a good example of how real progress can be made by small groups or individuals without specialist knowledge or funds. The WCC and WOAHS aim to continue reversing the gender skew online and mobilising change through digital tools, providing a positive example for others to follow. ■

36. “The Welsh Gender Equilibrium: Welsh becomes the biggest language Wikipedia to Achieve Gender Balance!” Accessed 24 April 2017. <https://blog.wikimedia.org.uk/2016/12/the-welsh-gender-equilibrium-welsh-becomes-the-biggest-language-wikipedia-to-achieve-gender-balance/>.

37. Determined by data collection completed in January 2018 by Victoria Leonard. See “Wikipedia: Notability (academics).” *Wikipedia*. Accessed 24 April 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability\\_\(academics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability_(academics)). Notability requirements tend to focus on traditional standards of prestige from which women have historically been marginalized. The absence of women professors on English-language Wikipedia is perhaps unsurprising given the difficulty of establishing new pages. The English-language page for Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer was repeatedly marked for deletion, despite having a well-established German-language Wikipedia page and Harich-Schwarzbauer’s professorial status and highly successful career as a classicist. Only on the intervention of a male Wikipedia editor could the threat of deletion be discontinued. “Talk:Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer.” *Wikipedia*. Accessed 19 March 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Henriette\\_Harich-Schwarzbauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Henriette_Harich-Schwarzbauer).

38. “Christopher Wickham.” *Wikipedia*. Accessed 24 April 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher\\_Wickham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Wickham). Similarly, Annie Ure, a Research Fellow in Greek Archaeology and curator of the museum for 54 years at the University of Reading, has no page to distinguish her from her husband. Accessed 19 March 2018. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy\\_and\\_Annie\\_Ure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy_and_Annie_Ure).