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Rebecca Thorndike-Breeze
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, rtb@mit.edu

Greta Kuriger Suiter
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, gsuiter@mit.edu

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Rebecca Thorndike-Breeze

Massachusetts Institute of Technology | USA

Contact: rtb@mit.edu

Greta Kuriger Suiter

Massachusetts Institute of Technology |USA

Contact: gsuiter@mit.edu

Abstract

Traditional academic projects often reward sole-authorship. But collaboration on Wikipedia can strengthen intellectual relationships while supporting student learning and redefine the assessment of academic collaboration. This paper presents a case study of working relationships among faculty at MIT, and other education institutions in Boston throughout the US, developing Wikipedia edit-a-thons, with the aim of helping readers identify how principles of Wikipedia's collaborative culture might help them enhance their own academic and professional collaborations. This report identifies several ways in which collaborations built for the purpose of editing Wikipedia strengthened and expanded participants' effectiveness at their various positions in higher education.

Keywords: Wikipedia, collaboration, hacker ethic, Wikipedia edit-a-thons, GLAM

Sustaining effective collaborative projects poses a number of project management challenges in any context, but such collaborative work in academia comes with a special set of problems. The intellectual labor necessary for individual participation in collaborative projects can be isolating and logistically challenging. Proposed collaborations can fall apart in the planning stage when individual contributions stall. A major reason for such setbacks is that, in many disciplines, collaborative projects are valued less than single-authored publications. Worthwhile educational projects can be sidelined or undermined as academics prioritize the work they must do alone to obtain reappointment, tenure, or promotion.

But academic collaboration does not need to result in a traditional career-advancing product, like an article or a book. Academic collaboration can focus on educational projects that strengthen intellectual relationships as they support student learning. And Wikipedia's ad-hoc, collaborative culture has much to teach us about this sort of cooperation. The two of us have found, through planning a series of Wikipedia edit-a-thons and other educational workshops, that the principles of Wikipedia's collaborative culture have redefined our view of academic collaboration.

Over the last two years, motivated by our shared commitment to educational values, our collaborations with library, archives, and instructional staff at our institution have formed a participatory culture in which we have built confidence and trust both in our own abilities and in each other.[2] We have learned that approaching educational projects in the spirit of both Wikipedia's collaborative culture and MIT's

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[2] On the role of Henry Jenkins's concept of participatory culture within Wikipedia's culture, see Reagle, 2010, p. 47.

"hacker ethic," in tandem with a strong framework of regular face-to-face meetings and clear task assignment, can accomplish much without a great deal of effort on the part of any single individual. When we combine our accumulated, interdisciplinary expertise in Wikipedia itself, and draw upon our knowledge and professional networks to solve problems, we foster creative relationships that lead to meaningful and opportune collaborations beyond Wikipedia.

This paper presents a case study of the productive work social and professional networks can do, both within and beyond Wikipedia. Our working relationships have developed to support Wikipedia events at MIT throughout the academic year, and they also support collaborations in other areas of our work, with colleagues at MIT, at other institutions in the greater Boston area, and, increasingly, throughout the US. It is our hope that this paper will help readers identify how principles of Wikipedia's collaborative culture might help them enhance their own academic and professional collaborations.

The Social Fabric of Hacker Culture

We began organizing Wikipedia edit-a-thons at MIT in part because we wanted to participate in what Dominic McDevitt-Parks has called the "mutually beneficial relationship" that can exist between Wikipedia and cultural institutions (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums, or GLAM institutions) (McDevitt-Parks, 2012). Briefly, the mutually beneficial relation between Wikipedia and GLAM is born out of their shared educational values; McDevitt-Parks argues that when GLAM institutions collaborate with Wikipedians, they pool social capital, increase access to information

and holdings, engage both the public and the Wikipedia community, and facilitate cultural change.

The edit-a-thons we organize incrementally increase public access to MIT's library and archival holdings, engage people across both the entire MIT community and the local Wikipedia community, and, we believe, facilitate cultural change as we create a social "hacker space" for learning through experimentation. Wikipedia is shaped by its collaborative participatory culture, in which a distributed network of strangers, bound by Wikipedia's governing principles, works together to create something that would be impossible for one person to create alone. And Wikipedia's core principles, particularly assume good faith, be bold, and no firm rules, create "low barriers of engagement," and support a culture of learning in public, and even learning through failure (Reagle, 2010, p. 47). Indeed, Wikipedia has been a conduit through which we have been able to connect some of the more traditionally academic areas of MIT – libraries, archives, and writing instruction – to the Institute's longstanding "hacker culture." Furthermore, the social fabric these projects have allowed us to weave among librarians, archivists, writing instructors, and Wikipedians from throughout the Boston area and beyond, enriches our social capital and enhances academic collaboration beyond Wikipedia projects.[3]

What eventually became the strong social fabric of our MIT-Wikipedia collaboration was, at least in part, woven from MIT's hacker culture – an aspect of MIT that is on proud display on campus. Throughout the first floor of one of MIT's most

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[3] On social capital, see Halpern, 2005, p. 3. On "digital social capital" and public participation, see Mandarano, Meenar, & Steins, 2010.

visible buildings, the Frank Gehry-designed Ray and Maria Stata Center, runs a long

central hallway with very high ceilings. Positioned along the hallway are examples of

"hacks" from MIT's history. One of the most moving and beautiful hacks consists of

numerous paper origami cranes hanging from the ceiling at the north-east entrance.

This was done as a memorial to Officer Sean Collier, who was killed in the line of duty

as police tried to apprehend the two perpetrators of the Boston Marathon bombing, in

late April, 2013. More light-hearted are the giant slide rule, a police car that once sat

atop MIT's iconic dome, and a fire hydrant connected to a water fountain (Fig. 1). Such

proud display of these hacks represents just how vital hacker culture is to the

institutional culture of MIT.

Figure 1. Images of MIT hacks displayed at the MIT Stata Center, by Greta Kuriger Suiter. Left, "Collier's Cranes." Right, "Fire Hydrant Water Fountain," which represents Former MIT President (1971-80) Jerome Weisner's often quoted declaration, "Getting an Education from MIT is like taking a drink from a Fire Hose."

As we both learned more about MIT's hacker culture through our immersion at work over time, we learned that hacking is not just about creating intricate pranks. It is about a very smart and serious group of students engaging in an extracurricular activity that is "both challenging for the perpetrators and amusing to the MIT community." ("MIT," 2017).[4] This hacker culture and Wikipedia's collaborative culture have much in common, though of course Wikipedians are not very keen on evidence of hi-jinx in the main space. MIT hacker culture has developed a code of ethics, also known as the "hacker ethic," that holds much in common with Wikipedia's governing principles and philosophies – not least of which being the fifth pillar's emphasis on "no firm rules." The hacker ethic is an "informal…and self-enforced" code that enables MIT hacks to remain a valued aspect of MIT's broader culture, not unlike the ways in which Wikipedia's guiding principles have elevated the site to prominence as the top source of information. The edit-a-thons we have organized draw in students and community members with an interest in hacker culture, either explicitly or implicitly.

Learning Wikipedia's Culture, Addressing Diversity Gaps

Our Wikipedia partnership formed at MIT through happenstance in January of 2015. January at MIT is Independent Activities Period (IAP), where everyone in the MIT community, including students, staff, and faculty, organize, lead, and participate in a

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[4] See also Cummings, 2009 on the value of incorporating into writing pedagogy the "lazy virtues" of commons-based peer production, a model used in Wikipedia, and its related hacker culture.

broad range of activities, classes, film series, and other events. Both of us began working at the Institute around the same time, and our first January at MIT was taken up with learning how to get started with Wikipedia edit-a-thons – Greta in the role of organizer, and Rebecca as an eager participant.

Greta Suiter began learning about Wikipedia in 2012, when she attended the annual Wikimania conference in Washington D.C. There were many inspirational moments during the conference, but it was unclear how she could incorporate Wikipedia activities or events into her work as an archivist at George Mason University (GMU). Later, in fall of 2013 as she worked on her art history degree at GMU, Greta took an introduction to digital humanities class with Professor Mills Kelly, who attracted national attention in 2012 when *The Atlantic* published the article "How the Professor Who Fooled Wikipedia Got Caught by Reddit" (Appelbaum, 2012). The story was about Kelly's course "Lying About the Past," which included an assignment that asked students to add fictional information to Wikipedia to see whether anyone would notice, and to highlight how bad actors can exploit Wikipedia's cultural assumption of good faith. While there were no Wikipedia-specific assignments in Greta's digital humanities course with Kelly, he strongly encouraged students to create an account and make at least one edit that semester.

Greta's interest in Wikipedia was definitely piqued, but without more specific instruction, she waited until she attended an edit-a-thon at the Gelman Library at George Washington University in June, 2014 to create an account and begin editing. Dominic McDevitt-Parks, then Wikimedian-in-residence at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), provided a short introduction and training. The theme of the event was local DC history, and Greta's first edit was on the article for Langston

Terrace Dwellings ("Langston Terrace," 2017). At this event, Greta saw how a library could host a Wikipedia event that combined instruction, resource sharing, and outreach. She immediately saw how adding references and citations to Wikipedia from archival collections could be very helpful to archives who often struggle with sharing knowledge about their holdings.[5]

The first opportunity Greta would have to host a Wikipedia themed event would be in January 2015, about five months after she started working at the MIT Institute Archives and Special Collections. It was in preparation for this event that Greta and her then-co-worker Jessica Venlet met with Maia Weinstock – an experienced Wikipedian who also works at MIT, and who was gracious enough to provide support and advice. Greta attended one night of Maia's week-long "Writing Women into Wikipedia," event (hosted in tandem with MIT's Women's and Gender Studies program), also in January, 2015. From that experience, she learned more about running Wikipedia events, and gained ideas about how to advertise the Archives edit-a-thon.

Rebecca Thorndike-Breeze was drawn to editing Wikipedia in 2014, because she wanted to incorporate a public and free dimension into her scholarly life. As a writing instructor, she often taught students how to begin research with Wikipedia, and thus capitalize on their existing internet research habits. Having analyzed and debated various controversies regarding Wikipedia's diversity gaps with her students,[6] she got

[5] On the potential for archivists to leverage Wikipedia for outreach and promotion, see Combs, 2011. On the ways in which this practice could potentially act against Wikipedia's standards, see Snyder, 2013.

[6] Class discussions focused on Filipacchi, 2013.

involved with Wikipedia both because of its lack of editorial diversity and because it offers so many opportunities to put her scholarly and pedagogical abilities to use for everyone.

In January of 2015, Rebecca first crossed paths with Greta Suiter and Maia Weinstock. She was intrigued by Weinstock's "Writing Women into Wikipedia" and Greta's "From the Archives to Wikipedia" events. Both events stressed Wikipedia's gender gap and sought to enhance entries about women. The first event approached the gender gap in a general way, encouraging participants to contribute to any topic; Rebecca focused on enhancing entries about women cartoonists, and her first contribution to Wikipedia was a new article for British cartoonist Suzy Varty ("Suzy Varty," 2017). The second event drew upon MIT archival holdings, including records about the first woman-owned architecture firm Howe, Manning and Almy, Inc. ("Howe," 2017), which was founded and operated by MIT alumnae.

The common theme of increasing the number of women editors and enhancing content about women deepened our understanding of Wikipedia's diversity gaps. Recent surveys report that 80-90% of Wikipedia editors identify themselves as white, college-educated men between the ages of 18 and 29 ("Systemic bias," 2017). Though perhaps unintended, this lack of editorial diversity shapes the content of Wikipedia through systemic gender bias (Wadewitz, 2013; Wagner, Garcia, Jadidi, & Strohmaier, 2015; Wagner, Graells-Garrido, Garcia, & Menczer, 2016). Thus, in addition to promoting archival and library holdings, a major catalyst of our Wikipedia events has been to diversify editorship and content pertaining to women and other underrepresented groups.

This is a common goal across many such Wikipedia events. According to a Wikimedia Foundation evaluation report on 121 edit-a-thons that took place from September 7, 2013 to December 6, 2014, edit-a-thons have shown great potential for creating "significant content around a specific topic," and stimulate Wikipedia editing communities, both by providing a social space for experienced Wikipedians to edit and by training new editors. Top goals for project leaders of 32 of the events surveyed included the following categories: "building and engaging community (94%), … increasing awareness of Wikimedia projects (81%), increasing diversity of information coverage (78%), making contributing easier (75%), and increasing diversity of participants (75%)" (Wikimedia Foundation, 2017). We share these priorities.

MIT Edit-a-thons

Though we did not consciously set out to do so, looking back at our collaboration we now see that from the very start we were working in the hacker spirit to put on these edit-a-thons. As Tad Suiter explains in his introduction to the collection *Hacking the Academy: New Approaches to Scholarship and Teaching from Digital Humanities*, "a hacker is a person who looks at systemic knowledge structures and learns about them from making or doing. They teach themselves and one another…." (n.p.). The authors both set out to learn and enhance Wikipedia and their respective fields by making and doing, together: in Greta's case she learned about Wikipedia through Wikimania 2012, Kelly's class at GMU, and at the NARA D.C. History edit-a-thon; and in Rebecca's case she learned about both the value of Wikipedia for student learning and the site's pressing need for more diverse editorship and content. This section narrates our progress and highlights how we cultivated a participatory culture

and learned incrementally to adopt what Robert Cummings calls the "lazy virtues" of hacker culture and Wikipedia's collaborative composition model. This conception of laziness, Cummings explains, promotes "the idea of taking an object designed for one purpose, modifying it, and then applying it to another context entirely" (p. 4). As the following narrative demonstrates, we learned to identify how our skills (archival, library, writing, teaching, etc.) could be hacked to facilitate planning and execution of several edit-a-thons over a two-year period.

For all events, from January, 2015 through March, 2017, we consistently built upon a foundation of regular face-to-face meetings, carefully assigned tasks, and firm deadlines for various points in the process. We were able to leverage the marketing capabilities of the library, engage with library staff and the broader MIT community, and use library space and resources.

Date	Event	Editors	Articles Created	Articles Edited	Total Edits	Words Added	Article Views	Commons Uploads
Jan. 23, 2015	From the Archives to Wikipedia	11	1	8	...	...	...	...
Jan. 22, 2016	Introduction to Editing Wikipedia	5	1	4	...	...	...	...
Jan. 29, 2016	Writing Black History into Wikipedia	6	2	4	...	...	...	...
March 5, 2016	MIT's Art + Feminism 2016	19	...	28	...	...	...	...
Oct. 21, 2016	Images of Science and Technology	9	0	17	38	496	187K	67
Oct. 28, 2016	MIT Rare Books	7	0	12	36	909	262K	0
Jan. 19, 2017	Women in Politics	10	1	15	79	1.52K	86.8K	0
March 11, 2017	MIT's Art + Feminism 2017	18	1	32	199	7.09K	116K	0

Figure 2. Results from MIT Wikipedia edit-a-thons, January, 2015-March, 2017. Article-view data from April 8, 2017. Our participant numbers are commensurate with the participant average of 14, presented in the most recent edit-a-thon evaluation report ("Wikimedia Foundation," 2017), with our best-attended events exceeding that average.

As noted above, "From the Archives to Wikipedia" was the first-ever Wikipedia event that Greta organized. As shown in Figure 2, 11 participants edited 8 different articles, with one new article created. As an archivist, Greta is especially interested in connecting audiences to the archival and special collections that the library stewards. Allowing participants to edit Wikipedia while examining archival and special collections brings together the two worlds of the digital and the physical in a way that is becoming more and more common. When we see something interesting in real life we want to

share it digitally. All of our events, but particularly "From the Archives to Wikipedia," attempt to build upon this impulse to make digital that which is only physical.

Being a new employee, Greta was tentative about leading a session on a topic she had limited prior experience with, but fortunately a colleague from the archives, Jessica Venlet, encouraged Greta and offered to help plan and host the session. Given that neither host had much experience editing Wikipedia, without the support of a fellow collaborator it is unlikely that the event would have happened. This shows how collaboration and a budding hacker spirit began to build our confidence and move our Wikipedia projects forward.

At the event, Greta and Venlet were both surprised by how thoroughly focused participants were on editing. Participants had some basic questions that were easily answered, but for the most part were very self-sufficient. Overall the Institute Archives staff viewed the event as a success. But, without further support from MIT Libraries or other Institute community members, Archives staff determined that an edit-a-thon could only be held annually, during January's IAP. This explains the gap in events from January, 2015 to January, 2016 (see Fig. 2). Fortunately, Wikipedian and Librarian for Electrical Engineering & Computer Science Phoebe Ayers joined the MIT Libraries in the spring semester of 2015. When she joined forces with us to plan edit-a-thons, she brought the support of MIT Libraries with her, and we have been able to put on multiple events per year.

After participating in "From the Archives to Wikipedia," Rebecca reached out to Greta about potential future collaborations. Working throughout the year with Ayers, they planned two events for January, 2016: an "Introduction to Editing Wikipedia" session, and the "Writing Black History into Wikipedia" edit-a-thon. As Figure 2 shows,

the first event had 5 participants editing 4 articles, with one new article created, and the second event had 6 participants editing 4 articles, with 2 new articles created. After the event, we debriefed and identified improvements we wanted to make for future events. Feeling that her training session took up too much time at "Introduction to Editing Wikipedia," Ayers noted that she wanted to streamline the instruction portion for future events. Rebecca noted that she did not yet feel comfortable in her role as a facilitator; though she clearly introduced the audience to the motivation for the event, she let Greta and Ayers field most participant questions. Still, for Rebecca the process of planning and executing this event did much to build confidence in her Wikipedia expertise and her ability to communicate that usefully to a varied audience.

One week later, at "Writing Black History into Wikipedia," one of Greta's colleagues from the Institute Archives created a new article on Yenwith K. Whitney ("Whitney," 2017), an MIT alumnus who studied aeronautical engineering and was a fighter pilot with the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II. At subsequent events and conference presentations, we have used this article as an example of Wikipedia's collaborative culture in action, as edits accumulate to improve articles over time. The participant began the article in her user sandbox on January 29th during the edit-a-thon, and continued to edit it until March 10th, when another Wikipedian moved it from the sandbox to the main article space. She had submitted it for review and on March 12th, but the article was declined because reviewers did not consider the subject to be notable enough. Small edits continued to be made to the article by a handful of editors, but it was not until November 15th when it was officially accepted as an article. The Yenwith K. Whitney revision history page shows the article's progress and eventual acceptance: "Smmurphy moved page Draft:Yenwith K. Whitney to Yenwith K. Whitney: Publishing accepted Articles for creation submission" ("Whitney revision,"

2017). This article's review process underscores the power of persistence within Wikipedia; initial rejection should not stop work on a project. This event rounded out a month of collaboration among Venlet, Ayers, Greta, and Rebecca; our experience that month showed us that we wanted to keep working together for future events.

In March, 2016, Greta, Venlet, Ayers, and Architecture and Art Librarian Lareese Hall organized an MIT node of Art + Feminism, a global Wikipedia edit-a-thon that brings together artists, art professionals, librarians, scholars, students, and anyone interested in Art and Feminism. Greta was able to draw upon this global network of support, and learned even more about organizing and promoting edit-a-thons through this process. Art + Feminism created and shared a variety of training videos about editing Wikipedia, including pre-recorded and live Google Hangout training sessions. Aligning with the broader Art + Feminism community came with many benefits, though the amount of information shared during the organization stage could be overwhelming. Still, knowing that there was much community interest in making sure the node events were successful helped buoy the MIT organizers through the whole process.

This was our most successful edit-a-thon, with 19 participants editing 28 articles (see Figure 2).[7] We had a large and engaged crowd that included MIT community members, local Wikipedians, students from other colleges, and the general public. Rebecca could not help with the planning, but she was an enthusiastic participant, and

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[7] We know that some new articles were created, but on the day of the event we failed to track that information. This issue in particular called our attention to the need for better tracking tools.

the event marked a turning point for her in terms of Wikipedia-editing confidence. Rebecca sat near Ayers as she gave one-on-one training to others, and as Rebecca eavesdropped, she managed to finally get the message that she should be bold and make edits if she thought they were in line with Wikipedia's five pillars.

At this event, she used her skills as a writer and editor to copyedit the entire entry for famous 19th century painter Rosa Bonheur, ("Bonheur," 2017). She began by focusing on sentences that demonstrated implicit gender bias, and then extended her attention to remove numerous unnecessary words and otherwise polish the prose. In about two hours' time, she transformed a fully developed but generally difficult to read article about one of the most prominent women artists in history. Going forward from this event, she began to consider herself a Wikipedian.

After a brief hiatus, Ayers, Greta, and Rebecca began planning fall events in July, 2016. We met biweekly, handling most of the preparations in the meetings themselves. These were much less formal than our meetings for IAP 2016 events; it was clear by this point that we were all very comfortable working together and trusted each other. Task assignment became much simpler as we volunteered for tasks that we considered to be easy. This was a subtle but valuable shift, because we recognized that, given our different skills, a task whcih is easy for one of us is often much more labor intensive for others. In these summer and fall 2016 planning meetings, we recognized how the lazy virtues of the hacker ethic had taken root in our collaboration, and we began to capitalize on them more purposefully.

We were motivated to meet regularly in the summer because we were excited by Greta's suggestion to hold an edit-a-thon that worked with the MIT rare book collection. Initially, the idea was to upload images of rare books to Wikimedia

Commons, but it failed to gain traction with the Institute Archives and Special

Collections staff. Not to be deterred, we decided to split these into two events. The

first would focus on enhancing images of science and technology on Wikimedia

Commons, with training for anyone who needed it. The second would include a

presentation from the MIT Rare Books manager and draw upon the collection of rare

books for subject inspiration to edit Wikipedia.

At first, the Rare Books manager was skeptical, but once we reassured him that

all he needed to do was get the books to the reading room and give a brief talk, he

agreed to help with the event. Greta and the Rare Books manager met twice to

determine which resources would be used and how their representation on Wikipedia

could be enhanced. Identifying creative links to Wikipedia articles through the books

was an important part of organizing the event. At the "Images of Science and

Technology" event, we had 9 participants editing 17 articles; they added 496 words

and made 67 Commons uploads. At the "Rare Books" event, we had 7 participants

editing 12 articles, and adding 909 words (see Fig. 2). In the future we want to return

to Greta's original idea of hosting a single edit-a-thon focused on the theme of rare

books and images. We plan to strengthen it further by linking it to Ada Lovelace Day in

October, 2017.

As Figure 2 shows, we have data on total edits, words added, article views, and

Commons uploads for the "Images of Science and Technology" and "Rare Books"

events, whereas previous events only have data about the number of participants,

articles created, and articles edited. As we began planning the "Images" and "Rare

Books" events, we were frustrated by the lack of information we had about the

contributions our previous events made to Wikipedia. When Rebecca presented on our

collaboration at the Wikiconference North America in San Diego, CA, in early October, 2016, an audience member affiliated with the Wiki Education Foundation directed her to the Wikimedia Foundation events dashboard to help track event contributions more precisely ("Programs," 2017). We now use the events dashboard, which was modeled on the Wiki Education Foundation's course dashboard, to track data for all of our events. Thus, our collaboration has been enhanced by our connections to other Wikipedians and Wikipedia initiatives.

The value of linking to larger initiatives is clear with our most recent event, Art + Feminism 2017. This edit-a-thon again was our most successful of the year, with 18 participants editing 32 articles, adding 7,009 words, and creating one new article. This year, the main Art + Feminism organizers encouraged node organizers to use the Wikimedia Foundation Programs and Events Dashboard for better data tracking, which we could easily do after using it for our October, 2016 events.

We chose to organize this year's MIT node event around the theme of Comics, Graphic Novels, and Zines, and reached out to more members of the MIT Libraries community. Anna Boutin, the new Art and Architecture Librarian, assisted with planning by pulling books from the collections for the event, Rhonda Koffman, a cataloger at MIT Libraries, hosted a zine making activity; Rebecca drew upon her experience teaching comics to lead various basic cartooning exercises for participants who wanted to create material for their zines. As the data for "From the Archives to Wikipedia," "Women in Politics," and both Art + Feminism events show, feminism is a major participant draw, and linking with Art + Feminism's international initiative attracted the most participants of all.

From Greta's perspective as an archivist, increasing diversity in both editorship and content has shaped her passion for matching resources with content gaps in Wikipedia. It has made her look at the archival collections at MIT with an eye focused on race or gender and to consider these collections first when looking for what is missing on Wikipedia. One of Greta's favorite outcomes is from that first "From the Archives to Wikipedia" edit-a-thon in 2015: the creation of a new article for a conference entitled "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994" ("Black Women," 2017). The small collection in the MIT archives related to the event includes many newspaper clippings, the call for papers, and speeches from the conference. Much of the material was used to create the Wikipedia article, and though some of the material is available online through different news sources, it was MIT's archival collection that brought the subject to the fore and to the edit-a-thon. Greta now watches out for collections like these as she does her day-to-day work.

Hacking Other Collaborations

Learning to collaborate like Wikipedians and hackers has enhanced our academic collaboration within our roles at MIT and beyond. In essence, we have hacked our collaborative approach to planning these Wikipedia events for use in our professional roles. In Rebecca's role as a lecturer in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication (WRAP), this new approach to collaboration has been a revelation. MIT's model of undergraduate writing instruction differs from the typical one followed by most US colleges and universities. MIT undergraduates must take two communication-intensive (CI) courses in the humanities, arts, or social sciences, usually in their first two years, and two CI courses in their major in their last two years.

Often, WRAP lecturers are embedded within these CI courses.[8] These WRAP lecturers design and teach the writing and communication curriculum for these courses, some of which are quite large and thus in addition to coordinating with subject-content instructors, WRAP lecturers must coordinate and collaborate with each other to design pedagogy.

Rebecca works as both the lone WRAP lecturer in an introduction to archaeology CI-class and as part of a team of WRAP lecturers for two large engineering CI-classes. The Wikipedian mindset she has adopted through her partnership with Greta and her various Wikipedia collaborations has changed her approach to this WRAP work, and has yielded impressive results. The principles with the strongest influence have been focusing on shared values, assuming good faith, being bold, and remembering that perfection is not required. In the broadest way, keeping WRAP's educational mission central to her approach in all coordinating meetings and communications makes it is easier to assume good faith, even in times of heavy workload and stress. Maintaining this perspective makes being bold and offering suggestions to enhance or revise the curriculum much easier, and these contributions have yielded positive educational results. For example, Rebecca has presented her approach to teaching visual rhetoric using comics at course-specific and department-wide staff meetings, and several WRAP colleagues have followed up with positive feedback and anecdotes about how they adapted the lesson to their classes. Rebecca also facilitated a meeting with the lead WRAP coordinator for an engineering course and Wikipedian Phoebe Ayers, in her

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[8] See Poe, Lerner, & Craig, 2010 for a presentation of MIT embedded instruction in science and engineering classes.

capacity as Librarian for Electrical Engineering & Computer Science, to revise a literature review assignment to include stronger library instruction.

Most interesting, though, is how Rebecca and Greta's partnership yielded the incorporation of archival and rare books instruction into her introduction to archaeology course. Rebecca queried Greta about this possibility, and Greta put her in touch with the appropriate archives staff. Thus, our MIT-Wikipedia network yielded positive educational results: during one of their recitations, archaeology students visited the Institute Archives and Special Collections Reading Room to receive instruction from the Archivist for Reference, Outreach, and Instruction and the Rare Books Manager. The session featured holdings related to archaeology, anthropology, and evolution. Students then worked hands-on with holdings and drafted potential research questions. In this archaeology course, Rebecca also led a class on the present state of archaeology articles on Wikipedia, and trained students in ways they could draw upon the research they had done in various class assignments to improve archaeology articles.

Wikipedian principles also enhanced Greta's work as an MIT archivist. The MIT Archives encourage staff to start projects that may seem overwhelming at first. Archives work is highly iterative and may be done with many participants who may work on the same project but never meet, since projects can take years to complete. This relates to Wikipedia's project; starting a stub is just as important as adding sources and content in the future, and this principle applies to an archivist beginning to describe collections. Further, the principle of being bold has enhanced Greta's confidence to try out new ideas at work and not to be ashamed or intimidated by the messiness of archival work.

MIT's edit-a-thons have also drawn us into collaborations with outside groups. The popularity of Wikipedia means that experts are in demand for speaking and training. For Greta, this has led to participating in an edit-a-thon at Phillips Academy in Andover, MA, leading a train-the-trainer workshop for the Digaai Brazilian cultural center in Boston, and presenting and participating in an edit-a-thon at the MITRE Corporation in Bedford, MA.

Further, we would be remiss if we did not mention the generative support we received from our bi-institutional, interdisciplinary collaborators: Northeastern University Digital Scholarship Group Assistant Director and Digital Humanities Librarian Amanda Rust, Northeastern University Associate Teaching Professor of Writing Cecelia A. Musselman, and MIT Lecturer of Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication Amy Carleton.[9] Over the last two years we have done numerous conference presentations and workshops together; Figure 3 illustrates our mutual connections, using our initials, to edit-a-thons at MIT, Northeastern, and Phillips Andover, as well as connections to the Wiki Education Foundation and New England Wikimedians like Maia Weinstock (MW) and Phoebe Ayers (PA).

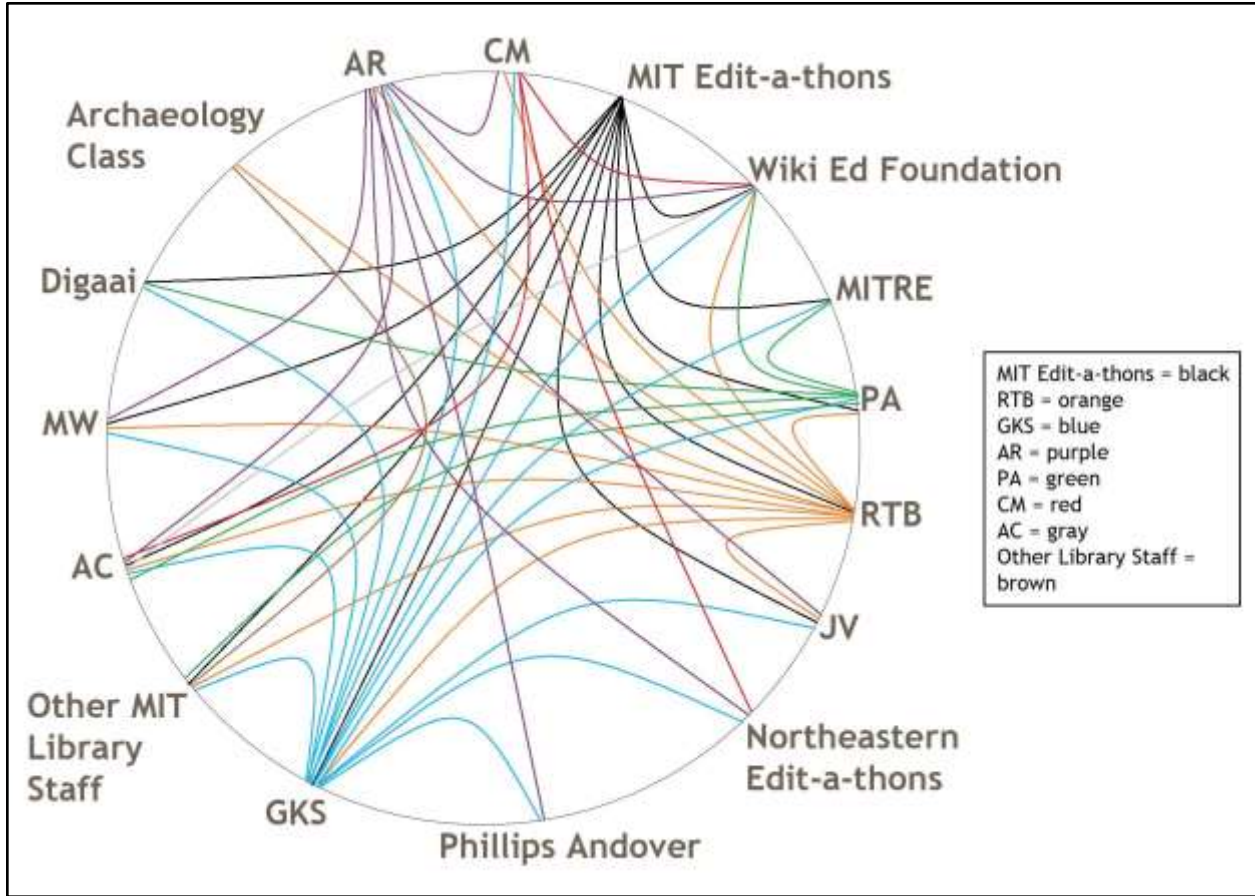[9] This collaboration is described in Carleton, Musselman, Rust, Suiter, and Thorndike-Breeze, 2017.

Figure 3. MIT Edit-a-thons' proliferating network, including events we participated in and new collaborative relationships. The network visualization includes all events and initials of all collaborators. The key includes MIT events and initials of primary collaborators.

The Social Fabric of Academic Work

The above network visualization (Fig. 3) also illustrates the ways in which

collaboration supported Greta and Rebecca's Wikipedian expertise and capacity to train

others in Wikipedia's principles and culture, in order to meaningfully enhance

Wikipedia and incrementally address diversity gaps in editorship and content. The

increasingly dense "weave" of connections at the center of this visualization

underscores something that both Wikipedians and hackers know, but something with

which academics generally struggle: many hands make light work. Each of the many hands represented here, and numerous others that are not, make meaningful contributions toward a common educational goal. And along the way, these many hands also yield several educational projects, in the form of edit-a-thons, training sessions, classes, conference presentations – even articles. The collaborative model captured by the web of this network has the potential to push back on the typically hierarchical view of academic work, insofar as it honors all hands involved in the educational and scholarly work of academia. It stresses that librarians, archivists, writing instructors, Wikipedians, scholars, and researchers are equal teammates in these projects, and not an edifice of academic "support" underneath the scholar or researcher at the head.

It is true that scholarly articles and books require rigorous engagement, and the Wikipedian values of "no firm rules" and "perfection not required" probably will not bring that about. But we have found that this collaborative culture and its alignment with the MIT hacker ethic has allowed us to build enough momentum in these less formal educational projects that not only do we produce successful events, but we produce more of them. We speculate that as academics experience success with these kinds of collaborative educational projects, they might seek out more formal academic collaborations, with higher stakes, with these teammates they have grown to trust. Though the traditional devaluation of collaborative writing in the academy, outside of STEM, may not be going anywhere, we are hopeful that if academics embrace the sorts of informal academic collaboration we describe in this paper, it can lead to more formal collaborative publications, which in turn could eventually bring about broader changes.

Collaborating on Wikipedia edit-a-thons has shown us that academic collaboration does not need to proceed according to traditional formal channels, or focus upon concrete deliverables beyond the events themselves, which leaves us plenty of space for participatory learning and identifying areas for improvement. When we plan these events, we are focused on the long game: Wikipedia, libraries, archives, writing instruction, and education broadly construed all share interlocking objectives, including promoting the discovery and use of information, improving worldwide scholarly communication, and enabling people to become better writers. This flexible and adaptable approach allows participants to rely upon the social fabric of professional networks to share the load and solve problems.

About the Authors

Rebecca Thorndike-Breeze

Rebecca Thorndike-Breeze is a Lecturer in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Comparative Media-Studies/Writing division, where she teaches writing, rhetoric, and communication. She earned her Ph.D. in literature from Northeastern University. Her teaching and research interests include rhetoric of science, writing studies, affect theory, animal studies, and British realisms and modernisms. She also researches the role of emotional labor in collaborative processes, and has published essays on affect in the realist and modernist novel.

Greta Suiter

Greta Suiter is the Collections Archivist at the MIT Institute Archives and Special Collections. At MIT, Greta works with departments, labs, and centers to collect, preserve, and make available the rich history of MIT. In addition to arranging and describing collections, Greta is also passionate about increasing access to archival materials through digital means. Sharing collections in creative and collaborative ways led her to become involved in editing and encouraging others to edit Wikipedia.

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