IJIDI: Book Review

Proffitt, M. (Ed.). (2018). *Leveraging Wikipedia: Connecting communities of knowledge*. **Chicago: ALA Editions**. **ISBN 978-0-83891-632-2. 263 pp. $68 US**.

Reviewer: Stacy Allison-Cassin, York University, Canada
Book Review Editor: Norda A. Bell, York University, Canada

T he Wikimedia community has seen an increase in the participation of cultural heritage institutions such as libraries in Wikimedia projects (Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons, Wikidata, etc.). In an effort to expose this potential to a wider audience Merrilee Proffitt, a senior program officer at OCLC, has published *Leveraging Wikipedia: Connecting Communities of Knowledge*. Made up of 15 short entries by a variety of contributors on different initiatives and aspects of the Wikipedia movement, and of potential interest to library workers, this ALA Edition publication takes a practical approach to the topics discussed, with authors offering first person accounts of their experiences. However, it is not a manual or guide on how to incorporate Wikimedia projects into library workflows and programs, instead these accounts are offered as a place to get inspired by the myriad of possibilities, from edit-a-thons (Snyder) and "micro editing" through the #1lib1ref campaign (Orlowitz), to creating a Wikipedian in Residence position to boost your institution's knowledge of Wikipedia editing (Stinson & Evans), to working with faculty members on Wikipedia as class writing projects (Davis), using Wikipedia to teach information literacy (Sengul-Jones) to using Wikipedia and Wikidata for metadata creation (Lemus-Rojas & Pintscher). Each chapter offers a slightly different angle on implementing a Wikimedia project and commentary on how Wikimedia can be used to increase your library's impact, both on and offline. This volume is recommended for those looking for a starting place and background information on getting their institutions involved in the Wikimedia movement.

The organization of this volume is useful for those wanting to dip into a single or several chapters as they can be read independently of each other. However, there are a few points of criticism. The first is that there is some content repetition and overlap between chapters. A number of chapters cover the same basic information with repeated statistics and references to the same articles. One wishes this repetition had been reduced in favour of increased unique content. This might have been solved with chapters on specific kinds of opportunities for libraries. For example, a single chapter dealing with edit-a-thons with accompanying case studies and recommendations. Further, a number of the articles try to cover too much ground by briefly citing a wide range of different initiatives and would have benefited from a tighter focus on a single issue. A last frustration is the large number of references to online content, screen shots and links integrated into the book. This makes sense given Wikimedia is online, but this publication would have served better as an openly available online publication where the integrated links could be followed, making this a more useful tool for librarians interested in more interactions with the Wikimedia projects. Despite these challenges, this is a useful book and recommended for anyone curious about venturing into the Wikipedia space.

Issues related to diversity and inclusion within the Wikimedia movement are complex. There is a known lack of diversity in relation to both the editors, who are overwhelmingly English speaking, white males from Western countries, and in the breadth and content of articles. While there are no chapters in this volume specifically on the topic of diversity and inclusion within the Wikipedia movement, it is a thread that is picked up in many of the chapters. Diversity is particularly highlighted in the contributions from Doyle and Sengul-Jones, and these chapters are highly recommended. Since Wikipedia's inception in 2001 there have been numerous media stories, academic articles, blog posts, and publications regarding Wikipedia's lack of coverage of topics related to women and its inhospitable environment for female editors, sometimes referred to as the "gender gap" ("Gender bias on Wikipedia," n.d.), a problem mentioned separately by Doyle, Proffitt, and Sengul-Jones. Sengul-Jones highlights examples of community and public library initiatives which tackle broader issues related to gaps in content, systemic bias, and participation from minority populations in the U.S. These problems have obvious implications in relation to what information people can find in Wikipedia and a lack of diverse participation and authors leads to a lack of diverse content overall.

Numerous projects and initiatives exist within the Wikimedia movement to work on social justice and equity. This volume provides an overview of some of these initiatives, and work related to diversity and inclusion within Wikimedia projects have the potential for real impact on the availability of the world's knowledge. Initiatives such as Art+Feminism, AfroCROWD, and Women in Red are examples of community projects in North America that are working to include more content from and about diverse populations. Doyle discusses the ways her position as the Wikipedian in Residence for Gender Equity at West Virginia University allowed her to focus on training students to create content for Wikipedia about women and issues important to women, as well as to raise awareness on the ways working with the Wikimedia platforms can advance equity. Through her position she modelled ways academic institutions can integrate Wikipedia into teaching on gender inequality and equity.

Many of the authors in this volume state that libraries and Wikipedia are "natural allies" given their shared commitment to increasing the availability of free, trustworthy information on the internet. While it is true that there are opportunities for libraries within the Wikimedia projects to advance their mission, as Doyle pointedly states, "…gaps in knowledge and knowledge types cannot be seen as benign or dismissed as incidental if Wikipedia is to be considered the preeminent global knowledge resource now and in the future." (p. 55). Doyle concludes her chapter with a challenge to libraries, writing: "Libraries, as the historic stalwart of knowledge, stand to participate in increasing access to equitable, quality information for all." (p. 65). Thus, as libraries increasingly participate in the Wikimedia movement, awareness of, and advocacy for, issues related to diversity and inclusion must be at the forefront.

References

Gender bias on Wikipedia. (n.d.) In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved August 11, 2018, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gender_bias_on_Wikipedia&oldid=855203316

Stacy Allison-Cassin (sacassin@yorku.ca) is an Associate Librarian at York University, Toronto. She has held a number of different positions at York, including Digital Pedagogy Librarian, Cataloguing librarian, Digital Humanities Librarian, and most recently the W.P Scott Chair in E-Librarianship. She is active member of the Wikimedia community. Her research focuses on critical approaches to knowledge organization, critical theory, and music.