

Creating Quality Digital Content: The Wiki Librarian Project

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ABSTRACT: The Wiki Librarian project, which has been running for ten years at the University Library “Svetozar Marković” in Belgrade, represents a successful example of linking academic education with digital knowledge culture. Students from the Department of Library and Information Science at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, are required to participate in a student internship as part of the course Digital Text 2, where they learn to create high-quality and verifiable articles on the Serbian Wikipedia. Practical work in the library, under the mentorship of experienced librarians, enables students to develop research and writing skills, critical thinking, and digital literacy, while simultaneously contributing to the growth of Wikipedia. Between 2016 and 2025, 159 students completed the internship, creating 172 new articles and supplementing 17 existing ones, a significant number of which received high-quality ratings. This paper analyzes the methodology of the student internship, the results achieved, and the significance of the project for academic education, the development of library competencies, and the enrichment of the Serbian Wikipedia.

KEYWORDS: Wikipedia, Wiki Librarian project, education, librarians, University Library “Svetozar Marković” in Belgrade, LIS students, Digital Text 2.

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1 Introduction

In the contemporary information age, the internet has become the primary source of knowledge. As the largest online encyclopedia, Wikipedia constitutes an indispensable resource providing access to relevant information in real time. The University Library “Svetozar Marković” in Belgrade, in collaboration with Wikimedia Serbia, developed the Wiki Librarian project in order to enable students — alongside librarians — to acquire practical experience in the creation of quality digital content. Students from the Department of Library and Information Science at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, within the course Digital Text 2, have the opportunity to write and edit Wikipedia articles through training sessions and practical workshops; such work constitutes an integration of academic competencies and digital literacy. The project has been accredited by the National Library of Serbia and has, over the course of a decade, encompassed numerous generations of students and librarians, enabling them to acquire and enhance the competencies essential to research, writing, and the technical formatting of content (Стакић, Поповић, and Кринуловић 2021).

2 Wikipedia and Young Editors

Wikimedia Serbia, founded in 2005 as the local branch of the global Wikimedia Foundation, has developed educational programmes enabling schools and universities to use Wikipedia as a platform for learning and research (Кринуловић, Стијеновић, and Стакић 2015). Since 2007, students have had the opportunity to write and edit Wikipedia articles instead of conventional seminar papers. The first student article in Serbian was devoted to ENIAC, the first digital electronic computer, and since that time the number of participating students and librarians has continuously grown (Стакић, Поповић, and Кринуловић 2021). Young editors learn how to conduct thorough research, critically analyse information, and present it reliably. In this way, competencies in critical thinking and research skills are developed, as well as an awareness of the ethical management of digital content. Students also develop communicative and social skills through teamwork and collaboration with mentors, while technical aspects — text editing, adding references and images, and understanding Wiki syntax — contribute to the development of digital literacy (Стакић, Поповић, and Кринуловић 2021).

2.1 The Educational Programme of Wikimedia Serbia

The educational programmes of Wikimedia Serbia are intended for schools, faculties, and other educational institutions. Seminars, workshops, and edit-a-thons enable students and instructors to acquire practical knowledge in content creation and the application of principles of information verifiability. The objective of the programmes is to encourage the creation of relevant and high-quality content and to promote open access to knowledge. Success is measured by the number of articles created and improved, the quality of the text, and their usefulness to the community (Стакић, Поповић, and Кринуловић 2021).

2.2 Young People on Wikipedia

Students and pupils are generally not recommended — and are frequently not permitted — to cite Wikipedia in academic papers, yet many begin their research process on precisely that platform (Kazaljka). Young editors on Wikipedia constitute an important and active segment of the community that creates and edits content on this global online encyclopedia. They often represent a significant proportion of the volunteer base, whose contribution is one of the key reasons for Wikipedia's success and relevance. Editing articles enables young people to use Wikipedia as a platform for scholarly learning and research. The process of creating and supplementing articles requires thorough engagement with sources, critical analysis, and fact-checking, which contributes to the development of critical thinking and research skills. In addition to academic development, participation in Wikipedia editing enables young editors to develop social skills as well. Collaboration with other members of the community demands communication, teamwork, and the capacity to operate effectively within an international environment. Such experience is exceptionally valuable, as young people learn to collaborate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, perspectives, and professional contexts — a skill of inestimable importance in the contemporary digital age. Editing Wikipedia also constitutes a significant educational experience (Поповић, Шевкушић, and Стакић 2015). Through writing articles, young people learn to systematise information, analyse data, and express their ideas in a clear and precise manner. These skills are valuable not only in academic settings, but also in future professional development, as they foster the capacity to learn independently, solve problems, and think logically. Working on Wikipedia also develops technical competencies. Students and young editors learn how to use Wiki text for formatting,

add images and references, and gain an understanding of the structure and operating principles of digital platforms, thereby acquiring the ability to manage digital content effectively. An important aspect of young editors' work is the development of social responsibility; they acquire an awareness of the importance of reliable information and the ethical use of sources. The mentorship and support provided by experienced editors represent a further important component of the learning process. Young editors have the opportunity to learn from experts, to receive feedback and guidance. Ultimately, the work of young editors on Wikipedia has long-term significance: their engagement enriches content, fosters diversity, and contributes to the availability of reliable knowledge. In this way, they become agents of new standards in digital education and participants in shaping the future of information platforms (Стакић, Поповић, and Кринуловић 2021).

2.3 Student Internship

One year after the establishment of cooperation between Wikimedia Serbia and the University Library “Svetozar Marković” — more precisely, in 2016 — an organised student internship for students of Library and Information Science at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, was launched within the framework of the Wiki Librarian project. This internship is integrated within the course Digital Text 2, and its objective is to provide students with practical experience in working with digital tools for the creation and editing of content on Wikipedia.

During the internship, students attend a series of lectures and workshops covering the fundamentals of writing encyclopedic articles, proper text editing, the use of Wiki syntax, and the addition of reliable references. The internship offers multiple benefits. In addition to refining skills in writing and digital processing, students have the opportunity to become acquainted with the environment of one of the most significant libraries in Serbia and to familiarise themselves with the organisation of library work. The internship encompasses the preparation of materials for articles, which are subsequently entered directly onto the Serbian Wikipedia and formatted in accordance with the requirements of the Wiki platform. Particular emphasis is placed on the citation of references from relevant sources. Students receive clear instructions and a scoring list with precise criteria that an article must satisfy in order to be accepted.

The article text must contain a minimum of 3,500 bytes and be written clearly, in encyclopedic style, without superfluous generalisations. The pres-

ence of an infobox — or alternatively a gallery of three images — earns additional points, as does at least one picture illustrating the subject. The article must contain at least four subheadings to ensure the automatic generation of a table of contents, and must include internal links to relevant Wikipedia articles. A minimum of three reliable references is obligatory to ensure the article's validity and to prevent its deletion. If an article, by its nature, cannot contain an infobox or illustrations, this requirement is compensated by expanding the text by 2,000 bytes. Students thus learn to adapt their work to the given circumstances while maintaining high quality. Through this internship, students acquire skills that serve them both in academic settings and in future professional development. They learn to conduct research, evaluate sources, create structured and logically presented content, and collaborate with peers and mentors, all of which contributes substantially to their future competence as librarians and digital media experts.

2.4 Results Achieved

Between 2016 and 2025, a total of 159 students from the Department of Library and Information Science at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, completed the student internship at the University Library. A total of 172 new articles were created and 17 articles were supplemented (Figure 1).

The written articles met all the necessary requirements, and a considerable number of articles were rated as very good. These findings indicate that the student internship was successfully conducted.

3 Discussion and Significance of the Project

The project demonstrates how academic education and digital literacy can be successfully integrated into a practical programme that benefits both students and the broader community. The role of librarians as mentors and educators is of particular significance, given that they are responsible for developing in students the competencies that will be invaluable in their future professional work. The project contributes to the digital knowledge culture and enriches the Serbian Wikipedia with relevant and reliable content, thereby increasing the availability of knowledge in open access.



Figure 1. Number of students and created articles during the student intership

4 Conclusion

A decade of the Wiki Librarian project confirms that the combination of student internships, librarian mentorship, and digital platforms can make a significant contribution to the development of education, library competencies, and the dissemination of knowledge through open access. Students acquire practical experience in researching, writing, and editing articles, and the Serbian Wikipedia has been enriched by hundreds of new and supplemented articles — a result that clearly demonstrates the value of this programme for the academic community and for society as a whole.

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