



WIKIBRARIANS GATHERING MOMENTUM

The Wikipedia and Libraries information evenings presented by ALIA in partnership with Wikimedia Australia in late 2014 attracted 360 participants to nine presentations around the nation, and have already led to new collaborative projects, including a new Wikipedia editing assignment for undergraduate students at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Western Australia.

Free information sessions for ALIA Members were held in Perth, Hobart, Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, enabling participants to gain a different perspective on a tool that some have previously regarded as a threat to traditional skilled reference services. But that's a view that is changing, and changing fast, as more and more LIS professionals decide to actively participate in Wikipedia, improving the depth and credibility of the resource, and reaching out to new library users in the process.

At the ALIA National 2014 Conference, Macquarie University Library's Research Librarian Andrew Spencer and Content and Communications Coordinator Brendan Krige, along with Dr Sham Nair from the University's Department of Biological Sciences, presented a paper on using Wikipedia as a gateway to library resources.

Their hypothesis was that students are so used to the ease of use with tools such as Google, that they now expect other resources, such as those in libraries, to be as just as easy to find and to use. Linking from Wikipedia to scholarly resources in the University Library puts the library's resources and support right where it needs to be – where students are already looking.

INCITE has previously reported on other successful library initiatives with Wikipedia, including Michael Carney's project with original materials at the State Library of New South Wales, and Liam Wyatt's role as the world's first official Wikipedian in Residence at the British Museum (*INCITE* March 2014). Clearly, over the last 12 months, momentum has been gathering and interest in being part of the Wikipedia phenomenon has been growing, with teacher librarians harnessing familiarity with Wikipedia as a way to improve students' information literacy skills, and a major project partnership between the National Library of Australia and the State and Territory Libraries to showcase local newspaper content in Trove database via Wikipedia.

The University of Notre Dame's Lydia Dawes said the Perth information session in late 2014 was particularly useful, as she was in the process of planning teaching for 2015 at the time.

'I'm always looking for new teaching ideas and this came along at the perfect time to plan for next year,' Lydia said.

Other information literacy educators in university libraries are following suit, using the opportunity Wikipedia provides to teach new LIS students the important skills of not just locating, but also enabling access to unique and original materials along with reputable scholarly resources.

Wikimedia Australia Committee member Pru Mitchell says such collaborations between Wikipedia and Australian LIS professionals are a natural fit, improving reference to quality Australian content within Wikipedia and, at the same time, providing a fantastic tool for teaching information literacy.

'Feedback from ALIA participants indicated they appreciated learning about the mission, scope and structural elements of Wikipedia,' Pru said. Many also expressed an intention to try editing Wikipedia and to contribute references – which makes this partnership a success from a Wikimedia Australia perspective. Wikimedia Australia would like to thank Kirrin Sampson, ALIA Training Manager, and the state and territory managers who made this happen.

As *INCITE* goes to press, ALIA Training, supported by the State Library of New South Wales, is working with Michael Carney and Kathryn Barwick to develop and lead in-depth training workshops for Members, covering page set up, editing protocols, image uploading to commons and other basic skills needed by newly-minted Wikipedia contributors. It is hoped participants from these workshops will, in turn, share these skills with colleagues so that more library and information professionals can contribute to Wikipedia and use it to highlight special and unique collections and resources across Australia's collections.

The first of these workshops is scheduled as a satellite event at next month's ALIA Information Online 2015 Conference. ALIA is also establishing a wiki for the Australian library Wikipedia editing community to encourage discussion, debate and the sharing of knowledge between Members.

