Appendix I: Building Community Connections through Wikipedia by K. Martin

Overview:

Students are asked to research an individual or organization in their community that does NOT have a Wikipedia presence (or has a very limited page—What Wikipedia calls a 'stub') and to create this page based on Wikipedia's guidelines for contributors.

Pedagogical Purpose:
This assignment helps students understand the role of community organizations or individuals that work in them through research, while actively contributing to an online information resource.

Student Value:
Wikipedia assignments teach students the following:
- How to conduct research
- How to properly cite and hyperlink materials
- How to write for the web
- How to write with, and for, a public community
- How to conduct and respond to peer review
- Where to look for information regarding their local community
- How to recognize what's missing from the web and to consider why this might be the case.

Wikipedia, like much of the web, is notoriously written by white, upper class males, and as such reflects their interests and knowledge (Reagle and Rhue 2011, Wagner et al., 2015). This acts as a vicious cycle of instilling more cultural power and prestige to those that already have it. Many groups (Art+Feminism, Whose Knowledge?) actively work to center internet knowledge elsewhere and raising awareness of this amongst students will help them to think critically about what they read and write on the web.

Sample Assignment Description:
Students should be introduced to the critical debates surrounding Wikipedia early on – it makes for great classroom discussion!

Each student should locate one person or organization from an under-represented group within their community that meets the Wikipedia guidelines for notability. They should research this person or organization and, following the guidelines (widely available online) for contributing to Wikipedia, create a page about this person or organization to share their work with the larger internet community. They should submit a 2-3 page reflection on the process, highlighting decisions they made while creating their page.

Students should be graded on:
- Topic selection: Did they locate a person or organization who should be recognized but was not?
- Quality of research: Were their primary and secondary sources used? Did they come from peer-reviewed sources (where appropriate)?
- Quality of writing: Wikipedia articles are supposed to be written with no point of view. This is a very different skill than what students are usually asked for and requires some thinking.
- Polish of page: These are live pages on the web and will need some review before 'going live' or they will be questioned by Wikipedia community members.

- Reflection: Are students able to think critically about their decisions around inclusion? About writing for the web? How does contributing information about their local community to a worldwide web resource compare to other assignments they've completed?

Note for instructors:
If there's time and space in your syllabus, consider adding a level of peer review to this assignment, by partnering students up and having them review/edit each other's work and reflect on this process.

It is not possible to build Wikipedia pages for every community, organization, or person that is considered 'notable' by their standards. Some communities do not have existing records for their achievements and others do not pass down generational information in a written form, meaning they are outside of the bounds of being captured by Wikipedia's standards as they currently exist. Consider using this as a teaching moment… What can be done to improve this massive web resource? Who gets to make these decisions? What might we (as individuals or as a class) do about this?

There are many, many guides to editing Wikipedia and making your own pages. A great place to start is this training library set up by the folks at Wiki-Education: https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/training/students.