

This is supplementary material for the webtext “Wikipedia as Editorial Microcosm” by Joshua DiCaglio et al., published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 29(1), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/29.1/topoi/dicaglio-et-al/index.html>.

The overview of the Project

Welcome to the Wikipedia Project designed for advanced editing courses, including technical and professional editing! This document is designed to help get you oriented to the project.

1) The Task

For you, the student, the goal of this project is to:

1. Develop complex developmental or comprehensive editing skills
2. Introduce you to the complexities of editing in a community with pre-established conventions and culture.
3. Practice working with editing as a process that involves many parties, sources, and interests that evolve over time.
4. Become familiar with the challenges of editing in digital settings.
5. Allow you to face and work through the trepidation that can come with editing in a live setting with published documents.

From wikipedia’s perspective, this project is aimed to examine and work with articles that:

1. Have, for whatever reason, become stalled...
2. ...yet have a good foundation of content...
3. ...but need a significant (bold) intervention to move them forward.

To understand this task, please review the document entitled “[The Problem for Wikipedia: when a wikipedia article stalls](#)”

For this project, we’ll be taking one of these kinds of “stalled” articles and intervening with the purpose of facilitating future writing.

2) The Trajectory

This project will take a little while to get up and running as we get oriented to Wikipedia. Ultimately, your articles will determine the trajectory for much of the project, but we can provide this general outline, to be supplemented by the timeline in the WikiEd dashboard.

1. Get signed-up for Wikipedia and Wiki Ed dashboard
2. Learning the conventions, standards, and editing tools of Wikipedia
3. Selecting and assessing articles - **We’ll be working with TWO articles each**

4. Providing some initial contact with potential wikipedians (usually via talk pages)
5. Perform [bold edits](#) as appropriate, while appropriately making space for and working with any other editors who may have worked with the article in the past, be working with the article now, or even might work on it in the future.
 - a. Focus on Organization edits first. This will likely lead to:
 - b. Focus on content focus and appropriateness
 - c. Check for Neutral Point of View, Original Research, and other related issues
6. Endgame:
 - a. To the extent appropriate, copyedit and polish your article
 - b. Leave traces of your edits and issues raised:
 - i. Update any talk posts or sandboxes as appropriate
 - ii. Check and update tags on your article. You can leave tags on the page to signal future editors that these things need to be done, and it is a good practice to leave a message on the talk page explaining what these tags refer to.

Note that we are NOT writing an article ourselves, nor are we spending significant time finding sources. While these are two essential tasks for Wikipedia, our focus here is primarily on helping articles with significant *developmental editing* problems. Writing and researching for an article take substantial time, and don't always leave the space for the issues we're focusing on here. Indeed, in many editing situations, the editor will NOT be the writer or the subject-matter expert. In Wikipedia's case, you can have an article with lots of great sources and content but still with substantial writing problems -- in fact, this is what we're looking for. My general rule is this: add content and sources as necessary to really push the article forward; **but if it takes you longer than an hour to do any one writing or research task, leave it for future editors.**

3) What a successful project looks like.

A successful project might look different depending on what your articles need and who might be involved in the article. The key is that you have **provided a significant, bold editorial intervention while appropriately accommodating and working with past, current, and future contributors.**

Your article might look nearly the same as it did before if there is some substantial reason that you were not able to move the writing forward yourself; in fact, it is possible that all of your edits may be removed from the article. In such cases, there should still be evidence that you substantially intervened or contributed to the community via talk pages, sandbox drafts, or other forms of communication.

The goal (and assessment) here is entirely focused on your ability to work with this community and the editorial situation, NOT where the product is at the end. Please do not

barrel over or ignore the community to push your edits through just because the assignment is coming to an end.

Here are examples of a successful projects that students have done in the past, each with their own kind of problems and intervention:

Transforming an Essay-like article

- 1) Art and World War II -- ([Before](#) + [After](#))
 - a) The student transformed this article from a personal essay to an article appropriate for Wikipedia.
 - b) They created a new organization for the article, reworking the content to fit within this new structure.
 - c) They rewrote whole sections to eliminate the essay-like tone as well as any other issues with Wikipedia style and form.
 - d) They added in images (which is appropriate since it's a page about art), and added a lot of "citation needed" tags for future editors
 - e) This page has remained relatively stable since (as of 2020).

Splitting a page that grew too large

- 2) Virtual Reality -- ([Before](#) + [After](#) + [Virtual reality applications](#))
 - a) The student was working on this article just as VR interest was greatly increasing. Despite being a busy article (in terms of the number of people working on it), they were able to make a significant intervention by focusing on some of recently added material--an "applications" section--that was having significant issues with NPOV and appropriateness (see WP:NOT).
 - b) They split a large section in a new article that covered virtual reality applications and make that into a decent article with a lot of room for other editors to come in and work on/improve it.
 - c) Both the VR article and the VR applications article continue to have a lot of editors working on them and have continued to develop in a way clearly shaped by this intervention.

Fixing inappropriate content and focus

- 3) Basic Life Support -- ([Before](#) + [after](#))
 - a) This article had significant issues with focus of the content, including significant sections of instruction and overly specialized material that violates [WP:NOT](#).
 - b) The student addressed these WP:NOT issues and greatly improved the tone. They did an excellent job using [WP:MEDMOS](#) to justify and guide their edits
 - c) They had substantial engagement with the community, having some good discussions with other editors and successfully used the sandbox to work out their bold edits in advance.

- d) Note that they did NOT make all of the changes themselves and the article was not where it really should be. **Yet I'd still call this a successful project since it did the good work to get it on the right track.**

Fixing a problematic cultural article (movie, character, book, etc)

- 4) Lightning McQueen – ([Before](#) + [After](#))
- The article had problems with lack of focus in the lead and throughout the article, and included large plot summaries of movie appearances that did not focus on the character's involvement in each film.
 - The student decided to find a model article, electing to use the Woody (Toy Story) in order to base their edits on a featured article.
 - The student addressed the lack of focus by reformatting the lead and reorganizing information moved out of the lead into the "Characterization" section
 - Trimmed unnecessary and off-topic details out of the entire article, including the "Characterization" section. Also greatly reduced and honed the plot summary articles to focus specifically on the character's role in each appearance
 - Created a space for future editors to continue work by making a new section, "Cultural Impact." This is a good example of how to signal future editors to come finish work that you do not have time to do, as this section would take a good amount of time and research to really flesh out.

Coordinating between articles

- 5) [Application of Photovoltaics](#) – 3 Article Coordinations – [[Photovoltaic System: Before + After](#)] [[Photovoltaic Effect: Before + After](#)] [[Photovoltaics: Before + After](#)]
- This student found that these related articles were ballooning because of this industry growing. To address this, the student decided to create an Application of Photovoltaics article to consolidate all of the uses of this technology together and help combat clutter on all of the other pages.
 - The Photovoltaic Effect and Photovoltaic System articles were not worked on by the student much, but they helped in trimming these two down by moving information to the Application of Photovoltaics article. They also reworked the lead of the Photovoltaic System article.
 - The student reorganized the Photovoltaics article a lot. There was a huge applications section prior to the student moving most of this information to the new Application article. They also worked to rename sections and label groups of information to help guide future edits in a more focused direction.
 - All of the information in the Application article came from the other 3 articles. As you can see, there was a ton of info that was bloating these already large articles. Further, they left the article at a great spot for future editors. The lead is not incredibly refined, some info throughout may need to be further trimmed down, and there is a question of TMI, but this is a great state for the article to begin in.

4) Other exemplary projects

Education in Utah - ([before](#) and [after](#))

This is one of an assortment of articles on “education in” various areas. These articles have an inherent “what for?” problem (as we describe in Part 1) since the purpose and focus of such articles are not immediately clear. What kind of information is one hoping to find in an article about education in a particular area, especially one more specific than a nation? What information particular to Utah is relevant and how does one shape this?

When the student began, the article was organized as an enormous “History” section and contained a lot of information not necessarily directly relevant for a Wikipedia entry on Education in Utah.

- They reorganized the article slightly to make it more appropriate. Note that this change was ultimately a quick one, moving everything out of a subheading of “History.”
- They trimmed content that was repetitive or unnecessary and refocused content that was not situated in a way that is relevant to the article.
- They worked on NPOV. For example, they reworked parts of the section on “Indian Placement Program.”
- They coordinated this article with others. For example, they examined and linked a separate article on the “Indian Placement Program” and significantly cut down on the amount of information in the “Higher Education” section since this information belongs at the articles for those colleges.

Intertextuality ([Before](#) and [After](#))

This is a complicated theoretical term used in the humanities and literary theory. As with many such terms, this article had clearly received some attention by subject matter experts but remained scattered in its organization in a way that made the article difficult to approach..

- Complete organizational overhaul of the article, but now it reads in a much more intuitive way that follows a logical flow of content -- while still keeping all of the content.
- Student added a considerable amount of citations
- Student cited some WP:NOR and WP:NPOV issues and addressed them in their edits
- Student's edits allowed for editors to come in and make changes (made space for them) because of the organization change
- Since the student worked on it there have been some additions in content, as well as additional citations added. Other than that, the student's organization of the article and things has largely stayed the same

Horrible Histories ([Before](#) and [After](#))

This was an excellent case of significant and thorough editing with some cooperation with the Wikipedia community. The original article had significant problems and multiple tags, including for being essay-like and confusing.

- The student reorganized the entire article into a logical form and sorted the content into this new form.
- A great deal of extraneous content was cut in smart ways
- Sections were rewritten into an informative style.
- Work was done to alleviate problems in original research and other NPOV problems.
- This was a case of live editing. The student edited heavily alongside [Coin945](#)
 - This editor originally wasn't giving very detailed edit summaries but once they realized the student editor would be continuing they started giving more detailed summaries of the edits they made

Forestry in Russia ([Before](#) and [After](#))

This article has existed since 2007 but was expanded into an essay-like article in [2017](#), which prompted further contributions that followed this form. When the student found it in 2021, a bulk of the material was in the lead, with significant issues with the content, focus, and tone of the article.

- The new organization took the existing information and organized it so that it looks more like a Wikipedia article, with clear categories of information.
- The lead, properly speaking, wasn't much of a lead but rather content that might go in the article proper. The student reworded a lot of the information in order to craft a lead from it but also left a template message signaling a future editor to check their lead.
- As part of the reorganization, the student considered what kinds of information should go where, ultimately moving much of the content into new categories.
- The original content was often disjointed rather than written in coherent informatic style. The student rewrote whole sections to make them work as informative statements. This also allowed him to remove some inappropriate content and make clear space for citation.