



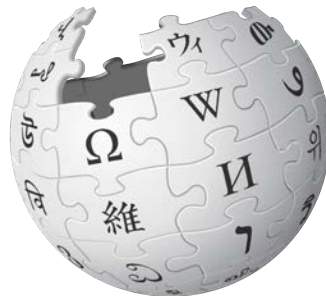
Wikimedia in Schools Series

Gaps in Open Knowledge



Before you start:

If you haven't already done so, read the [Introduction to Wikimedia](#) handout for context.



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Session Objectives:

We hope that by the end of the session you will have a better understanding of:

- ★ The meaning and importance of open knowledge.
- ★ The concept of systemic bias, and why this applies to the open knowledge ecosystem.
- ★ How system bias applies to Wikipedia, using the gender gap as an example.
- ★ How to identify knowledge gaps on Wikipedia.
- ★ The importance of actively contributing to the open knowledge ecosystem.

Session length:

1 hour without online activity.

1 hour 20 minutes with online activity.

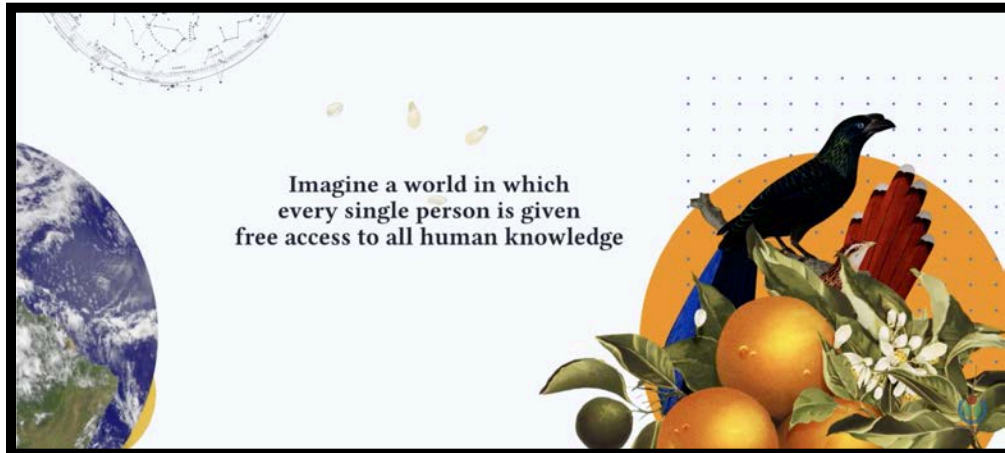
Activity 1: Recap on open knowledge and Wikipedia



1. What is the meaning of 'open knowledge'? Compare your answer with another class member.

2. Write down three facts about Wikipedia. Compare your answers with another class member and add down new points.

Watch the following [video](#) and note down any interesting points:



Notes:

Knowledge gaps and systemic bias

Key Terms:

Systemic bias

The inherent tendency for a system to produce particular outcomes.

In other words, a system has a built-in characteristic which makes it likely to favour a particular result.

In the case of online information, this may mean that information about, and perspectives of certain groups of people are more likely to be shown.

Although anyone can edit and contribute to open knowledge, there are still barriers that prevent some people from contributing to Wikipedia. These barriers may include a lack of access to technology, a lack of digital skills, a lack of time, lack of confidence and a lack of recognition.

This means that the knowledge, traditions, stories and languages of some communities are missing from Wikipedia and the broader internet. This is a form of systemic bias, as when we search online for information we are more likely to get knowledge and perspectives from some individuals and communities than others.

Systemic bias in online information can be **explicit bias**, where the information itself or the sources used are biased. Or it can be **implicit bias**, where the information about a certain community is missing altogether.

Although Wikipedia strives for a neutral point of view, these biases still exist.

Who is missing from open knowledge?

Key Term:

Global Majority

A group of countries that make up the majority of the world's population. They are typically less wealthy, less industrialised and less technologically advanced. Many of these countries are found in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania.

The 'average' Wikipedian (someone who contributes to Wikipedia through editing or creating articles) is white, male, good with technology, speaks English, aged 15 - 49, from a predominantly Christian country and from outside of the global majority.

For example, in 2024 only 14% of active editors on Wikipedia identify as female¹ and only 20% of biographies on Wikipedia are of women.

¹ https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Community_Insights/Community_Insights_2024_Report

Activity 2: Why does diversity matter?



Key Terms:

Diversity:

In open knowledge, diversity refers to the inclusion of different and varied people and perspectives, both in the production of knowledge and in its content.

If there is little diversity in who contributes to open knowledge, it is more likely that systemic bias will occur.

Let's have a closer look at the characteristics of the 'average' Wikipedian. Why do these characteristics matter, and who might be getting overlooked?

In your pairs or small groups, look at the table on the next page.

Pick three of the characteristics of the 'average' Wikipedian and explain why you think this might lead to systemic bias in Wikipedia.

Then in larger groups or as a class, try to write something down for every characteristic. We have completed one for you to get you started.

Characteristic of the 'average' Wikipedian	Why might this lead to systemic bias?
Male	
White	
Good with technology	<i>People who aren't confident with technology are not represented. This might include the elderly, people with certain disabilities or those who did not have a formal education.</i>
English speaking	
Aged 15 - 49	
Lives in a predominantly Christian country	
Outside the global majority	

Activity 3: Searching for knowledge gaps.



Have a look on Wikipedia now. Pick something that interests you, or your hometown.

Is the article representative? Is there anything or anyone missing? What could be done to improve it?

Try to come up with at least one example in your pair / group, and make some notes below:

How can I help to make open knowledge more diverse?

When open knowledge doesn't include all individuals and communities, this increases misunderstanding and polarisation. By becoming a Wikipediaian you can learn to edit articles and create new articles to increase diversity in the areas you know it is needed.

You could look at the [online tutorials](#) or complete the [Wikipedia Adventure](#) to teach yourself editing skills.

Your teacher could also look at the Wikimedia in Schools workshop [Editing Wikipedia](#).

Your teacher can also arrange for a workshop with Wikimedia UK.

Evaluation and Feedback

We would be very grateful if you could complete this [short student feedback form](#) about the session.

Thank-you for taking part!

Appendix:

Link to video on Wikimedia and Open Knowledge:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2HiRf-TPTU>

Online tutorials on how to edit Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Contributing_to_Wikipedia

Link to the Wikipedia Adventure activity:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:The_Wikipedia_Adventure