

The following 3 articles need to be **reviewed**:

- Philippines and US hold naval drills in South China Sea amid territorial dispute (25 hours; Overdue)
- Hundreds of thousands of British public sector workers strike over planned pension changes (11 hours)
- U.S. space agency NASA sues ex-astronaut (4 hours)

Wikinews interviews US National Archives Wikipedian in Residence

From Wikinews, the free news source you can write!

Revision as of 13:57, 1 July 2011 by Pi zero (Talk | contribs)

(diff) <- Older revision | Latest revision (diff) | Newer revision -> (diff)

Thursday, June 30, 2011



This article mentions the Wikimedia Foundation, one of its projects, or people related to it. *Wikinews* is a project of the Wikimedia Foundation.



Wikipedia Campus Ambassador]] training event.

Image: Sage Ross.



Dominic McDevitt-Parks, a prolific contributor to Wikipedia and a graduate student in history and archives management, has agreed to answer a few questions about his new role as "[[w:Wikipedia:GLAM/BM/Wikipedian in Residence#{{{anchor}}}Wikipedian in Residence]]" at the US National Archives and Records Administration.

"Wikipedians in Residence" are volunteers placed with institutions, such as museums and libraries, to facilitate use of those institutions' resources on Wikipedia.

According to a Pew Internet report, 42 percent of Americans use Wikipedia as an online source of information. The online, collaborative encyclopedia boasts more than 3.5 million articles in English and versions in over 250 languages. Given the website's vast readership, the Archivist of the United States has proclaimed himself "a big fan of Wikipedia" and emphasizes the need for the National Archives to work with the project. The Archives posted the internship listing in March, expressing its desire for an employee who "will work as a community coordinator and strengthen the relationship between the Archives and the Wikipedian

Wikimedia Foundation

Related stories

- Wikinews interviews US National Archives Wikipedian in Residence
- RIA Novosti celebrates 70th anniversary, uploads 100 images to Wikimedia Commons
- Wikimedia Foundation announces departure of general counsel Mike Godwin
- FBI asks Wikimedia Foundation to remove seal from websites, Wikimedia declines
- Wikimedia Foundation addresses controversial content conflict



More information on Wikimedia Foundation:

- Wikipedia
- History of Wikipedia

The National Archives at College Park, Maryland, known informally as Archives II, was built due to space constraints at the main building in Washington, D.C..

Image: National Archives and Records Administration.

mostly on Latin American history.

He began his work at the Archives in late May, and since then he has undertaken numerous projects, including uploading onto Wikipedia 200 photos taken by Ansel Adams for the National Park Service. Although those photos have always remained in the public domain, accessing their high-definition versions could be problematic. Researchers who wanted to view the files had to visit the Archives facilities in College Park, Maryland.

McDevitt-Parks is also preparing a "[[w:Wikipedia:GLAM/NARA/Today's Document challenge#{{{anchor}}}|Today's Document challenge]]" on Wikipedia, where works featured as "Today's Document" on the Archives' website are also the main focus of newly written or expanded encyclopedia articles displayed on Wikipedia's home page. The first — and so far only — winner of the challenge was the Wikipedia article "Desegregation in the United States Marine Corps", which incorporated an Archives-held photo of the first African-American recruit to the US Marine Corps. Before the challenge, according to McDevitt-Parks, "a thorough history of desegregation in the U.S. Marines didn't exist in Wikipedia's knowledge ecosystem. The topic wasn't totally ignored, but simply split among related entries; a devoted, focused article never existed solely in its own right."

The "Wikipedian in Residence" position falls within the Archives' social media staff within the Open Government division of Information Services, since the institution's goal is to distribute as much content to the widest audience possible. The internship is 40 hours per week from mid-May to late August.

Interview



The Archivist of the United States, David Ferriero, has been very

community through a range of activities".

McDevitt-Parks, who describes himself as a "history buff, a word nerd, a news junkie and an occasional pedant," is a 24-year-old graduate student at Simmons College in Boston. On Wikipedia, he has contributed for more than seven years under the username "Dominic", his work focusing

- Criticism of Wikipedia
- Jimmy Wales
- Larry Sanger

(((Wikinews))) Before you started your internship, how close of a relationship did the National Archives have with Wikipedia?

(((Dominic McDevitt-Parks))) There was no official relationship, however the National Archives has long been supportive of Wikipedia. Earlier this year, for instance, the National Archives hosted a meetup in the main DC location in honor of Wikipedia's tenth anniversary. The Archivist of the United States, David Ferriero, is incredibly friendly to Wikipedia, as are many of the National Archives' staff. As he wrote after WikiXDC, "As an agency, I look forward to our staff learning more about the fabric and culture of Wikipedia and how to get involved." He also penned a letter to the Wikimedia Foundation offering support from the National Archives for the successful Washington D.C. bid for Wikimania 2012. In all likelihood, this is not a relationship that will end after this summer, either.

(((WN))) Why is it important that institutions like the National Archives foster this sort of relationship with Wikipedia?

(((DMP))) Archives and other such institutions preserve our cultural

supportive of Wikipedia. He is shown here welcoming Wikipedians to the Archives to celebrate the project's tenth birthday.

Image: Sarah Stierch.

heritage not just for the sake of keeping them, but so that we may access and use them. In the 21st century, accessibility is about more than just having exhibitions or a public research room; it is about having a digital presence and proactively delivering content to people with an information need, whether or not they were looking for a particular document from an institution's holding. Wikipedia and its sister projects

are perfectly suited for this purpose in a number of ways. The most obvious is *visibility*. There is no institutional web site in the world that is more popular among general web users than Wikipedia, which is one of the top 10 ranked web sites according to volume of traffic. Its article on a given topic will nearly always rank higher in search engine results than any institution's page, even one about a document actually held by that institution. In general, Wikipedia is the first and often only place online searchers will go to learn about the issues and items in which an institution might specialize. This means that there is no better way to reach the public than Wikipedia, and there is no better way to make one's holdings accessible and—just as important—discoverable than by making it directly available on Wikipedia. The pervasiveness of Wikipedia also means that work to improve it will have much more impact than many other education and outreach programs.

Wikimedia's projects can do more than just reach people, though. It's not merely a content host or a forum, like YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Wikimedia is a *community* with an intellectual mission. It will not only make holdings findable, but it will add value to them. They write encyclopedia articles related to the holdings of cultural institutions, or to subjects for which holdings are valuable source material or illustrations; they organize, categorize, and even sometimes digitally restore images; they transcribe and proofread textual documents. They are doing this for their personal fulfillment, nearly always without the knowledge and cooperation of associated cultural institutions. Indeed, thousands of Wikimedians are already engaged in their own little projects which donated content or expertise can help along; both parties are interested in adding value to their work by partnering with the other.

Finally, Wikimedia is unique among the major online fora and hosts for cultural content in that it shares cultural institutions' commitment to open access and public education. Wikipedia is a non-profit, and creating free public knowledge is its sole purpose. All original content is released under a free copyright license so that it can be widely disseminated without permission or fee. In fact, its commitment to freedom of information is so strong that it often cannot even accept works from some cultural institutions which restrict their use in some way (such as by disallowing derivative works or requiring non-commercial use), and making institutions truly free and compatible with Wikipedia is one of the jobs of Wikipedians in Residence. Wikipedia is not just a venue for presenting our cultural heritage, it is an active ally for all institutions that seek to do so.

(((WN))) What aspect of having a Wikipedian in Residence is seen as most valuable to the National Archives? What would you, personally, say is the greatest benefit to any cultural institution from engaging with the Wikimedia community?

(((DMP))) For the National Archives, all of the above apply. This is about public outreach and increasing access and use. NARA wants to find users where they are, not just wait for them to visit, and the people are on Wikipedia. According to David Ferriero, the National Archives would like this collaboration with Wikipedia to exemplify their "commitment to the Open Government principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration." Wikimedia partnerships are so promising because they can be extensions of any institution's mission in a number of conceivable ways.

(((WN))) You have already told (http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/politics/conversations-dominic-mcdevitt-parks-national-archives-connects-with-wikipedia/2011/06/02/AGCYDWHH_story.html) *The Washington Post* that other institutions have hired Wikipedians in residence, including the British Museum, the Museu Picasso, and the Archives of American Art. Do you know of any other institutions that may develop similar relationships with Wikipedia in the near future?

(((DMP))) You can see a listing of other Wikipedian residencies here. There have been several, but still less than ten, and each situation has been unique. I can't really speak to any specific future collaborations being worked on, as I am not privy to those negotiations. However, I will say more generally that these relationships are only going to become more common. Wikimedians and chapters around the world have been in touch with various institutions interested in working with us. I saw and met many of these people firsthand at GLAMcamp NYC, which was attended by dozens of excited representatives from cultural institutions attracted by the prospect of a relationship with Wikipedia and just as many incredibly motivated Wikimedians who are involved in reaching out to these institutions.

(((WN))) **Are there other — non-Wikimedia — opportunities online you feel the National Archives should look for?**

(((DMP))) The goal of cataloging, describing, digitizing, and transcribing the entire holdings of the National Archives is an impossible one using traditional methods and within traditional budget constraints. Cultural institutions need to engage the interested public to become active partners in preserving cultural heritage, rather than simply consumers. The work with Wikimedia is an important aspect of that new thinking, but there are all sorts of allied projects out there that would also make good partners. This includes similar crowdsourced projects for scanning and transcription, which the National Archives is already seeking out (<http://blogs.archives.gov/aotus/?p=2938>), as well as other specialized groups interested in digital history or particular topic areas.

(((WN))) **How have your experiences — both in school and in Wikipedia — prepared you for this job?**

(((DMP))) I am a history geek and an archivist-in-training. In my life off of Wikipedia, I have an undergraduate history degree, have worked in library/archive settings before, and am currently pursuing master's degrees in both history and library science (archives management). I think these real-life experiences in their field are one of the main reasons that the National Archives was comfortable letting me on to their staff. I hope to be able to relate to the people and the practices here on a higher level than the average Wikipedian. I believe strongly in the work and the mission of the National Archives completely apart from how it syncs up with Wikipedia.

As a Wikipedian, I have been deeply immersed in various aspects of the project for many years now. I first started back in 2004, and have been an administrator since 2005. Along the way, I served as arbitrator, CheckUser, oversighter, and OTRSer, gaining a useful perspective on some of the project's inner workings and (for lack of a better word) governance. I've also done outreach to real people as a [\[\[w:Wikipedia:Campus Ambassadors#{{{anchor}}}|Wikipedia Campus Ambassador\]\]](#) for university students in Boston. I am cross-project Wikipedian, having also been very involved in Wiktionary over the years, where I am also an administrator. I have written content ranging from dictionary definitions of modern colloquialisms to articles on Chilean revolutionaries. But, most importantly, I hope that my familiarity with the culture and practices of Wikimedians will help facilitate this National Archives collaboration.



(((WN))) **Having worked in the National Archives for a few weeks now, has your approach to or perception of your work in Wikipedia or the National Archives changed in any way?**

(((DMP))) I really wasn't sure what to expect when I got here. The staff



The National Archives is reaching out to other crowdsourced projects for scanning and transcription. During a program on citizen archivists, Jessica Zelt (North American Bird Phenology Program), Matthew Knutzen (New York Public Library), and Darla Adams (Ancestry.com) are shown with moderator Meredith Stewart (National Archives).

Image: National Archives and Records Administration.



This photo, taken by Ansel Adams at Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, was provided by the National Archives as part of its partnership with Wikipedia

Image: Ansel Adams.

have all been exceedingly welcoming and cooperative which is a major relief. The real work has been figuring out what I can do and where best to spend my time. Most of the National Archives' documents are not digitized, and possibly not even cataloged on the item-level. Those certainly include some items that Wikimedians would like to use for their projects, but it remains to be seen how much I can realistically do in one summer with those documents. I do want to get as much digital content as possible on Commons, but aside from the technological challenges we face at Commons in trying to figure out how to do mass uploads, the situation with the National Archives' scan files is just as much of a barrier. They are often confusingly named, difficult to locate, or incomplete. I hit the ground running with the upload of an important batch of Ansel Adams photographs, but it turns out that that was actually the lowest-possible hanging fruit.

(((WN))) What challenges do you foresee having to face in your work?

(((DMP))) The real challenges are about organization, both of documents—as I mentioned—and of people.

One of the biggest challenges is that we need Wikimedians to get on board with the project in a big way. This is an incredible opportunity for us as a project, but it requires a special community effort to take full advantage of it. We need volunteers to tag articles, to categorize media, to help with templates and coding tools, to write related article content, to transcribe and proofread texts, to add new images to articles, to digitally restore images, and so on. I can personally serve as the point of contact between the National Archives and Wikimedia, but it needs to be much more than that to be a successful project. At this point, the project spaces I am creating on-wiki are my attempt to create an inviting and useful infrastructure to serve as a hub for this effort, but they are not organically grown like most Wikimedia projects. I, and various helpers with templates and coding, have magicked them into existence in the last few weeks. They need participants to sign up and adopt them as their own so we can really get the ball rolling.

(((WN))) *The New York Times* reported (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/business/media/31link.html>) in January that less than fifteen percent of Wikipedia's contributors are women. The article raised concerns that this gender gap has affected the relative emphasis of topics covered on the encyclopedia. In what ways would this problem affect your own efforts to organize the Wikipedia community, and how do you plan to address it?

(((DMP))) This is an issue that I care strongly about. (And somewhat relatedly, I served, and will continue to serve, as Campus Ambassador at a women's college, and it was a wonderful experience.) The problem is really about more than gender imbalance; it's about having a community that represents a diversity of backgrounds, viewpoints, and personalities. Those of us who work in the humanities can also sometimes feel like a minority on Wikipedia, as one would expect from a male-dominated culture. There is a lot of room for improvement on Wikipedia of articles related to women's history—as well as the history of minority and non-Western peoples—and the National Archives has some incredible resources for these topics. One of the things that I would like to be able to do at the National Archives is to tap their existing pool of volunteers and funnel them towards NARA-related volunteerism on Wikimedia projects. As a national organization with various facilities and presidential libraries throughout the country, there is a lot of potential for various local volunteer communities to get involved. Institutions like the National Archives have volunteers eager to help their cause, but who would otherwise not get involved in Wikipedia, and this group of people likely has a very different demographic makeup than Wikipedia as a whole. I can attest that the library/archives community is certainly not male-dominated. The National Archives is interested in collaborating with Wikipedia not because it wants to lay work at the feet of the Wikipedia community specifically, but because it wants to for Wikipedia to be a platform for the public at large to be able to become active participants in preserving and interpreting their cultural heritage. This plan also means organizing a corresponding corps of Wikipedian volunteers to welcome

and mentor such new editors.

(((WN))) Which aspects of this particular internship attracted you more than any other job opportunity you could have obtained?

(((DMP))) I am a longtime, obsessive Wikimedian with a passion for history who is studying to become an archivist. Every aspect of the opportunity attracted me as soon as I learned about it. :-)

Sources

- Jared Keller. "How Wikipedians-in-Residence Are Opening Up Cultural Institutions (<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/06/how-wikipedians-in-residence-are-opening-up-cultural-institutions/240204/>) " — *The Atlantic*, June 16, 2011
- Lisa Rein. "Conversations: Dominic McDevitt-Parks, National Archives connects with Wikipedia (http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/politics/conversations-dominic-mcdevitt-parks-national-archives-connects-with-wikipedia/2011/06/02/AGCYDWHH_story.html) " — *The Washington Post*, June 2, 2011
- Brett Zongker. "National Archives hires 'Wikipedian in Residence' (http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2011/06/01/national_archives_hires_wikipedian_in_residence/) " — *Boston.com*, June 1, 2011
- Mary. "Meet Our Wikipedian in Residence: Dominic McDevitt-Parks (<http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access/?p=5054>) " — *NARAtions*, June 1, 2011
- Tony1, HaeB, and Jean-Frédéric. "ArbCom referendum goes live; US National Archives residency; financial planning; brief news (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/2011-05-30/News_and_notes) " — *Wikipedia Signpost*, May 30, 2011
- Sarah Stierch. "Ansel Adams comes to Wikimedia (<http://museumintern.blogspot.com/2011/05/ansel-adams-comes-to-wikimedia.html>) " — *Sarah - Your Favorite Museum Intern*, May 28, 2011
- "Call for Applicants: Wikipedian in Residence (<http://blogs.archives.gov/aotus/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/national-archives-wikipedian-in-residence-intern-call-for-applicants.pdf>) " — *US National Archives*, March 15, 2011
- David S. Ferriero. "Celebrating 10 Years of Wikipedia (<http://blogs.archives.gov/aotus/?p=2489>) " — *AOTUS: Collector in Chief*, March 15, 2011
- Noam Cohen. "Define Gender Gap? Look Up Wikipedia's Contributor List (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/business/media/31link.html>) " — *New York Times*, January 30, 2011

Retrieved from

"http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Wikinews_interviews_US_National_Archives_Wikipedian_in_Residence"

Categories: June 30, 2011 | Wikimedia Foundation | Internet | Wikimedia | Original reporting | Interview | Published | Computing | Science and technology | Wikipedia | United States | North America | Wikimania | Media | Education | Culture and entertainment | Washington, D.C. | Maryland

- All text created after September 25, 2005 is available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 License unless otherwise specified.





Contributions must be attributed to Wikinews.

Copyright terms on images may vary, please check individual image pages prior to duplication.

Wikinews®, and the Wikinews logo are registered trademarks of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.

Wikinews is not responsible for the content of external sites.