

RAISING REPRESENTATION

ting Wikipedia:
guide to improving
content on the online
encyclopedia

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Badges and resources
for Wikipedia editing.
Credit: Hannah Cobb



Raising Representation team at the Cifa 2025 'Shaping the Future' conference.

Credit: Hannah Cobb

Raising Representation editors at the 2025 Cifa 'Shaping the Future' conference. Credit: Hannah Cobb



How can we highlight diversity so that students like us can see important role models and not feel so demoralised by the headline statistics?

Shocking statistics

Most archaeologists will be familiar with the *Profiling the Profession* exercise that has taken place regularly since 1997. This study has tracked workforce dynamics in British archaeology and, perhaps most importantly, has highlighted the areas in which we are less dynamic as a profession, particularly around equity, diversity and inclusion. As students of archaeology looking to pursue a career in the subject, hearing that employed non-white archaeologists have only ever comprised between 1 and 3 per cent of the UK profession; that a similarly small percentage have ever been (reported as) disabled; seeing the statistics that firmly demonstrate a glass ceiling for women in archaeology; and not seeing any representation of non-binary or gender-diverse archaeologists in those studies, can all be really demoralising.

Yet we know that there are archaeologists who identify in all of these minoritised ways who are doing amazing work, so the question we asked ourselves is, how can we raise their representation? How can we highlight diversity so that students like us can see important role models and not feel so demoralised by the headline statistics? Our answer has been to turn to Wikipedia, both as a form of activism for archaeology and to positively impact Wikipedia itself.

Wikipedia remains one of the most influential accessible sources of public knowledge, yet it reflects deep inequalities in gender representation. Less than 20 per cent of English language Wikipedia articles focus on women, with only approximately 15 per cent of Wikipedia's contributors identifying as women. Coverage of non-binary individuals is more limited, with just 429 biographies existing at the time of writing. These broader statistics are further compounded in fields with existing diversity issues, such as archaeology. To help correct this, during the 2024/25 academic year, archaeology staff and students at the University of Manchester developed the *Raising Representation* project. The project aimed to train participants in creating and editing Wikipedia biographies of underrepresented women and non-binary archaeologists through a series of Wikipedia editathons, thus bolstering both Wikipedia content and contributor diversity, and also raising representation for aspiring archaeologists to see.

Raising Representation at the Cifa conference

After running several editathons at the University of Manchester, we came to the Cifa annual conference in Birmingham, to edit on an unprecedented scale! We were

supported by Richard Nevell from Wikimedia, and our lecturer Hannah Cobb. We came prepared with a list of archaeologists whose biographies we could create or add to, but we really wanted to hear from attendees directly and discover who mattered to them, whose work inspired them, and who they felt deserved greater recognition on platforms like Wikipedia.

We had a drop-in stand where people could stop by, learn about the project and share names of colleagues or peers who they felt deserved greater visibility, or even tell us about their own work. Conference attendees reacted positively to the project, often sharing their insights into the present lack of representation. Many visitors to the stand were women and, with only a few exceptions, the majority of those interviewed were women or non-binary people. A common reaction from interviewees was appreciation for the project aims but a humble resistance to having their own name included on the list, regardless of the importance of their work. However, where people were willing to share, they brought forward stories and information about individuals that we might never have found through desk-based research alone, and whose work, mainly in heritage and the public sector, was notable and indispensable yet widely unrecognised online.

We also took turns to research and draft Wikipedia entries based on the suggestions we received. We followed Wikipedia’s guidelines on notability, using only independent sources such as news media, published scholarly articles, and popular books which do not contain self-promotional content. The subjects of biographies are required by Wikipedia to be ‘notable’ independently of their organisation or affiliation with other notable individuals for articles to be accepted. Care was taken to represent people’s identities and contributions accurately and inclusively.

How we raised representation: project outcomes

The editathon’s Wikipedia outreach dashboard tracked the edits, characters and references added for each contributor and article for the period 29 April–5 May 2025. The extended editathon period encouraged contributions from those who wished to participate but were unable to during the conference.

Thirty-six biographies were created or improved upon, of which 25 per cent have been published to date. Of the articles created, 89.7 per cent are about women and 10.3 per cent non-binary or gender-queer archaeologists, who are not represented in official demographic surveys (see Profiling the Profession, 2021). A total of 33.3 per cent of articles created, and 15 per cent published, are for archaeologists of colour.

Unfortunately, 22 per cent of articles created were rejected following review. Before publication, 55 per cent of now-published articles were rejected at least once. A primary reason for rejection was insufficient sources to fulfil notability criteria (87.5%). Two articles were flagged for a ‘close connection’ between the subject and writer, despite this not being the case.

Limitations to Raising Representation

A major issue highlighted by visitors was that women and gender-diverse individuals often take archaeological roles that are not public-facing and are often collaborative (something identified back in 1985 by Joan Gero), and so their individual contributions can be hard to identify and their ‘notability’, as defined by Wikipedia, can be hard to establish. Many

interviewees working in heritage or public archaeology remarked that they publish as their organisation, not as themselves. Notably, women make up the majority in these sectors – 53 per cent in public archaeology and 66 per cent in heritage and museums (see Profiling the Profession, 2021) and are therefore less likely to pass Wikipedia’s notability criteria. The criteria of ‘notability’ for Wikipedia biographies also intersects with both micro- and structural inequities across the archaeology and heritage sectors, compounding the difficulties involved in increasing the representation of women and non-binary people and highlighting the systemic barriers to raising marginalised voices in archaeology.

Conclusion

Given the limitations to establishing notability, and our own observations and conversations at the ClfA conference, it is

clear that the *Raising Representation* project and similar initiatives (eg the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland’s *Hidden Voices* project, and the AHRC-funded *Beyond Notability* project) are vital for challenging systemic barriers and making space for more inclusive depictions of archaeology on public platforms like Wikipedia. Women, non-binary archaeologists and archaeologists of colour remain severely underrepresented on Wikipedia because long-standing workplace norms and social expectations make it difficult to meet Wikipedia’s notability criteria and will continue to do so until these gaps and patterns are addressed across the sector and by Wikipedia. The work undertaken so far is a drop in the ocean of systemic inequity but hopefully the resulting ripples of awareness will go some way towards redressing the imbalance in Wikipedia’s representation, and in the archaeological and heritage professions as a whole.

Headline figures per editathon event (further edits, words and references were made after each event but these have not been captured by the dashboards, which only operate during a period – usually a week – after the editathon)

Raising Representation events	Total edits	Words added	References added	Article views
‘Doing Archaeology 2’ in class editathon Nov 2024	33	843	6	2,260
Classics, Ancient History, Archaeology, and Egyptology Society editathon Feb 2025	154	6,760	71	6,210
ClfA Conference editathon April/May 2025	116	1,780	16	46,500
UoM & Historic England editathon for NW archaeology depts May 2025	28	1,690	11	1,130
Total	331	11,073	104	56,100

The authors

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