

British Library Wikimedian in Residence: Report for 2021

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Note on Report

This report gives a month by month overview of the first year of the British Library Wikimedian Residency from March 2021. This report is not exhaustive, and covers highlights of each month as opposed to detailed breakdowns of ongoing projects. It is hoped that it will provide insight into the overall activity of the WiR at the British Library, and the kinds of work engaged in.

March 2021

India Office Records [IOR]

Our collaboration with the India Records Office was consolidated with the identification of two datasets for a small project on Wikimedia Commons. The IOR are interested in making material available in this manner, with a view to scaling up for more reference materials if successful. The datasets include 54 volumes of Annual Administration Reports in Bengal (1870s-1936) and 124 volumes of India Office Lists (1860-1947). We agreed to try an initial pilot of 5 reports.

2CIP [Two Centuries of Indian Print]

Lead by Tom Derrick, from 15 March – 14 April 2021 the Two Centuries of Indian Print project ran a competition to proofread text from Bengali books digitised by the project, now hosted on Wikisource, in partnership with the West Bengal Wikimedians User Group.

IFLA [International Federation of Library Associations]

We engaged with IFLA's Wikidata interest group on collaborative plans for an event in May, to coincide with #1lib1ref. I drafted a new introductory zine for Wikimedia beginners, and began the process of collating and updating internal resources at the British Library for supporting staff who wish to work with Wikimedia.

[April 2021](#)

IOR

We spent time this month discussing the implementation of an information box on uploads, contextualising the potentially harmful and triggering content of these colonial papers. Having spoken with Stuart at WMUK, we found a technical solution to this, and worked with the IOR to find suitable wording, in tandem with British Library policy and the input of the internal BAME Working Group, to address this issue succinctly.

Wiki Wednesdays

We invited speakers from a variety of projects to talk to Library staff about their work on Wikimedia projects. Tom Derrick's work with Bengali Wikisource partners was the focus of one discussion, with a presentation from Bodhisattwa Mandal. I also arranged for Heather Steinhagen, of Indigenising Wikipedia, and Erin O'Neil, former Wikimedian-in-Residence at the University of Alberta to present on their work. We aimed to create intersectional programming, focussing on marginalised voices and projects which amplify and support diversity.

IFLA

Our collaborative training event with IFLA for Wikidata trainers was well-received. I acted as the moderator for questions and discussion. Further details are available on our most recent Digital Scholarship [blog](#).

[May 2021](#)

UCL Placements

Prior to my appointment at the Library, the Endangered Archives Project (EAP) had arranged for two placement students from UCL to come on board in May for two weeks to work on Wikipedia-based projects. I was pleased to get a chance to work with both Hope Lowther and Jack Hudson, providing basic Wikipedia training and support throughout their placements. Hope also participated in the Urban Tree Festival, which was an encouraging sign of a successful placement and, in her own words ‘a Wikipedia convert’.

[Hope Lowther Blog, 26 May 2021.](#)

[EAP Placement Dashboard](#)

IOR

Separate to the EAP placements, which were run in tandem with the UCL Archive Management programme, we were pleased to welcome our own placement student, Dominic Kane, who worked with us on a part-time basis through to early July. Dominic blogged about his introduction the library below.

[Dominic Kane Blog, 2 June 2021.](#)

Urban Tree Festival

We hosted the Urban Tree Festival Wikithon, which was a thoroughly enjoyable event. As of 25th May, the statistics were very encouraging, with 12 editors contributing at least 29 articles, editing 119, adding over 18k words and a number of images to Commons. The atmosphere was collegiate and we were able to share a number of resources, linked below. We covered aspects of the Tree Festival on our blog, also linked below.

[Laying Down Roots With WikTreePedia, 7 May 2021.](#)

[Getting a head start for the online Urban Tree Wikithon, 13 May 2021.](#)

[Wikithon Materials](#)

[Wikithon Dashboard](#)

IFLA

We were the hosts of the inaugural IFLA Wikidata Office Hour – we were happy to welcome the two EAP placement students for an informal open house on Wikidata, at which Andy Mabbett provided an excellent overview and beginner’s guide to Wikidata.

Presentations/Meetings

A presentation to Contemporary British Collections was well-received, and by happy coincidence the new Head of Collections and Curation, Dr Xerxes Mazda was in attendance, thus raising the profile of the residency at a high level. It was useful to meet with the new Copyright Manager, Alison Davidson to talk about collaboration on open access materials, and the Learning Team expressed an interest in developing support for younger Wikimedia users, an idea which we hope to consider.

Metadata Training

I attended in-house training on Library metadata standards to support my learning on the asynchronous Library Juice Metadata Course which concluded in early May. I attained 99.5% on this course and it has helped to inform my implementation of Wikidata into library frameworks.

June 2021

IOR/Placement

Dominic Kane's placement working on the India Office Records progressed very well. By the end of June, we had uploaded three sets of IOR lists, and we prepared the remaining reports for later ingest, pending agreement from the Library about wording of the content warnings. Dominic presented his final project overview to the Digital Scholarship team on Wednesday 30th June at our regular team meeting. Dominic also blogged about the practical application of his skills on the Digital Scholarship [blog](#).

Wikimedia Wednesdays

A four-session season of Library internal presentation Wikimedia Wednesdays culminated on Wednesday 30th June with speakers from the Linked Infrastructure for Networked Cultural Scholarship project in Canada. Prior to this, talks on Indigenizing Wikipedia and the Bengali Books project were well received and attended.

Conferences

I attended a number of conferences this month for information pertaining to the residency and the activity of Wikimedia. These are listed below.

- [Arctic Knot](#)
- [IIIF](#)

- [DCDC21](#)

In my own time, but relevant to the residency, I also completed two courses as part of [DHSI 2021](#): RegEx in an Afternoon, and Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed.

National Libraries Now Proposal

I co-ordinated a proposal for the National Libraries Now conference, in conjunction with Stella Wisdom (British Library), Rebecca O’Neill (Wikimedia Ireland) and Jason Evans (National Library Wales) which was accepted by the organising committee. The panel is entitled **Reflecting on Wikimedian Residencies in the GLAM Sector, UK and Ireland** and will consist of four lightning talks recorded in August and a question and answer session in September.

July 2021

Events

I attended an event on ‘Decolonising the Database’ run by the University of Brighton, which was attended by a few interested Wikimedia parties. We wrapped up Dominic’s placement with an IOR-focussed Hack and Yack session, in which Dominic took participants through the process of adding items to Wikidata, with an overview of QuickStatements and the project as a whole.

Agents of Enslavement

We are in the process of creating a Wikibase as part of the Agents of Enslavement project run by Graham Jevon (see Press/Media). Graham approached us with this idea and with support from Stuart, we are hoping to use this as a pilot for the Library as a whole to see the potential benefits of Wikibase, as well as the specific utility for the Agents project, in drawing together and illustrating networks of influence and enabling bespoke queries.

New Media Writing Prize

Our work on the electronic literatures Wikidata project continued, and I began the process of preparing data pertaining to the New Media Writing Prize winners for upload to Wikidata. We hoped that this umbrella of NMWP authors, works and topics will prove to be a useful set for exemplifying the importance of Wikidata in a GLAM context, particularly for emerging formats, and we plan to write this into a case study for the residency.

Wikimania

We recorded a session for Wikimania which is being edited for upload. Information about this session can be found [here](#).

August 2021

Reading Group Sessions/Decolonisation

I participated in two important reading group sessions this month: the first, with the Digital Scholarship Reading Group, focussed on Scott Ratima Nolan's recent work on Kaitiakitanga and approaches to cultural heritage. This work also became relevant when I met with Alice White during August to talk about Residence experiences. The BAME network reading group also met later in the month to discuss Stuart Hall's 'Familiar Stranger' which fed into broader discourse around decolonisation hosted by the Wikimedians in Residence group. Following this particular Resident's meeting, I assisted Sara Thomas in curating a [list](#) of decolonisation resources on Etherpad.

Canadian Copyright

I met with Fran Fuentes of the Americas/Eccles Centre at the Library to discuss the Canadian Copyright collection, and the framing of some images therein. This was a useful discussion which tied in with Scott's work, and Fran and I spoke about curating a short series of events in January focussed on Indigenous languages, and perhaps inviting speakers from the [Indigenous Languages Toolkit](#) to speak to staff members. I also met with Alice White of Wellcome to discuss our experiences as Wikimedians in Residence, which followed on from the decolonisation discourse and allowed us to approach Scott in regards to resources and support moving forward.

IOR

The India Office uploads were largely completed: we have now uploaded over 200 individuals to Wikidata. These individuals were Postmasters listed in the Indian Civil and Military lists from the 1880s. This completes the initial data cleaning and uploading work done by Dominic Kane and detailed at the [project page](#).

A further three documents were uploaded to Wikimedia Commons:

[India List Civil and Military, July, 1885](#)

[India List Civil and Military, January, 1886](#)

[India List Civil and Military, July, 1886](#)

We are particularly proud of the work done to contextualise these works in a thoughtful context which actively works to reduce harm through the use of content warnings. Dominic Kane, Tom Derrick and I presented on this work and the Bengali Books competition at Wikimania via an asynchronous presentation, linked [here](#).

TNA Meeting

We were invited to meet with Rebecca Hutcheon and Nicola Hunt of the National Archives to discuss our work with Wikimedia and the role of the Resident. This was a useful collaborative meeting that highlighted the potential for work with TNA and the mutual understanding and common issues that exist between the organisations, as well as some of the key differences in our archival material.

Metrics/Engagement

We were asked by Neil Fitzgerald, Stella's line manager, to find a method for metrics measurement of image views. Jason Evans and Robin Owain offered good advice about the mechanism for this in BaGLAMa, while Richard Nevell kindly showed us a shortcut to specific metrics for British Library uploaded material, as opposed to anyone uploading a Library artefact.

Lord Chamberlain's Plays

We engaged with a new idea to work on a data set of the [Lord Chamberlain's Plays](#), with a key focus on BAME playwrights, in collaboration with the Eccles Centre (Cara Rodway) and Leeds University (Kate Dossett).

September 2021

Lotus Sutras

I was delighted to hear from Tan Wang-Ward's Project Manager cover, Laura Parsons, who wanted to revisit the possibility of uploading scroll material onto Wikimedia Commons. This offered a great opportunity to touch base with Martin Poulter at Khalili who has had similar experience with unusual upload dimensions. Martin has been extremely helpful, and at my last check-in with Laura we are looking at potentially uploading 4 scrolls, after image checking and clearance from the IDP. I am currently awaiting confirmation and updates from the IDP end.

ARP Work

The library's Anti-Racism Project (ARP) ran a series of workshops this month for staff to talk about how we envisage the library in the next five years, and to speak to experiences and attitudes about the anti-racism work they are embarking upon. The ARP also have a separate Metadata and Cataloguing subgroup. At this month's meeting of that group, Alex Hailey presented on our work on the India Office Records and we received positive feedback about the implementation of content warnings on Commons, and requests to present again at future meetings for different departments.

Lord Chamberlain's Plays

There are two strands to this, one is utilising the data about the plays, which includes communication and papers around the plays, as items for a Wikibase pilot; and the other is about getting these items up onto Wikimedia Commons if possible. The Plays are one of the libraries biggest collections, and although there will likely be some copyright complications (due to the mixed death dates of authors, plays which went to America and so on) we are optimistic that we can upload at least some of these documents.

I was lucky enough to have an in-person meeting at St Pancras on the 27th where we viewed a few sample items: these were largely typed 'Reader's Reports' from the 1940s and 1930s, which were fascinating from an anti-racist and diversity perspective (censorship was a huge part of the LCP remit) and some actual play texts with marginalia, corrections and comments. They are all typewritten on old style typewriter paper and very fascinating to look at. This project will work in tandem with Leeds University, who are leading the way with work on offensive language in archives and catalogues, and offer a huge opportunity to excel in our partnership with BL North.

At this meeting, we spoke with Kate Dossett and Cara Rodway about the potential for events related to these projects. We agreed that Citation Justice would be a great angle to take in all events, and proposed a series of three Wikithons, roughly grouped around themes of Surveillance, due to the censorship angle (possibly in tandem with The National Archives); Race (looking at the plays as evidence of Black artistic presence in the pre-war years) and Women (hopefully tying into Art + Feminism/Women in Red, in March 2022). We are really excited about these possibilities.

National Libraries Now

The National Libraries Now conference discussion panel went very well, and I was able to blog about this for the Library (link below). Stuart was a great chair and it was an excellent showcase of links across the four nations. I wrote a short [blog](#) about National Libraries Now for the Digital Scholarship Blog.

Wikimedia Wednesdays

Wikimedia Wednesdays started again on 29th September with Richard Nevell presenting on the Connected Heritage NLHF project. We had a healthy number of sign-ups, and are excited for the upcoming talks over October.

- Richard Nevell on 'Connected Heritage'
- Liam Wyatt on 'WikiCite: Past, Present and Future'
- Georgina Burnett, Wikimedia Deutschland and possibly Lozana from Rhizome (TBC) on 'Wikibase: free, flexible and collaborative linked data for libraries'
- Dean Rehberger and Sheila Gonzalez [Michigan State University] on 'Enslaved.org: A knowledge representation in WikiBase of people, events, and places in the historical slave trade'
- Kate Topham and Julian Chambliss [Michigan State University] on 'Making Sense of Graphic Literature: Comics as Data North America (CaDNA) and Building a Wikidata Culture'

Meeting Past WiR

It was so nice to finally meet and catch up with Andrew Gray, who answered some Wikidata questions regarding the New Media Writing Prize and reminisced about his time at the Library. I am hoping that Andrew and I may collaborate on a reflective piece, whether a blog or podcast while this Residency is running. IFLA is regrouping to address the change in status of the Wikidata Working Group into a Special Interest Group and we met to discuss the preliminary steps of this.

October 2021

New Media Writing Prize

I uploaded a full list of shortlisted authors and award winners to Wikidata. This was a useful learning curve and I aimed to create some useful queries to use this collection to its fullest potential. We had two meetings to catch up about this work this month, which helped shape the data uploads and create a methodology of priorities in terms of author uploads and adding additional details about the works themselves.

Lord Chamberlain's Plays

The Lord Chamberlain's Project is now divided into two strands: **Indexes**, and **Plays**. Indexes will deal with the upload of index cards/bibliographic data to Wikidata, while Plays will look more broadly at the cultural context of the works, the censorship reports and the playwrights and topics involved. This will be Wikipedia and Wikimedia Commons focussed. Kate Dossett of the University of Leeds is a collaborative partner on Plays, but not Indexes, which is solely in-house. We had an **LCP Indexes** meeting this month and spoke about

creating a structure/schema for Wikidata uploads. I have drafted this and received feedback from Laura Walker.

Agents of Enslavement

Stuart Prior was very supportive in this area and two meetings were held this month, one with Eccles and British Library, and the other with Wikimedia Deutschland, Wikibase and the Library. We are now well informed about the relationship between Wikibase, WBStack and Wikimedia Deutschland, as well as the potential for upcoming change in the organisations.

IOR Follow-Up

I caught up with Alex Hailey and Antonia Moon of the India Office Records: they wish to progress from the pilot project and upload more material to Commons. I was happy to assist in this, and have agreed to meet with Alex to consider what kind of workflow and timeline we may be looking at to get this done in the coming months.

Dia de los Muertos

I was an invited speaker at the Dia de los Muertos Closing Gala, where I spoke as part of a round table on Indigenous languages. I mostly spoke about my experiences in Saskatchewan and the Scots Wikipedia question, and was very grateful to Sara and the WMUK team for helping me prepare and get confident for this event.

Relabelling

I attended my first Digital Research Team meeting – this is a smaller version of our weekly Digital Scholarship team meetings for those who report directly to Neil, and those who report to them. My impression was that the residency is being well received and perceived as valuable. Neil asked that work on the relabelling of historical uploads to progress: currently we do not have a label on Commons for ‘uploaded by the British Library’ as opposed to just materials from the Library.

Thought Bubble Preparation

I prepared for our first in-person Wikithon on the 11th of November at Leeds Libraries, as part of Thought Bubble. I created training slides, preparatory spreadsheets and COI information. I wrote and published two blogs about Thought Bubble: an introduction [here](#), and preparatory information [here](#).

Education

Annika McQueen from Learning approached me with some question about engaging with Wikimedia in their programming. I have spoken with Daria and the WMUK Programmes team about this and arranged a meeting to manage expectations with Annika in the next month.

November 2021

New Media Writing Prize

The NMWP uploads were completed, with items all grouped under New Media Writing Prize Special Collection. I constructed some queries and am working on an in-depth blog entry about the process and findings for the BL Digital Scholarship blog in early 2022.

Lord Chamberlain's Plays

The LCP1 project (index cards and data) progressed with a December Hack and Yack event, looking at using Quickstatements to upload mass edits and items. We chose a pantomime theme as there are multiple instances of pantomimes in this dataset

LCP2 (censor reports and plays) is also progressing with a proposal for a series of three themed Wikithons in early 2022, one of which will hopefully be hosted by The National Archives on the theme of surveillance. I have organised a meeting with Jo Pugh, Kevin Searle, Kate Dossett and Library representatives for December 16th in order to progress these plans with TNA. [This meeting was postponed til January 2022 due to staff absences.]

Meetings

I sat in on the meeting regarding Transkribus and Wikibase, which was also attended by Daria and Stuart. I attended the BAME Network Reading Group as usual, and also very much appreciated and enjoyed the WMUK Decolonisation meeting for residents, which asked important questions and set a really beneficial tone for our ongoing work.

Training

I attended three sessions of Dr Martin Poulter's Wikidata training, all of which were incredibly useful in helping shape ongoing projects at the Library. Martin was an exemplary trainer and top human in terms of his helpfulness with some difficult queries!

Placement Proposals

I helped EAP shape a proposal for a PhD placement in 2022 that has just been accepted. It will focus on 'discoverability of the online collections of West African manuscripts in Arabic' and will include some Wiki-based work. Along with Daria Cybulska (WMUK), I also met with the Education department at the Library to consider Wiki-based work for the Education department, as perhaps a module or ongoing collaboration.

Thought Bubble

We ran our Wikithon for Thought Bubble, a high-profile comics festival: attendees included Kenn Taylor, Lead Cultural Producer North, and representatives from Leeds University and the Library's cataloguing team. A couple of members of the public also joined. It was an enjoyable, low key event and gave me the chance to meet Lucy Moore and Hope Miyoba in person. Leeds was a great venue and host: Rhian Isaac could not have done more.

Book Bindings

I had a request for a meeting from the book bindings team at the Library to look at how to increase traffic to the images on Commons. We met to talk about how to interlink Wiki pages and ways we could promote the collection that has been uploaded through this. We also spoke about Wikidata potential.

[December 2021](#)

Indigenous Reading Group

I met with a group of individuals interested in starting an Indigenous Reading Group in 2022. This is a good link to the Americas/Eccles Centre and I hope that we will be able to progress with plans to make this happen as a regular in-Library event.

Hack and Yack

Noting the large amount of records for pantomimes in the LCP (c. 300/400 for Cinderella!) we hosted a festive December Hack and Yack event to get staff in the Library familiar with QuickStatements and Wikidata uploads. The event was a quiet one but enjoyable. It was nice to see work being done on the LCP collection and to introduce some colleagues to the functionality of OpenRefine. In return, getting some insight and input into how to frame these items was very useful for the project going forward. Stuart was a great trainer and support in arranging this event.