

CHAPTER 7

WP:CATÉGORIE IS . . . LIAISON LIBRARIAN CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL QUÉBÉCOIS LGBTQ+ CONTENT IN FRANCOPHONE WIKIPEDIA

*Michael David Miller*¹

¹ McGill University

Abstract

Liaison librarians have unique roles in their institutions and in their greater communities. They often support and collaborate with professors and students in their subject areas and, of equal importance, have a special knowledge of resources available in their assigned liaison areas. This chapter will explore how a liaison librarian with subject responsibilities can contribute to closing gaps and community building through Wikipedia and the Wikimedia projects. It will describe the author's contribution, as a liaison librarian, in addressing the Québécois LGBTQ+ gap in the Francophone Wikipedia project, WikipédiaFR. The author will also discuss how Wikipedia can be used as a tool for community building and raising awareness about the Québec LGBTQ+ culture and history gap in WikipédiaFR. The contribution events and their format, les soirées contributives, hosted at the Bibliothèque à livres ouverts du Centre Communautaire LGBTQ+ de Montréal, that sought to improve and create local LGBTQ+ Wikipedia content en français will be discussed. Additionally, the author will share thoughts on existing and not existing in Wikipedia for local LGBTQ+ communities.

Keywords

LGBTQ+, Queering Wikipedia, Liaison librarianship.

Introduction

The cultural capital of Wikipedia is such that existence within it denotes a level of power and importance. The phenomenon of considering something or someone truly significant or insignificant, through its presence or absence on Wikipedia, can be a damaging one.

—Kelly Doyle (Minding the Gaps, Ch. 5, *Leveraging Wikipedia: Connecting Communities of Knowledge*)

Communities must be represented in the world's premier information source—and more importantly in their native language. Kelly Doyle (2018) reminds us that Wikipedia is power, existing or not existing in Wikipedia is a cultural statement, and she alludes to Wikipedia having authority—if your community exists in it, it is important; if it does not exist in it, it is not important. Take the francophone nation of Québec as an example. Québec is Canada's only francophone, or French-speaking, province, with a population of 8.5 million people out of an estimated 38 million people in all of Canada (Statistique Canada, n.d.). Of Canada's 10.9 million francophones, 7.8 million (71 percent) live in Québec (Quémener et al., 2019). On October 14, 2020, 1.37 percent of articles in the WikipédiaFR were linked to *Québec's Wikipedia Portal*, 9.03 percent were to the U.S. portal, and 16.97 percent to France's portal—this showed a possible underrepresentation of content about Québec. This representation may look bleak, but back in 2016, the Fondation Lionel Groulx, a historical society that focuses on Québec's history, reported that approximately 5,000 WikipédiaFR articles were about Québec (Pierre Graveline, 2016). Today there are more than 30,000 articles about the *Je me souviens*, Québec, province (*Portail:Québec—Wikipédia*, 2020).

Wikipedia content is a reflection of the interests of the thousands of volunteers who contribute to it each month. That is to say, the more

Table 1 Francophone Population and Number of Articles by Wikipedia Portals in WikipédiaFR as of October 14, 2020

Country	Number of Francophones	Number of Articles in Portal	Percentage out of 2,259,644 Articles (%)
France	66,060,000	383,510	16.97
Congo-Kinshasa	42,533,000	4,382	0.19
Algeria	13,804,000	11,360	0.05
Morocco	12,729,000	7,825	0.35
Cameroun	10,006,000	10,808	0.48
Belgium	8,678,000	42,181	1.87
Côte d'Ivoire	8,259,000	3,897	0.17
Québec	7,833,000	30,195	1.34
Tunisia	6,081,000	7,721	0.34
Switzerland	5,734,000	26,767	1.18
Canada (excluding Québec)	3,149,000	36,217	1.60
United States	2,127,000	204,745	9.06

Québécois that contribute to WikipédiaFR, the better Québec's coverage will be. This also applies to LGBTQ+ content. With more LGBTQ+ Québécois contributing to WikipédiaFR the better this local culture will be represented. Table 1 shows the top ten countries with Francophone populations, the total Francophone population, and the specific articles in their associated country profiles in comparison to the overall number of articles in WikipédiaFR. In this table, the United States was added for comparison purposes and Québec was removed from the Canadian numbers, as this chapter's focus is on this Canadian province. In addition to what appears to be a small number of articles for Québec, an argument can be made that most Francophone countries have local cultural content gaps. WikipédiaFR notability policies are not favorable to local cultures and histories and tend to favor their national counterparts, due primarily to the criteria on a credible

source (“Wikipédia,” 2020a, 2020b). A future research project on what constitutes a “credible” source in WikipédiaFR could help explain the low levels of articles about countries other than France. One thing is for sure, Québec LGBTQ+ newspapers, magazines, and other media publications are not considered “national” sources.

Francophone Wikipedia and LGBTQ+ Content: Wikipédia and la francophonie

WikipédiaFR is the fifth largest language Wikipedia with over 2.2 million articles as of December 2020. Understanding the geographic reach of the Francophone world helps understand the emphasis of this chapter on the geographic distribution of articles in the WikipédiaFR. In 2018, the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)* estimated that there were 300 million francophones spread across 106 countries and territories (Quémener et al., 2019, p. 87). Total 235 million of the 300 million francophones use French on a daily basis (Quémener et al., 2019, p. 88). A little over 59 percent of these daily users are in Africa and the Middle East, 33.4 percent in Europe, 7 percent in the Americas, and 0.3 percent in Asia and Oceania (Quémener et al., 2019, p. 38).

In September 2018, the Wikimedia Traffic Analysis Report showed that WikipédiaFR received 636 million page views that month (Wikimedia Foundation). In addition, the most recent 2013 Edits Per Wikipedia Language report breaks down the provenance of WikipédiaFR editors: 80.1 percent from France, 5.5 percent from Belgium, 4.5 percent from Canada (including Québec), 1.7 percent from Switzerland, and 1.2 percent from the United States (Wikimedia Foundation, 2013).

LGBTQ+ Francophone Content

As of October 24, 2020, of the 2.2 million articles in WikipédiaFR, 10,294¹ are in the LGBTQ+ Category *Catégorie:Lesbiennes, gays, bisexuels et transgenres* and 5,353² are in the *Catégorie:LGBT par pays* (translation:

Table 2 Number and Percentage of Articles by Country Portals in WikipédiaFR

Catégorie	Number of Articles	Percentage out of 5,330 <i>LGBT par pays</i> articles (%)	PetScan Permalink
LGBT par pays	5,353	100	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17963101
LGBT en France	883	16.44	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967595
LGBT au Congo-Kinshasa	No category	0	No permalink
LGBT en Algérie	6	0.09	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967596
LGBT au Maroc	13	0.24	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967597
LGBT au Cameroun	4	0.08	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967598
LGBT en Belgique	43	0.79	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967599
LGBT en Côte d'Ivoire	2	0.04	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967607
LGBT au Québec	152	2.85	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967611
LGBT en Tunisie	15	0.26	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967612
LGBT en Suisse	54	1.03	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967613
LGBT au Canada*	150	2.78	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967614
LGBT aux États-Unis	2,117	39.53	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967615
LGBT au Royaume-Uni	342	6.32	https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17967618

* Excluding Québec

LGBT by country). There are ninety-nine subcategories associated with the *Catégorie LGBT par pays* of which eighty-six are about specific countries. The *Catégorie LGBT au Canada* is divided into subcategories, which includes, as a subcategory, the *Catégorie LGBT au Québec*.

The previous table (Table 2) is a breakdown of LGBTQ+ content as of October 24, 2020, in the WikipédiaFR based off of country or region using the Wikimedia Foundation Labs' PetScan Tool³ that provides the number of articles associated to a category as well as the number of articles associated to a category's subcategories. The depth of analysis goes as deep as the eleventh subcategory. After the eleventh subcategory, the number of results ceased to increase.

This data indicate that there is possible underrepresentation of Francophone countries and an overrepresentation of the United States in LGBTQ+ country-specific information in the WikipédiaFR. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, however, the content of Wikipedia reflects the interests of its contributors; perhaps there is more interest in creating Francophone LGBTQ+ content related to France and the United States. Librarians and other organizers can help build interest in creating Wikipedia content about underrepresented topics by hosting events and other activities to train and onboard new editors; in the next section, the author will discuss his role in hosting such an event.

Where It All Started

My passion for this project started in August 2017 in Montréal, the Francophone province of Québec's largest, and Canada's second largest, city. Montréal celebrated its 375th anniversary, Canada celebrated its 150th, Wikimania and the WikiConference North America were *en ville*, and it was the month of the world's largest Francophone LGBTQ+ Pride celebration, Fierté Montréal (Tourisme Montréal, 2019). During a *Wikipédia aime les bibliothèques* event, in a moment of introspection, I wondered if my intersecting identities—a gay, cisgender, néo-Québécois, originally from Michigan, and born of a Korean mother who was adopted by my white American grandparents—were represented in Francophone Wikipedia (WikipédiaFR).

Mado Lamotte: La reine du Québec

That very same summer of 2017 I found myself considering Québécois LGBTQ+ cultural icons, particularly *Drag Queens*. In a world before *Rita Baga*—a finalist in the 2020 *Canada's Drag Race*—the most well-known Drag Queens from Québec were Mado Lamotte and Michel Dorion. Lamotte and Dorion helped bring drag culture to mainstream Québécois culture. They both own Drag Queen cabarets, *Le Cabaret Mado* and *Le Bar le Cocktail*, respectively, that offer a performing stage to Montréal's Drag Queens.

Lamotte is a household name in Québec society via her appearances on many Québec television programs and is also known internationally, notably in Francophone Europe. Lamotte has produced large public shows such as *Mado's Got Talent* at the *Festvial Juste pour rire/Just for Laughs Festival* and what was reported to be the world's largest outdoor Drag Queen show, *Mascara*, at the *Festival Divers/Cité* (Montreal Gazette, 2014). Dorion is well known thanks to her personifications of Céline Dion, her organization of the *Illusions* drag show at Fierté Montréal, and thanks to her numerous appearances in Québec media.

Despite the wide notoriety of these people, locations, and events in Québec, Lamotte was the only one with a Wikipedia page on WikipédiaFR in August 2017. Michel Dorion was absent, as was Rita Baga and Barbada de Barbades the Drag Queen who brought Drag Story hour to Québec public libraries (Simard, 2019). Learning of these absences moved the author to get involved with Wikipedia to help contribute to addressing this culture gap.

Catégorie:LGBT par pays > LGBT au Canada > LGBT au Québec

The first step in the project was to identify how many LGBTQ+ articles already existed in WikipédiaFR. Thankfully, the WikipédiaFR's *Catégorie* classification system already had established categories in this area. The WikipediaFR *Catégorie* system finds itself somewhere between the ultraconservative Library of Congress Classification System and the

pure freedom of #HashTags (“Aide:Catégorie,” 2020). The category that provides a portrait of Québec specific LGBTQ+ articles in WikipédiaFR is the *Catégorie:LGBT au Québec*, a subcategory of *Catégorie:LGBT au Canada*, which is also a subcategory of *Catégorie:LGBT par pays* (translation: LGBT by country). The category system, much like our library classification systems, functions in an arborescence hierarchy.

While exploring the *Catégorie:LGBT par pays*, it was discovered that many of the Québécois LGBTQ+ community’s cultural icons, places, and historical events were absent from the *Catégorie:LGBT au Québec*. This content gap was addressed through the professional expertise of the author’s role as a librarian, allowing him to leverage his library’s collections, and those of others, to contribute to Wikipedia and develop relationships with the LGBTQ+ community of Montréal, and more largely, Québec.

Wikipédia et la communauté LGBTQ: visible et vivante

Five contribution activities were organized as a next step to addressing the Québécois LGBTQ+ gap in WikipédiaFR. The series was entitled “Wikipédia et la communauté LGBTQ+: visible et vivante” (translation: Wikipedia and the LGBTQ+ Community: Visible and Vibrant) and ran from October 2017 to May 2018. This was made possible thanks to a partnership between *la Bibliothèque à livres ouverts du Centre communautaire LGBTQ+ de Montréal* (translation: The Open Book Library of the LGBTQ+ Community Centre of Montréal), *le Café des savoirs libres* (translation: The Free Knowledge Café), and Wikimedia Canada. The goal of these activities was to empower the Québec LGBTQ+ community to write about its culture, history, artists, and public figures in the WikipédiaFR project. This was done by using the LGBTQ+ community center’s position in the LGBTQ+ community, along with its library’s resources, the resources of other libraries, and the expertise of librarians and Wikipedia volunteers. These activities provided an opportunity for seasoned and perspective Wikipedians to meet notable Québécois LGBTQ+ artists and authors and to learn



Figure 1 Rita Baga (Drag Queen) and participants at the contribution event, April 11, 2018.

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more about their art and other work in a conference-style format that was inspired by the conference-contribution activities developed at the Cinémathèque québécoise (2020).

The five activities were broken up into four parts:

1. Introduction of the project and discussion about the Québécois LGBTQ+ gap
2. Presentation from an invited guest
3. A workshop on contributing to Wikipedia and to library resources
4. Open time to contribute to WikipédiaFR

The contribution activities focused on local Québec Queer history, spaces, and culture. Participants wrote new articles, created Wikidata

entries, and added photos to Wikimedia Commons about the following topics: Parc de l'espoir, Barbada de Barbades, Rita Baga, Kevin Lambert, and important police raids in Queer spaces that helped change LGBTQ+ rights in Québec. We also had the founder of the *Bibliothèque à livres ouverts*, Benoît Migneault, as an invited guest. During this event, we created a Wikidata entry and uploaded photos of him to Wikimedia Commons. Future plans include an article for Migneault once he meets notability criteria.

These events were also used to discuss libraries in general. Participants were encouraged to obtain library memberships with *Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec* (BAnQ), Québec's National Library and Archives, as well as with the *Bibliothèques de la Ville de Montréal* or another local public library. BAnQ proved to be an important resource for historical newspapers, magazines, and government publications on historical LGBTQ+ people, places, and events in Québec because of its digitization projects on Québec heritage newspapers (BAnQ, 2020). I was also able to use important resources available through the McGill University Library: the *Archives of Gender and Sexuality* from Gale and *LGBT Thought and Culture* from Alexander Street Press, to supplement the resources from BAnQ and the public libraries (Miller, 2020). This access allowed me to prepare “press dossiers” before the events that were shared with participants to help in the creation and editing process.

WP:Catégorie est . . . la conclusion

Librarian involvement in Wikipedia and the Wikimedia Projects is an opportunity to engage with their local communities and help close gender, LGBTQ+, and local history and culture gaps. As information professionals working in academic settings, we have privileged access to our own institution's resources and to an important network of colleagues in national, research, public, and specialized libraries. We can and should be leveraging our own library's collections and working with colleagues in other institutions to help make the information on Wikipedia more robust and accurate because it is the most used

source of information that our patrons, colleagues, friends, family, and acquaintances use.

Wikipedia can be intimidating on first approach. It is an ecosystem where there is no formal authority, contributors need to learn a Wikipedia contributor culture and its rules, as well as learn the technical aspects of contributing. There is a learning curve, but a learning curve that all librarians can easily overcome and help others overcome and engage in their local communities in a way that empowers them to tell their stories. It can also be a space that feels unsafe and hostile for LGBTQ+ contributors, but there is hope. The Wikimedia Foundation has positioned itself as an ally to the LGBTQ+ community. On December 8, 2020, Maggie Dennis (2020), vice president of Community Resilience and Sustainability, speaking on behalf of the Wikimedia Foundation, wrote “to restate, reinforce, and firmly assert [the Wikimedia Foundation’s] commitment to supporting the LGBTQIA+ volunteers in [the] movement, as well as others who face exclusion and hostility on the basis of identity factors.”

Earlier we saw that the U.S. LGBTQ+ category in WikipédiaFR represents 39.53 percent of all country-specific LGBTQ+ content. It would be interesting to know if this larger representation is also present in transcontinental languages such as Portuguese, Spanish, or Russian, or even in more continental languages such as Dutch, German, or Italian. Perhaps this is simply a phenomenon in the WikipédiaFR, but it is possible it is generalized in other language Wikipedias. A future research project could provide some important insight behind what appears to be an overrepresentation of U.S. LGBTQ+ culture in Francophone Wikipedia.

Wikipedia and the Wikimedia sister projects are trying to create a world in which everyone can share in the sum of human knowledge. Local Queer history and culture has a place in the sum of all human knowledge but is often absent, underdeveloped, or subject to strict rules on notability. However, what is beautiful with Wikipedia is that the content and rules of the project reflect the interest of its contributors. The more people from the LGBTQ+ community that contribute to Wikipedia, in all of its language versions, the more we can close

the LGBTQ+ gap at a local level and contribute to change the rules that can often make certain gap-closing contributions difficult. That is exactly the aim of this project: to emphasize local Queer Québécois context in WikipédiaFR.

Notes

- 1 Source: <https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17961118>.
- 2 Source: <https://petscan.wmflabs.org/?psid=17963101>.
- 3 WMF Labs PetScan Tool: <https://petscan.wmflabs.org>.

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