

# Improving Outreach and Evaluation for the NNLM Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon

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## Abstract

**Background:** The National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) held two virtual Wikipedia Edit-a-Thons in 2018. Edit-a-thons engaged librarians in adding citations to medical articles on Wikipedia, directing Wikipedia users to National Library of Medicine (NLM) information resources.

**Objective:** The goal of this Associate Fellowship project was to provide a strategy and supporting documents for planning, promoting, executing, and evaluating future Edit-a-Thons.

**Methods:** Edit-a-thons hosted by other organizations were reviewed for marketing timelines and evaluation tools. NNLM tweets, emails, and blogs for the 2018 edit-a-thons were also reviewed. Discussions with the NNLM Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon Planning Team were held to identify challenges and opportunities encountered during the 2018 edit-a-thons. Meetings with project sponsors clarified the primary goal of the edit-a-thon. Additionally, Wikipedians and librarians who use Wikipedia were interviewed about edit-a-thons and Wikipedia culture. Project planning documents and promotional materials were created. In the final phase, tools were reviewed by the NNLM team for preparation for spring 2019 implementation.

**Results:** Fifteen external edit-a-thons were reviewed, and four active Wiki users were interviewed. A suite of tools, including a Gantt chart, Trello boards, and sample emails, were created for the Team to manage, promote, and evaluate future edit-a-thons.

**Conclusions:** Wikipedia edit-a-thons are an innovative way to engage network members and promote NLM resources on new platforms. Project management tools can help ease the burden of executing future edit-a-thons. Consistent evaluation will help guide the evolution of the NNLM edit-a-thon and encourage exploration in new directions.

## Background

Wikipedia is among the most widely used websites for health information (Heilman & West, 2014). Recognizing the importance of Wikipedia as an online information source, and the opportunity to engage network members in improving the quality of medical articles on Wikipedia, the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) held virtual national edit-a-thons in April and November 2018.

The topics for the two events were selected with the help of Dr. James Heilman of WikiProject Medicine, a collaborative effort to manage and improve medical information on Wikipedia. The April event focused on Rare Diseases, and the November event centered around women’s health.

Leading up to the edit-a-thons, the NNLM Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon Planning Team, hereafter referred to as the Team, held monthly meetings to discuss and plan. They hosted public training webinars on Wikipedia, the basics of Wikipedia editing, and recommended resources for selected topics. Recorded trainings were uploaded to YouTube. Edit-a-thons and trainings were promoted via social media – primarily Twitter – emails, and blog posts. All edit-a-thon information was maintained and updated on the NNLM WikiProject page, [nnlm.gov/wiki](http://nnlm.gov/wiki).

Edit-a-thon participants were asked to register on the Wikimedia Outreach Dashboard in advance of the event. The dashboard provides analytics, including the number of editors, the number of edits made, and the number of edited articles (see Table 1, below). On the day of the edit-a-thon, the Team hosted live WebEx demonstrations and tweeted about the event using #CiteNLM2018. Participants were encouraged to log on to WebEx for assistance and to tweet about their participation using #CiteNLM2018.

Date	Topic	Editors	Articles Edited	Number of Edits
April 2018	Rare Diseases	32	111	736
November 2018	Women’s Health	50	204	705

Table 1: Wikimedia Outreach Dashboard analytics for the 2018 edit-a-thons.

## Objectives

The purpose of this project was to provide a sustainable, adaptable strategy for planning, promoting, executing, and evaluating NNLM Wikipedia edit-a-thons.

This project involved evaluating the planning and promotional activities of the 2018 edit-a-thons and proposing a framework for future edit-a-thons. Additionally, the project sought to identify partners for future edit-a-thons, procedures for topic selection, and measures for evaluation.

Additional objectives included writing a news announcement for the NNLM website and a post for the National Library of Medicine’s (NLM) InFocus blog.

## Methods

### Background Research

The project required research of Wikipedia, Wiki culture, and edit-a-thons.

The use of Wikipedia for health information needs and edit-a-thon models used by other organizations were explored. A PubMed search alert for “Wikipedia health information” was created, and articles were gathered in a Wikipedia collection (see [Appendix 1](#) for a list of titles or follow this link to the collection on NCBI:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/myncbi/stacy.brody.1/collections/56789036/public/>).

Librarians and active Wikipedians were interviewed about hosting edit-a-thons and their perspectives on Wikipedia culture. Interviewed individuals were not affiliated with, and had not necessarily participated in, the #CiteNLM2018 edit-a-thons.

Meetings with project sponsors were held to clarify the primary goal of the edit-a-thon; this guided the development of planning, marketing, and evaluation strategies.

To gain an understanding of the challenges and opportunities afforded by the NNLM edit-a-thon, the Associate arranged a conference call with the 2018 edit-a-thon Team soon after the November edit-a-thon. Team members discussed the November edit-a-thon and needs for future events, including clearer planning, delegation, and documentation. Planning timelines were also explored in edit-a-thon meeting minutes, emails, and blog posts. The Team provided contact information for previous partners. Additionally, the Associate reviewed #CiteNLM2018 tweets to identify participating librarians and institutions who might take on larger roles in future events. As the Team saw the edit-a-thon as an opportunity for interprofessional education, and as an active Wikipedian recommended partnering with subject experts, the Associate included in the search for potential partners professional organizations that have hosted edit-a-thons or that have subject matter expertise.

### Creating Project Management Tools and Marketing Documents

Two project management tools were created using freely available downloadable templates, including an Excel Gantt Chart developed by [Vertex42](#) and a social media calendar by [Hootsuite](#), and the web-based tool [Trello](#). The Associate selected tools based on feedback from team members and familiarity with project management tools (Brody, 2017). Insights gleaned from Team members, planning meeting minutes, and edit-a-thons planned by other organizations, were incorporated into the tools.

The Gantt chart was created in Excel using a downloadable template from [Vertex42](#). The timeline was developed from dates of blog posts, emails, and training webinars from the 2018 edit-a-thons, discussions with blog editors and Wikipedia editors, and reviews of plans from other edit-a-thons. Additional sheets in the Excel file includes resources to support the tasks in the timeline. Additionally, a potential social media content calendar, based on a template from [Hootsuite](#), provides structure and uniformity for social media promotions.

The Trello boards display the same content as the Gantt chart but according to the Kanban project management style. KanBan boards include task lists: To Do, Doing, and Done tasks. Trello is an interactive tool, enabling users to move cards between lists, attach files, and create checklists.

In the Gantt chart and Trello board, tasks were assigned to categorical roles, such as marketer, writer, or Wikipedian, and were given start and end dates, based on a proposed date for the spring 2019 edit-a-thon.

Sample email announcements, tweets, and Facebook posts were written according to a proposed project timeline and after reviewing 2018 edit-a-thon email announcements and posts from other organizations hosting edit-a-thons.

### Writing Articles

The Associate wrote an NNLM news announcement to summarize the successes of the November edit-a-thon, drawing on data from the [#CiteNLM Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon Outreach Dashboard](#), a Wikimedia Foundation tool employed for both the April and November 2018 edit-a-thons, and #CiteNLM2018 tweets. Data visualizations were created in [Piktochart](#) to enhance the post. Insights from the Team were inspired a NLM InFocus blog post on new and continuing NNLM initiatives, including the Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon.

### Sharing Documents

The Associate uploaded documents to Google Drive and created descriptions for each document to provide context.

### Garnering Feedback

Feedback from the Team was solicited via email and conference calls and was used to fill gaps in documentation of 2018 edit-a-thons, identify challenges and opportunities, and improve tools.

## Results

### Research Revealed

The Associate reviewed 15 edit-a-thons, including virtually distributed and in-person programs (see [Appendix 2](#)). Of the 15 edit-a-thons reviewed, four used the Outreach Dashboard for measurement and evaluation.

The Associate interviewed four active editors, including a librarian and a professional Wikipedian. Discussions revealed the importance of partnering with both active Wikipedians and subject experts and of managing expectations of success.

The NNLM team also saw edit-a-thons as opportunities for interprofessional collaboration.

### Primary Goal Identified

The lack of a primary goal made it difficult to identify appropriate outcomes from the edit-a-thon. The Associate struggled with developing a clear logic model, which requires an understanding of short- and long-term results. Discussions with project sponsors resulted in clarifying and stating a primary goal for the edit-a-thon: To leverage the audience of Wikipedia to share NLM resources more broadly and with new audiences. With a primary goal clearly defined the Associate was able to proceed with project planning. Evaluation measures were revised to focus on articles edited, available from the Outreach Dashboard, and coverage of NLM resources. With regards to edit-a-thon planning and promotion, this clarification led to the decision to focus on NLM resources and to a media strategy that emphasized sharing NLM resources and edited articles.

### Management Tools and Marketing Documents Created

The Associate created project management tools, including a Gantt chart, social media calendar, and partner contact list, all in Excel, and five Trello boards containing similar content (Figure 1). The Excel file

containing the Gantt chart provides supplementary information, such as a sheet listing ten resources for topic selection and 13 potential topics for future edit-a-thons, as identified by the Associate.

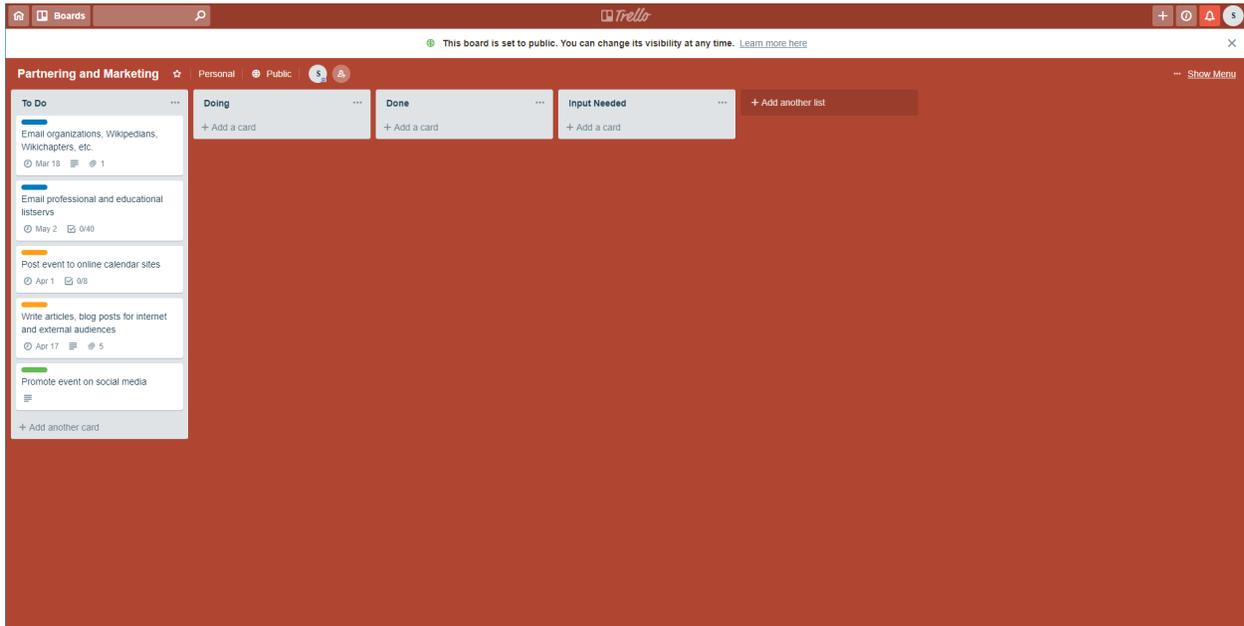


Figure 1: The Trello board for partnering and marketing includes lists for tasks to do, tasks that team members are doing, tasks that have been done, and tasks for which input is needed. Each task is presented as a card which can be moved across these lists.

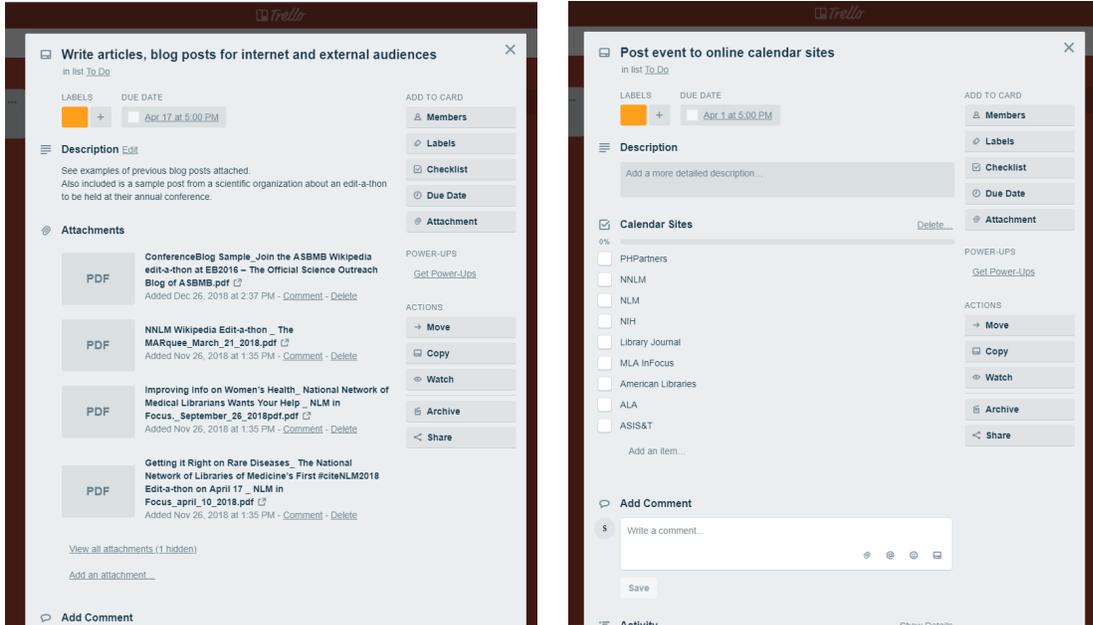


Figure 2: Task cards for writing articles and posting to online calendars demonstrate the affordances of Trello. These include the ability to create labels, write descriptions, add attachments, and write checklists.

To supplement the timeline on Trello, files for sample emails and blog posts were attached to marketing task cards and a checklist for online event calendars on which the edit-a-thon may be promoted was included in the marketing board (Figure 2). Seven online calendars and blogs to which event information might be submitted were identified. Fifty potential partners, including organizations and individuals, as well as librarians, NNLM members, Wikipedia groups, and subject matter experts, were identified. The Associate created calendars for social media and email promotions, a library of “evergreen content” to share via social media or email, fifty sample Tweets, and six sample emails. Email announcements advertise the event and provide links to learn about Wikipedia and hosting in-person edit-a-thons.

### Articles Written

An [NNLM news announcement](#) highlighted the successes of the November edit-a-thon (see [Appendix 3](#)). An NLM InFocus article highlighted three projects from 2018 that will continue in 2019. These include the edit-a-thon, the *All of Us* partnership, and Research Data Management.

### Documents Shared

Twenty-nine documents were uploaded to the shared online folder. Documents were shared in both static and interactive file formats which allow for the distributed Team members to edit in real time.

### Feedback Provided

Two conference calls were held. In the first call, Team members provided feedback on their needs for future edit-a-thons, such as project planning and consistent messaging documents. In the second call, Team members reviewed tools created by the Associate and provided feedback for changes for 2019 implementation. They expressed preferences for using Trello as a working document and the Gantt chart as a reference document. Additionally, they suggested focusing on Twitter over other social media platforms, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, for promotional efforts. While not all regional offices consistently use other social media platforms, most have active Twitter accounts.

### Discussion

Wikipedia is a widely used health information source. By adding NLM resource links to medical articles, the Network addresses the second goal of the new NLM strategic plan, to “reach more people in more ways through enhanced dissemination and engagement pathways” (NLM Board of Regents, 2017).

While working on this project, the Associate recognized the importance of meeting consumers where they are with the information and resources they need. The Associate also gained insights into Wikipedia and Wikipedia culture.

The Associate gained skills in project management and communication and experimented with tools, such as Gantt charts and Trello boards. Discussions with project sponsors emphasized the necessity of clarifying project goals for planning and evaluation.

The Associate also encountered the challenges of working with distributed teams. During the project, the Associate used e-mail, WebEx, and in-person meetings to coordinate among Team members.

The project would have benefited from the Associate creating a clearer statement of expectations, encouraging more engagement from Team members, and employing alternative communication channels.

## Recommendations

The Associate recommends continued evaluation of the edit-a-thon and renewed discussion of its purpose. As the vision for the edit-a-thon evolves, so, too, will evaluative measures.

The Associate recommends an in-depth evaluation of the edit-a-thon as an immersion session at the Medical Library Association annual conference. This model presents a unique opportunity to build partnerships. Other professional organizations have successfully hosted edit-a-thons at national conferences (Simons Foundation, 2017).

The Associate recommends developing clear roles for team members, including detailed descriptions and responsibilities. Additionally, the Associate would recommend implementing alternative communication channels to allow for asynchronous collaboration. Skype and Slack are popular options. Slack also provides integration capabilities with Trello and would be especially useful if the Team continues to use Trello for project management.

As the primary goal of the edit-a-thon is to share NLM resource more widely, the Associate recommends centering future edit-a-thons around NLM resources rather than selecting subject areas.

Lastly, the Associate recommends continued evaluation of the edit-a-thon model and engagement of edit-a-thon participants. Librarians, scientists, and government agencies are interacting with Wikipedia and related sites (i.e. Wikidata and Wikimedia) in new and innovative ways. Future events may, for instance, focus on Wikidata. To be relevant and engaging, and to increase the impact of the event, NNLM must continue to follow changes in the Wikipedia environment.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Wikipedia Articles

1: O'Mathúna DP. How Should Clinicians Engage With Online Health Information? *AMA J Ethics*. 2018 Nov 1;20(11):E1059-1066. doi: 10.1001/amajethics.2018.1059. PubMed PMID: 30499435.

2: Meka J, Vigliotti A. Should Crowdsourced, Unvetted Content on Wikipedia Be Used in Health Sciences Teaching and Learning? *AMA J Ethics*. 2018 Nov 1;20(11):E1033-1040. doi: 10.1001/amajethics.2018.1033. PubMed PMID: 30499431.

3: Murray H. More than 2 billion pairs of eyeballs: Why aren't you sharing medical knowledge on Wikipedia? *BMJ Evid Based Med*. 2018 Aug 14. pii: bmjebm-2018-111040. doi: 10.1136/bmjebm-2018-111040. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 30108058.

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literature support for online medication information provided by Lexicomp and Wikipedia. *J Med Libr Assoc.* 2018 Jul;106(3):352-360. doi: 10.5195/jmla.2018.256. Epub 2018 Jul 1. PubMed PMID: 29962913; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC6013145.

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## Appendix 2: Edit-a-Thons

<b>Edit-a-Thon</b>	<b>Communications Platforms and Tips</b>	<b>Evaluation Tools and Tips</b>
<a href="#">AgNIC</a>		Survey of participants
<a href="#">Brown Women in Science</a>	Tied to Ada Lovelace Day  Used Etherpad for collaboration and communication during event  Twitter Hashtag	Wiki page signup  Participants listed Results on wiki page SurveyMonkey
<a href="#">Chronicle of Higher Education How To Article</a>	Twitter Hashtag	
<a href="#">Composing Wikipedia</a>	Facebook live streaming Twitter hashtag Facebook event	Google Form signup  Wikimedia Outreach Dashboard
<a href="#">Duke</a>		
<a href="#">500 Women Scientists at Caveat NYC's Underground Science Festival</a>	<a href="#">Coordinated with event/conference</a> <a href="#">Created an event page</a> <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:500_Women_Scientists">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:500_Women_Scientists</a>	Wikimedia Outreach Dashboard
<a href="#">Medium article</a>	Dedicated email address for edit-a-thon event	Follow up with contributors Use dashboard Allow for time (approximately 2 weeks) to evaluate
<a href="#">National Museum of Women in the Arts, Art+Feminism</a>	Hashtags on social media Promote via global initiative Post on events calendars	<a href="#">Wikimedia outreach dashboard</a>

<a href="#">Royal Society</a>	Included links to media stories on Wiki page to highlight event impact	<a href="#">Sign up on wiki page</a> <a href="#">Survey Monkey feedback</a>
<a href="#">UNC African American History</a>		<a href="#">Participants entered their initials next to the topic on the list.</a>
<a href="#">Wikipedia: #1Lib1Ref</a>	Held over the course of more than one day	
<a href="#">Wikivoyage</a>		<a href="#">Participants signed up on Wikipage and posted a Userbox to their individual userpages</a>
<a href="#">WNYC Studies, Nancy's SXSW Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon</a>	<a href="#">Facebook Live</a>	<a href="#">Typeform</a>
<a href="#">Women in Tech, Global Edit-a-thon</a>	<a href="#">Tied to an international observance day</a>	<a href="#">Created a Twitter Moments Story</a>
<a href="#">Women on Wikipedia at RIT</a>	Created LibGuide for event Created a dedicated email address	<a href="#">Google Forms Exit Survey</a>

## More Editors and More Edits - A Look at #citeNLM2018

Posted Nov 30, 2018 by [Franda Liu](#)

Category: National

On November 7, 2018, NNLM successfully hosted its second Wikipedia edit-a-thon. Building on the success of the first edit-a-thon in April, more than 50 editors, including first-time editors and newly minted women's health experts across the nation, from Delaware to Utah and Wisconsin to Hawaii, made a total of 555 edits on 161 women's health articles. Edited articles have since been viewed over 1 million times. Participants were active on Twitter, using #CiteNLM2018 to connect with others and share their contributions. Many thanks to all participants and to the NNLM team who hosted live demos and engaged colleagues and students on university and hospital campuses throughout the day of the edit-a-thon.

We hope to continue our work on Wikipedia and invite you to edit health articles not only on edit-a-thon days, but throughout the year. We provide editing resources on our [WikiProject page](#). You can also view [NNLM training videos](#) created for the edit-a-thon. Share your editing story with fellow librarians and with NNLM. Keep an eye out for news about our next edit-a-thon in 2019.



**NNLM News**  
Stay informed on our latest news!

E-mail \*

### Past Announcements

#### [Happy Holidays from the National Network Coordinating Office!](#)

We are wishing you the very best holiday season and a prosperous 2019!



Posted Dec 21, 2018

Category: National

#### [NNLM Announces Registration for the Third Cohort of Bioinformatics Continuing Education Courses](#)

The National Network of Libraries of Medicine is pleased to announce open registration for the third cohort of



Posted Dec 20, 2018

Category: National

#### [More Editors and More Edits - A Look at #citeNLM2018](#)

On November 7, 2018, NNLM successfully hosted its second Wikipedia edit-a-thon.



Posted Nov 30, 2018

Figure 3: More Editors and More Edits was posted on the NNLM website on November 30, 2019.

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