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Wikidata in Research Libraries

by Caroline Winter | 6 March 2020 | English, Observations, Observations and Responses | 0 comments



WIKIDATA

Lisez-le en français

This observation was written by Caroline Winter.

Title	<i>White Paper on Wikidata: Opportunities and Recommendations</i>
Creator	the Association of Research Libraries (ARL)
Date of publication	April 2019
Keywords	open data / données ouvertes, research libraries / les bibliothèques de recherche, scholarly communication / la communication savante

In April 2019, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) published their *White Paper on Wikidata: Opportunities and Recommendations*. This white paper shares the findings of the ARL's Task Force on

Wikimedia and Linked Open Data, which was established in 2018 to investigate the potential of using Wikidata as a repository for libraries' linked open data and to explore how libraries can use Wikidata to improve discoverability and community engagement.

The white paper offers several recommendations. For librarians, it recommends experimenting with Wikidata, participating in the Wikidata community, and advocating for open data licensing to allow its knowledge base to grow. For libraries, it recommends modelling engagement by encouraging, rewarding, and providing support for such experimentation, particularly that which engages with the library's under-represented communities.

Overall, the white paper contends that Wikidata is not a replacement for existing library systems, but rather an opportunity to transform library data into linked open data, and to improve community engagement and resource discoverability in the process.

Wikidata and the INKE Partnership

As an emerging knowledge environment, Wikidata is a topic of interest to INKE members in terms of library metadata and other research applications.

The ARL white paper is part of an ongoing conversation about the role of Wikidata and linked open data in libraries. Lisa Goddard and others in the library community have noted that the library community has long recognized the potential of LOD to transform library MARC records to be more open and interoperable, but technical, cultural, cost, and other barriers have prevented wide-scale adoption of LOD in libraries (Allison-Cassin and Scott 2018; Godby et al. 2019; Goddard and Byrne 2010a and 2010b).

Two presentations at the [2020 INKE Partnership Gathering in Victoria](#) highlighted different types of engagement with Wikidata. In his paper "Public Knowledge as Byproduct: Wikidata in Libraries and Archives," Dean Seeman (University of Victoria Libraries) discussed an experimental new metadata workflow at the University of Victoria Libraries that incorporates contributing to Wikidata as a way to improve discoverability and contribute to the library's public knowledge mission. In her paper "Linked Familiarity: Wikidata and Bartlett's Familiar Quotations," Constance Crompton (University of Ottawa) discussed a research project that uses Wikidata to analyze *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* through linked open data.

Crompton also discussed the importance of librarians and researchers contributing knowledge to Wikidata and Wikipedia during her talk "[Donating and Developing: Contributing to Wikipedia to Make a Better Web](#)," given in October 2018 as part of her role as the ETCL's [Honorary Resident Wikipedian \(HRW\)](#), a program developed in partnership with INKE, the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, and the University of Victoria Libraries.

At the INKE Victoria gathering in 2018 and in the article "[Open Social Knowledge Creation and Library and Archival Metadata](#)," Seeman and fellow UVic Libraries colleague Heather Dean discussed Wikidata as a way for libraries to engage in social knowledge creation (2019).

[The Australian Open Access Strategy Group \(AOASG\)](#) has argued that enriching Wikipedia benefits the Open Access movement, and vice versa, and has called upon individuals, funding organizations, journals, research organizations, and universities to contribute to Wikipedia and Wikidata (AOASG 2017).

Wikidata in the Media

Wikidata has received coverage in the general media related to its [relevance to AI and virtual assistants](#), a [Wikidata-thon in the National Gallery of Art](#), the [effects of vandalism on search engine results](#), as part of [a solution to the fake news problem](#), and, in a piece by University of Victoria Computer Science student Kyle Wilson, its role as [source data for a bot-generated Cebuano edition of Wikipedia](#).

Wikidata has not received notable coverage in the general academic press, but it is discussed in library community. For example, it is the topic of discussion in several posts on the [OCLC Research blog](#) and a post about integrating Library of Congress and Wikidata records on the Library of Congress blog *The Signal*.

Wikidata and Open Scholarship

Increasingly, libraries and other cultural heritage institutions worldwide are expressing interest in Wikidata and the Wikibase software on which it is built as a tool for creating, storing, and sharing open data. A recent Wikibase strategy paper, for instance, notes that pilots of Wikibase for storing library authority data are underway in seven national libraries, with seven others expressing interest (Pintscher et al. 2019). Responding to this interest from the GLAM community and a recognition of shared values and goals, Wikibase development will proceed with GLAM applications in mind (Pintscher et al. 2019).

Europeana is increasing its engagement with Wikidata, following the recommendation in a 2015 report by its Wikimedia Task Force that Wikidata be a “central element” of the organization’s strategic plan (Europeana 2015). It led the first [Wikidata and Wikibase for National Libraries](#) meeting in August 2019, which brought together representatives from 30 institutions to share existing work on Wikidata in libraries and develop a roadmap for the future.

The ARL white paper notes that the interest shown in Wikidata by the library community is a function of a larger shift toward openness, including open scholarship, and that, as an open social knowledge base, Wikidata is an important piece of infrastructure in the open scholarship ecosystem (2019).

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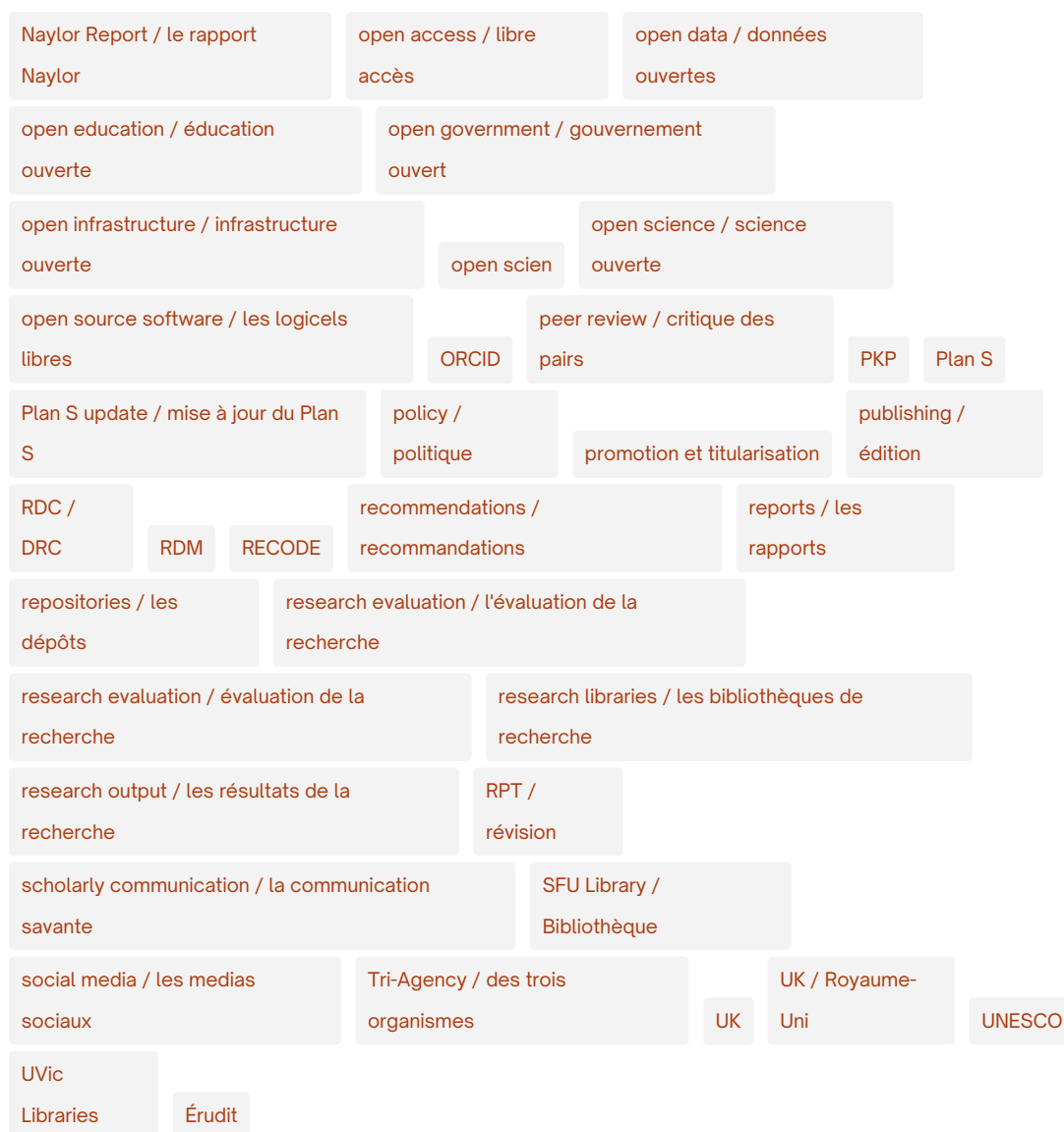
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