

Wikimedia UK is the national charity for the global Wikimedia open knowledge movement. We work with the Wikimedia Projects such as Wikipedia to enable people and organisations to contribute to a shared understanding of the world through open knowledge, with a focus on the knowledge and communities that have been left out by structures of power and privilege. Our work in partnership with the cultural sector is transforming the public’s engagement with cultural heritage collections and delivering increased reach and impact for some of the world’s leading galleries, libraries, archives and museums.



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# Partners in Open Knowledge:

The impact of Wikimedians in Residence







Deze Indiaense Vogelen en Dierden, met den Gorgheeling  
 van d. 1615: 1616 In d. James Park of diergarden  
 by Westminster verdundt London te sien geweest.



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 van d. 1615: 1616 In d. James Park of diergarden  
 by Westminster verdundt London te sien geweest.

This booklet summarises the key findings from our recent evaluation into the long term impact of Wikimedia UK's Wikimedian in Residence programme. Our research – conducted mainly through structured interviews – focused on residencies that took place between 2012 and 2017, and has led to increased understanding about the nature and scale of the impact created through these partnerships, and the development of best practice recommendations.

Wikimedians in Residence are a crucial element of Wikimedia UK's work with the cultural and education sectors. Residents act as change makers, advocating for open knowledge within and beyond their host institutions and supporting and facilitating new practice through training, outreach, policy development, technical innovation and research.

Our evaluation demonstrates the extent to which these partnerships have enabled world-leading cultural heritage institutions to increase their reach, improve their external image and shift their internal culture towards more open practices. It also reveals the multiplier effect of the Wikimedian in Residence programme, with the potential to influence change beyond the immediate scope of each individual project and create sector-wide impact.



The Wikimedians  
in Residence  
delivered four  
kinds of impact

*04*

# 01

## Impact on reach:

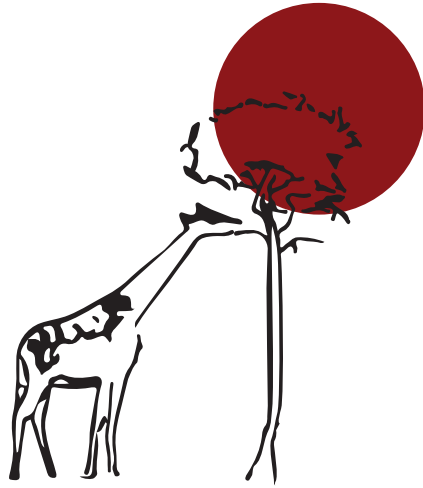
Residency projects within our partner institutions extended the reach of collections to new audiences, and enabled participating organisations to better share their knowledge. This effect continued after the residencies themselves ended.

*Wikipedia is 'where the light is', so it makes sense to put the collections there. Digitised and derivative works have had far more views than original works – for example, images uploaded from books (not the books themselves) are being viewed now, where anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the books have not been taken out before.*

Mahendra Mahey (Head of British Library Labs, involved in the Wikimedian in Residence project), impact interview July 2017

*The statistics of images reused on Wikipedia (released during the residency) are being counted via BagLAMA alongside YouTube views and uses on Internet Archive. These increased numbers are mentioned a lot within the organisation in different contexts, even in conversations with the government.*

Gill Hamilton (Digital Access Manager, National Library of Scotland, Wikimedian in Residence's line manager), impact interview June 2017



# 02

## Impact on external image:

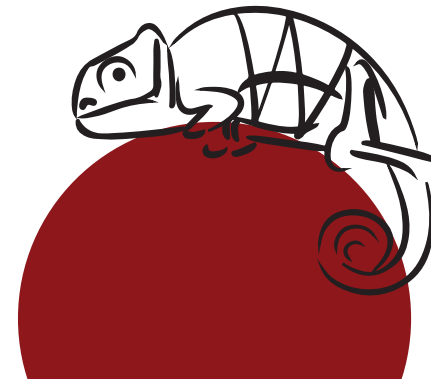
Hosting a Wikimedian in Residence changed the institutions' external image. Several partners report that their engagement with the programme enabled them to become more open and connected with their audiences.

*British Library was seen in the sector as risk averse, but the fact that we hosted a Wikimedian in Residence was a signal that we are open to innovative projects.*

Mahendra Mahey (Head of British Library Labs, involved in the Wikimedian in Residence project), impact interview July 2017

*One of the great challenges of a 21st century museum is how it embraces technological advances.... The projects run by Wikimedia allow us to engage with a global community who will use, reuse, interpret and add value to our content. In short: Wikimedia provides a platform that allows anyone to become a collaborator with one of the world's great museums.*

Ed Baker (Data Researcher, Natural History Museum, involved in the Wikimedian in Residence project), residency final report May 2014



# 03

## Impact on culture:

Similarly, the Wikimedian in Residence programme transformed our partners' culture and self-perception, and made them more open and more confident. In some cases, these changes in culture and practice were strengthened by internal policy changes.

*Having a Wikimedian in Residence at the Natural History Museum coincided with a paradigm shift in how we think about our digital content and the start of a project to rapidly digitise the museum's collection of more than 80 million specimens at an industrial scale. Having an advocate for Open Science and a culture of reusable content helped us to frame these projects in a context that makes this work useful to a wider audience. We have also raised the institution's internal understanding of the benefits of open data.*

Vince Smith (Research Leader, Natural History Museum, Wikimedian in Residence's line manager), residency final report May 2014

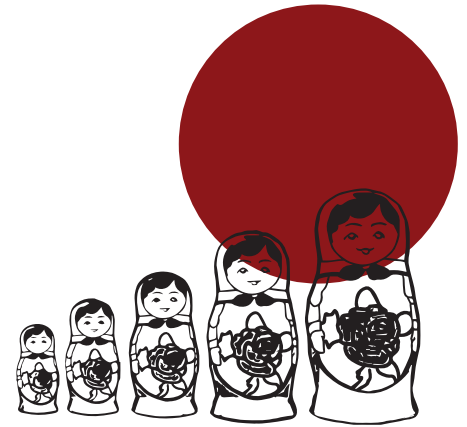
*Having the resident hugely increased understanding within the organisation of its role in the open knowledge movement. By actively participating in this programme the Library drove its thinking about openness, policies, across the organisation. That's extremely long lasting and is continuing as the organisation moves towards embracing public domain.*

Andrew McDougall (Organisational Development Partner, National Library of Scotland, involved in the Wikimedian in Residence project), impact interview June 2017



# 04

## Impact on scale:



The programme had a multiplier effect. Host institutions worked with many other organisations and the projects often had an impact at a sector-wide level. At the Natural History Museum for example, the resident leveraged the prestige of his host institution to run collaborative projects with other organisations. These included discussions with Wellcome Collection (which later developed into a Wikimedian in Residence project), advising the Royal Society on hosting a Wikimedian in Residence (which led to the setup of the project), and Wikipedia events with the Medical Research Council, the Office for National Statistics, and the Collections Trust.

*The biggest benefit of having the Wikimedian in Residence was building awareness of open knowledge within the museum and galleries sector in Scotland. Organisations are increasingly seeking advice from MGS on e.g. digitisation projects – that's become very popular, possibly because widening access is so important now in the sector. The advice given is linked to the open knowledge because staff have gained expertise in it through the residency. For MGS, the big change has been increased confidence in speaking about licences.*

Kelly Forbes (Digital Manager, Museums Galleries Scotland, Wikimedian in Residence's line manager), impact interview June 2017

# We translated our learning into seven recommendations of best practice

If implemented, these significantly increase the likelihood of achieving sustainable impact by hosting a Wikimedian in Residence:



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- 01 Be clear about expectations** and be prepared to change and adapt. The most successful programmes were those in which learning was applied while the residency was still happening.
- 02 Customise the programme** to reflect the host institution's particular strengths and challenges. Shape each project in a way that makes best use of existing skills.
- 03 Ensure visibility.** Institutional 'buy-in' is more likely where the residency is widely known and understood by the partner organisation's staff team, including those not directly involved in the project.
- 04 Build communication, transparency and trust.** Open knowledge often involves significant institutional change. Make it a priority to build trust and establish regular, open and transparent lines of communication between the partner and Wikimedia UK as well as across the host organisation.
- 05 Recruit carefully.** A successful residency project depends in large part on the range of skills brought by the resident, with both 'soft' skills and more technical knowledge being important.
- 06 Transfer skills.** The more Wiki skills are embedded in the host organisation, the more likely it is for the project to achieve long-term impact.
- 07 Build the business case.** All organisations have financial pressures. Long-term impact is more likely when the financial case for open knowledge is made successfully.

Since we launched the Wikimedian in Residence programme in 2012 it has grown significantly in size and scale, with partner organisations becoming more focused on sustainable change rather than immediate outputs. We are increasingly working with universities and umbrella bodies through this programme, as well as with individual cultural institutions, and are focused on partnerships that deliver on our strategic priorities to create knowledge equity, develop digital literacy, and change policy and practice. We also deliver or facilitate a wide range of other projects and programmes, for organisations who want to engage with us in different ways or on a smaller scale.

Find out how Wikimedia UK can help your institution to unlock content, develop new ways of engaging with the public and enable your audiences to benefit from the educational potential of the Wikimedia projects. To learn more, please contact us or download the full report, Partners in Open Knowledge:

[https://wikimedia.org.uk/wiki/File:WIR\\_Impact\\_Report\\_2012-17\\_\(single\\_lowres\).pdf](https://wikimedia.org.uk/wiki/File:WIR_Impact_Report_2012-17_(single_lowres).pdf)



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