

## Librarian Perception of Wikipedia: Threats or Opportunities for Librarianship?

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### Abstract

The rapid rise of Wikipedia as an information source has placed the traditional role of librarians as information gatekeepers and guardians under scrutiny with much of the professional literature suggesting that librarians are polarized over the issue of whether Wikipedia is a useful reference tool. This qualitative study examines the perceptions and behaviours of National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore librarians with regards to information seeking and usage of Wikipedia. It finds that instead of polarized attitudes, most librarians, although cautious about using Wikipedia in their professional capacity, hold a range of generally positive attitudes towards the online en-

cyclopaedia, believing that it has a valid role to play in the information seeking of patrons today. This is heartening because it suggests the existence within the librarian population of attitudes that can be tapped to engage constructively with Wikipedia. Three of these in particular are briefly discussed at the end of the article: Wikipedia's ability to appeal to the so-called "digital natives," its role as a source of non-Western information, and its potential to enable a revitalization of the role of librarians as public intellectuals contributing to a democratic information commons.

### Introduction

Wikipedia is an online and rapidly expanding database containing information on a vast array of subjects, both conventional and unconventional. Starting operations in 2001, it now boasts ten million articles in 260 languages and logged 684 million visitors in 2007 (Wikipedia 2009). It is one of the most highly visited websites on the planet and as a result, to a very great extent, is the online public's principal access to encyclopaedic knowledge today. Students like Wikipedia for its breadth and depth of topical knowledge and also for its ease of use (Luyt 2008). But for information professionals, the freely editable nature of Wikipedia and the general anonymity of the editing process itself present something of a problem, violating as it does key tenets of information authority by which librarians judge the worthiness of information sources.

Wikipedia is both symbol and agent of a new culture of information consumption, including its production, usage and retrieval. The rise of ubiquitous, free or low cost, and easy to use Web technologies have made this change possible. Generally described under the rubric of Web 2.0 or social media, their impact on the information landscape has been profound, wide-ranging, and ongoing. Librarians are faced with the challenge of adapting to this changing landscape. In this article we report on a study of

librarians' responses to Wikipedia. The study uses a qualitative approach to tease out the range of responses librarians are developing towards this profoundly revolutionary technology, rather than produce conclusions of statistical significance and generalisability.

### Wikipedia in the professional literature

Much of the professional literature on Wikipedia tends to polarize the debate into anti- and pro-Wikipedia camps. William Badke (2008, 48), for example, writes that "If you want to get five opinions from four information professionals, just mention Wikipedia" while Farrelly (2008, 30) tells us that "Among information scientists there's one topic that never fails to elicit strong opinions, arguments bordering on the brusque, and general tension. I speak of course, of Wikipedia." Similarly, Pressley and McCallum (2008, 39) note that "few online resources provoke as much controversy in the library community as Wikipedia." Such polarization may in fact be occurring, but no evidence is presented to support the case in these articles; it appears that such a framing device is a rhetorical strategy used to position the author's own opinions as a middle of the road, pragmatic compromise to the issue – a compromise that is usually in favour of Wikipedia as one tool among others in the arsenal of the reference librarian. Farrelly tells us he "made peace with Wikipedia [by] remembering my eighth-grade English teacher, Mrs. Daley's, sage-like advice: 'Encyclopedias are very nice to start with, but don't stop there'" (Farrelly 2008, 31).

Those articles which do not employ this device make it clearer from the onset what position they are taking with respect to Wikipedia. A sentence such as "Rebelling against traditional encyclopedias that are compiled by an exclusive group of experts, this web site [Wikipedia] has put the power of knowledge into the hands of the general public", for example, makes it obvious that the author is a supporter of Wikipedia, rather than an enemy (Lipczynska 2005, 6). And there are many supporters of Wikipedia in the literature. Peter Binkley (2006, 61) writes that "Wikipedia is a glorious experiment, and a challenge to us to live up to our ideals. How can we devote ourselves to making information accessible to all, and then scorn these devoted amateurs who delight

in building with the bricks we give them?" Diane Murley (2008, 593) ponders, "Why do so many of us tell students to avoid Wikipedia, rather than teaching them how to use it responsibly? Wikipedia has weaknesses that can make citing to it a bad idea. However, if those weaknesses are recognized and evaluated, it is an excellent place to be researching certain questions." And in an early review of Wikipedia three contributors assessed its coverage of popular culture, current events, and science. Each of them had something positive to say about the online encyclopaedia ranging from "the public library is the people's university and Wikipedia, verily is the people's encyclopedia" to "despite its flaws, however, Wikipedia should not be dismissed" to "I was pleased by Wikipedia's objective presentation of controversial subjects" (Miller, Herlicher & Berry 2006, 123, 124). In fact, there is very little literature in the professional press that adopts an overly negative position in regards to Wikipedia. Cheryl Miller Maddox (2007, 91) writes that "Trained as a librarian and a historian, I have been suspicious of Wikipedia from the outset for the usual reason: the identity and authority of its contributors are unknown. I don't use the site unless I'm searching for a bit of information (e.g. an abbreviation). I certainly would never use it to look up the details of a person's biography." Gary Gorman sets out in his article on Wikipedia to show it is "an unethical resource unworthy of our respect" (2007, 274). Using Floridi's information ethics he argues that Wikipedia "by virtue of its unregulated content has the potential to harm the innocent and certainly contribute to information entropy" and concludes by declaring "Wikipedia poses as an encyclopedia when by no stretch of the definition can it be termed such; therefore, it should be subject to regulation" (Gorman 2007, 275). Despite these two strongly worded attacks on Wikipedia, however, it is clear that much of the literature either supports Wikipedia wholeheartedly or with some reservations. What range of opinion on this issue is to be found within the body of practising librarians in Singapore? This study aims to shed light on this question.

### Method of the study

The sample selected for the study came from staff employed by the National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore. Volunteers were asked to participate in

the study by sharing their views on Wikipedia. The final selection of librarians was designed to obtain a balance of gender and work experience within the organization. Twenty-six NLB librarians were interviewed as a result. The interviews were semi-structured in nature in order to allow the interviewers to probe further when interesting responses were given, and to encourage greater detail when interviewees seem particularly engaged with the question or their responses to it. After a section devoted to collecting general demographic information, questions were grouped into two broad areas. The first set dealt with the use of Wikipedia by librarians during their work and private life while the second dealt with how librarian's viewed Wikipedia's effect on patrons and patrons' relations with librarians.

## Findings

### The private use of Wikipedia

In their private lives the vast majority of librarians use Wikipedia. In fact, only three indicated that they did not use it at all. When asked why they use Wikipedia, the respondents' answers divided into two broad groups: convenience and content. Wikipedia was seen as a convenient information application as it is indexed by Google and appears among the top hits in many Google searches. Given what we know about the propensity of search engine users to not explore beyond the first page of links, this is a key asset for Wikipedia (Jansen and Spink 2006). But content is important for many of the librarians as well. One found that Wikipedia was good at providing easy to understand definitions of technical terms. The same respondent praised Wikipedia for being "fun to read" (Respondent #3). Other respondents were quick to point out that they only used Wikipedia when searching for certain kinds of information, for example, for entertainment (Respondent #9), recipes (Respondent #4), and travel (Respondent #16). But the majority did not mention any particular limits to the kind of information they sought. Instead the limit was the function they assigned to that information. Wikipedia content became a source of "general" (Respondent #4), "background" (Respondent #2), or "quick" (Respondent #10) information. It was seen as a means of obtaining a "brief" (Respondent #13) overview of a sub-

ject or "a rough definition" (Respondent #17) or a "starting point" (Respondent #19) to a project.

The librarians who did not use Wikipedia gave a variety of reasons for their decisions. One stated that they could find the information in other places, suggesting that they had a definite set of alternative information sources they consulted for their needs (or perhaps that their information seeking was limited to a narrow set of topics). Another librarian declared that her "circle of friends don't use, so I don't use". This circle was linked to issues of education (and perhaps class?): "More information savvy people will [not] use it ... those more illiterate people [will]" (Respondent #20). The final respondent who didn't use Wikipedia for personal searches commented that she "use[d] it more for work" (Respondent #7). And it is to the work use of Wikipedia that we now turn.

### The professional use of Wikipedia

The vast majority of librarians used Wikipedia in their professional lives – only five claimed not to do so. The respondents were asked to quantify their usage. Their answers ranged from infrequently to hourly, but less rather than more use was the norm. Only two librarians admitted to using Wikipedia hourly and only three more daily. The bulk of the responses indicated weekly use (7 respondents), monthly use (7 respondents), and infrequent use (6 respondents).

In terms of why they used Wikipedia the respondents downplayed convenience. Only three admitted that Wikipedia's convenience or what amounts to the same impetus, its position at the top of many Google searches was a key factor in their use. Instead the hunt for background information or context and the availability of useful reference lists at the bottom of Wikipedia's articles was stressed. The use of Wikipedia for general or background information on a subject has already been observed in the case of the librarians' personal information seeking behaviour. This reason for using Wikipedia remained high for professional work with seventeen respondents claiming to use Wikipedia for initial searches. What appears different in their professional work behaviour is the use of Wikipedia as a bibliographic tool. In many cases, the search for background information and usable reference lists was all part of the broader

information strategy deployed by the librarian. As one respondent put it: “I use it [Wikipedia] as a first step, especially on the subject and domain which I’m unfamiliar. Then when I need even more information, I will check out its references listed” (Respondent #3), while another told us that Wikipedia is meant “just to give you a basic understanding [of the topic, but] at the very bottom there are external links, which can be linked to reliable sources. It’s easier to find the sources through wiki rather than you look through the Internet” (Respondent #12).

### External links and references

However, some librarians don’t even pay much attention to the content. Instead they quickly glance through content and sub-headings to gauge relevance, and then focus on the external links and references. This saves time, as well as providing the leads for further searches. They use terms found in Wikipedia articles for further keyword searches: “I don’t use the whole info: basically I look out for keywords, and then do a search on databases. I use the references at the bottom. Some are actually credible, so they are usable” (Respondent #17). Another librarian claimed a similar pattern of usage: “I’d normally read the intro, before all the sub parts at the bottom, I’ll look at the external links and the references cited. Then I move on from there, I don’t really go into detail, reading the sub-parts, I’d rather look for related info, since I’ve gotten an idea of the subject” (Respondent #16). Even in the case of entries that librarians consider dubious right from the start, the references may be of use: “Some of the articles have a warning that it may not be accurate, so I look at the links provided, which leads to more authoritative answers” (Respondent #19). In all these cases, the Wikipedia search is a preliminary, pilot search done before moving on to what are considered more authoritative sources. In contrast to those librarians using Wikipedia as a start for their information hunt, a number were keen to point out that their use of Wikipedia was a last resort. One told us that she wouldn’t use Wikipedia “unless I’m unable to find other information sources from other reputable sources. [For] example if the info is so esoteric that it cannot be found in other reference materials then I would be forced to rely on Wikipedia” (Respondent #2).

### Citing Wikipedia

Respondents were asked if they would cite Wikipedia as a source to their clients. A slight majority of the librarians indicated they would not do so (14 respondents). They gave a variety of reasons. At the top of the list was the declaration that Wikipedia was not an authoritative source (5 responses). Closely related to those in this category were librarians who were concerned that “any Tom, Dick, or Harry can edit” Wikipedia (Respondent #18). Two respondents got to the heart of the matter by explaining that their concern was with the accuracy of Wikipedia entries. As one stated: “I know people who write Wikipedia articles, and while they can be obsessive compulsive they can still make mistakes. And also they are doing it in their spare time” (Respondent #26).

Many of the librarians, although willing to cite Wikipedia, were hesitant to do so, hedging their answer by noting that it would be a last resort (4 respondents). Other hedging strategies were employed as well. Three of the librarians told the interviewer that they would always add other citations to the list they provided clients; that is, they would never give Wikipedia as the only source to a query (but would they provide only one source for any query?). Two other respondents would only use Wikipedia entries as citations if they felt the references were sound. Once we account for these hedging strategies, only a few librarians wholeheartedly supported Wikipedia as a source for clients. For these librarians the comprehensiveness of Wikipedia seemed to act as a mitigating factor enabling its use. As one respondent noted: “I think it should be given some credit, as it’s very comprehensive, it provides links and sometimes you can’t find [the information] in any other search engine, especially [for] local [questions].” (Respondent #14).

### Non-western information searches

When we were able to probe specifically on the type of searches librarians made on Wikipedia as professionals, and why they did so, the results were interesting. To begin with, many used Wikipedia to search for information on topics involving non-Western cultures. One librarian searched Wikipedia for a character in the famous Chinese story *Romance*

of the *Three Kingdoms* and justified it “because these characters are not easily found, say in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as they are in Chinese, whereby Wikipedia, when I key in the *hanyu pinyin* name, it will give me some rough hits and the background knowledge” (Respondent #12). Another conducted a Wikipedia search on a Singaporean Tamil language author (Respondent #18) while a third described a search for information on paramilitary forces in Singapore (Respondent #9). Wikipedia was even a potential source of information for non-Western places, as one librarian noted: “This mountain in China: just type in and something came up, quite good, quite comprehensive” (Respondent #17). Japanese *manga* (Respondent #15) and the Indian state of Goa (Respondent #20) were other examples of this tendency to look for information on non-Western topics in Wikipedia. Wikipedia, it seems, fills a niche for information that is perhaps more Asian-centric, multicultural and multilingual in nature.

#### **Wikipedia’s accuracy, currency, and comprehensiveness**

Respondents were asked to comment on the accuracy, currency and comprehensiveness of Wikipedia. In terms of accuracy, most of the librarians choosing to comment had good experiences so that they were willing to concede that Wikipedia was overall either fairly or quite accurate (8 respondents). One believed that “there are some professionals who do take their time to update articles in Wikipedia and even if you find errors, it’s minor” (Respondent #16). Another librarian told the interviewer that in terms of accuracy she “can’t say for sure it’s 100% accurate, but at least majority of the info provided is mostly supported by references and there are also online volunteers, who look out for mistakes” (Respondent #19). One librarian appeared aware of the *Nature* study that compared errors in Wikipedia and *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and concluded that there was not much difference between the two. He told the researcher that “in terms of error [Wikipedia] compares to more established traditional encyclopaedia such as *Encyclopaedia Britannica*” (Respondent #14). There was an absence of hedging here as well. Only two librarians indicated that it was hard to evaluate accuracy while another commented that accuracy was related to the age of the entry. Popularity was also

seen as a qualifying variable in terms of accuracy as “many pairs of eyes” (Respondent #2) produced more accurate articles.

Generally, the currency of Wikipedia was unchallenged. One librarian stressed that the information in Wikipedia was potentially at least capable of being more current than traditional encyclopaedias. She noted in fact that Wikipedia “can be more reliable than the older encyclopaedias. If you are looking for encyclopaedic knowledge, it can be more updated, [be]cause Wikipedia is updated more often” (Respondent #16). Another respondent was unsure while two others believed that “you need to look at the topics, if it’s something people talk about then it’s up to date” (Respondent #15). In terms of comprehensiveness, the verdict appeared much the same as for currency. It was something that most librarians believed Wikipedia excelled at. Of those responding to the question, twelve believed Wikipedia to be quite comprehensive while another five believed that it varied with the topic.

#### **The usefulness of Wikipedia**

There was surprisingly strong agreement among the interviewees that Wikipedia was, overall, a useful information tool (only two believed it not to be useful at all). Responses were generally upbeat and positive. Overall, the majority of librarians praised Wikipedia for either its comprehensiveness (9 respondents) or its usefulness as an easy means to obtain general or background information (8 respondents). But Wikipedia was also praised for its language by one librarian who commented that it was “user friendly and the language is easy to understand. Specific and specialized terms, for example physics or chemical terms, which the layman may not understand, [makes] foreign topics more easily understandable and more accessible; don’t need to go through textbooks” (Respondent #1). Others stressed that Wikipedia was a good beginning for a search that would unearth “background reading” (#2) or give the user “a general idea of the topic” (Respondent #7). Some even acknowledged that it was likely to appeal to the general user more than regular library resources ever could: “Wikipedia is much more useful than the databases we have, cause it’s easy to search, language wise, it’s easier to read, even if there are complicated terms, there are links and you can read

up about that term is about as compared to other reference terms that I've used before" (Respondent #16). This was especially the case today because "nowadays, people want fast, and it fits the purpose, and it serves this group" (Respondent #17). But despite praising Wikipedia, some librarians could not give themselves completely over to it. "So far I've not read something that I know is wrong" one librarian told the researcher, but immediately went on to add: "Too bad I can't use the info in Wikipedia" (Respondent #14). Similarly, four other librarians explicitly noted that despite the good aspects of Wikipedia, its information was inherently suspect and in need of verification. As one of these librarians noted: "It's useful, but that doesn't mean it's accurate" (Respondent #12).

### **Is Wikipedia leading patrons to bypass the library?**

The librarians were asked if they felt that people were bypassing reference services in favour of using Wikipedia. Five agreed that this was the case. Some argued that "patrons believe Wikipedia is as good as reputable encyclopaedias" so that "they don't need to come to the library as it is very convenient to access Wikipedia" (Respondent #2). Interestingly, many of the librarians who believed that Wikipedia was diverting patrons from library services were quick to implicate not just the website itself, but the Internet in general: "I think not only Wikipedia but the Internet itself [is diverting patrons]. With the Internet people can find loads of things so in the sense they are bypassing libraries and librarians" while another noted that "they are definitely bypassing, not only [be]cause of Wikipedia, but the Internet itself. Like they will go straight to Internet, go Google" (Respondent #12).

Far more librarians believed that they were not being bypassed by Wikipedia (13 respondents). Of this four believed that users still needed library resources to provide multiple perspectives on a topic. Others were sure that library users understood the value of libraries as store houses of trustworthy information. For example, one librarian said that "students learn and are aware [of] Wikipedia's strengths and weaknesses hence they will still approach librarians and libraries for further knowledge" (Respondent #8) while another had faith that that pa-

trons would "come by when they know they should come by. They want to verify what they found or they don't really know what they need to do" (Respondent #24). Other librarians in this category gave different answers. One considered that many people don't even know what Wikipedia is or are otherwise completely flummoxed in their quest for information (Respondent #11) while another believed that certain ages and groups would still prefer the library over Wikipedia (Respondent #25).

Eight respondents refused to give a black-and-white answer to the question. Some qualified their answer by noting the nature of the patrons, suggesting that libraries would be bypassed by "secondary and college students" (Respondent #5) or "patrons who want to look for information and they are not concerned [about] the information authenticity" (Respondent #7). The implication being that those concerned about where their information comes from would stick to the library. Time pressure was another distinguishing characteristic that made the situation facing libraries less stark: "if they are in a rush and the librarian says they need time, then they will use Wikipedia. [Whether they use the library] depends on their urgency" (Respondent #20). And finally, one librarian noted that the kind of question being asked was a determining factor behind patrons' willingness to bypass reference services: "Quick reference questions are now removed entirely. Multivariate questions, more than one-dimension questions, they come to us" (Respondent #26).

### **Wikipedia: Opportunity or threat?**

Only a few librarians see Wikipedia entirely as a threat. For example, one respondent commented that "I think you can think of it as a threat: it's so accessible. I mean if I'm a patron, I don't need to talk to people. Part of our job scope is to provide reference and enquiry service and they will bypass us" (Respondent #15) while another noted that "people may think it [Wikipedia] is a one-stop information source" (Respondent #2) so that "people may not need librarians anymore" One librarian was especially concerned with losing the young to the Internet world: "It can be a threat, especially for teenagers ... when it comes to teens, I mean they will be more than happy to lift the info[rmation] from Wikipedia" (Respondent #17).

Most of the librarians believed that Wikipedia was more of an opportunity than a threat. Many believed that librarians offered a unique service which would continue to exceed the information standards of Wikipedia and thus provide them with an exploitable niche. One respondent believed, for example, that Wikipedia would allow librarians to “concentrate on the real work” (Respondent #3) which according to another librarian consisted in helping people use information sources in the best way possible. This individual argued that “any form of information tool would always need someone to help guide how to use. Even if the help feature is very comprehensive having a person to interact with you and clarify is so much better” (Respondent #16). Others argued that Wikipedia did not “provide all the answers” (Respondent #19) so that it “complements” [sic] the work of librarians rather than opposes it. Similarly another librarian revealed that she perceived “Wikipedia and librarianship as two separate entities. Wikipedia is like [an] online encyclopedia whereby people can edit but librarianship is assisting patrons to locate information they want and the sources librarians provide [are] authoritative” (Respondent #23). Quite a few librarians believed that Wikipedia is an opportunity for collaboration, rather than an adversary. These librarians argued that they or other subject specialists could help improve Wikipedia’s content. As one put it: “I believe that librarians should use Wikipedia to extend their talents or information knowledge skills by contributing to Wikipedia if they can. When Wikipedia ... librarians should leverage on [Wikipedia] to show our professionalism. So as and when Wikipedia users read Wikipedia, they know the contributions are from librarians and so they would even approach librarians even more” (Respondent #7).

The idea of collaboration was shared by other librarians, including one who argued that “Wikipedia might be a platform for librarians to share information ... I think some libraries are doing [this] now” (Respondent #22). And finally, one respondent believed that Wikipedia could be a useful tool for reference librarians themselves: “I think it would be an opportunity, honestly speaking, sometimes librarians don’t know a lot of things ... the librarian does not need to tell the patron that they do not know the answer, but they can go to Wikipedia and try to increase the information that they can give to the patron” (Respondent #18).

## Conclusions

While the librarians were generally cautious in referring patrons to Wikipedia in the course of their professional duties, they otherwise gave a range of mostly positive responses. This is heartening for a number of reasons and provides a sound base for potential institutional responses to Wikipedia that could serve to help make Wikipedia into a better information tool in the long-run as well as help meet the information needs of current and future patrons. All of the librarians interviewed for this study were aware of Wikipedia, and many have either visited the site or used its services, and continue to do so. Wikipedia, whether for professional or personal purposes, does feature in their information landscape. It is ironic, although perhaps not entirely surprising, that the librarians interviewed were accessing Wikipedia for pretty much the same reasons as their “lay” users: high visibility in search engine results, ease, convenience, and good expectations of retrieving a result. The key difference would seem to be that librarians specifically look for further resources within the Wikipedia article, such as keyword terms, definitions, references, citations and external links.

Being users themselves, librarians can likely sympathize with users who value Wikipedia for its ease of use and its wide coverage. As succeeding generations are progressively even further removed from the era of print-only research this is important. A recent CIBER (2008) paper suggests that what some commentators refer to as the digital natives or young people who have never experienced a world without Internet connectivity are at danger of not developing academic skills that are still vital to a critical informed citizenry and workforce. The report also notes that, by the time these students reach university, the chance to impart such skills may have vanished (CIBER 2008). If this is true the role of public libraries becomes vastly more important as it attempts to reach out and develop appropriate information-seeking habits or cultures. And this will not happen if libraries are disdainful of the new Web technology.

It is equally encouraging that the librarians are making use of Wikipedia to address the skewed nature of knowledge production in the world. Wikipedia was used to clarify matters such as Chinese characters (names, terms, spelling) and to obtain cultural/ethnic information. In an age where aca-

demographic journals covering subjects related primarily to North America or Europe can masquerade as “international” (Paasi 2005), Wikipedia, if properly supported, can be a counter-balancing factor in re-adjusting, even to a small degree, what is a bias towards knowledge of and from the West. Canagarajah (2002) tells us that one of the main impediments of authors from the periphery is a lack of understanding of discursive conventions of scholarly writing. Perhaps Wikipedia, with its generally co-operative culture could provide these authors with a voice and, if librarians develop a habit of using Wikipedia, an audience.

This leads to a final point, a reflection on the finding that many of the librarians viewed Wikipedia as an opportunity for the profession rather than a threat. A majority sees the profession as having continued relevance to the information-seeking public based on two key pillars: complex and critical information needs still require the services of librarians; and there are opportunities for collaboration and participation in Wikipedia and other platforms that hold the promise of promoting the credibility of librarians. If this sentiment was encouraged by library management, as it has been in a number of libraries in the United States (Lally & Dunford 2007; Zentall & Cloutier 2008), it would be a welcome development and opportunity to improve on what is, at least potentially, a democratic alternative to the current system of academic knowledge dissemination which many argue is increasingly more interested in forging ties to corporate and bureaucratic interests (Slaughter & Rhoades 2004; Olssen & Peters 2005). Participating in the development of a democratically constructed information commons based on Wikipedia (Black 2008; Hansen, Berente & Lyytinen 2009) would also help librarians redefine their roles in an increasingly digital world. Karl Bridges has argued that Web 2.0 services in libraries has resulted in “a higher public profile” for the profession; a situation that they should not ignore. He offers a vision of “a higher public profile for librarians”, a profile that requires librarians to participate in a “fuller engagement with the wider intellectual life of academe” and perhaps even more importantly, the development of “the librarian as a public intellectual ... more fully engaged in public discourse” (Bridges 2008, 5). If Wikipedia could help realize such a project it would be well worth the effort.

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