



Wikipedia:Wikipedia Signpost/2022-01-30/In the media

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In the media

Fuzzy-headed government editing

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UK PM says editing your Wikipedia article is wrong

[Boris Johnson](#) is in danger of losing his job as UK prime minister due to a bit of fuzzy-headed partying (<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jan/25/boris-johnson-braced-for-perilous-48-hours-with-release-of-sue-grays-report>) which broke COVID lockdown rules. But his possible ignominious exit should not hide what we consider to be one of his major achievements in office. He was quoted this month by *The Independent* denouncing (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/colston-statue-boris-johnson-wikipedia-b1988008.html>) attempts to "change our history or to bowdlerise it or edit it". He continued "It's like some person trying to edit their Wikipedia entry – it's wrong." He was commenting on a jury's acquittal of the "Colston Four" who tore down the statue of eighteenth-century slave trader [Edward Colston](#) during the [Black Lives Matter](#) protests in Bristol in 2020.

Perhaps inadvertently, *The Independent* hinted at a case of somebody who may have tried to change history while editing Wikipedia. [Grant Shapps](#), the Conservative transport minister, was quoted saying "We are introducing via the police crime sentencing bill, new measures which would potentially plug a

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gap and make it absolutely clear" that people who admit to tearing down historic statues should be convicted.

Shapps was accused in 2015 of whitewashing his own Wikipedia article, and editing those of other British politicians through the account Contribsx (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Contribsx>).

Contribsx was first indefinitely blocked for sockpuppeting, and then acquitted – not by a jury of his peers or by the House of Commons – but by ArbCom. – S

New Zealand MP tries to prove that Johnson is right


Harete Hipango admitted that she asked a staff member to edit the Wikipedia article about her, according to *National MP Harete Hipango 'regrets' Wikipedia edit* (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/460354/national-mp-harete-hipango-regrets-wikipedia-edit>). An IP editor who removed the entire Controversies section of the article four times is traceable to "PS-NZ-AS-AP Parliamentary Service", and they admitted in an edit summary to being a staff member for Hipango. The media coverage led to the incident being added to the Controversies section, and a side-effect of the attention was the entire article being rewritten and expanded by 15 editors. – G, S


And other political high jinks (and worse)

- **Edits by police:** Offensive edits came from the Australian state police network (https://www.heraldsun.com.au/subscribe/news/1/?sourceCode=HSWEB_WRE170_a_TCA&dest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.heraldsun.com.au%2Ftruecrimeaustralia%2Fpolice-courts-victoria%2Fpolice-probe-offensive-edits-of-indigenous-web-page%2Fnews-story%2F4d45a1d0c815db8538c2fa339f762856&memtype=anonymous&mode=premium&v21=dynamic-cold-test-snoscore&V21spcbbehaviour=append&nk=551cf0e21b4b9d8bca102dfd1a7ae458-1640733851). The edits

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made to an indigenous tribe's Wikipedia article came from within Victoria Police network – Herald Sun (Melbourne) (paywall)

- **Even more offensive edits:** News about Wikipedia being vandalized keeps generating newspaper clicks. This time however it wasn't just a newspaper that reported on a single run-of-the-mill bad edit. Instead, The Rakyat Post observed (<https://www.therakyatpost.com/news/malaysia/2021/12/30/rina-harun-bullied-online-offensive-edits-made-to-the-womens-ministers-wikipedia-page/>) that people on Twitter were tweeting about the Wikipedia article about Rina Harun having been vandalized multiple times, and attributed the rise of bad edits to a photograph of her using a water jet that was making the rounds. Many of these edits were to change her name to slurs.
- **Government contractor edits Wikipedia, causes an internal investigation:** An anonymous editor using the the IP address of Taiwan's Directorate General of Highways edited a Chinese Wikipedia article about a political commentator. An internal investigation and examination by cybersecurity specialists found the computer that was used. A temporary contractor was named and he voluntarily went to the police following the revelation. Multiple Chinese language newspapers (ETtoday (<https://finance.ettoday.net/news/2139284>), UDN (https://udn.com/news/story/6656/5990249?from=udn-catehot_news_ch2)), and the English-language Taiwan News "Wikipedia entry edited by contractor: DGH" (<https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2021/12/28/2003770325>) reported the incident. It was also added to the article in question on Chinese Wikipedia for future historians.
- **Government cites Wikipedia?:** The Epoch Times, the favorite newspaper of the Falun Gong new religious movement, reports that an NIH spokesperson told them to look at Wikipedia to assess their position on the Great Barrington Declaration. The article implies that Wikipedia is not to be trusted, a position we (occasionally) agree with.
- **Website Liar.co.uk redirects to Boris Johnson Wikipedia page** according to Walesonline.uk (<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/website-liarcouk-redirects-boris-johnson-22802795>). Believe it. – B, J



Johnson

In brief

- **We missed at least one:** *The Washington Post* in an article stating that *More than 1,700 congressmen once enslaved Black people* (https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/interactive/2022/congress-slaveowners-names-list/?itid=ap_juliezauzmerweil) notes that the slaveholdings of many of the congressmen are not commonly known. As an example they give Senator *Rufus King's* Wikipedia article which misses the fact. See a [related article](#) in this month's *Signpost*.
- **Citation needed?:** Normally we leave academic papers out of this column in favor of our Recent research column. But [this paper](https://academic.oup.com/gigascience/article/doi/10.1093/gigascience/giab095/6505121) (<https://academic.oup.com/gigascience/article/doi/10.1093/gigascience/giab095/6505121>) is about Wikipedia's coverage of Covid-19, a topic first mentioned in [this column](#) in [March 2020](#) citing Omer Benjakob's [news article](https://www.wired.co.uk/article/wikipedia-coronavirus) (<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/wikipedia-coronavirus>). The academic paper's three authors include Benjakob.
- **NFT speculators are angry:** after Wikipedians [declined to classify NFTs as "artworks"](https://news.artnet.com/market/wikipedia-editors-nft-art-classification-2060018) (<https://news.artnet.com/market/wikipedia-editors-nft-art-classification-2060018>). See coverage in [Artnet](#) and *Smithsonian* magazine (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/wikipedia-editors-vote-no-on-nft-art-definition-180979405/>).
- **Addictive substance for Wikipedians:** *Vice* reviews (<https://www.vice.com/en/article/jgmjk4/i-cant-stop-playing-this-wikipedia-history-game>) a new simple game called WikiTrivia (<https://wikitrivia.tomjwatson.com/>) which uses factoids from Wikipedia and Wikidata to create timelines. It's addictive. Go straight to the game site, beat 13 in a row, and then never – never ever – use it again.
- **Smithsonian:** [held an edit-a-thon](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/smithsonian-libraries-and-archives/2022/01/18/100-women-in-science-in-smithsonian-history/) (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/smithsonian-libraries-and-archives/2022/01/18/100-women-in-science-in-smithsonian-history/>) on 100 women Smithsonian scientists.
- **Translation into Arabic:** [WikiDownen project](https://www.arabnews.com/node/1997021/media), University of Jeddah translate Wikipedia articles into Arabic (<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1997021/media>), an initiative of the Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Foundation (*Arab News*)
- **21 and still going:** anniversary noted by [WIO News](https://www.wionews.com/technology/wikipedia-turns-21-all-you-need-to-know-about-worlds-largest-internet-encyclopedia-445051) (<https://www.wionews.com/technology/wikipedia-turns-21-all-you-need-to-know-about-worlds-largest-internet-encyclopedia-445051>) (owned by [Zee Media](#))
- **We're weird**, according to U of Toronto's newspaper *The Varsity* [1] (<https://thevarsity.ca/2022/01/16/weird-wikipedia-articles/>)
- **Ageism:** Entertainer [Aijaz Aslam](https://images.dawn.com/news/1189294/ajiaz-aslam-doesnt-want-anyone-to-be-defined-by-their-age-and-calls-) is [unhappy with focus on ages](https://images.dawn.com/news/1189294/ajiaz-aslam-doesnt-want-anyone-to-be-defined-by-their-age-and-calls-) (<https://images.dawn.com/news/1189294/ajiaz-aslam-doesnt-want-anyone-to-be-defined-by-their-age-and-calls->

out-the-ugly-phenomenon-of-ageism) in Wikipedia bios, especially when wrong facts are presented. (*Dawn*)

- **No thanks to crypto donations?:** TechRepublic says Wikipedia (sic) may stop accepting cryptocurrency (<https://www.techrepublic.com/article/mozilla-stops-accepting-cryptocurrency-wikipedia-may-be-next-are-dominos-falling/>) pending the outcome of GorillaWarfare's request for comment on meta-wiki (see her related Opinion column in this issue of *The Signpost*).
- **Local "flavour" wanted:** A WikiAfrica AfroCuration event will be held in Zimbabwe just a few days after publication, in partnership with the National Gallery of Zimbabwe (TechZim (<https://www.techzim.co.zw/2022/01/zimbos-heres-your-chance-to-give-wikipedia-that-local-flavour/>))
- **Wikipedia's bias exposed again:** Conservative personality Steven Crowder has received over 430,000 views for his YouTube video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv7s_ydrdHE) "EXPOSED: Wikipedia's Bias Tested and PROVEN!" Crowder and a compatriot made a number of edits to Wikipedia pages, and argue that the reversal of their changes exposes Wikipedia's bias. Bizarre interpretations of Wikipedia policies and guidelines, as well as misreadings of messages from fellow editors, are shown. A subsequent AN/I thread was opened regarding the accounts (whose names he showed in the video).

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- That WikiTrivia game is a lot of fun *and* a great reuse of content outside of the projects. My highest streak is 11. Ckoerner (talk) 15:22, 31 January 2022 (UTC)

- I somehow managed 22 on my first try via beginner's luck, but haven't been able to do better than 10 since then. --Ahecht ([TALK PAGE](#)) 20:02, 2 February 2022 (UTC)
- I am glad SOMEBODY is watching over this. It makes my brain bend, but we have to keep Wikipedia as honest as possible. Best wishes to all. [BeenAroundAWhile](#) (talk) 20:23, 6 February 2022 (UTC)

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