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Systemic Bias in Wikipedia : What It Looks Like, and How to Deal with It

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Systemic Bias on Wikipedia

What it looks like, and how to deal with it

Laura Quilter / Copyright & Information Policy Librarian
University of Massachusetts Amherst, Oct. 24, 2012
Open Access Week 2012

what it looks like

"Systemic bias is the inherent tendency of a process to favor particular outcomes. The term is a neologism that generally refers to human systems..."

"Systemic Bias", Wikipedia, quoted as of Oct. 19, 2012; http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Systemic_bias&oldid=493766084

types of SB in wikipedia

- systemic bias on Wikipedia replicates the systemic biases of culture at large: racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, majority religion, etc.
- replicates systemic biases of Internet culture: Anglophone, class privilege, "Libertarian" politics, WM
- amplified / modulated by the medium of the Internet:
  - pseudonymized communications
  - self-selected class of privileged, well-educated, technologically-savvy, folks with time on their hands
- various additional biases: pop culture; tech topics; non-academic; current events; corporate / MSM sources; etc.

what it looks like

content bias

- dearth of articles
- inadequate articles
- perspective bias

- editor demographics
- editor experiences
- editor participation, contributions, & retention

what it looks like: missing content

User:Dsp13/Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
< User:Dsp13

The Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science is a 2-volume work containing entries on nearly 3,000 scientists. Below is a list of its entries in Volume II, the text of which is accessible online on bookrags.com

Ogilvie, Marilyn; Harvey, Joy, eds. (1999), *The Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science*, II, Routledge, ISBN 978-0415920407

- Margaret Sibylla von Löser - Elise Depew Strang L'Esperance / Elise Strang L'Esperance / Elise L'Esperance / Elise Strang - Marie Louise Dugès La Chapelle / Marie Louise Dugès Lachapelle / Marie-Louise Dugès La Chapelle / Marie-Louise Dugès Lachapelle / Marie-Louise Lachapelle / Marie-Louise La Chapelle /Marie Louise Lachapelle / Marie-Louise Lachapelle / Marie Louise Dugès / Marie-Louise Dugès - Lora Sarah La Mance / Lora Sarah Nichols La Mance /Lora Sarah LaMance / Lora Sarah Nichols LaMance / Lora Nichols LaMance / Lora Nichols La Mance / Lora LaMance / Lora La Mance - Marguerite Hessein, Madame de La Sablière / Marguerite de La Sablière / Marguerite Hessein de La Sablière / Marguerite Hessein, Madame de la Sablière / Marguerite de la Sablière / Marguerite Hessein de la Sablière / Mme de la Sablière / Madame de la Sablière - Anne de La Vigne / Anne de la Vigne - Laïs - Christine Ladd-Franklin / Christine Ladd - Nadezhda Nikolaevna Ladygina-Kots / N. N. Ladygina-Kots - Carobeth Laird / Carobeth Tucker / Carobeth Tucker Laird - Elizabeth Rebecca Laird / Elizabeth Laird - Marie Jeanne Amélie Harlay Lefrançais de Lalande / Marie-Jeanne Amélie Harlay Lefrançais de Lalande / Marie-Jeanne de Lalande / Marie Jeanne de Lalande - Cornelié Lamarck /Cornelié de Lamarck / Cornelia Lamarck /Cornelia de Lamarck

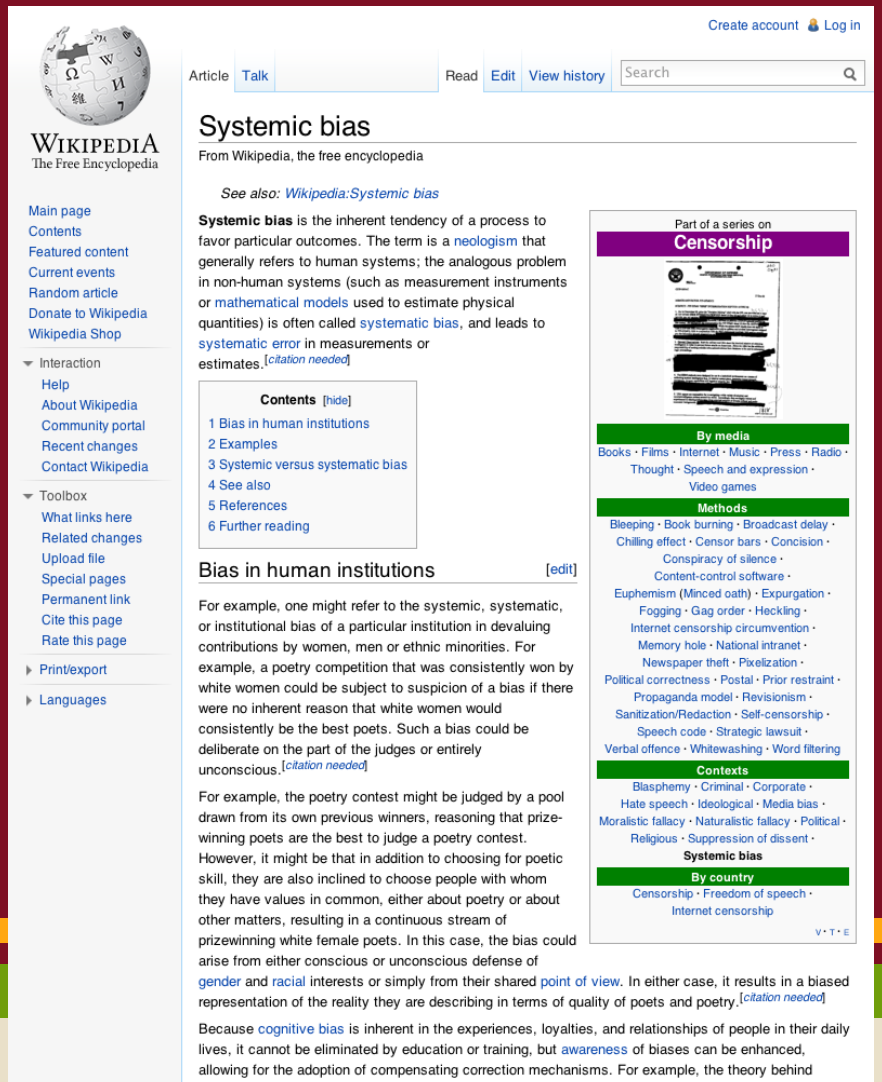
- Suzanne Lambin - Bertha Lamme - Francesca Raimonde Lamonte - Lois Lampe - Jeanne Lampl-De Groot - Rebecca Craighill Lancefield - Ruth Landes - Janet Elizabeth Lane-Claypon - Fanny E. Langdon - Ladema M. Langdon - Linda Bartels Lange - Mathilde Margarethe Lange - Hedwig Langecker - Grace Langford - Toni Von Langsdorff - Phoebe Lankester - Marcelle Lapicque - Elisabeth Larsson - Clara Ethelinda Larter - Amelia Laskey - Gerda Laski - Edna Ernestine Lassar - Lasthenia Of Mantinea - Vida Annette Latham - Caroline Wormeley Latimer - Linda Laubenstein - Emma Eliza Laughlin - Charlotte Louisa Laurie - Marie Anne Pierrette Paulze Lavoisier - Annie Law - Margaret Lawder - Barbara Lawrence - Penelope Lawrence - Alice Louisa Lawrenson - Elva Lawton - Hilda Mary Lazarus - Désirée Le Beau - Elaine Le Breton - Dorothée Le MaÎTre - Mary Frances Leach - Eleanor Burke Leacock - Mary Douglas Leakey - Henrietta Swan Leavitt - Nataliia Ivanova Lebedeva - Vera Pavlovna Lebedeva - Marie Victoire Lebour - Suzanne Leclercq - Una Christina Ledingham - Julia Southard Lee - Rebecca Lee - Rose Hum Lee - Sarah Wallis Bowdich Lee - Mary Elizabeth Leebody - Florence Sarah Lees - Helena Lefroy - Inge Lehmann - Emilie Lehmus - Marguerite Lehr - Dorothea Leighton - Sarah Plummer Lemmon - Leontium - Leoparda - Nicole-Reine Hortense Lepaute - Ol'Ga Borisovna Lepeshinskaia - Lidiia Karlovna Lepin - Ekaterina Vladimirovna Lermontova - Iuliia Vsevolodovna Lermontova - Jeanne Leschi - May Sybil Leslie / May Sybil Burr - Ruth Mandeville Leverton - Hilde Levi - Rita Levi-Montalcini - Lena Levine - Margaret Rutherford Bryan Levyns - Florence Parthenia Lewis - Graceanna Lewis - Helen Geneva Lewis - Isabel Lewis - Lilian Lewis - Madeline Dorothy Lewis - Margaret Adaline Reed Lewis - Mary Butler Lewis - Hilda Winifred Ivy Leyel - Leona Woods Marshall Libby - Marie-Anne Libert - Clara Flora Lieber - K.O.Victoria Lieu - Lin Qiaozhi - Almira Hart Lincoln - Hjördis Lind-Campbell - Maria GrÃFin Von Linden - Marianne Lindsten-Thomasson - Dorolyn Lines - Laura Alberta Linton - Mélanie Lipinska - Srbui Stepanova Lisitsian - Sofiya Nikolaievna Lisovskaia - Gulielma Lister - Henrietta Emma Litchfield - Elizaveta Fedorovna Litvinova - Marie Litzinger - Dorothy Jordan Lloyd - Rachel Lloyd - Lorna Lloyd-Green - Christina Lochman-Balk - Lotte Luise Friedericke Loewe - Martha Daniell Logan - Myra Adele Logan - Mayme Logsdon - Elizabeth Anne Lomax - Cynthia Longfield - Hannah E. Longshore - Mary Jane Longstaff - Kathleen Lonsdale - Isabella Losa - Jane Loudon - Esther Pohl Lovejoy - Augusta Ada Byron, Countess Of Lovelace - Mary Hewitt Loveless - Frances Lowater - Clemence Sophia Lozier - Lu Gwei Djen - Liliana Lubinska - Adelaida N. Lukanina - Katharine Fowler Lunn - Katharine Luomala - Cecelia Lutwak-Mann - Marguerite Lwoff - Katharine Murray Lyell - Mary Elizabeth Lyell - Mary Johnstone Lynn - Mary Lyon - Yelena Aleksandrowa Lyubimova - Clara Louise Maass - Catharine Macaulay - Bella Dytes Maccallum - Eleanor Josephine Macdonald - Mary Stuart Macdougall - Elsie Gregory Macgill - Carolina Henriette Macgillavry - Sheila Scott Macintyre - Pauline Beery Mack - Helen Marion Macpherson Mackay - Madge Macklin - Marde-Therese Mackowsky - Florence Edith Carothers Maclaughlin - Ida Maclean - Annie Louise Macleod - Grace Macleod - Macrina - Rachel Macrobert - Ada Isabel Maddison - Margaret Schönberger Mahler - Countess Of Artois Mahout - Lucy Philip Mair - Maude Makemson - Harriet Florence Maling - Elizabeth Malleson - Edith Mallory - Margaret Eliza Maltby - Evelyn Brower Man - Hilde Mangold - Harriet Mann - Ann B. Manning - Grace Evelyn Manson - Mary Ann Mantell - Irene Manton - Sidnie Milana Manton - Anna Morandi Manzolini - Stefania Maracineanu - Marcella - Jane Haldimand Marcet - Marguerite Du Tertre De La Marche - Margery - Tereza Kristoforovna Margulova - Mileva Maric - Louise De Marillac - Evelina Marinov - Hertha Marks - Abby Lillian Marlatt - Alice Lee Marriott - Mary Elizabeth Marsh - Clara Marshall - Sheina Macalister Marshall - Ella May Martin - Emilie Norton Martin - Lillien Jane Martin - Harriet Martineau - Josefina Martinez-Alvarez - Mary The Jewess - Carol Y. Mason - Marianne

- each red link is a woman scientist without an article
- *Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science*, User: Dsp13

what it looks like : inadequate articles

- shorter & less content
- fewer references
- fewer links in or out
- fewer editors & fewer eyes ==> more bugs, typos, bad writing, uncorrected vandalism
- perspective bias ("criticism" sections; unlinked and uncredited family members of men; non-global perspectives; undue weight)
- ... fewer "Featured Articles", "Good Articles", "Do-you-know" highlights; "Vital Articles".

what it looks like: inadequate content



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Languages

Systemic bias

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

See also: Wikipedia:Systemic bias

Systemic bias is the inherent tendency of a process to favor particular outcomes. The term is a neologism that generally refers to human systems; the analogous problem in non-human systems (such as measurement instruments or mathematical models used to estimate physical quantities) is often called systematic bias, and leads to systematic error in measurements or estimates.[citation needed]

Contents [hide]

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Part of a series on
Censorship

By media
Books · Films · Internet · Music · Press · Radio · Thought · Speech and expression · Video games

Methods
Bleeping · Book burning · Broadcast delay · Chilling effect · Censor bars · Concision · Conspiracy of silence · Content-control software · Euphemism (Minced oath) · Expurgation · Fogging · Gag order · Heckling · Internet censorship circumvention · Memory hole · National intranet · Newspaper theft · Pixelization · Political correctness · Postal · Prior restraint · Propaganda model · Revisionism · Sanitization/Redaction · Self-censorship · Speech code · Strategic lawsuit · Verbal offence · Whitewashing · Word filtering

Contexts
Blasphemy · Criminal · Corporate · Hate speech · Ideological · Media bias · Moralistic fallacy · Naturalistic fallacy · Political · Religious · Suppression of dissent · **Systemic bias**

By country
Censorship · Freedom of speech · Internet censorship

v · T · E

Bias in human institutions [edit]

For example, one might refer to the systemic, systematic, or institutional bias of a particular institution in devaluing contributions by women, men or ethnic minorities. For example, a poetry competition that was consistently won by white women could be subject to suspicion of a bias if there were no inherent reason that white women would consistently be the best poets. Such a bias could be deliberate on the part of the judges or entirely unconscious.[citation needed]

For example, the poetry contest might be judged by a pool drawn from its own previous winners, reasoning that prize-winning poets are the best to judge a poetry contest. However, it might be that in addition to choosing for poetic skill, they are also inclined to choose people with whom they have values in common, either about poetry or about other matters, resulting in a continuous stream of prizewinning white female poets. In this case, the bias could arise from either conscious or unconscious defense of gender and racial interests or simply from their shared point of view. In either case, it results in a biased representation of the reality they are describing in terms of quality of poets and poetry.[citation needed]

Because cognitive bias is inherent in the experiences, loyalties, and relationships of people in their daily lives, it cannot be eliminated by education or training, but awareness of biases can be enhanced, allowing for the adoption of compensating correction mechanisms. For example, the theory behind

- the article exists!

BUT:

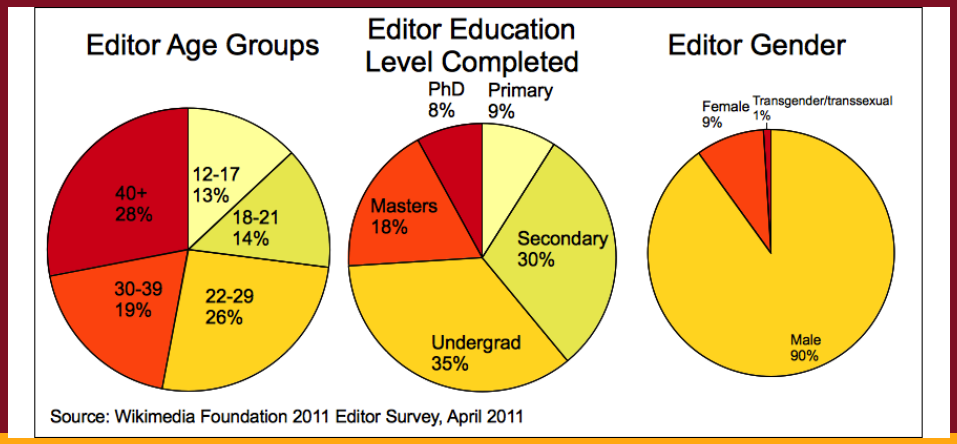
- inadequate article: overall small article relative to topic's importance
- perspective bias: very little discussion of gender / ethnicity

what it looks like: editor experience

- 8.5-15% of editors are women [various]
- Wikipedians are less "agreeable" & less "open"; cultural expression & tone - conflict, tendentiousness; 24% report harassment [Amichai-Hamburger 2008; WES 2011]
- editor frustration because of deleted/reverted work, or lengthy processes to justify / educate
- Note: WikiMedia Editors Survey 2011 looked at nationality/language; education; motivation & experiences; gender. NOT ethnicity, religion...

why does systemic bias persist?

- editing comes from editors: average Wikipedian
  - white, male [90%], 32yo, college-educated or student, English-speaking, US or European; single (60%); not a parent (80%) [WES 2011]
- Wikipedia culture established that replicates the "average Wikipedian"
- English sourcing
- digital divide



so why do we care?

- #6th ranked site on Internet
- #1 general reference on Internet -- the go-to for wide variety of answers for children, students, academics, press, etc.
- 2.7Bn pageviews in US in 2011

- the good news is that while Wikipedia's failings replicate those of the larger society, and in particular those of Internet society, *Wikipedia is easier to change!*

how to stop worrying & learn to love editing Wikipedia

- "so-fix-it"
  - become an editor (and more)
  - small changes, big changes, writing articles
- understand Wikipedia culture
  - (a) effectively represent your subjects
  - (b) change Wikipedia culture for the better
- change Wikipedia demographics
  - underrepresented interests, skills, and identities

How to make an article bullet-proof: 1 *Become an editor*

- establish yourself as an editor
  - small edits are fine! typos, refs, facts
- follow the core Wikipedia principles
  - notable subject; neutral point of view; no original research; verifiable sources; you don't own it.
  - editorial behavior: assume good faith; talk about content not editors; avoid conflicts of interest.
- when challenged
  - stay civil, and
  - seek allies & outside opinion: friendly objective editors/admins for 2d opinions

How to make an article bullet-proof: 2
Prepare your content

- Pick a topic
- Review any notability or style criteria for your subject (e.g., biographical; entertainment)
- Find a model: similar topic, handled well
  - copy the source if you are new to Wikipedia!
- Start a draft off your userpage:
  - User:*Lquilter/Subject (draft)*
- Establish notability: Gather 3+ independent refs with detailed coverage of your subject; OR meet other notability criteria
- Seed wikilinks in relevant articles (e.g., awards, lists, subjects)

How to make an article bullet-proof: 3 *Write your article*

- Assert notability claim in first sentence / paragraph
- Include relevant categories
- Add references and a references section
- Add a section for awards / 3rd-party recognition
- Add a section for notable works, and in comments or talk describe why the works are notable. Add wikilinks on the notable works if they are independently notable.

references & further reading

- Wikipedia, Systemic Bias
- Wikipedia, WikiProject Countering Systemic Bias
- Wikipedia Editors Survey, 2011
- Lots of coverage in press & blogs. See, e. g., Cohen, NYT, 2011/01/31; Sue Gardner, 2011/02/19.