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## **Social Media Technology**

The Jewish Museum's *Scenes from the Collection* exhibition includes works of art spanning classical to contemporary time periods. It features paintings by well-known artists such as Camille Pissarro<sup>1</sup> and Lee Krasner,<sup>2</sup> as well as beautifully crafted objects by unknown makers.<sup>3</sup> My selected object, *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle*, was made by Moses Formstecher who lived in Germany in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Beyond these basic facts, however, I could find little information about Formstecher. Even a general internet search yielded very few results about him.

### **Possible Social Media Implementation: Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon**

By engaging its audience of scholars, researchers, and people interested in Jewish art, the Jewish Museum can generate more content about artists in its collection. In recent years, some art museums have conducted Wikipedia Edit-a-thons to bring attention to areas of art history that have been overlooked. For example, this past March the Museum of Modern Art (“MoMA”) held its fifth annual [Wikipedia Edit-a-thon on art and feminism](#), an “all-day communal updating of Wikipedia entries on subjects related to gender, art, and feminism.”<sup>4</sup> The event included Wikipedia training, conversations with artists and digital technology professionals, and gallery sessions. People of all gender expressions were encouraged to attend. Novices to Wikipedia

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<sup>1</sup> Camille Pissarro, *Portail l'église Saint-Jacques à Dieppe*, 1901, oil on canvas, 31 x 26 in. Jewish Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Lee Krasner, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1930, oil on linen, 30 x 25 in. Jewish Museum.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g., *Aquamanile (Handwashing Vessel)*, late 12<sup>th</sup> century with later inscription, copper alloy, 9 x 11 x 4 in. Jewish Museum.

<sup>4</sup> “2018 Wikipedia Edit-a-thon: Art + Feminism,” Museum of Modern Art, accessed at <https://www.moma.org/calendar/events/3941>

editing received training and guidance. Those who were averse to actual editing could participate in the panel discussions. MoMA also provided meals and childcare to participants. If someone could not stay for the whole day, MoMA offered suggestions on how they could participate depending on how much time they had. For instance, someone who had 90 minutes could attend a training session and add citations to an article in their area of expertise.

Similarly, in November 2017, the Metropolitan Museum of Art (“the Met”) conducted a [Wikipedia Edit-a-thon for Asian Month](#) to “develop new articles about Asian artworks, artwork types, and art-making traditions.”<sup>5</sup> Like MoMA, the Met offered workshops throughout the day-long event, providing information about resources available to participants. Visitors could use images of the Met’s collection recently released in the public domain through open access. The Met encouraged the Wikipedia Edit-a-thon participants to use the Met’s scholarly and digital resources to improve the available information on Asian art.

Through these events, museums such as MoMA and the Met demonstrate interest in diversity while building interest in their collections. They connect with their audiences in a more participatory way. In contrast to the traditional model of information going in one way, from the museum to the visitor, both museums and visitors work together toward the goal of making information available. According to the 2015 NMC Horizon Report, “there is a need to recognize that niche visitor groups and individuals can provide museums with insights that enrich collections and enhance the interpretive value of an exhibit.”<sup>6</sup> Museums can tap into their visitors’ knowledge and passion for these subjects, while the audience benefits from the museums’ guidance and expertise.

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Knipel, “Join Us at the Met for a Wikipedia Asian Month Edit-a-thon,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed at <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2017/wikipedia-event-asian-month>

<sup>6</sup> “Increasing Focus on Participatory Experiences,” NMC Horizon Report: 2015 Museum Edition, p. 18.

## Relevant Features and Benefits of Wikipedia-Edit-a-Thon for the Jewish Museum

The Jewish Museum held its own [Wikipedia Edit-a-thon for Women's History Month](#).<sup>7</sup> Participants listened to talks by artists and curators and received Wikipedia training from the Museum's Director of Digital before beginning their editing session. Another such event could engage the Museum's audience to improve information resources on lesser-known Jewish artists. Both the Museum and its audience have an interest in creating and improving information available on Jewish art and artists. A Wikipedia Edit-a-thon would unite Museum and audience resources toward this end.

The [Wikipedia entry for the Met's Asian Month Edit-a-thon](#) shows how much can be accomplished at one event. Twelve new articles were created, three articles were improved, and data/images on twelve entries were created or improved.<sup>8</sup> Currently, there is no Wikipedia article for Moses Formstecher. Yet the Jewish Museum must have enough information about him to be able to attribute *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* to him. More generally, the Museum has resources about Jewish artists in its collection – books, articles, materials in its curatorial file – in addition to the knowledge of its curators and educators. An Edit-a-thon participant who wants to learn more about Moses Formstecher or any other artist can make use of these resources and draft a Wikipedia article. Visitors can contribute valuable content, and the Museum would be able to gauge the scope of its audience's interests.

## Potential Audiences

Museums that have conducted Wikipedia Edit-a-thons welcome anyone who wants to participate, regardless of their editing experience. A potential event at the Jewish Museum would

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<sup>7</sup> "Wikipedia Edit-a-thon," Jewish Museum, accessed at <https://thejewishmuseum.org/calendar/events/2018/03/11/wikipedia-edit-a-thon-031118>

<sup>8</sup> "Wikipedia:Meetup/NYC/MetAsianMonth 2017," Wikipedia, accessed at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Meetup/NYC/MetAsianMonth\\_2017](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Meetup/NYC/MetAsianMonth_2017)

attract (1) people who are knowledgeable about Jewish artists and want to share their knowledge; (2) people who want to learn more about Jewish artists and want to avail themselves of the Jewish Museum's resources; and (3) people who want to engage in a community event.

Regarding the first category, many museum visitors are already knowledgeable about the content which they seek out. In my visits to the Jewish Museum, I have noticed that most of my fellow visitors have an existing interest and are well-informed about Jewish art and history. It is this interest that leads them to visit the Museum in the first place. A Wikipedia Edit-a-thon would give them the opportunity to contribute their expertise and feel like they are a part of the Museum. The second category would fit someone like myself – not particularly knowledgeable about Jewish artists, but willing to learn more and eager to use the resources offered by the Museum. Engaging with such visitors gives the Museum an opportunity to grow its audience beyond those who are familiar with its collection. Lastly, many people would be drawn to the opportunity to participate in an event with fellow visitors and Museum staff. Even if they do not have knowledge of or a pre-existing interest in the subject matter, they would be willing to engage with it for the purpose of creating something together.