

WIKITHERAPY



Bringing the Wikimedia Projects into Therapy Settings: Patients adding value

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Abstract

The **Wikitherapy** programme was pioneered at the Argostoli Mental Health Day Center in Kefalonia, Greece. The objective was to introduce individuals with sociomental disorders to Wikipedia and three sister Wikimedia Projects (Wiktionary, Wikiquote and Commons) and encourage them to edit through two weekly sessions of two hours each over a six-month period. A total of ten individuals participated, five on a regular and five on a “come-and-go” basis. The Wikitherapy programme also included visits to places of interest in town, in order to collect material for the group project (article about historical local square, visits to municipal library, museum, state archives). During the programme there was close collaboration with the Day Center Staff (psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker and nurse). As a whole, the well-being of the participants was improved, with progress assessed by staff and marked in development of skills, expressing emotions, taking initiatives and social interaction. The first presentation of results was at the Wikiproject Med Conference at Villa Monastero, Lake Como, Italy in June 2016. Only the most relevant details have been included in this poster: the full proposal, timeline, midpoint report and final report can be accessed at <https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Grants:IEG/Wikitherapy>.

Below is a “before and after” summary of its results on the two most active participants. Emphasis has been placed on the lasting effects of the programme, one year after its completion.

Keywords: sociomental disorders, Day Center, Wiktionary, Wikiquote, Wikimedia Commons

Case study I:

D.V., male, 27

BEFORE

High school graduate D.V. has been receiving care from the Day Center since it opened in 2008. With an innate curiosity and passion for words, D.V. practiced an unusual habit when reading books: he would stop randomly at a word in the text he was reading and look up the word in six different languages in his collection of dictionaries. The word would be entered in the first column of a hand-written list and its translations in the next columns. Each book was counted as a new “cycle of work” and could output up to 300 words. The Center’s psychiatrist was perplexed as to how this odd hobby could have any productive meaning.

AFTER

The answer was **Wiktionary**: all words have a built-in translation template that offers the fields for entering translations into the project’s 40 language versions simply by removing markup and adding text. Dimitris was happy to learn that his favorite pastime was perfect for making valuable contributions to the free and open online dictionary of the Internet. Today D.V. is a regular editor who has entered over 1000 translations in fifteen languages. He also makes minor contributions on Greek Wikipedia by checking articles of his interest for typos and spelling/grammar mistakes. Moreover, he has spoken about his new “occupation” - as he calls it - at a public event in his hometown.

Mina Theofilatou is an electrical & computing engineer employed as a computer science teacher at the Argostoli Evening School in Kefalonia, Greece. With ten years of experience in using the Wikimedia Projects in Education, and a special connection with individuals experiencing social and mental problems, she devised the Wikitherapy programme to bring the benefits of Wikimedia editing to an even more disadvantaged audience. The programme has successfully been adapted to the Alvear Hospital in Buenos Aires, Argentina by fellow Wikimedian and psychologist Andrea-Patricia Kleiman with the project “Wikiquote at the Hospital.”

Case study II:

E.K., female, 35

BEFORE

Middle school graduate E.K. was particularly fond of uploading images with famous quotes on her Facebook page.

AFTER

It didn’t take long for us to find her natural fit: Wikiquote. Soon enough E.K was looking up categories to find the right “home” for the latest quote she had singled out from her books, while also correcting mistakes and improving on contributions made by other users. Her contributions are even more special because Greek Wikiquote is a dormant project and often she was the sole contributor for days in a row. This boosted her language skills and self-confidence enough for her to enroll in High School and continue studies in secondary education.

Most importantly,
Wikitherapy is fun...
This is what makes the
programme ideal for
adolescents. Scan the
QR code to watch the
video!

