

Hanley Happenings

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University of Pittsburgh at Bradford

Hanley Library

A Few Words About Wikipedia

By Marietta Frank

Can it be?! Wikipedia going to print?! According to an article in the April 23, 2008 online *New York Times*, a German publisher plans to publish a one-volume paper (yes, *paper*) "greatest hits" version of the German Wikipedia. Interesting.

The whole phenomena that is Wikipedia is interesting. Who contributes to Wikipedia and why? Who changes entries and why? Why some people see it as an authoritative source and why (a recent letter to the editor in the local paper referenced a Wikipedia article)?

I always wonder why students use Wikipedia for information when they

have access to Britannica Online. But, when I realize it takes fewer clicks and less time to get to Wikipedia, and you almost always find an entry, I begin to understand. It is quick and it is easy—not necessarily good for you, but it fills a need, sort of like fast food.

When talking to students about library resources I try to caution them about the dangers of Wikipedia and show newspaper articles about companies, governments, and presidential campaigns altering entries, as well as articles about the ever present danger of entry vandalism. I try to emphasize the fact that like any encyclopedia, it should not be used as the basis of

research, and if using it for background reading, one must be wary. I try to emphasize when looking for information, to think about when it is appropriate to go to the visible web. I suspect my words fall on ears tired of hearing disparaging remarks directed toward Wikipedia. So, in between the usual summer projects, I will contemplate Wikipedia and fast food and seek another approach.

Which brings me to summer and away from this Wikipedia ramble.

Have a wonderful summer!



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- *American Song Database*
- *Encyclopaedia Judaica*

- *Encyclopedia of Associations*
- *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports*

- *PsycCRITIQUES*
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