

## Presentation for:

[WikiCon 2026](#) Wellington, 2 May 2026

- and -

[ESEAP 2026](#) Kaohsiung, Taiwan, 17 May 2026

## **Botanists in the Wikiverse: Planting the seeds of open data enrichment and reuse with the botanical community**

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### **Script for slides (presented by Heidi Meudt)**

#### Slide 1 - Botanists in the Wikiverse

Kia ora koutou I'm Heidi Meudt, a Botany Curator at the Museum of New Zealand, also known as Te Papa, and a Wikimedian based in Wellington. I've been editing mostly in the biodiversity space for about 4 years.

My co-author on this presentation is Siobhan Leachman, a well-known New Zealand Wikimedian who was unable to be here today. She's been editing for over 12 years!

Today's presentation on "**Botanists in the Wikiverse**" is one that I will give twice this month - at WikiCon in Wellington in early May, and then at ESEAP in Taiwan in mid-May.

#### Slide 2 - Outline of Presentation

The **main aim** of our presentation today is to use our wiki outreach in the botanical community to **showcase how and why to collaborate with subject matter experts** to educate and upskill them in Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons and Wikidata at local, regional and international levels.

We will also discuss **benefits, challenges and strategies for success**, and what **successful engagement and impact** look like, so that you can use this information to **replicate thematic outreach** yourself!

### Slide 3 - Why collaborate with subject experts?

First, who are subject matter experts? They include **anyone with expertise in a particular area**, including community scientists; you do not need a PhD or job in that field to be a thematic expert!

So **why would we**, as Wikipedians or as Wiki community, **collaborate with subject experts**? There are **many benefits to us** when we work alongside thematic experts, and in fact many of these listed here were the **main objectives of our outreach** with the botanical community.

We **grow professionally** from these collaborations, gaining experience in editing, teaching and facilitating events.

But it is when we **work together with the subject editors** that we can make the magic happen, including making significant **improvements to accessibility, visibility and reach** of a particular subject on Wiki as well as beyond to **third-party websites**. In the case of **biodiversity**, for example, the content on Wiki is automatically ingested into **iNaturalist, Biodiversity Heritage Library, and the Atlas of Living Australia** to name a few.

Our constructive collaborations create a **network of people and projects**, and this includes subject experts themselves increasing the reach further by educating their colleagues and institutions.

And by continuing to work with the same expert community on multiple initiatives over time, we **increase the impact** of each of these outreach efforts and obtain a **higher level of community acceptance**, understanding and support of Wiki engagement and editing.

### Slide 4 - Why should subject experts collaborate?

We can also ask, **why would subject matter experts collaborate with the Wiki community**? Some of their **motivators** are listed here.

A main motivator for subject matter experts seems to be to **gain professional development**, as they learn to edit Wiki with hands-on training and obtain other

**transferable skills** in research, writing and collaboration.

Subject matter experts see for themselves the **impact of their edits - for example, research done by themselves, their colleagues and their institutions are more accessible**. They report a strong sense of **satisfaction**, that they are **making a difference** by **amplifying expert knowledge and research impact**, increasing **accessibility** while at the same time building a **like-minded community** around them.

#### Slide 5 - How to collaborate at multiple levels

We have developed a **suite of tailored wiki outreach engagement experiences that exploits any opportunity to train and work with subject experts**. This was an **iterative process** that evolved over time as we've **developed skills in recognising potential projects** and being **proactive, flexible and strategic**.

We suggest **starting locally** before jumping into regional or international engagement, and that you be open to **different formats and lengths of events**.

Outreach can be **formal events** such as edit-a-thons, workshops, webinars or conference presentations, or more **informal events, such as discussions**, live demos, emails or one-on-one tutoring.

#### Slide 6 - Informal outreach to thematic community

Many of the things we will discuss in this talk are more formal events, but before we do that we want to briefly highlight what we call "**informal outreach**", because **small informal interactions can have a huge impact**.

Informal wiki outreach involves any **networking, educating and socialising opportunities** with individuals or groups of people about wiki.

We've provided some examples here of **online and in-person** informal outreach.

As one **digital example**, Siobhan and I both **reach out frequently on the citizen science platform iNaturalist** to ask specific users to open their licenses for their photos and observations, or to thank them for doing so and let them know their image is now in a particular Wikipedia article.

As an **in-person example**, we've also had **multiple informal discussions and addressed follow-up questions** during the breaks or social parts of formal outreach events, such as conferences.

### Slide 7 - Who to collaborate with: Local level

So let's start now by looking at **engagement at the local level**.

At a local level we engage with **individual subject matter experts** whom we tend to know or get to know personally.

This could be **staff at local institutions**, or **experts** at outreach events.

Local engagement tends to be **in person** or may result in further one-on-one training through email or tutoring sessions.

### Slide 8 - Upskilling local subject matter experts

Siobhan made me do this slide! This is because in addition to being a Wikipedian, I myself am also a subject matter expert. How I came into Wiki provides an **example of successful engagement with a local subject matter expert**.

This year I will celebrate **20 years as botanist** at Te Papa, but it was only about **4 years ago** when I suddenly saw the **huge potential of the Wikiverse as a very powerful platform for scientific research**.

When I got started in Wiki, **Siobhan individually tutored me**, often via email or Zoom, sometimes in person, in biodiversity editing. **Within 6 months** I was creating new Wikipedia pages for species and scientists in my area of expertise, and adding and linking up images and information in Commons and Wikidata. I could see that my contributions were having a **positive impact both on Wiki and in the botanical and wiki communities**. Siobhan and my collaboration then evolved into us using our experience to **actively collaborate on Wiki outreach to train other subject experts, especially botanists**.

Although some of my Wiki editing is recognised at my workplace, Papa as "**digital outreach**", the majority of my wiki editing and volunteering is done **on my own time**. I believe **lack of time is the main impediment** to subject matter experts getting more involved in Wiki.

### Slide 9 - Engagement with local institutions & staff

So, collaboration with individual subject experts at a local level often **leads to engagement with their institutions and organisations**, including these specific

examples listed here.

Some of these involve the Wiki community and others happen organically within the institution, for example, a subject matter expert who is now trained in Wiki upsills their colleagues in Wiki editing, **embedding it into the work practice**.

This leads to a **symbiotic relationship** between Wikipedians, who provide support and training, and subject matter experts and their institutions, who may see Wiki as being aligned with their values and strategy and can provide in-kind support to the wider Wiki community, such as venues and other resources.

Engaging with local institutions and staff can result in these relationships being a **stepping stone to regional engagement**.

#### Slide 10 - Local events: edit-a-thons and BioBlitzes

Here are **two specific examples of local biodiversity engagement** that we have been involved with regularly. Our New Zealand species edit-a-thons are now an **annual event**!

**Edit-a-thons** involve us the organisers **preparing (and giving) a presentation, as well as preparing examples, templates and resources, including links** to articles to edit via Google sheets. Attending subject experts get **hands-on learning in a safe and fun community**, and we always ask for **feedback** in a survey before closing the event to help improve for next time.

**BioBlitzes** are events where subject matter experts find and identify species on a certain day and place, and Wikimedians can **Wikify the event in real time and demonstrate the value of Wiki** to those attending the BioBlitz. It is easy to **show the impact** of editing by using local examples of species that are collected during the event as specimens are brought in.

#### Slide 11 - Local challenges

Here is a **list of challenges** we have to learn to overcome when we organise local thematic events.

Most of these are really about **how to reach out** to locals, subject experts, organisations and institutions, and **figuring out the best method of engagement**, which sometimes means stepping outside of our own comfort zone and learning something new.

Another important challenge is **advertising and finding support for communications and social media** not just from the Wiki community but also from the subject expert

institutions or organisations.

#### Slide 12 - Local strategies for success

Based on our experience the last 3 years with our local botanical community, we have put together a **list of strategies** that we believe will **foster success in any local wiki outreach project** with thematic experts.

It starts with a common Wiki theme of **being BOLD** - and ends with making the event **cheap or free with lots of food and coffee!**

Of course all the stuff in between - **relationship building, communications and advertising, prepping the content, and getting support and funding**, are very important too.

We've had success by approaching both **individuals and local institutions multiple times** providing opportunities to attend **multiple types of events over time**.

It's good to focus on **local themes** (say, the local flora and fauna, or local places or people), get the **local Wiki community** behind you for support and apply for **funding** (for example to WANZ) to put on your event.

#### Slide 13 - Who to collaborate with: Regional level

Now, let's **move up to the regional level**, where we aim to collaborate with subject **experts who belong to regional groups or organisations**, for example, Australasia.

This includes **staff at regional institutions** as well as experts at **regional conferences** or workshops.

For regional biodiversity events, this could include regional BioBlitzes, iNaturalist City Nature Challenge or the Great Southern BioBlitz.

This engagement tends to be **in person** if we are attending the regional conference or workshop but **may be online** when we offer engagement and training opportunities to regional groups or organisations.

#### Slide 14 - Regional example: 2025 ASBS conference

Here is a specific **example of a regional thematic outreach opportunity** that Siobhan and I developed.

We reached out to the **Australasian Systematic Botany Society (ASBS) conference organisers** at the very beginning of the 2025 conference being organised, receiving their early and active support and incorporation into the **conference registration page**.

We **prepped the community** by writing articles about Wiki editing in the ASBS newsletter and **advertised our workshop** via their newsletter, society email list, social media and word of mouth.

We **asked the community** what they wanted to learn, and tailored a **full-day in-person pre-conference workshop** focused on **upskilling them with hands-on learning of specific skills on three Wiki platforms**, emphasising how Wiki can help with their work.

We also gave a **conference presentation** about Wiki for Botanists at the conference itself, and did a lot of **informal outreach** there too.

### Slide 15 - Regional challenges

At the regional level, we see the main challenges to be first **discerning when a regional conference is occurring** and **getting involved early enough** in the conference planning to have your thematic outreach be part of it.

Then **creating awareness** at a regional level prior to the event, and **tailoring an event for and with the participants**.

At the regional level we were not only engaging with individuals but also with **organisations** such as the **conference organising team** and **an entire scientific society**, which means practicing **co-management**, incorporating **their ideas and needs**, and exercising additional **time and patience**.

We were sometimes also dealing with much **larger groups of people** in a **location away from home** which can also be **more complex to manage**.

### Slide 16 - Regional strategies for success

Here's a **list of strategies that will be beneficial** to you and your outreach at the **regional level**.

Similar to fostering local success, being **BOLD**, reaching out and maintaining regular **communication** is imperative, as is being **flexible and accepting** any additional opportunities to engage.

It's good to have a **regional perspective**, for example, with the Australasian Systematic Botany Society conference we focused on plants from the entire Australasian region to **capture the broader botanical community of this society**.

Finally, being **organised** and **sharing the load** with each other and with conference organisers was crucial.

For example, Siobhan and I **work very well together and have complementary skills, meeting regularly** (usually weekly) to plan and complete the outreach. We also **worked closely with the conference organising team** to get content about our workshop onto the conference website as it was being developed for the conference as a whole, and to get society newsletter articles about Wiki and our workshop published.

#### Slide 17: How to collaborate: International level

Collaborating at an **international level** requires Wiki outreach organisers to be **even more bold and agile**.

Having a **detailed plan of engagement before offering any opportunities** to international organisations or conferences and **advertising them as widely on as many platforms as possible** are key. So is being **flexible** when things change or difficulties arise.

We recommend getting **support** from the relevant international organisation, conference organising committee, your own Wiki community, and the host country Wiki community and Wiki chapter.

Building an organising team that is **multilingual** is important so that you can **reach the intended audiences**. In our case for the **International Botanical Congress** held in Madrid, Spain in 2024, our organising team could communicate in English, Spanish, German and Portuguese.

Offering a **suite of opportunities before, during and after the international event** will have **wider reach** and **more return on the massive investment that is required** to get to an international conference in these times - such as webinars, workshops, presentations, posters, and of course the all-important informal engagement during breaks!

#### Slide 18 - International challenges

At the international level, the main challenge for us was **funding**.

For example, our idea to run a Wikidata workshop at the International Botanical Congress in Spain in 2024 **fell through the cracks of Wikimedia Foundation funding channels**, as it was not a local or regional project and it was taking place in another country alongside a scientific conference.

We had to **piece together funding from different places**, within and outside of Wiki channels. It helped immensely that I was already being supported by my workplace to attend the conference and present a research talk.

Organising over **widely differing time zones** with international collaborators, **engaging with very large organisations** and groups of people, including many you do not personally know, all of whom have their own agendas, adds complexity and risk.



**Co-managing such thematic outreach** at a very large international conference with the conference organising team can be quite daunting, frustrating, time-consuming and complex, and so **more logistics, time, energy, money and agility are required** to succeed at this level. But the payoff can be huge once you pull it off!

#### Slide 19 - International strategies for success

To succeed at the international level, here's kind of a time line containing our suggestions for Wikimedians who wish to undertake similar engagement efforts.

**6+ months:** Build a **team** of motivated organisers with **complementary skills**. The team should be **small, dedicated, and collaborative**. Ask your audience what they want to learn, and apply for **funding** from your local chapter or the Wikimedia Foundation.

**3-6 months prior:** Start meeting **weekly**, working both individually and together to design a **series of events** focused around a **conference or theme**. Find a way to make them **free (or cheap) and accessible**.

**0-3 months prior:** This is basically the **same advice as for local or regional events too**: get **support** from experienced Wikipedians and local chapters for **tutoring and communications**; provide lots of **food and drink**; include activities for **community-building**; and hold the event and make sure you do a **survey** on the day.

#### Slide 20 - Summary of successful engagement

In summary, to successfully achieve Wiki outreach with subject matter experts, at the local, regional or international level: **Be BOLD!**

It takes **courage** to step outside your comfort zone and engage with an expert community.

Seek all kinds of support - **logistical, funding, in-kind and moral support** - for this work.

**Share the load** with co-organisers and other Wikipedians.

**Execute** your amazing thematic outreach.

And then... **Rinse and repeat!**

This is an English idiom indicating the **continual repetition of an action or sequence of events**.

By **continuing to engage with the same community at different levels** and over multiple events, the **repeated exposure** will itself help the outreach **gain momentum**.

#### Slide 21 - Summary of successful impact

But **how do we know** if our thematic outreach has been **successful and impactful**?

**It's when subject matter experts become "Wiki aware"** - some may even become **active editors** - and they take their new skills and knowledge back **to their institutions and organisations**. Their **personal education transforms into actions and education** at the institutional level. Some **examples** might be: them linking collection management systems and Wikidata at work, openly licensing images, uploading images to Commons, upskilling other staff or subject experts in wiki editing.

**It's when institutions also become "Wiki aware"**, and start including Wiki platforms and editing in their work plans, workflows, collaborations with external organisations including the Wiki community, and reuse of their data and knowlege.

Successful impact is the result of a **symbiotic relationship** between individuals and communities: within and between Wikimedians and individual thematic experts, and also within and between the wiki community and the thematic community.

**Remember that personal and institutional change takes time**, usually months or years of **dedicated advocacy**, so **time, persistence and working together** are key!

#### Slide 22 - Botanists in the Wikiverse - Find out more!

Finally, you can get more **information and resources** about our recent **wiki outreach with the botanical community** by visiting the **links** on this slide, including a link to our peer-reviewed Wikidata paper published last year in Annals of Botany!

Specifically, you can find out about our **local, regional and international outreach programmes we've done** in **Wellington, Australia and Spain**.

Also, we'd love to see you at our next local New Zealand species edit-a-thon, happening in **Wellington on 17 October**, so please sign up for that.

#### Slide 23 - Acknowledgments

We would like to **thank the following organisations, people and conferences** who have supported our "Botanists in the Wikiverse" outreach over the last 3+ years, including all of you in the audience today!

#### Slide 24 - Ngā mihi nui! Thank you!

**Thank you very much for attending** our talk today.

If you have any questions or would like to get in touch with us about anything, **please reach out** to either myself or Siobhan.

Ngā mihi nui.