San Francisco Changemakers: A PCC Wikidata Pilot Project

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San Francisco Changemakers: A PCC Wikidata Pilot Project

Inspired by the 96 people whose images appear on San Francisco’s Ella Hill Hutch Community Center murals, students in the University of San Francisco Martin-Baró Scholars and Esther Madriz Diversity Scholars programs (2015-2019) wrote and edited *Changemakers: Biographies of African Americans in San Francisco Who Made a Difference*. The biographies within celebrate Black excellence and honor the legacies of African American educators, community activists, politicians, sports figures, pastors, doctors, entertainers, artists, and parents in San Francisco.

In 2020, the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) issued a call for participation in a pilot project to explore Wikidata community practices and establish relationships between Wikidata and library authority files. We chose to create or enhance Wikidata items for the 96 persons listed in the Changemakers book and created a project webpage. The list gave us a discrete set of identities and offered the potential to tie into existing Wikimedia/Wikipedia projects/articles and collaborate with campus centers and students.

**Goals**

- Create and enhance Wikidata items and related entities in authority repositories representing local people, places, and events of significance to USF, with an emphasis on underrepresented communities
- Increase staff capacity and understanding of linked open data models and practices
- Explore the opportunities that Wikidata offers for creating new and more flexible workflows for authority control

**Workflows**

Deliberately and thoughtfully matched biography characteristics to entity schema:
- Developed a list of “required” properties, adapted from Wikidata-WikiProject Archives Linked Data Interest Group/Describing People
- As resources allowed, we added further “optional” properties such as occupation (P106), educated at (P69), notable work (P800), field of work (P101), or residence (P551) for example
- Created additional Wikidata items for references and related entities as needed

**Challenges**

- Collating from multiple sources Wikidata community norms for property usage
- Inconsistency in community standards, definitions, and use of similar properties
- Conflicting information found in varying reference sources
- Representing the unique, notable biographical aspects of each person using the available Wikidata properties
- No direct way to represent a person in Changemakers “first in their field” status. Wikidata editors discussed a “historic first” property proposal in 2019, but it was not adopted by Wikidata editors

**Reflections**

- Data and description are not neutral and we need to consider our positionalities and biases in the language and properties we choose to use in Wikidata items
- Property:P21 sex or gender posed issues for our working group around preference and authority and we created a statement on why it was not used to describe the people in Changemakers
- The need to consider carefully the purpose and potential outcomes when creating open, linked data about people

**Perceived Impact**

- Potential for exploitation and harm when adding data representing historically marginalized communities. Who does the data represent and who will be using that data?
- Since most people in Changemakers would be considered ‘out of scope’ for LCNAF, and might not meet Wikipedia “notability” criteria, adding them to Wikidata might provide more visibility
- Potential for increased interest and visibility of USF scholarship

**Future Steps**

- Community review process for creating new Wikidata properties that could better capture the work and lives of the people in Changemakers
- Repurpose Wikidata items as “lite” authority records
- Add Inspiration mural images to Wikimedia Commons
- Test our workflow on a similar project, like student work for the Fillmore Activist Project and other USF collections

**Current Projects Overview**

- **Project Overview**
  - **Project name**: Engage San Francisco
  - **Description**: Engaging students in the Fillmore Activist Project
  - **Status**: In progress
  - **Related groups**: Fillmore Activist Project

- **Current Projects**
  - **Project name**: In Userland
  - **Description**: In Userland
  - **Status**: Complete
  - **Related groups**: In Userland

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