Leveraging Notability

Defining, Critiquing and Strategically Engaging a Wikipedia Guideline

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*T*he contributions of women in all fields of work, scholarship, and life have been universally under-recognized across time. Studies show that gender bias on Wikipedia reflects this cultural bias that is transmitted and then amplified by Wikipedia guidelines, particularly through its notability standards (Wagner et al. 2016, 22; Kramer 2019). As an example, on October 2, 2018, Donna Strickland became the third woman in history to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics. She was already an accomplished scientist, as evidenced by numerous awards recognizing her scientific research, multiple publications in prestigious journals, and leadership of a team developing ultrafast lasers for optics investigation. However, she did not have a Wikipedia page until the evening after she received her award. A Wikipedia article drafted in March of 2018 was rejected in May 2018, just five months before she won the Nobel Prize, because "there wasn't enough coverage of [her] work in independent secondary sources to establish her notability" (Maher 2018). In other words, measured by Wikipedia's notability guidelines, her life and work did not warrant an article. While Strickland's

case is one of the most infamous examples of gender bias in Wikipedia, it is representative of a similar bias across the Wikipedia platform, where only 18% of the biographies are about women and only 9% of the editors are women.

The 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project coalesced as a way of addressing gender bias in sources of knowledge that identify the notable contributions of individuals in religious traditions–in history books, in institutional archives, in news media, and in sacred texts. This project found its primary focus with a concern for how this information ultimately makes its way onto a tertiary source like Wikipedia. The 1000 Women in Religion List contains more than 1500 individuals who are noteworthy as founders, practitioners, teachers, resistors, and researchers of the world's religious and wisdom traditions, yet do not have a biographical entry on Wikipedia. Like Donna Strickland, many of the women on the list have made significant contributions in their areas of religious or spiritual expertise. Like the Nobel laureate, their accomplishments are under-represented in the secondary literature. It is also worth noting that there are many women important to the development of the world's religious, spiritual, and wisdom traditions who are not even on the list because we have little-to-no access to reliable secondary sources that record their accomplishments.

This monograph is a response to the problems editors and supportive librarians working with the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project are having meeting Wikipedia's notability standards for their biographical submissions. First, there is the general deficit of reliable secondary sources about women in trade books, encyclopedias, journals, news media, and more, which makes writing about these women difficult. Second, there is the logistical and socio-cultural problem of learning to navigate Wikipedia's notability standards in the context of a system that is notorious for its gender bias. Wikipedia editors, and the librarians who support them, are frustrated by these barriers to the work of including biographies about women on platforms like Wikipedia. The biographies in this volume address these issues of equity and inclusion by celebrating the unrecognized yet noteworthy work of women activists in religious, spiritual, and wisdom traditions. For the most part, these are women who responded to the needs of the religious and secular communities where they lived and worked without the benefit of publicly recorded accolades, awards, or academic celebrity. Documenting their noteworthy accomplishments by writing their biographies addresses the deficit of secondary sources about their lives. This allows us to claim their notability and, in general, creates a more inclusive and equitable understanding of notability.

In this chapter, I begin by defining the dual challenge facing Wikipedia editors writing biographies for the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project. First, there is the challenge of understanding and navigating Wikipedia's biased notability standards. Second, there is the challenge of leveraging, critiquing, and extending

these notability standards in ways that promote the inclusion of women. Next, I move to a reading of the biographical projects in this volume, where I identify the strategic ways of claiming notability deployed by each author. These serve as potential models for writing that increase representation and reshape our cultural and Wikipedia-specific definitions of notability. I end by holding up the work of projects like the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedida Project, highlighting the mundane task of writing biographies about women as an integral part of the broader effort to stake a claim for the noteworthy, largely unrecognized work of women activists in the world's religious, spiritual, and wisdom traditions.

Wikipedia and Notability

Wikipedia is the world's largest reference website, containing over 48 million articles in 302 languages, written by 72,000 unique, active contributors. It is the 5th most popular internet site, visited by almost 400 million visitors monthly. The first page of a Google search almost always contains a link to Wikipedia along with an infobox populated by information obtained from Wikipedia and Wikidata. In a world where we question the reliability of almost any given source of knowledge, Wikipedia has become the default source for a comprehensive, objective presentation of the facts. It is not uncommon for disputes between friends, colleagues, neighbors, and partygoers alike to be settled by an internet search that takes you directly to a Wikipedia article.

Given its ubiquitous character and extensive influence, it is remarkable that each Wikipedia article is created collaboratively by volunteer contributors, called Wikipedians, who are mostly anonymous amateurs. There is no requirement that volunteer editors have a degree or certified proof of expertise. A specialist with multiple degrees in a given area has no privileged claim to authority. The contributions of an academic expert with a PhD are subject to the same review as any other editor. Articles on Wikipedia are living documents that are mercilessly edited across time by multiple editors with varying degrees of expertise. This model democratizes the curation and production of knowledge–a result that can be celebrated by feminist, womanist, and postcolonial theorists. Still, in academic circles, this dispersed authority creates concern about Wikipedia's reliability and, as such, many prohibitions remain about Wikipedia's use as a research tool and citation source.

However, concerns–academic and otherwise–about Wikipedia's reliability are not universally supported by the literature. Studies show that Wikipedia is almost as reliable as the benchmark *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Giles 2005, 900). Also, Wikipedia provides better coverage and longer articles about women than

Britannica (Reagle and Rhue 2011, 1138). Wikipedia is the encyclopedia anyone can edit, regardless of recognized expertise; nevertheless, its reliability remains comparably good precisely because of the exacting application of a system of norms and principles developed by Wikipedia's editing community to create and maintain an objective presentation of facts substantiated by verifiable sources. Policies and guidelines developed by engaged members of the community through Wikipedia communication conventions, such as talk pages, essays, and new guideline proposals, describe a set of best practices covering areas like content, deletion, editing, naming, style, social behavior, and notability. The focus is on the quality of a contribution, its substance, and its composition, not on the qualifications of a particular editor.

At the front end of the editing process, when a 1000 Women in Religion Project editor is deciding who to write about, notability guidelines are a primary influence. According to Wikipedia (n.d., "Wikipedia: Notability (People)"), "A person is presumed to be notable if he or she has received significant coverage in reliable secondary sources that are independent of the subject." In other words, personal websites and blogs written by the subject do not count as reliable sources that indicate a subject's notability. Promotional biographies on business and university websites are also suspect. Wikipedia editors, informed by these notability guidelines, function as gatekeepers who determine which articles, including the biographies submitted about women in religion, meet the standards to become a published page and which do not. A well-cited article that makes a good case for a subject's notability helps to prevent any potential discussions about deletion. In order to increase the probability that a submission will be accepted, women included on the 1000 Women in Religion Project list are supported by at least two reliable sources. First-time editors are encouraged to select a subject with at least five reliable secondary sources.

So, how does this work in practice? Wikipedia articles are written in an encyclopedic style where every fact that is presented has to be backed up by a citation from a reliable secondary source: a published book, a major newspaper, an academic journal, or an internet source with a .edu or .org URL. Also, like any encyclopedia, primary research is not allowed. You might know from firsthand knowledge or from someone's blog that a woman named Margaret Jackson was born on November 21, 1932, in London, England, or that she started a university for women in Thailand, but if you cannot cite a reliable secondary source, you cannot use that information in your Wikipedia article.

Gender Bias: A Critique of Wikipedia and Notability Guidelines

If all things were equal, Wikipedia's notability guidelines would not be problematic. These criteria are, in fact, the foundation of Wikipedia's favorable ratings compared to other encyclopedia projects, such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, seen as the gold standard for a reliable presentation of the facts. Wikipedia's definition of notability suggests a logic that presupposes equity and assumes that all things notable are covered in some form of reliable media. Given this logic, if 18% of the biographies on Wikipedia are about women, one can assume that the life and works of men comprise 82% of the biographical information worth noting and knowing. Studies show that biographical information about women is covered less than biographical information about men in trade books, academic writing, scientific journals, and more. Just take a stroll through the biographical section in bookstores and libraries. They are dominated by stories about past presidents, kings, and war heroes who are mostly men. However, this is not because women are less noteworthy. Instead, conventional market wisdom suggests that more men buy biographies than women and that the biographies men are interested in reading are about men (Kahn and Onion 2016). There is more media coverage about the life and works of men than women because that is what sells. Remember, by definition, notability on Wikipedia is gauged by how much coverage a subject has received in various media. A woman might be noteworthy but, without secondary sources to back that up, she is not notable by Wikipedia standards. In this way, the ubiquitous gender bias in the production of knowledge, generally noted in the production of trade books, academia, and more, is reproduced as the apparent gender bias on Wikipedia.

In this current framework, an editor writing for the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project deals with this bias by writing about a subject whose noteworthy character is extremely verifiable. In this way, the case for a particular woman's notability is supported by multiple citations that indicate significant coverage in various media outlets across time. This should be enough but, again, studies show that often it is not. Given equal notability, women are less likely than men to have a Wikipedia page (Adams, Bruckner, and Nasland 2019). The gap is more significant for women who are local heroes where notability can be questioned in the absence of unambiguous, global notoriety. In other words, the possibility of bias increases when editors make subjective decisions about what counts as notable and what does not (Wagner et al. 2016, 10).

Wikipedia's woman problem is so well documented that even the Wikimedia Foundation acknowledges that the representation of women on its biographical pages is a reproduction of ongoing cultural biases (Maher 2018). Recognizing this

gender bias, individuals and groups in the Wikipedia community have developed multiple WikiProjects, like the Women in Red project, that aim to increase the number and rate of biographical submissions about women and the number of women editors who would, presumably, write entries about women. In 2014, the Wikimedia Foundation committed to increasing the representation of women on Wikipedia from 14% to 25% by 2015. They failed miserably, suggesting that ongoing gender bias on Wikipedia is not just a simple replication of cultural bias that can be addressed by a valiant effort to increase the number of submissions about women (Torres 2016). Something else is going on.

Feminist critics of Wikipedia argue that the problem lies with Wikipedia's infrastructure, including, but not limited to, its encyclopedic and internet base, its policy, and its logic. They point to how these deep foundations are informed by, and in turn reproduce, patriarchal and hierarchical Enlightenment ideals such as the pursuit of objective knowledge and the idea of the great man (Ford and Waicman 2017, 3). There is actually a "Great man theory" entry on Wikipedia. This notable theory "is a 19th-century idea according to which history can be largely explained by the impact of great men, or heroes; highly influential and unique individuals who, due to their natural attributes, such as superior intellect, heroic courage, or divine inspiration, have a decisive historical effect" (Wikipedia n.d., "Great Man Theory"). "Great men" are conquering generals, popes, famous authors, titans of industry, leaders of expeditions that discover new worlds, geniuses that discover scientific wonders, and more. In this model, women often appear in an encyclopedic project like Wikipedia because of their relationship with a famous or heroic man as his wife, mother, or muse. They also appear as "great women" who achieve or overachieve as measured by the standards that identify "great men." Here, notable greatness is public rather than domestic, singular instead of collaborative, and supported by a presumably universal scale rather than perspectival claims. Substantive achievements that do not fit this mold are dismissed as trivial or insignificant. It follows that one of the reasons there are fewer women on Wikipedia is because many of the things women do in cultures around the world can be identified as domestic, collaborative, achieved at a local level, and therefore less notable within Wikipedia's current framework.

Feminist critiques reject this patriarchal, hierarchical framework, along with the notion that there is some absolute measure of notability. Feminist theory suggests that understandings of notability vary depending on the perspective of those doing the judging. Social, economic, geographic, and historical factors make a difference. From this perspective, what counts as notable varies across time and from community to community. Research supporting this point of view is readily available to the Wikipedia community on project pages, talk pages, and help venues. Nevertheless, despite considerable critique, gender bias on Wikipedia

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persists. Wikipedia's notability standards are developed and enforced by its most active editors. 85–90% of the editors on Wikipedia are young, White, technologically savvy men who are passionate about things like sports, movies, popular culture, and politics–categories that are covered widely on all types of media within a culture where traditional notability sells (Sengul-Jones 2019, 18–23). Feminist critiques of Wikipedia are a hard sell on talk pages discussing the possible deletion of an article about a noteworthy, but not necessarily famous, woman activist in religion.

Strategic Ways of Claiming Notability

What do editors working with the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project do in the context of this manifest, ongoing, and seemingly intractable gender bias perpetuated by notability standards that reproduce and extend a biased representation of the world's knowledge? They continue to write boldly about women whose lives as activists have made a difference in the unfolding of the world's religious, spiritual, and wisdom traditions. Moreover, in the writing, strategies have emerged that not only increase the number of women represented on Wikipedia, but illustrate the validity of varied perspectives on what counts as notable. The biographies in this volume support and extend the work of these editors by gathering reliable sources, presenting primary research, and being intentionally strategic in establishing the facts that make up these women's stories.

Each biography in this volume describes the life and work of a woman activist, noteworthy in her religious, spiritual, or academic context, yet not identified as notable, or at least not notable enough to have a biographical page on Wikipedia. The author's task is to make a case for their subject's notability in ways that identify her activism and recognize its effects. In each chapter, the work of these women as founders and leaders in the "great man" tradition–a second-wave feminist task–is amplified and made visible. Importantly, their work as coalition builders, collaborators, mentors, facilitators of resistance movements, challengers of traditional gender norms, and more–a third-wave feminist project–is also held up as an essential part of their notable character. Read carefully, and with an eye toward how each author builds her case, these biographies help us uncover strategic ways of writing and claiming notability. These strategies are varied and nuanced, tailored to the presentation of the particular life and work of the author's subject. Yet themes and trends emerge that help us to think about the task of writing women back into our histories in broadly strategic ways. The authors write in ways that bolster a woman's notability in a traditional mode, making her super-notable by using many high-quality sources. They uncover the textual erasure of a

woman's traditional notability by lifting her out of footnotes and archives to write her back into the narrative as the subject of her own notable story. They stretch the boundaries of notability by highlighting her local and domestic accomplishments. Finally, they reshape the boundaries of notability by identifying the importance of individual efforts to collaborative achievements and coalition building.

Bolstering Traditional Notability

You can thumb through any encyclopedic list of famous women in each of the world's wisdom traditions, any list of women who have been leaders of prestigious organizations, or any list of influential women activists in religion that pops up on the internet, and you will find a significant number of women who do not have a biographical entry on Wikipedia. The women on these lists are notable, even by Wikipedia standards, because their fame, influence, and power is searchable on the internet and recorded in various secondary sources. They should be part of Wikipedia's "hopeful and earnest approximation of a comprehensive and democratically authored history" (Valentine and Myrie 2019), but they are not. They are missing. Leveraging the concept of notability includes the work of writing biographies about these missing women. Most of the women in this volume are notable when measured according to Wikipedia's guidelines. Janet McKenzie is an internationally recognized artist. Shundō Aoyama Rōshi is one of the highest-ranking nuns in the history of Soto Zen. Dr. Yvonne V. Delk is the first African American woman ordained in the United Church of Christ (UCC). These women, and the rest of the women in this volume, are poster children for the gender gap on Wikipedia and can legitimately be classified as missing entries. The authors of their biographies recognize that their subjects meet and even exceed Wikipedia's minimum notability standards. They also understand that this does not guarantee a successful Wikipedia submission. They know from experience that the notability bar in the culture generally, and on Wikipedia specifically, is often higher for women than for men. Proactively, they strategically bolster their chapters with numerous citations in order to make an ironclad case for their subjects' notability. The authors in this volume deploy this strategy in a variety of ways. Here are three good examples:

Recollecting Sources

When the *National Catholic Reporter* announced that Janet McKenzie's painting, *Jesus of the People,* was the winner of their much anticipated "Jesus 2000" art competition, there was substantive national and international media coverage. The reaction to McKenzie's groundbreaking work was intense and prolonged, including

the well-publicized protests of her image of Jesus as a person of color by the Westborough Baptist Church. Nevertheless, she does not have a Wikipedia page. Wikipedia did not exist until 2001, so it is reasonable to guess that there is no page because, in the lapse of time between this career-defining event and the rise of Wikipedia, McKenzie's life and work was no longer front-page news. Ursic strategically recollects much of the original coverage as source material for her biography on McKenzie. She reminds us that, for several years, the coverage was international and sustained. She goes on to illustrate the ongoing relevance of McKenzie's work, quoting Fr. John Christmann, an artist and musician, in a February 2019 article entitled "Black Jesus Matters": "McKenzie brings us back to the essential reality of the incarnation and realization that Christian art is bereft without the full expression of humanity." Ursic's citation of numerable, verifiable sources allows her to make a strong case for McKenzie's notability based on Wikipedia guidelines for "significant and sustained coverage in reliable secondary sources" (Wikipedia n.d., "Wikipedia: Notability"). In her biography, Ursic does the hard work of gathering the many quality sources that illustrate McKenzie's important and unique influence across time as a creator of religious works of art. With citation after citation, Ursic makes an indisputable argument for McKenzie's superior notability as a great woman in the Enlightenment tradition.

Accessing Foreign Language Sources

Shundō Aoyama Rōshi is one of the highest-ranking nuns in the history of Soto Zen and one of the first to receive an advanced academic degree. She is the abbess of three temples in Japan and oversees numerous Buddhist activities. She lectures widely throughout Japan, has authored over 50 books, and, important for Wikipedia's notability guidelines, there is extensive coverage of her work in Japan. There is also considerable interest in her work among Westerners interested in Buddhism. Aoyama is notable by Wikipedia standards. However, most of the secondary sources covering her life and works are written in Japanese. The likelihood that these sources are accessible to a Wikipedia editor seeking to write a biographical entry in English on Wikipedia is low. Karma Lekshe Tsomo, an expert in Buddhism in her own right, deploys a strategy that addresses this problem. She relies on a careful reading of available English sources; however, because there are only a few English language sources, she does not stop there. She compliments these limited sources with a strategic use of sources available in other languages. This gives us a sense of the international coverage and global significance of Aoyama's life and work. Tsomo's biography identifies English sources, gives us a sense of the multiple sources available in other languages, and provides another English source that can be used to bolster Aoyama's notability.

Placing Sources in Context

Dr. Yvonne V. Delk's story puts her life and work at the center of a half-century of civil rights history, from her participation in sit-ins at segregated lunch counters to her struggle for women's rights to her more recent support for issues affecting people who identify with the LGBTQ community. Mary Hamlen, the author of her biography, presents multiple sources that document her achievements in the struggle for human rights. However, with the spotlight on iconic civil rights figures such as James Forman and Dr. James Cone, her particular accomplishments have, up to this point, been overlooked. Hamlen notes that she is not even listed as a significant figure on the United Church of Christ (UCC) website, where she served in national leadership for over 20 years and was the first and only woman nominated to lead the denomination. So it is no surprise, given she is missing from her own denomination's website, that she does not have a biographical page on Wikipedia. Hamlen takes up her cause and champions Delk's story by gathering numerous sources that detail the trajectory of her career from a teacher of Christian education at a small UCC church in Atlanta, Georgia, to her positions in national leadership with the United Church of Christ. She uses her sources to trace Delk's work for African American rights, the rights of women and children, LGBTQ rights, and more. She presents Delk's accomplishments alongside sources that cover the overall development of the civil rights movement. Hamlen makes her case for Delk's notability through a strategic presentation of her sources that places Delk's life and work in a context where we can take account of her valuable contribution to the civil rights movement.

In all three of these biographies, the authors make a case for notability based on a presentation of high-quality secondary sources. The strategic nuances deployed by each author are instructive. Ursic jogs our memory, recollecting forgotten sources that remind us of the groundbreaking character of Janet McKenzie's image *Jesus of the People.* Tsomo supplements her detailed but limited English-language sources with information demonstrating the wealth of sources available in other languages. Hamlen places her sources in a historical context that amplifies her subject's notable contributions. These authors understand that, to bolster the case for their subjects' notability, they need more than raw sources. They need to use their sources to craft a coherent and compelling presentation of the facts.

Uncovering Textual Erasure

Based on an initial search of secondary sources, many of the women on the 1000 Women in Religion list are noteworthy by traditional and Wikipedia-specific

standards. After a closer look, however, questions often arise. The sources may exist, but they are contradictory, hard to access, incomplete, or even missing. Sometimes a source recognizes a woman's notable work but fails to recognize her agency in the creation of that work. Other times, sources recognize a woman's accomplishments as part of a collective effort and then fail to document the significance of her particular contributions, and so on. These texts or sources that are incomplete, contradictory, confusing, and sometimes hard to access indicate some erasure in the historical record. These types of erasure make it difficult to take account of notable women and their achievements. The experience of editors for the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project confirms this assessment. Leveraging the concept of notability includes identifying the textual erasure of a woman's life and work, supporting her notability with reliable sources and amending the historical record. Many of the stories about women in this volume were difficult to tell because the secondary sources were compromised by textual erasure. The significant contributions of Bertha Mae Lillenas–a pioneering, early 20th-century preacher and hymnist–are omitted from some mid-20th-century biographies about her husband Haldor Lillenas, also a famous hymnist. Dusty copies of one of May Eleanor Frey's religious novels–*Altars of Brick,* popular in the 1940s and 50s–are still available on Amazon.com. However, many of the scarce volumes illuminating her life and influence are only available in remote archival collections. Miranda Shaw's seminal and award-winning work, *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism,* is covered widely in the secondary literature. However, secondary sources covering her life and ongoing influence are missing. Many of the authors in this volume take up the strategic task of ensuring an accurate historical record is available and accessible so that their subject's notability can be verified. Here are three good examples of this strategic approach.

Identifying and Diagnosing Inconsistencies in the Historical Record

Bertha Mae Lillenas preached and composed popular religious music at a time when the work women did was primarily domestic. The fact that historical records document Lillenas's talents as an ordained preacher and successful composer is remarkable and a testament to her notability. Even so, there is no biographical entry on Wikipedia covering her life and works. In her biography, Melisa Ortiz Berry explains that this is likely because mid-century sources, focused on her husband's achievements, rewrite Bertha Mae's history. They give her husband credit for much of her work as a preacher and church organizer. Berry makes a strategic comparison of early and later sources that allows her to pinpoint the textual erasure. Her work helps us to see the actual gloss of Bertha Mae's work in favor of a more socially acceptable presentation of Haldor Lillenas's work. By

pinpointing the erasure, Berry bolsters the validity of these earlier sources, making a more durable case for Bertha Mae Lillenas's notability.

Restoring Access to the Text

Mae Eleanor Frey was the first woman ordained in the Northern Baptist Convention. She served as a chaplain in World War I and was a world-famous global evangelist and a writer of popular religious novels. Used copies of her books –*The Minister* and *Altars of Bricks*—are still available. However, if you wanted to read anything about the life and work of this noteworthy woman activist in religion, you would have a problem. There are a few, scattered secondary sources available behind various publisher paywalls such as Newspapers.com or Brill.com. However, your best bet would be a visit to the Flowers Pentecostal Heritage Center (FPHC) in Springfield, Missouri. They have an extensive collection of Frey's published works, her correspondence, contemporary media coverage, obituaries, and recent coverage of her influence as a Pentecostal preacher and evangelist. Some of it is viewable online for free. Most of it is not. A quick scan through FPHC's index shows plenty of secondary sources to back claims about Frey's notability. However, the average researcher and Wikipedian has no way of getting to these sources because of their location in an archival collection that is geographically remote and, for the most part, unavailable in a digital format. As a result, the case for Frey's notability is weak, and there is no Wikipedia article.

Deborah Fulthorp's biography brings the coverage of Frey's life and work outside the institutional walls of the Assembly of God's archives into a larger public venue. Her strategy for making a case for her subject's notability involves restoring our access to sources about Frey's life since it is this lack of access that has, for all practical purposes, erased the story of Frey's notable character. Fulthorp scours the archives, uncovers Frey's history, and amends that history. She assembles the multiple archival sources into a coherent life story that foregrounds the importance of her subject as a model for women's leadership in religion and the advancement of women's rights. In essence, she restores our access to the text of Mae Eleanor Frey's notable life and work.

Foregrounding Agency

Miranda E. Shaw has spent over two decades researching the role of women and female deities in Buddhism, including extensive research in India and Nepal. Her groundbreaking work produced two seminal books: *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism* (1992) and *Buddhist Goddesses of India* (2006). Both books have been recognized with prestigious awards. Thirty editions of *Passionate Enlightenment* have been printed in seven languages. There are seventeen published editions of *Buddhist Goddesses of India*. Both books are well-reviewed

by many publishers. It is therefore strange that, beyond the cursory listing of her academic credentials and publications with her identification as an associate professor (all on the University of Richmond's website) and her birth year published on her *WorldCat Identities* page, there is no biographical coverage of Shaw's life and influence. This neglect amounts to an erasure of her life beyond the publication of her most popular books. It makes a full-throated case for her notability and the creation of a Wikipedia article difficult.

Shaw's biographer, Janice Poss, strategically grounds her chapter in a presentation of Shaw as a well-published and influential expert in Tantric Buddhism and Buddhist goddesses. Poss supports this claim with readily available secondary sources covering her seminal works. She bolsters the case for Shaw's notability with an analysis that puts her work in the broader context of Buddhist studies and 20th-century feminist critiques of Western interpretations of Buddhism that marginalize the importance of feminine deities and the role of women. However, the media coverage, which centers on her literary works, creates an oddly disembodied presentation of her accomplishments. Poss supplements these sources and analysis with a consideration of Shaw's life history, helping us to recognize that her award-winning books were not created *ex nihilo*—from nothing. Poss addresses this neglectful erasure of Shaw's personal story with a biographical history that brings her early life and influence, her accomplishments as a teacher, and her ongoing work in Buddhist studies into view. She also takes this life history and places it into the context of a Buddhist lineage of great teachers. Poss effects a strategic shift in focus away from her subject's award-winning books onto Shaw as the fully embodied agent, which makes a more durable case for her notability.

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Each of the authors in this section thinks strategically about some critical missing piece or significant erasure in the coverage of their subjects' notability, which is otherwise well-supported by secondary sources. Their strategies vary depending on the type and circumstance of these gaps in the record. Berry reinforces our confidence in earlier secondary sources by pinpointing the textual erasure of Bertha Mae Lillenas's superior preaching and composing talents. Fulthorp retrieves Mae Eleanor Frey's history as an influential Pentecostal preacher and evangelist from its archival confinement and erasure. Poss refocuses our historical attention onto Miranda E. Shaw as the author of her award-winning books. Their strategic restoration of these erasures enables each of these authors to rewrite these women's stories. By restoring what has been erased and making history right, they justify the notable character of these women activists in religion.

Stretching the Boundaries of Notability

Forty percent of the biographical pages on Wikipedia describe subjects whose notable contributions are local rather than global. This statistic indicates that it is harder to make a case for a subject with local notability. Extra scrutiny beyond adequate secondary sourcing is also applied to "non-public figure[s]," "people who are relatively unknown," "subjects notable for only one event," and so forth (Wikipedia n.d., "Who Is a Low-Profile Individual?"). Wikipedia guidelines state that while "a determination of notability does not necessarily depend on things such as fame, importance, or popularity," those characteristics "may enhance the acceptability of a subject" (Wikipedia n.d., "Wikipedia: What Notability Is Not"). Taken together, these Wikipedia guidelines and statements suggest that local, non-public, or domestic accomplishments are a questionable, though not excluded, basis for a determination of notability. A study released by Oxfam in January 2020 shows that, worldwide, much of the work women do can still be classified as local, domestic, and located in the private sphere (Coffey et al. 2020, 8). The notability of a woman whose life and work can be classified in these ways is sure to be contested even if the biography itself is well-supported by secondary sources. Wikipedia is not, after all, "an indiscriminate collection of information" (Wikipedia n.d., "Wikipedia: What Notability Is Not"). Not only must the information presented be verifiable by third-party sources, "the topic must be worthy of notice" (Wikipedia n.d., "Wikipedia: Notability (People)"). In general, bias on Wikipedia favors global notoriety in a public and professional sphere, and these biases work against women's inclusion. Leveraging the concept of notability includes the work of writing biographies that challenge and stretch the boundaries between the local and the global, between the private and the public, and between the domestic and the professional.

Like most women in the world, there are women covered in this volume who attended to local and domestic needs outside the public eye. In these cases, part of the biographer's job is to identify the broader influence of the local, the private, and the domestic on the global, public sphere. For example, liberation theologian Beatriz Melano's local focus on the rights of women and children influenced the global development of liberation theology. Pentecostal missionary Margaret Peoples Shirer's domestic efforts around healthcare and literacy for the people she served advanced the global Pentecostal movement and the Assembly of God ministries in Africa. There are biographers in this volume who strategically attend to and foreground the connections between their subjects' local and domestic accomplishments and global trends. Here are two good examples of this strategic approach.

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Tracing the Broader Impact

In her essay, "Surreal Feminist Liberation Theology," feminist theologian Mary Hunt identifies her colleague, Beatriz Melano, as one of "the earliest feminist voices in Latin American liberation theology" (Hunt 2010, 20). Melano was a persistent advocate as a professor and an activist in Buenos Aires, Argentina and at regional conferences in Latin America over multiple decades for a feminist approach that takes into consideration the needs of women and children. Hunt reminds us of her formative influence on her students at ISEDET (*Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos*, Buenos Aires, Argentina), including feminist theologians such as Marcella Althaus Reid. Nevertheless, while her male colleagues, such as José Miguez Bonino and Emilio Castro, are recognized worldwide and beyond with Wikipedia pages and more for their role in the development of liberation theology, her locally recognized contributions are not well known. Her biographer, Martha González Pérez, has taken on the labor of collecting the sources that document her work at ISEDET and at Latin American conferences in ways that demonstrate her more extensive influence across time, across Latin America, and across the world. She strategically assembles these sources into a coherent narrative that makes a strong case for the global impact of Melano's locally recognized notability.

Detailing Domestic Dimensions

The Assemblies of God (AG), the fourth largest international Christian federation and the world's largest Pentecostal denomination, was founded in 1914. It quickly became a global church based on its mission to evangelize the lost by establishing church bodies in every country in the world. There are currently over 384,000 congregations in over 212 nations serving roughly 67.9 million followers worldwide (Assemblies of God n.d.). At the age of 22, in 1919, five years after the church was founded, Margaret Peoples Shirer arrived in West Africa, where she worked as a missionary for the Assemblies of God church until 1947. She helped establish missions in Burkina Faso and Ghana along with her husband and family. She created writing systems for local languages, translated scripture, and advanced literacy and healthcare, all in service of spreading the mission. In his book *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century,* Harvey Cox (1995, 121) identifies that women dominated the AG's early missionary work before organizational prohibitions were in place that limited their contributions. To great advantage, they used their domestic talents to pursue their professional ministries. However, historical coverage of this early period misrepresents women's work and the importance of their efforts. For example, Shirer's instrumental translations and literacy work for the Mossi and Ghanaian people, which paved the way for the establishment of the AG's ongoing

missions, is attributed to a group of "American missionaries" that one might assume to be men (Roamba 2016, 58). The day-to-day domestic engagements that allowed Shirer to develop an alphabet, a dictionary, and translations of scripture, which she taught the people to read, are erased by this gloss. There are Wikipedia pages that cover the vital work of AG missionaries. However, the work of Shirer and other early women missionaries, along with their work's domestic dimensions, is missing from these biographical and descriptive pages.

Biographer Rosemarie Daher Kowalski uses Shirer's letters, speeches, and articles, buried in mission results, fundraising accounts, and recruitment reports, as source material. She uses these sources to detail the domestic, mundane work of talking to women as they grind their corn. Her strategy lets us see how it is precisely this domestic work that enables Shirer to create a writing system, translate scriptures, and teach the people to read. Daher stretches the boundaries of notability by making the connection between this domestic labor, Shirer's professional accomplishments, and the AG's global mission. She makes a strong case for Shirer's notability by deploying sources that detail the domestic character of Shirer's work and its importance to the early development of the Assemblies of God's global mission.

* * *

Biographers González Pérez and Daher Kowalski both recognize that the local and domestic character of their subjects' lives and works requires a narrative and an analysis that makes connections to a broader public and global impact. Otherwise, their subjects' accomplishments will be dismissed as unworthy of public notice. González Pérez celebrates Melano's local and regional accomplishments even as she deploys sources that delineate the long-term and global impact of her subjects' life and work. In this way, she stretches and troubles the boundary between our assessment of local and global influence. Daher Kowalski makes a notable heroine of her subject by detailing the domestic minutiae that enabled the creation and spread of a global religion. In this way, she stretches and troubles the boundary between our assessment of domestic and professional influence. Through a strategic use of their sources, González Pérez and Daher Kowalski demonstrate the global impact of both the local and domestic.

Celebrating Collaborative Achievements and Coalition Building

Collaborating on, and coalition-building for, a common goal are, by definition, activities that bring people together to work jointly on an activity, project, or event. Success is, or at least it should be, identified as a collective accomplishment. Getting a man on the moon was a collaborative effort. We recognize people by name for this effort, including President John F. Kennedy, Neil Armstrong, and Buzz Aldrin. However, the effort also involved a 400,000 strong backup team (Riley 2009). A recent study suggests that women outperform men in collaborative problem solving (Sandle 2017). Studies also show that women who engage in collaborative efforts suffer a "coauthor penalty" that men do not (Sarsons 2015, 3). As well, men often receive solo credit for collaborative work involving both men and women (Laura Rutherford-Morrison 2017). An excellent example of this bias is the fact that it took 50 years and an Academy Award-winning movie for NASA engineers Christine Darden and Mary Jackson, mathematician Katherine Johnson, and computer programmer Dorothy Vaugh to be recognized for their groundbreaking contributions to the success of the moon landing (Elassar 2019). Wikipedia notability guidelines reflect the cultural bias in favor of singular achievement and male collaboration. If women's collaborative efforts are recognized, they occur as a mention or merger under a broader article covering the outcome or product of a joint effort. Leveraging the concept of notability includes highlighting the collaborative accomplishments of women who are already considered notable by traditional standards and documenting the essential role of unrecognized, particular women involved in noteworthy collaborative efforts.

Many of the women in this volume are collaborators and coalition builders. Ida Weis Friend was known as a founder, leader, and organizer of many Jewish and civic organizations at the turn of the 20th century in New Orleans. Through her strategic volunteerism, she built coalitions across religion, race, and gender that helped establish local and national labor laws to protect women, children, and minorities. Ellen Leonard, a Canadian theologian and prolific writer, is known for her work as a feminist scholar. She is less well known for her essential role in the collective effort to establish the Catholic Network for Women's Equality, which works for women's ordination and related issues of equality. Their biographers strategically foreground the collaborative and coalition-building efforts of their subjects and highlight the broader national significance of this type of work. In this volume, authors document their subject's accomplishments and count their collaborative achievements as noteworthy contributions to make a more expansive

and comprehensive case for their notability. Here are two good examples of this strategy:

Documenting An Individual's Collaborative Work

Ida Weis Friend was a founder, organizer, and leader of many Jewish and civic organizations in New Orleans at the turn of the 20th century. In her various roles, she functioned as an activist for the rights of women, children, and other oppressed minorities. Friend used her connections with national organizations to build coalitions that promoted human rights at the state and local level. The national organizations she worked with, such as the Urban League and the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), are well known, and their local and global accomplishments are documented on Wikipedia and beyond. The life and work of Ida Weis Friend, whose initiative was instrumental to these accomplishments, is mostly unknown. She was recognized in her lifetime by other community influencers who understood that, if they wanted to get something done, Friend could lead the effort. However, because her work was largely collaborative, the case for her notability is weak. It would be relatively easy to insert a mention of her achievements on the Wikipedia page for the Urban League or the NCJW, and that would be a start. Her biographer, Rosalind Hinton, goes further. Hinton identifies Friend's participation as a coalition builder and collaborator across multiple organizations and then goes about documenting her individual contributions. Hinton's strategy is to give credit where credit is due. She makes a strong case for Friend's notability by allowing us to see that her work as an individual was essential to the cooperative endeavors that had significant local, regional, and national impact.

Counting Collaborative Achievements

Dr. Ellen Margaret Leonard, CSJ, is a theologian, scholar, prolific writer, and respected professor. She is notable by Wikipedia guidelines as an academic and could, therefore, have a biographical entry on Wikipedia. The most logical strategy for making that happen includes supporting her case with multiple, reliable citations that document her remarkable life as an academic. However, Leonard's life's work includes more than her particular accomplishments as a professor and writer. Leonard also devoted herself to a collaborative effort to advance women's rights in the Catholic Church and more broadly, which eventually took form as the Catholic Network for Women's Equality. Wikipedia guidelines suggest a narrow focus on contributions and accomplishments that can be clearly credited to the subject of the biography. In light of these guidelines, Leonard's collaborative efforts that she cannot and does not claim as an individual achievement could be considered superfluous. Her biographer, Mary Ellen Chown, is not deterred. After

making a case for Leonard's notability aligned with Wikipedia's traditional guidelines for academics, she proceeds strategically by identifying Leonard's work with the Catholic Network for Women's Equality as central to her work as a feminist theologian. Chown makes a case for the noteworthiness of this collaborative work, so that our understanding of notability shifts to include dedicated participation in worthy collaborations.

The job of the biographers in this volume involves documenting the collaborative achievements of their subjects and counting them as noteworthy contributions. This is a third-wave feminist task that seeks to reshape our thinking of notability on Wikipedia and in general. Hinton identifies the individual effort involved in her subject's coalition-building efforts and then connects these efforts to their global impact. Chown makes a traditional case for her subject's notability and then foregrounds the significance of Leonard's collaboration. Here the strategy is not just a numbers game that aims for equal representation on a platform like Wikipedia. With a skillful use of sources and analysis, these biographers make the case that the notability of their subjects is enhanced by their collaborative accomplishments.

Writing Women's Biographies: A Strategic, Activist Endeavor

Women in religion have been pursuing writing as an activist endeavor across the world and the centuries. Hildegard of Bingen's (1098–1179) extensive writings challenge the patriarchal expectations for a woman's role within church hierarchies in her time and still today. Sojourner Truth's (1797–1883) "Ain't I a Woman" speech continues to challenge readers to consider the interlocking complexities of sexism and racism. Chung Hyun Kyung's (1956–) *Struggle to Be the Sun Again* challenges the imposition of Western religious values onto people in a non-Western context. These women, and many others, were activated by the oppressive biases that structure the lives of women, children, and other minoritized peoples. They wrote and spoke in strategic ways, sometimes even claiming divine inspiration, in order to critique their traditions, including interpretations of scripture, patterns of worship, organizational hierarchies, and more. They critiqued those in positions of power and called their followers to change their behaviors and to participate in collective action. They are rightly considered activists because their writing inspired an impassioned, spirit-motivated response in their readers.

The 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project was born of this activist impulse. Contributing biographies to Wikipedia, where only 18% of the biographies

are about women, and only 9% of the editors are women, is an embodied critique of a system that has ignored women's accomplishments and dismissed their notable character. The very act of writing an article and pursuing it to acceptance is a claim for that particular woman's notability. Making that claim in a world where notability standards are biased is an activist endeavor. However, editors for the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project are not without support. Biographers, like the authors in this volume, the librarians who support them, and the Wikipedians who will use their chapters as secondary sources form a nexus of activism. This interconnected activism has the potential to shift the percentages in terms of representation as well as our perceptions about women and notability.

The Biographer as an Activist

The biographers in this volume represent the determined few who choose to write biographies about women despite the hurdles. Market dynamics discourage the production of biographies about women. Research sources about the life and works of women are often insufficient or inaccessible compared to source availability for subjects who are men. In addition, questions about the relevance and notability of women subjects are more numerous and persistent than they are for men. It takes intestinal fortitude to embark on a project made more difficult by cultural biases beyond an author's direct control. Nevertheless, the authors of women's biographies forge ahead regardless of these hurdles. In doing so, they develop strategies and create models that make it easier for those who follow.

In "Writing Women's Lives: One Historian's Perspective," Susan Ware (2010, 417) recognizes that the "traditional narrative arcs that trace a male model of success or achievement do not necessarily apply to female subjects." Women biographers find inspiration in their subjects' struggles to "excel in a public realm usually reserved for men." Undaunted, women's biographers write inspiring accounts of the lives of women whose notable works have been ignored or dismissed. Moreover, their inspiring writings exceed market expectations. They go above and beyond in their efforts to track down hidden sources and do original research. Many of the biographers in this volume traveled distances to visit remote archival collections. They scheduled and rescheduled interviews with their subjects and their subjects' associates. They did all of this to fill out the unsubstantial documentation that is characteristic of so much history about women. With these sources, they create rock-solid arguments for their subjects' relevance and notability. They know their work will receive extra scrutiny because their subject is a woman, and they rise to the challenge. Writing high-quality biographies about forgotten women is an activist endeavor. Done well, it increases the interest in and

demand for information about women; it uncovers, creates, and increases our access to secondary sources, and it reshapes our thinking about women and notability.

The Librarian as an Activist

The group of women academics who initially conceived the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project included many with strong research and writing backgrounds. However, in spite of their skills, the group initially struggled with Wikipedia's sourcing guidelines and use of authority control databases. The project's association with Atla (formerly the American Theological Library Association) and member librarians helped overcome these barriers. Librarians who work with research databases daily have become essential to the success of the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project in multiple ways. First, librarians are uniquely prepared to search numerous databases to identify women who are missing from the 1000 Women in Religion list. Second, they have their fingers on the pulse of digital publishing and open access trends. Third, they can help editors who are not university employees, who live in remote areas, or who have limited financial resources to access reliable secondary sources. Women are traditionally more affected by access issues, and librarians can help them overcome these issues. Fourth, librarians understand the way encyclopedic knowledge is organized and authenticated. Their facility with "authority control" allows them to help build a list of 1000 and more women, since a woman who has one or more authority control numbers is likely to meet Wikipedia's notability standards. They are also able to help editors use these authority controls to access relevant information about a subject. These are but a few of the many ways librarians serve as activists. Librarians are on the frontlines of knowledge curation, acquisition, and production. They are uniquely positioned to function as activists as they work to overcome barriers for women editors and others interested in this work, and as they help to identify women who should be on notability-based platforms like Wikipedia.

The Wikipedian as an Activist

The fact that the Wikimedia Foundation recognizes gender bias on its platform, studies this bias, and supports programs to address the issue has a lot to do with the work of women like Sue Gardner, former executive director of the Wikimedia Foundation from 2007 to 2014, and Katherine Maher, the current chief executive

officer and executive director of the Wikimedia Foundation. They took reports of harassment and bias seriously and worked to activate the platform's collective efforts toward effective solutions. These efforts have been more and less successful, with the Wikimedia Foundation failing miserably at its 2011 goal to have 25% of its editors identified as women by 2015. However, their outspoken critique from the highest levels of the organization made a space for other activists to create projects that address the issue of gender bias at a grassroots level. For example, Rosie Stephenson Goodknight and Roger Bamkin started the Wikipedia project Women in Red in 2015, as a way to create articles about notable women. Other Wikipedia projects, including Art+Feminism, WikiProject Women, and WikiProject Gender Studies, also focus on gender bias on Wikipedia. Through their projects, these Wikipedia activists gather together editors and potential editors who are concerned about bias. They teach new people to edit. Furthermore, they work to rewrite guidelines to make the platform more user-friendly and to make the culture more woman-friendly. There are also super Wikipedians like Jess Wade, who write hundreds of articles a year about cis and transgender women in specific areas like science (Devlin 2018).

It is easy to identify these highly engaged women as activists working valiantly to shift the culture on Wikipedia specifically and in society more broadly. However, we cannot dismiss the ordinary editors who pursue their interest in women and religion, like the editors who participate in the 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project. Many of them begin this work by jumping into, what is for them, the deep end of the technological pool in order to make a small but significant contribution. Many of these women are not technologically savvy. They do not necessarily have degrees in religion or credentials as a religious or spiritual leader. Still, they are concerned about gender bias on Wikipedia and beyond. They care enough to go out of their comfort zones and join the effort. Their contributions are essential because, in the end, it will take the regular contributions of a multitude of ordinary editors who are activated to do something if we are going to make a collective shift. Each of these people, from the highest levels of the Wikimedia Foundation to the ordinary, sometimes struggling editor working to edit an article about a woman in religion, is engaged in an activist endeavor that increases our access to biographies about notable women.

As editor, I want to recognize the biographers in this volume who make the case for the notability of their subjects in line with Wikipedia's current notability standards. Thank you for the strategic ways you extend and reshape our understanding of this defining concept. Thank you to the particular librarians who helped them with their research. Thank you to every librarian who works to improve the representation of women, women's works, and women's issues on the databases that support this research. Thank you to the Wikipedians who will use

the biographies in this volume as a secondary source for the creation of a new biographical entry on Wikipedia. You are all engaged in an activist endeavor that improves the representation of women on notability-based platforms like Wikipedia.

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