

Electrifying Women Training: Blogging

Choosing a Topic

The kinds of things we have already blogged about

- Specific women or themes e.g. Ira Rischowski; the founding of the Women's Engineering Society
- Specific archival source e.g. the 1935 Register of Women Engineers (IET archives)
- Outreach events e.g. creative writing workshops and Wikithons
- Reviews e.g. theatre performance of SHE at the University of Leeds
- Output e.g. creative writing pieces from workshops

Choosing a topic

- A personal research topic – is there an area you have already been researching that relates to history of women in STEM? We would welcome more blogs about individual women or collaborations between women
- We are always keen to have a more international perspective, so would like more blogs about women in engineering beyond the UK
- You could choose to write about records/sources through archival research. We would be interested in more blogs relating to the online resource The Woman Engineer (refer to researching handouts)
- You might want to blog about an event or presentation that you have held or plan to hold (see presentation handout)
- We are interested in reviews of anything that relates to history of women in engineering/STEM e.g. theatre productions, films, books etc

All blogs available here: Electrifyingwomen.org/blog

Style Guide

Audience

- Know your audience – what are you blogging for? Who is your reader? What prior knowledge can you assume?

Content

- Choose a topic that interests you; it could be something you already know about or want to know more about
- Could be answering a small research question, writing a review of something, highlighting an area of necessary research
- Why is the topic timely or relevant? Why should someone else care about it?
- Research the topic – online archives (see handout from researching workshop). Find two or three pieces of key evidence
- Factcheck
- Referencing – no need to formally reference but make sure you are crediting other people's work/ideas

Structure

- Plan structure (if that helps you)
- Good to follow the point, evidence, comment structure
- Use a hook in the introduction e.g. an anecdote/statistic
- Start broad, then home in on the details/specifics
- End with a short conclusion summarising what you have discussed and perhaps raising further issues/areas to consider
- How long? Keep it on the shorter side where possible
- Short paragraphs and sentences

Language

- Always use the simplest word for a concept
- Avoid technical jargon, or explain it clearly if you do
- Be specific and clear

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- Blogs should have a conversational, engaging tone, though remain objective if dealing with more formal topics

Final touches

- Find appropriate/interesting media e.g. images or embedded videos
- Provide in-text links to relevant websites
- Further reading section, if necessary

‘Making the internet less sexist’: the Electrifying Women Wikithon at LSE Women’s Library

18th October 2019 by humer

Emily Rees

Wikipedia is a global resource, used by billions of users, but of the English language pages, only 16.8% of the biography pages are about women. For example, until last month, [Lady Katharine Parsons](#) – who co-founded and served as president for the [Women’s Engineering Society](#) (WES), advocated for women’s rights and their role in engineering, helped manage the engineering [firm](#) set up by her husband, engineer [Charles Parsons](#) – did not have her own Wikipedia page, only a stub on her daughter’s, [Rachel Parsons](#).

Like many other women of note in history, Katharine Parsons had not found her way onto the online encyclopaedia, which relies on volunteers to create and edit pages. Wikipedia are aware of this problem and have set up the initiative [Women in Red](#), which aims to level out this imbalance by running edit-a-thons or Wikithons as they are also known. These are run by experienced Wikimedians (experts in editing and using Wikipedia) who teach volunteers how to create and edit pages for notable women.

On the 21 September 2019, the [WES centenary project](#), [Electrifying Women](#) and [Heritage Open Days](#) came together to run such an event – the [Electrifying Women Wikithon at](#) the LSE Women’s Library in London. This was a follow-on from an earlier Wikithon run by WES at the library in March.

On what turned out to be a beautiful, late September Saturday, nearly 20 members of the public volunteered their time to come along to the event to learn how to edit Wikipedia and ‘make the internet less sexist’ (as the badges received at the end put it). The session was led by [Wellcome Trust](#) Wikimedian Dr Alice White, whose expertise and enthusiasm fuelled the day.



Dr Alice White leading the Wikithon

It was surprising how easy the process of editing is, operating much like basic word processing software that we are all mostly familiar using. More challenging is finding adequate references to support any claims being made on the page, for which extra research can sometimes be required. Sources held by the LSE women's Library proved useful for this. Citations are the cornerstone of Wikipedia; the more citations, the more reliable the information on the pages becomes. [A Wikipedia page is only as good as its editors and their sources.](#)

The participants in the Wikithon were provided with a list of women that they might want to edit or create a page for. Participants were attracted to a range of different women, depending on their own interests, which was fascinating to hear about. Some participants came from a science or engineering background and wanted to add more about the women working in their particular field, some just wanted to learn more about Wikipedia and others came wanting to work on particular women, whose careers they had taken a keen interest in.

The output from the four-hour session was remarkable: 11 articles were created; 38 articles edited; 9.73 thousand words and 107 new references added. Other than Katharine Parsons, new pages were added for food manufacturer and businesswoman [Ella Hudson Gasking](#), German refugee and engineer [Ira Rischowski](#), India's first female engineer [Ayyalasomayajula Lalitha](#), among others.

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A screenshot of the Wikipedia article for Katharine Parsons. The page is in English and shows the title 'Katharine Parsons' at the top. Below the title is a summary: 'From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia'. The main text begins with 'The Hon. Lady Parsons née Katharine Bethell (1859 – 16 October 1933) was the co-founder and second President of the Women's Engineering Society (WES), and an engineer in her own right.' There is a table of contents with five items: '1 Partnership with Charles Parsons', '2 The First World War', '3 The Women's Engineering Society', '4 Later years', and '5 References'. Below the table of contents, the section 'Partnership with Charles Parsons' is visible, starting with 'Born to William Frogatt Bethell at Rise Park in the East Riding of Yorkshire in 1859[1], Katharine met the Hon. Charles Parsons in Leeds in 1882 while he was working there as an engineer. They married in January 1883 and had two children, Algernon George and Rachel Mary.[2]'. The section 'The First World War' is also visible, starting with 'Famed for her robust character and exceptional organisational skills, during the First World War Lady Parsons was closely involved in managing the female workforces in Tyneside converted armaments factories. It was for this war work that Lady Parsons was made...'. The left sidebar contains various navigation links like 'Main page', 'Contents', 'Featured content', etc. The top right corner shows user options like 'Not logged in', 'Talk', 'Contributions', 'Create account', and 'Log in'. There is also a search bar at the top right.

Screenshot of Katharine Parson's Wikipedia entry which was created at the Electrifying Women Wikithon on 21 September

In fact, Ira Rischowski's new Wikipedia page was built upon research that Electrifying Women had compiled for our [blog post](#) about her story, which relied on material held in the Women's Library. Her personal papers, 1938-1988, are held as part of the Records of the Women's Engineering Society collection, more information [here](#).

The creation of new pages, and the editing of existing ones, not only means that these women are now visible on one of the most accessible and searched online knowledge resources on the internet, but also that they can be linked to the [WES centenary trail map](#). All these women now have a pin on the map, which shows the global spread of WES members; from the Wikithon there are new pins in India and Germany.

Feedback for the event was hugely positive, demonstrating a thirst for more events, with particular comment on Alice's one to one teaching and her expertise. Both Electrifying Women and the WES centenary project plan more Wikithons relating to women in engineering, so keep an eye out for information on these.

There are still many women who do not have pages, or whose pages need attention, so the efforts must continue, but this event was testament to how much a group of

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enthusiastic volunteers can get done in only a few hours to demystify the role that women have played, not only in engineering, but in history.