SLIDE 1: Still not ready for prime time?:

This is a fun study about information literacy librarians’ attitudes towards Wikipedia. Information literacy librarians are a subset of academic librarians who teach library skills to students.

The title is “still not ready for prime time” because even though Wikipedia’s ease of use and functionality ensure its popularity throughout the world, teaching librarians still have a considerable aversion to Wikipedia’s use in students’ university studies. They will cite Wikipedia’s changing nature and lack of authority, a pervasive campus attitude that regards Wikipedia as not scholarly, and the need to move students into more substantial library resources as the reason for this aversion. In this study, we explore their attitudes—and whether these attitudes may be changing.

SLIDE 2: study details:

This is a large study of librarian attitudes. The respondents were solicited through the American Library Association’s Information Literacy Instruction Discussion (ili-l) Listserv to take a 26-item survey that had five parts including, a demographic portion, a part that focused on pedagogical style, a part that focused on Web 2.0 interests, a part regarding attitudes towards Wikipedia, and a textbox for further comments. The study netted 281 completed responses for an incredible 80% completion rate—if this seems rather high, these are librarians, after all.

SLIDE 3: Why is Wikipedia interesting?
I think that it is absolutely true that Wikipedia is changing the world’s information landscape and that these changes are worth noting and they are worth studying by people like me.

In this slide I point out some of Wikipedia’s continuing successes. These include the 2005 Nature study segment where Wikipedia compared favorably in terms of accuracy with the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the discontinuation of Microsoft Encarta in 2009 because fee can’t really compete with free, and, the venerable Encyclopaedia Britannica’s adoption of a platform to take user suggestions in 2010.

Crowd sourced Wikipedia does work in tandem with the browser searches in Google and gets a good deal of its colossal traffic in that way. Also, a decent bit of the content is supplied by nerdy teenage male volunteers, a fact that might be frightening when you think about it—but Wikipedia does, as Chris Anderson writes in Free, make much of the world much more productive by making information freely accessible.

With its Web 2.0 virtues, Wikipedia practices the 21st century ethics of collaboration and social networking—virtues that stand in direct contrast a university’s ethic of individual achievement. Just what if anything information literacy librarians will make of these competing philosophies, we will soon see.

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**SLIDE 4: why study Wikipedia?**

Of the several researchers studying Wikipedia use among undergraduates, two specifically recommend librarian involvement in providing guidelines for using Wikipedia and for teaching its use to
undergraduates. So far information literacy librarians have been less-than-willing to answer this call.

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**SLIDE 5: literature review**

There are five categories of studies relevant to this research:

1. A Pew Internet and American Life Project study of primary school teachers indicated that American children are told not to use Wikipedia on their school projects.
2. Chen (2010) and Chesney (2006)'s study shows that more senior academicians are more comfortable with using Wikipedia than their junior colleagues. Certainly there may be many factors for this—peer pressure being what it is—but one interesting fact may be how academicians develop skills to evaluate information found over the web. They do so in one of two ways: They can compare the information in the website against another source in order to assess its quality as well as to reveal its depth or they corroborate the information in a website by fact-checking the information against one or more additional sources. Because experts have so much field-specific information in their heads, they can corroborate the information in Wikipedia instinctively—and often without even knowing it.
3. Number 3 shows how many Wikipedia researchers stress that college students use Wikipedia frequently.
4. Lim and Kwon (2010)'s study of Wikipedia usage by gender indicates that males are more likely to use it at a higher rate because they disregard professor’s proscription against its use.
5. Menchen-Trevino & Hargittai’s research distinguishes a student’s low stakes versus high stakes need for information. Although this may be obvious to many, it amounts to a sea
change for many practicing librarians who view every user’s information need as a high-stakes need.

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**SLIDE 6: acknowledgement of previous study**

I am indebted to Gemma Bayliss who first linked collaborative learning techniques, Web 2.0 technologies, and instruction in the use of Wikipedia in her exploratory study of five faculty members at a UK business school.

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**SLIDE 7: research questions**

In this study, I attempt to answer four research questions:

RQ1: Are American information literacy librarians incorporating Wikipedia into their teaching, and if so, how?

RQ2: Do years of professional experience predict incorporation of Wikipedia instruction?

RQ3: Are collaborative learning techniques associated with greater acceptance of Wikipedia in classroom and library?

RQ4: Does embracing Web 2.0 technologies imply acceptance of Wikipedia in classroom and library?

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**SLIDE 8: RQ1: Are American information literacy librarians incorporating Wikipedia into their teaching, and if so, how?**

This survey’s most important finding is that information literacy librarians in the U.S. provide little Wikipedia instruction.
This survey distinguishes class sessions that make any mention of Wikipedia from workshops focusing entirely on Wikipedia.

Regarding class sessions where any mention was made: nearly half, 41% provide no instruction, 35% provide 1-5 classes, 21% provide 5-25 classes, and a tiny 4% more than 25 per school term.

Standalone Wikipedia workshops are rarer: 83% provide no workshops, 15% provide 1-5, and 2% provide 5-25 workshops per school term.

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**SLIDE 9: how are librarians utilizing Wikipedia in American higher education?**

By recommending “presearching,” or using Wikipedia as a starting point to look for keywords, definitions, and references to other research.

By presenting its unique structure with its “Talk” and “Edit” components, by showing Wikipedia alongside other websites, or by showing Wikipedia to illustrate difference between crowd-sourced information and the single expert peer-reviewed resources.

**Notes:** One respondent noted the important of asking open-ended questions when working with students and cited a situation that became a teachable moment when a professor in a class sent an instant message to the library asking the librarian to verify information found on Wikipedia. It took “30 minutes to locate the information in a more academic space. It was determined that, while Wikipedia had the “gist” of the situation correct, it had failed to provide the context and the general thought about the incident being researched. Finding the scholarly material led to a deeper understanding for the students (respondent 12).”
3% [4] are having students edit or add to Wikipedia.

Here is an editing story: “To demonstrate Wikipedia’s changeable nature, one respondent has “students select two articles on topics about which they are knowledgeable. To one article they make edits with the intention of improving the article. To the other, they make changes with the intention of lowering the articles quality (i.e., adding false or biased information). For two weeks they monitor the articles via the talk pages and record what happens to their edits. Some edits are quickly removed, others are left untouched for the length of the exercise. I had one student actually get blocked! This exercise, I hope, makes my students more conscientious and discriminating users of Wikipedia as well as other Web 2.0 tools (respondent 70).”

SLIDE 10: Do years of professional experience predict incorporation of Wikipedia instruction?

The youngest group of librarians was also the group most likely to incorporate Wikipedia into their teaching—but not by much!

Regardless of demographics, in this study these respondents were most remarkable because they provided an explanation of Wikipedia into nearly every class session they taught.

SLIDE 11: RQ3: Are learner-centered collaborative learning techniques associated with greater acceptance of Wikipedia in classroom and library?

It is worth mentioning that information literacy librarians in the United States have professional standards that read information literacy becomes primary in “courses structured in such as way [as to] create student-centered learning environments where inquiry is the
norm, problem solving becomes the focus, and thinking critically is part of the process (p.4).”

Although the vast majority of information literacy librarians endorse collaborative learning, contrary to expectation, few embrace Wikipedia instruction at their institutions.

SLIDE 12: Does embracing Web 2.0 technologies imply acceptance of Wikipedia in classroom and library?

The question, “It is an instruction librarian’s responsibility to teach students how to evaluate information responsibly in a Web 2.0 world [survey statement 4]” received the highest numbers of “strongly agree” or “agree” answers in the whole survey. ....

SLIDE 13: however...

A related statement, “If it is not there already, a link to Wikipedia from a library’s homepage is a great idea [survey statement 16],” received the greatest number of disagree or strongly disagree.

Clearly, respondents do not want a link to Wikipedia on their library’s homepage!

SLIDE 14: conclusion

If it seems as though information literacy librarians do not and will never embrace Wikipedia, I must point out that surreptitious use of Wikipedia has always been high in libraries. Perhaps Wikipedia is in the process of coming out into the open.
In the present day, Wikipedia’s ease of use has to be admired, and its challenges confronted and reckoned with.

In this study, respondents wholeheartedly believed that helping students evaluate information in a Web 2.0 world is their responsibility as information literacy librarians—they were also quick to add this responsibility did not extend to adding a link to Wikipedia on their library’s websites.

However, who is to say what the future will bring? Perhaps when asked these same questions in 2018, or even 2013, respondents will hold Wikipedia in higher regard. I am optimistic and some see it as inevitable.

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SLIDE 15: THANK YOU VERY MUCH!