

History 381: Digital History
Fall 2012
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Boise Wiki assignment

It's time to practice doing digital history for a local, public audience. Our first step is to write articles for the Boise Wiki at <http://boise.localwiki.org>.

The Boise Wiki will likely eventually take a form similar to that of the Davis Wiki (daviswiki.org). However, currently it is a tiny site, with only about 500 pages. Our class this fall will expand that number slightly.

We will be talking more in class about what constitutes a good wiki article—how to pick a topic, what writing voice to use, how much citation is reasonable, etc.—but for now here's your assignment:

Write an article for the Boise Wiki in one of the following categories:

- the history of a place in Boise (e.g. a building, park, school, intersection)
- the history of an interesting person or organization whose life or work intersected significantly with Boise (e.g. a politician, a dance company, a philanthropist, a business leader)
- the history of an event or movement in Boise (e.g. Art in the Park, the Boys of Boise, a local human rights effort)
- the history of a piece of Boise's material culture (e.g. public art, a statue, the excellence bell on campus, the inscriptions in the sidewalk on the Basque block, the cross on Table Rock)

IMPORTANT NOTE: Before you write your article, do a search of the wiki to discover if there are already articles on that topic. I do not want to see duplicate articles. If you do want to build on a short article (a "stub") that already exists, that's fine.

Articles should be at least 300 words in length, and ideally will be 300-600 words, though in many cases longer articles are appropriate.

You should draw on both primary and secondary sources, though I understand primary sources will not be available for all articles. Primary source material might include photographs, newspaper articles, archival material, and more. You must have permission from the copyright holder to use copyrighted works (e.g. historic photographs) on the wiki.

Article topics are first come, first served. If you would like to claim a topic now, let me know, and I will start a Google doc where we can keep track of who is writing what.

By their very nature, wikis change frequently, as anyone can edit any page. It's possible, then, that another student will make contributions or corrections to a page you started. Accordingly, you'll need to turn in to me **a printed version** of the wiki article that is primarily your work. If you built on an existing "stub," provide me with "before" and "after" versions of the article. If someone else provided extensive revisions to your article after you posted it, turn in a version that best represents *your* efforts.

Finally, you need to write **a one- to two-page (single-spaced) reflection** of your experiences of writing on the wiki; please also post this reflection to the course blog. You might consider addressing any or all of the following questions: Why did you choose the topic that you did? What technological frustrations did you experience, and how did you overcome these hurdles? What are your thoughts about writing pieces of what may become a very large, collaboratively written history of Boise? What are the advantages and liabilities of writing local history on a wiki? What advice would you offer future Boise Wiki contributors?

Articles will be graded based on quality of the research and writing, as well as their potential interest to a public audience.

The hard-copy wiki article and reflection are due Monday, November 26 at the beginning of class.