

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

SESSION 158

WORKING WIKIPEDIA AS A CONTENT OUTLET AND SEO STRATEGY

WITH SHELLEY WILKS GEEHR

BETH: Hello, this is Beth Brodovsky, and welcome to Driving Participation. Today I'm actually running part two of my conversation with folks at the Chemical Heritage Foundation. We've already talked with a team about collaboration and how it impacted their program for "Things Fall Apart," and today we're gonna talk about their content strategy and the content that they're using on a day-to-day basis to connect their community with the work that they do. So today I am speaking with Shelley Wilks Geehr. Shelley is the Director of the Roy Eddleman Institute, and Shelley and I have actually known each other for, I think, 20 years now.

SHELLEY: I think it's at least 20 years, because I've been here for 19 and we worked together at my last job.

BETH: Terrific. Yeah, so Shelley and I met probably right when I started my business 20 years ago with the previous organization she worked with, and then worked together here for a little bit when she first started, so we have known each other for a very long time, and I thought they've been doing some really interesting things over the years as the Chemical Heritage Foundation has grown, and the more Shelley and I talked, I really thought it's time to tell this story here. So today we're going to be talking about the different types of content that the organization uses to share their story and some very unique ways that they're using Wikipedia to actually spread and connect people with the content that they're creating. Shelley, why don't you start off by telling everybody a little bit about the Chemical Heritage Foundation in case people haven't listened to the previous episode yet.

SHELLEY: Well, the Chemical Heritage Foundation is a history of science





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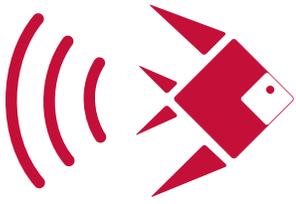
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organization. So when everybody hears the word “chemical,” they think that we do science, but we do not do science. There are no labs in the building. We don’t blow things up, although that disappoints a number of people for a number of reasons, but our job is to really look at the role of science in society at large, both present day and in the past. Science doesn’t happen in a vacuum. Things that people choose to study, things that people choose to apply, which would be maybe more engineering, happened because it fits within a particular society or a particular culture. So our role and our mission is to help people see how science is a part of their lives for better or for worse and how they, even if they are not scientists, participate in science.

BETH: It’s just an interesting thing because you wouldn’t normally think about this. In this work that you’re doing, what does participation mean for you in this organization? How does it show up in a way that you count, that you measure, that you look at in a way that helps the organization thrive to serve its mission?

SHELLEY: Well, it shows up internally with the number of skill sets that it takes for us to accomplish anything. We do need historians, most particularly historians of science, but even historians broadly and sociologists. We need people who are communicators, writers, people like that. We need people who know the science, which is not necessarily the historians of science. We joke that we have, you know, a resident chemist on board, but we do need all of those skill sets because you can’t explain things unless you have all of those skill sets. You can’t share those things. Externally we look at participation a little differently. We have a mission that talks about conversation and people interacting. So we look for the type of programming that allows people to ask questions or to have conversations. We look to create an atmosphere in our museum that is very warm and welcoming and we look for ways to participate on social media and other platforms to allow people to have a voice back to us. We are not necessarily interested in presenting the history of science to the world as this is what it is, end of story. We want a conversation. So that’s what participation means to





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us, people who come to the building and asks questions or participate in our programs or participate in our social media or things like that.

BETH: I think that's so interesting that you have a definition of participation that can be so easily and directly tied to your mission. I don't know if many people when they answer that question have really been able to present it that way, and I think that's so important because for me, what we try to do is help people who need participation-driven brands, have them help them connect their mission to their vision through the methodology of branding. The way that you described it, you have such a clear vision already of where that path leads you or is the guide for what you should be doing based on what you're trying to accomplish.

SHELLEY: I guess we're lucky that way.

BETH: You're lucky or became lucky because you worked really hard at figuring that out.

SHELLEY: We did. There were some really painful discussions a few years back under our former president about our mission and about our role and it's been interesting since that time to see how people define that, how they define participation and engagement and discourse and things like that and it's been very interesting for me at the organization watching that play out. So it was a lot of hard work at first. I'll be honest.

BETH: I think what's also very interesting about your organization, lots of organizations will tell me that they're the complex organizations, but you have this externally focused museum, but as we were talking about with Lisa and Rebecca before, that there's a lot more that goes on here besides just what people and maybe the public sees. There's a lot of research and writing and content generation happening just through the nature of what you do, but your role has really been to find the conduit for that. I'd love to have you talk a little bit about, how you, how that role has changed and how you decided what content





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you should be creating and what to do with it, how that's evolved over time.

SHELLEY: Well, that's, I mean, that's a really complicated question in the "what content should we be creating?" because science is so all-pervasive. I mean there isn't, like what stories shouldn't we tell is frankly an easier question.

BETH: Right, exactly.

SHELLEY: And I don't, you know, it's hard to say whether you made the best choice every time, but there are so many stories, and they're all interesting, and they all have something to add to our understanding of the way the world works, that a lot of times we make those decisions based on the interests of the people in the building to a certain extent, that, you know, you have a certain sort of critical mass of interest and it goes that way. With our museum, we are allowed to tell different stories somewhat regularly by changing the exhibits in the Hach gallery. We have teams of people who will work on projects for multiple years. Our Reach Ambler project was, oh goodness, at least five years worth of work on oral histories for people in the Ambler community. The series of playlets that came out of those oral histories and the small exhibit that we did in Ambler for it took a number of years and then continued after that public expression was over.

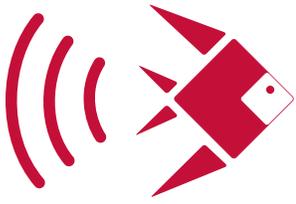
BETH: I have to ask. What's a playlet?

SHELLEY: What they did with the oral histories that they took of people in Ambler, we worked with the Playhouse in Ambler, commissioned I think a couple of playwrights and they did very short one- or two-person plays. Then they did a whole series then as an evening's performance. So these plays ran from like five minutes to maybe ten minutes. So small.

BETH: I think what's fascinating about that is I would guess many people wouldn't think, "Oh, science museum. They're doing plays."

SHELLEY: But we are.





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BETH: But you are, so where did that come from? How is it that you guys said, “This is a great expression of science”?

SHELLEY: Well, when you think about it, if you just teach people the science, they’re not gonna come. And we actually have other institutions, for instance, the Franklin Institute, that does a great job getting people interested in science and excited about science. So we don’t have to do that. What we have to do is show people how science is part of their every day life and what better way to do that than with an artistic performance where they don’t expect it, but in fact, The Lantern Theater, also a local institution is committed to doing a play about science every year and we’ve done a number of programs with them to allow them to expand their audiences experience just beyond just the play.

BETH: I love that because that leads into the conversation that we had with your colleagues about going outside your own walls and collaborating with other people. A lot of your wall is creation and management and delivery of content, but the reality is you don’t necessarily have to create all this content all by yourself.

SHELLEY: Or deliver it.

BETH: Or deliver it, right. That’s such an interesting thing, when it comes to content and the stories that you’re telling as an organization that you can say, “How can we use our skills on that ground to collaborate with another organization so that we’re telling a joint story?”

SHELLEY: Exactly. If you go back to Ambler, we do not have the skills in house to write serious plays, but we certainly have more than enough in-house expertise to do oral histories and to prepare those oral histories so that playwrights can look at them. For a little while, we were fortunate that we did have somebody on staff that did have a theatrical background, and she did take one of the books in our collection, which is a Jane Marcet book, “Conversations on Chemistry.” It’s written





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almost like a play, and she combined that with another book that we have called “The Fairyland of Science.” There was this whole movement in the 19th century to explain chemistry through the use of fairies.

BETH: Really?

SHELLEY: It was adorable! Beautiful, beautiful imagery, but so you explain bonding by the fairies holding hands and linking legs and things like that, and that’s how these molecules are made. So she actually combined those two into a performance piece that we did for the First Friday. So we’ve done a number of theatrical performances, either in the building or with collaborators.

BETH: It looks like this comes down to you got this content, this information, these stories and these stories, maybe it’s research, maybe it’s something, one of the best vehicles to connect it to the audience that you’re trying to connect it to.

SHELLEY: Right. You have to translate it. I mean, our audience is not going to read an academic book. They’re not going to do it. They may come to a lecture by the author of that academic book, but they are much more likely to come to something that feels a little more participatory, a little more fun, a little more engaging, a little more like entertainment. So that’s what we try to do. We do certainly offer a number of very serious lectures every year for people who really want that deep dive and we do have an incredible research library for people who are doing their own research and an oral history program. So we have lots of really solid, solid research going on in the building, but we do understand that that isn’t translated. We’re going to be telling these amazing stories for a very small number of people and we have broader ambitions.

BETH: Right, and that’s why we bring it back to the question about branding. So you’ve got these two different types of audiences and two methodologies. How do you manage your brand when it comes to focus and prioritization of audiences?





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SHELLEY: Well, that is something we do struggle with. Internally there is always that sort of push and pull like, “Oh, we can do this for a million people or we can do this really great wonderful thing for these 200 people that are very close and near and dear to our heart,” and I don’t think that we have figured all of that out yet. We are in the midst of another strategic planning process, which I think is gonna have a lot to say about prioritization. It’s a struggle. It’s always a struggle and what I’ve said since I started here is there are more good ideas than can possibly be accomplished. So it is a matter of you pick and you choose and maybe sometimes you do pick the wrong thing, but if you pick things that people are enthusiastic about doing and if you have, you know, a really quality staff and we really do here, then good is accomplished.

BETH: Right, exactly. I tell people all the time that no matter what you’re working on, you don’t want perfection to be the enemy of execution. Look at how much you’ve accomplished, look at everything you’ve been able to do because you took action and moved forward, even when there’s an internal struggle going on and I think there’s so much that we talk about as far as the right way to do things. I think it’s helpful for people to hear that we don’t have this part figured out yet, but it doesn’t mean that you’re not moving forward in other areas or moving forward making the best decisions that you can with the results and information you have.

SHELLEY: Exactly, and at the end of the day, the strategic plan that is coming to an end really emphasized the idea of intellectual leadership, so really knowing your stuff and then also we called it leadership of thought, and then also sharing broadly, reaching broader audiences, making an effort to move beyond the historians and researchers and scholars that were most familiar with us.

BETH: A lot of that I can see in the content strategy that you’ve been working through over these last few years. Why don’t you talk a little bit about, you’ve got all this content. What have you been doing with it? What methods are you using?





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SHELLEY: Well we use a number of methods. Certainly the museum comes to mind as that of 2008 and the idea that we would share our collections broadly. So we have built a museum with a changing exhibition program and we continue to, you know, find different ways of sharing our collections. We have just put online, we haven't really started ballyhooing it yet because we want to make sure all the kinks are out, a digital library. So our collections are now available. Not just our library collections. It feels like an online card catalog. It's a little more sophisticated than that, I assure you, but now our objects are available with very high quality photography and information about them and we're building that out. So it's another way of sharing beyond the city of Philadelphia. When you look at the stories we tell and you look at our collections, they are not Philadelphia stories exactly. We can certainly make them Philadelphia stories and we do try to personalize it and make it about being here, but they also have a much broader story to tell and we are a small organization. So we can't go, you know, we can't build elaborate traveling exhibitions that go out to major museums across the country. We don't have the staff to do that, but our online collections can be there. Our website can be there, our social media. So we just look for ways to share broadly and when you start talking about how are you going to share beyond Philadelphia, you have to do it digitally. There is no other solution that is cost-effective.

BETH: But you do still run a print magazine.

SHELLEY: We do. We have our print magazine, Distillations, which is now considered a media suite. It has a magazine, a podcast and a video component, as well a blog. So, you know, print is a really interesting thing. What I always say about distillations is it's a pleasure read. You don't read it to further your career. You don't read it because you're going to need to know something that's in it for your next staff meeting or anything like that. You read it because it's well-written, interesting content. At the end of the day, people still read print.

BETH: Yes, they do.





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SHELLEY: I'm a print person. I come from back in the day when there was only print! I find it really fascinating that I have made the transition to ebooks. I do almost all of my book reading on my iPad, and I love it. Oh, I love it, but I have to use an iPad. I can't use a Kindle. I need to see two pages at the same time. The Kindle drove me crazy because it was only one page and that just felt wrong, but I have not transitioned my magazine reading. At the end of the day, I find a print magazine a more satisfying read. I mean, a number of magazines do have a digital component, but there's still print. There's still news stands. There's just something about paging through a magazine and maybe it's the way you approach it. You don't read it from cover to cover necessarily. I think that there is still a huge demand for print. The thing that I struggle with as a communications person is it used to be all print. So we all knew what to do. We all knew how to print things and then there's this web thing. So we all built a website and now we needed to staff the website professionally, and now the website is its own beast, to be honest. It grows and grows and grows, but then the podcast came about. Again that idea of conversation and that idea of reaching people where they wish to consume your media. So now we have a podcast and well the podcast is just audio. We really should have some more video. So now I have videographers on staff. It seems that there are more and more ways to reach people and everybody wants to be reached in the way that they are most comfortable with. So I have found that over the years I don't just supervise editors and designers. I now supervise web people and social media people and videographers and people who do podcasts and we haven't found something that we can shed yet.

BETH: I've been saying for a long time that there's a lot "and" and not a lot of "or."

SHELLEY: There really isn't. I mean we do a newsletter online. So we don't do a printed newsletter. So that, which of course means that now we have this extensive email marketing thing, and that becomes a thing unto itself. We have given up a lot of print marketing, but not print content delivery, per se.





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BETH: Interesting. In your email, do you deliver content by email or is the email more of a marketing type of email?

SHELLEY: Well, we do marketing emails. Come to the next First Friday or whatever, but the newsletter is to give you some more information about things going on in CHF. We usually do one tied to the magazine, and certainly the magazine's content is all on our website. So we'll do a newsletter where we kind of tease out some of the more interesting articles and link to those on the website. When we have a project that's up and running, you know the e-newsletter will link to the project pages on the website. So the e-newsletter tries to push you to the website to be honest. It is promotional, but it is promoting our content as well as our events.

BETH: OK, got it. Now when it comes to the podcast and video, is that new content or is that, "We're gonna do a podcast and we're gonna transcribe that and then it ends up in the magazine"? Is it re-purposing or we call it modular content, or is it just three completely different content streams that are under this umbrella?

SHELLEY: It's a little of both. We are trying very hard to bring it all together. We did it recently. We had a great article in a recent magazine about taxidermy, which is very much a chemical process, and we had a great video about it, and, of course, the magazine links to the video. The video links to the online magazine content, etc., etc., and I believe we might have done a podcast on it as well, but I'm not 100 percent sure about that. So we tried very hard to examine a theme because the things you can do in video are very different from what you do in print or very different from what you do in an audio.

BETH: So it's not like you're taking your video, extracting the audio out of it and then that becomes the podcast?

SHELLEY: No. The podcast would be an interview with someone. So we use it, the





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research sort of informs all three projects, all three products, but you use these different media to look at things in a different way as opposed to just, “Here’s the video, Here’s the audio. Here’s the print.”

BETH: So it’s not really versioning of it. It’s not, “We’re gonna take this,” like what I would call re-purposing is I recorded a video. I’m gonna extract the audio and make that the podcast. I’m gonna transcribe the podcast and make that into an article. that’s one way to do it, but you’re doing it as components. Like here’s the email and like you said, angles. I really like that. So that’s opportunity, but it also triples ...

SHELLEY: It’s a lot of work.

BETH: Triples the work and the staff that you have to manage and just all of the pieces that are in motion. So what is managing that?

SHELLEY: Well, like I said, a great staff, the Distillations team, it’s actually a very small team when you look at it for what they do. There are two people who focus primarily on the video and the podcast. The podcast is monthly, the video is maybe every other month, 5-6 a year. The magazine is quarterly, but it is very, very high production values on that magazine and there are two people on that. Two.

BETH: Wow. So it’s designed outside?

SHELLEY: It is designed outside fortunately and we have an external copy editor, proofreader, which is hugely valuable as well, but it’s still, that’s a team of four producing all of that with a social media editor and a Wikipedian.

BETH: I think it’s important to know that this is so great. We would love to have this. It does take the support of people and whether inside or outside, there’s a financial cost to that. It’s so easy to think when it’s staff it’s free, but staff have a budget line and one person can only do so much from a space-time continuum,





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but also from a skill base. I'm sure you've seen at some point you can't just tell a print editor to go out and video. I see frequently in organizations that they want to hire the designer, writer, web developer, social media expert PR person, and think that they can get all those skills in one person. In general you'll get someone who is very high in one of those skills and cobbling it together in everything else.

SHELLEY: And depending on how much you're asking, things are gonna fall through the cracks. Our editor in chief of our magazine came with both the editorial experience and background. She is in fact a PhD historian of science so really solid content person there. So she came in also with podcast experience, and so that was very helpful, and she is in fact one of the hosts of our podcasts.

BETH: What made you decide to go in that direction knowing that you had a resource that...

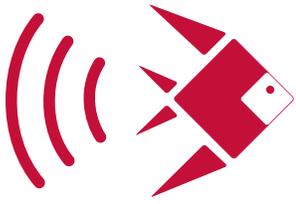
SHELLEY: Well, the podcast existed before.

BETH: The podcast already existed.

SHELLEY: Right. It was built under our former editor, but we started relatively early in the podcast world where you could sort of figure it out. It didn't need to be quite so professional and then we hired somebody who came out of I think it was Berkeley's program for both video and audio. She came in and really is doing a fabulous job producing the podcast, but she was doing a little video on the side. There's only so much you can do. A monthly podcast can be a relentless taskmaster.

BETH: This one was weekly. We did it weekly for almost three years and now we're every other week, and it's amazing how just that shift to every other week has opened up some space that we can do some of the other things and we made that shift because we wanted to start doing webinars and other things and there's just only so much capacity.





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SHELLEY: There really is.

BETH: And this is very lightly produced podcast as I'm sure, you know, everyone says I'm not trying to be NPR here.

SHELLEY: No, but if you listen to Distillations, it is very highly produced and in fact a number of I guess you would call them public radio stations across the country have picked up our episodes. Here and there.

BETH: I think that's an important thing for people to know who are listening to think about. So it's a combination of what content do you have to put into things because I would say what I really should do when we were doing a lot of print newsletters is tell people pay me everything for a whole year on the first issue and then I'll do all the rest of them for free because I can't tell you how many times over the years someone would hire us to do a monthly newsletter and we would do one issue and never see another one because for most people, getting the content is the problem, whereas you have this content that is piling up like crazy trying to figure out how to share it out of all the things that are possible. Then even with that, it's like what are the things we're going to do? What level, you could have just done a newsletter, but you decided to go magazine. You could have done an OK magazine, but you decided to do a really sophisticated polished magazine, and then once you've done that, then it's like how do you create. You can't have like a rogue, like a rogue podcast like mine. Like how does each of these things fit together, but level together to make sure that if somebody is coming into your orbit for one, when they move from one thing to the next, it feels cohesive and on brand and appropriate for your organization. It's a lot of decisions for people to have to make.

SHELLEY: It is a lot of decisions and the magazine, because of the quality of the magazine, it demands that the podcast have that same high quality. So what are the benefits of that? The benefits of that are that now it is picked up and broadcast off of public radio stations in different parts of the country. So that





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means I'm hitting my mission. I'm sharing it broadly and so you make decisions about what you can and cannot do. I think it's a tricky thing because I think it's important to get out there and try some things, particularly perhaps for organizations that don't have the resources that I've been fortunate to have here at CHF. Maybe you can't do everything on that totally high quality and then you have to make that decision. Are we gonna do one thing really, really spectacularly well or are we going to do a number of things that increase our range in various ways. There are other things you can do that are much less expensive to get your mission out. I think social media is key to that. I mean we share pictures of our collections all the time either through Twitter or Facebook. We talk about the things we do. We do a number of, particularly on Twitter, we do Twitter takeovers every Friday and our social media editor works with some member of our staff to develop a series of tweets throughout the day to you know, share what they do.

BETH: So basically if I Twitter takeover, it just means a high volume of tweets going out in a small amount of time on theme.

SHELLEY: Yes, or for instance, Liza Berry Drago who you spoke with earlier, she did a Twitter takeover about "Things Fall Apart." So you had the curator sharing the exhibition with you as she was building it.

BETH: Interesting. I haven't heard of somebody doing it. I've seen homepage takeovers among other things, but I've never seen anybody consciously really do that on Twitter, except for during a conference.

SHELLEY: No, we do it almost every Friday.

BETH: Interesting. Is there a hashtag? What would people follow if they want to take a look at what you're doing?

SHELLEY: They would follow our Twitter account, which is @ChemHeritage, I believe.





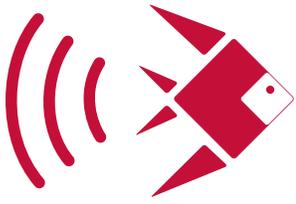
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BETH: All right, we'll put a link to that on the show notes page. So the other thing that I wanted to talk to you about is you've got all this content, you've got all this media, but one of the things that nonprofits struggle with a lot is breaking through all that noise and getting seen in search results. Getting seen on social media these days. It's getting harder and harder and harder. You have taken a very unique tactic that I had never really heard of anybody using before. You have a Wikipedia, which I'm sure anybody that's listening is thinking, "What? A Wikipedia." So why don't you talk a little bit about your Wikipedia and like what they do and how they came to focusing on Wikipedia as a content strategy.

SHELLEY: Well we did in fact focus on Wikipedia first because when you talk about search engine results, what comes up first? Wikipedia comes up first, but if you, and you're like here I am. I have all this content. I'm just gonna sit down in my office and put it all up on Wikipedia, you can't. Wikipedia will throw you out of there so fast. I remember way, way back somebody I worked with was telling me about Wikipedia and how you can build all this content on Wikipedia and this goes back to like 1999 or whatever and I remember looking at that and thinking that's just ridiculous. You can't build an encyclopedia with just everybody contributing and we frankly were very, very small back then. So there wasn't anyone to do it so we didn't do it and then Wikipedia really professionalized itself and now pages are owned by particular editors and you really have to establish your credentials in order to be able to participate in the Wikipedia community. So then we found ourselves with all of this content that we had finally built out on our website and no way to share that beyond our website, and Wikipedia also realized that it had really closed out corporate entities and so if you attempted to post content from an IP address that was linked to a corporation, they would shut it down. They didn't want anything to be a commercial or an advertisement and by doing that, they also shut out the cultural organizations that have a range of content. All of the stuff in PMA all those beautiful pieces of art that could be part of Wikipedia are suddenly shut out because it's considered a corporate IP address.





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BETH: Commercial.

SHELLEY: Right. So Wikipedia realized it had a problem and it created a program where it was encouraging cultural organizations to hire a Wikipediaian in residence for a short term, for let's say 4-6 months, and that person's role would be to come into the organization and train the staff to participate in Wikipedia, and it's a genius idea, but the fact is that six months is not long enough and also when people have full-time jobs, they don't necessarily have the time to participate in a very thoughtful and careful way on Wikipedia, but we tried it for six months, and loved it.

BETH: How did you get your Wikipedia person?

SHELLEY: We advertised, and you can do an ad. We explained what the job was and we were looking for people who had experience in Wikipedia and have experience as writers or editors, thing like that. We did this so long ago that I remember very clearly we got three resumes. Three. Two of them for different reasons were both easy to reject, and the third was this woman, Mary Mark Ockerbloom, who was very active on Wikipedia. She was very interested in women authors and she had started out years ago actually with an Excel spreadsheet. She was just sort of collecting information about women authors and then Wikipedia came along and she thought, "Oh, I have a way to share this information and promote these people," if you will. So she actually was a very credible, very well-established presence in Wikipedia and lucky for us she lives in Philadelphia and was looking for a part-time job. So she does a lot of work sharing content that has been created and either published by CHF or posted on our website and building out pages on people or concepts or even scientific instruments that matter to us. So she's doing a great deal of work on one particular project for us and just building out the Wikipedia presence of the individuals we're studying and the scientific instruments they've been connected to and things like that. We have a fairly extensive awards program where we award achievement in the scientific community. She builds out web pages for





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those individuals, and again, all of that links back to us in the notes and in other places, and then she works with our librarians and archivists to help share images from our collections in Wikipedia comments.

BETH: What has all this effort; now that you've been doing this, how long have you been doing it?

SHELLEY: Oh, I want to say four years.

BETH: That's quite awhile.

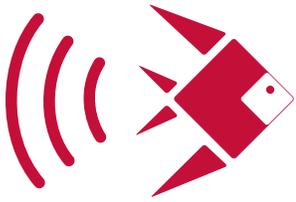
SHELLEY: That's quite awhile.

BETH: So what are the results? What do you think you've gotten out of going this path as opposed to say investing in an SEO consultant or something else? How is this specific tactic benefited the organization?

SHELLEY: You know, I have looked at SEO consultants and they all want me to just play up chemistry and other things which are not really about what we do. They never get that we're history of science and, but if our mission is really to share this information, is it necessary that this information is only available on our website. That feels very exclusive to me and also very limiting, whereas we know Wikipedia is gonna be number one in the search results. Why not share the information with that because Wikipedia's mission is pretty impressive too when you think about it. So why not participate in that and then have that come back to us? For awhile, Wikipedia allowed us to sort of see how many people were visiting individual pages. That's no longer available or it's not available in the same way, but we certainly know how many people come to our website from Wikipedia, and it's a pretty impressive number every month.

BETH: When it comes to like all the people that come to you website, where does the Wikipedia traffic land?





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SHELLEY: Oh, you know I never looked at, that's a great question. I never quite looked at it that way and part of the reason is there was an entire year where we had no idea how many people were coming to our site from Wikipedia because Wikipedia decided that the way it worked, unless you were https site, it wouldn't connect, and we were not, and when we relaunched our site, when we redid it and it relaunched a year ago, that was one, as soon as I found this out I went to ...

BETH: It's gonna be a big thing. That's a bigger conversation than we want to have.

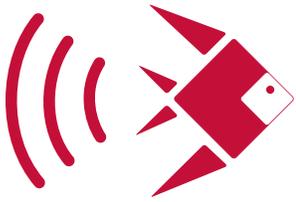
SHELLEY: And we're not having that.

BETH: But I think it's interesting that you're not just saying, "Hey, this is a strategy that we took to help us show up in search rankings." You're saying this is a strategy that's more aligned with our mission and our values than if we had taken, I'm sure it's not cheap to employ a Wikipedian. You could have taken that money and thrown it to the SEO guy. You could have gone that way, but I see your point in that like manufacturing results and doing things in SEO to draw them back to your site is very self-contained and this is all about us, whereas your approach is more, it's almost like you're collaborating with Wikipedia to lift you both up. Like it's good for Wikipedia to get people to come to their site. It's good for search rankings and it's good for you. So it's so much more holistic of an approach than the, "We're in it for us and we want to drive people to our site," to help us grow.

SHELLEY: And Wikipedia is always in the top 10 drivers. I mean certainly Google, all the search engines are out there as well as you know people who come to our site directly, but Wikipedia is always right up there and that would not be the case if we weren't actively posting

BETH: I mean from the perspective of an audience member, they're gonna click on a link from Wikipedia more often than they're gonna click on a link from a specific website and then read about you and then come to you from that way,





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feeling more like, “Well, I’ve learned something. I’m a little more educated,” and make them feel a little less sold to in some ways.

SHELLEY: Exactly, and people take very you know winding paths on the internet. So the more places you show up on the internet, the more opportunities you have for attracting people to your site.

BETH: It’s a hard thing sometimes for people to wrap their head around that it’s not about designing a path or a website that’s gonna get people to do the thing that you want. It’s how do you facilitate their needs? How do you understand who these people are and align the ultimate thing you want people to do with giving them what they want from their perspective. It’s a challenge.

SHELLEY: It is a challenge, but with the amount of content we have, the amount of images that we have that are out of copyright so they can be shared in Wikipedia comments, it’s just ...

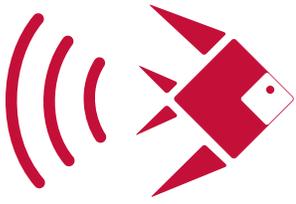
BETH: Such a perfect match for you.

SHELLEY: It is and again, we can do it with a part-time person, and we are very lucky that we have someone who is very good at what she does and only wants to do it part-time.

BETH: Perfect. So that leads to the question of if there are organizations that are listening that are at the stage where they do have content and they’re trying to figure out what is the best path for us and maybe this Wikipedia path is a possibility, what recommendations would you have for somebody that wants to look at some of these alternate ways and other things to do to get their content out there into the universe?

SHELLEY: Well, I would spend a little time learning how Wikipedia works. There are a number of edit-athons you can go to in any city. We have a little Wiki salon that happens on Saturdays once a month in our museum, and that, in fact, is run





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by our Wikipedian.

BETH: What's a Wiki salon?

SHELLEY: A Wiki salon is, at CHF what it is, is an opportunity for people to come in and help us build content because again, we don't really have scientists. We only have one. So we can't fix everything that's wrong with the representation of science on Wikipedia, but we have a number of constituents who are scientists, and they see what's wrong and they can come in and we can either help them learn how they can fix it or make it better or we can just make a correction for them if that's what they want.

BETH: So it's another way for you to participate, like get your community participating without really asking them to do anything other than nerd out on something that's interesting to them.

SHELLEY: Exactly! So it works very well for them and also if you are somebody who wants to build your Wikipedia skills, our Wikipedian is there to help you do that and you can pursue any interest that you want to share.

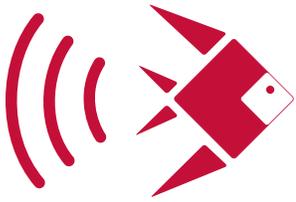
BETH: So people can come to this salon and it may not be them coming in to fix something specifically related to CHF. It's both they can do that if they want, but they can also do whatever they came for, you're helping them to meet their needs.

SHELLEY: Exactly.

BETH: It's really the key to everything.

SHELLEY: It is, and an edit-athon a number of institutions will do those when they're trying to build content on a particular subject. A number of museums will do it. Like I know we participated in one that was all about women artists and it was connected to a show that was all about women artists and build their





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presence.

BETH: You participate.

SHELLEY: Yes, our Wikipedian will go around and participate, but it's a good way for an organization that hasn't been involved to become involved and learn how it works and get a sense of it and then possibly run their own edit-athon around their own content.

BETH: I think that is a great idea. I want to thank you so much for joining me today. This has been so interesting and I always learn something whenever we have conversations. Thank you so much for sharing everything with both me and our nonprofit community. If people have more questions for you about how you run your salon and Wikipedia or any other content, what's the best way for them to get in touch with you?

SHELLEY: Well, as we said in the last one, certainly reach out to us through social media or in fact you can email me. I will answer.

BETH: Well, I appreciate that you're offering that, and I'm sure everybody else does, too. I will have the link to Shelley's email on the show notes page so please make sure you go look for it there. Thank you so much for joining me today, and I appreciate talking with you.

SHELLEY: Thanks. It was fun.

