THE INTEGRATING WIKIMEDIA PROJECTS INTO AFRICAN LIBRARIES' ECOSYSTEM (IWIPALE) PROJECT

INVESTIGATING THE POTENTIAL AND OPTIONS TO INTEGRATING WIKIMEDIA PROJECTS INTO LIBRARY ROUTINES

- SURVEY REPORT -

BY

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Introduction

Across Africa, libraries are evolving from traditional repositories of knowledge to active facilitators of open access, digital inclusion, and community engagement. In this context, Wikimedia projects, such as Wikipedia, Wikidata, Wikisource, and Wikimedia Commons, offer powerful tools for libraries to share knowledge, promote local content, and enhance information literacy. However, meaningful integration of Wikimedia into African library routines has been slow and uneven.

This survey, commissioned under the Integrating Wikimedia Projects into African Libraries' Ecosystem (IWIPALE) project, a Knowledge Equity Fund (KEF) funded project being implemented by the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA) was designed to explore how libraries, library professionals, and allied institutions across the continent perceive and engage with Wikimedia projects. It aimed to understand current levels of awareness, skills, and usage, while gathering practical suggestions on how Wikimedia can better support African libraries and vice versa. The survey provides insights into what librarians need to adopt Wikimedia in their daily work, identifies opportunities for collaboration, and highlights practical steps that can help bridge the divide. It also lays a foundation for stronger partnerships between Wikimedia communities and the African library ecosystem.

The findings from this survey will be compared with the key themes that emerged during the Virtual Conversations. Together, these insights will help in developing a comprehensive white paper. The white paper will highlight practical approaches and useful templates for integrating Wikimedia projects into everyday library routines. It will also suggest ways to strengthen collaboration between library and information professionals and the Wikimedia community in Africa and beyond.

Methodology

This study was conducted through an open online survey designed using Google Forms. The survey targeted individuals across Africa who are involved or interested in the library and Wikimedia communities. Participation was voluntary and open to librarians, library staff, educators, Wikimedia contributors, and other stakeholders in the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) sector. The survey link was widely disseminated through multiple channels to ensure broad reach and inclusivity. These included the AfLIA and Wikimedia Africa mailing lists, AfLIA's official website, and social media platforms such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter).

Once the survey closed, responses were downloaded, cleaned, and deduplicated to remove incomplete or duplicate entries. French-language responses were translated into English for consistency in analysis. The data was then processed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative responses were coded and analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data was uploaded into NVivo to facilitate thematic analysis. Adopting a mixed-methods approach allowed for a richer understanding of trends, perceptions, and suggestions related to Wikimedia engagement within African libraries.

Demographics section

Professional role of respondents

A large majority of the respondents, nearly three-quarters (72.5%), identified as librarians. This is not surprising because librarians are AfLIA's main audience. They are well connected to the association and usually receive regular updates about its activities.

Apart from librarians, the survey also received responses from people in other professional roles, but their numbers were smaller. These included students (9.8%), academics or faculty members (3.9%), Wikibrarians (2%), and Wikimedians (3.9%). Wikibrarians are library professionals who also actively contribute to Wikimedia projects. Their presence in the responses shows that some library staff already engage with open knowledge platforms like Wikipedia and Wikidata.

There were also a few responses from curators and heritage researchers (2.9%). Though representation from professionals from museums and archives were not strongly represented in the survey, their responses are equally crucial in considering perspectives that will facilitate adoption of Wikiprojects in their routine work. Again, even though the number of Wikibrarians and Wikimedians was small, their participation is important. It shows that some people already identify with the Wikimedia movement. These individuals could play key roles in promoting collaboration. They may serve as early adopters, important connectors, or champions who can help lead efforts to integrate Wikimedia projects into the daily work of libraries and related institutions.

Table 1: Professional role of respondents who participated in the survey

Professional Role	Count	Percentage
Librarian	74	72.5%
Student	10	9.8%
Educator / Academic / Faculty	4	3.9%
Curator, Architecture Historian and Heritage Researcher	3	2.9%
Wikibrarian	2	2.0%
Wikimedian	4	3.9%
Total	102	100%

Type of institution respondents work in

About half (50%) of the respondents work in academic libraries or educational institutions. These institutions often have better access to technology and structured programs, which could make it easier for them to adopt and integrate Wikimedia projects into their work. The second-largest group, 18 respondents (17.6%), work in public or community libraries. These libraries are closer to local populations and can play an important role in making knowledge accessible, especially at the grassroots level, and so they form a crucial constituency for ensuring inclusive access and community engagement with Wikimedia projects.

About 11% of participants work for a national library. National libraries play a key role in information policy, heritage preservation, and large-scale outreach. Their support can give national-level recognition and momentum to Wikimedia collaborations. NGOs and non-profits made up about 8.8% of the responses. These organizations often work on development goals and community empowerment, which aligns well with Wikimedia's mission of open knowledge. Other institution types included special libraries (2.9%), schools and community setups (2.9%), private sector institutions (2.9%), community organizations (2%), and government workers not based in libraries (2%).

Table 2: Type of institution respondents work in

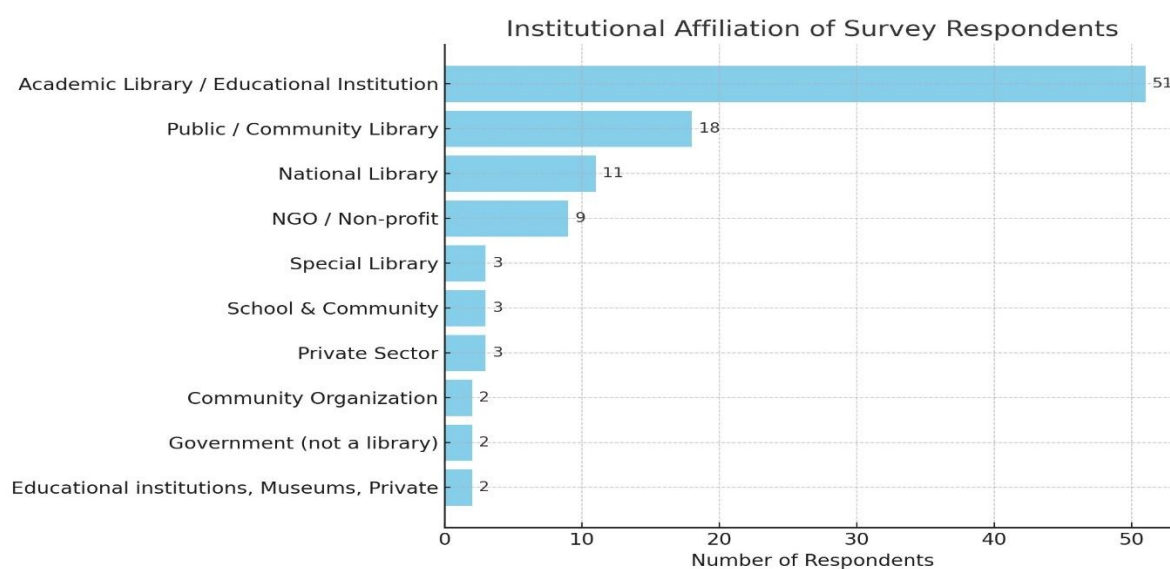| Institution Type	Count	Percentage
Academic Library / Educational Institution	51	50.0%
Public / Community Library	18	17.6%
National Library	11	10.8%
NGO / Non-profit	9	8.8%
Special Library (e.g., research, parliamentary)	3	2.9%
School Library	3	2.9%
Private Sector	3	2.9%
Community Organization	2	2.0%
Government (not a library)	2	2.0%
Other: Educational institution, Museum	2	2.0%
Total	102	100%

Fig 1: Affiliation of survey participants

Age of respondents

The largest group of respondents fell within the 31–50 age range, making up 46.1% of all participants. These are mid-career professionals and can be said to be mostly engaged in AfLIA-related or Wikimedia-related activities. People in this age group are often in leadership or decision-making positions, which is important for driving integration of Wikimedia projects into institutional practices. The next significant group was the 18–30 age range, which accounted for 37.3% of responses. These are mostly early-career professionals, young librarians, students, and interns. Their strong presence is a good sign for the future. It shows that young people are interested and engaged in open knowledge and library innovation. Only 13.7% of respondents were between 51–60 years old, and even fewer, just under 5%, were 61 years or older.

Table 3: Age range breakdown

Age range	Number of respondents	Percentage
18–30 years	38	37.3%
31–50 years	47	46.1%
51–60 years	14	13.7%
61 or older	5	4.9%
Total	102	100%

Gender

The majority of respondents were female, accounting for 72.5% of the total. This is almost three out of every four people who responded. Only 27.5% of the respondents were male. This trend only reflects the gender distribution in the library and information sector across many African countries, where women are often more represented, especially in public, community and school libraries.

Table 5: Distribution by gender

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage
Female	74	72.5%
Male	28	27.5%
Total	102	100%

Country representation

Responses were received from 15 African countries. The majority of responses came from Nigeria, making up just over half (52%) of all participants. Uganda follows with 10.8%, showing solid participation. South Africa (8.8%) and Ghana (6.9%) also contributed significant numbers, suggesting some spread across key Anglophone countries. Other countries with smaller numbers include Kenya, Botswana, Egypt, Zambia, and Mali, each with between two to four respondents. A few countries such as Cameroon, Benin, Gambia, Tanzania, Cote D'Ivoire, and eSwatini had only one respondent each. The spread shows that while the

survey reached a diverse set of countries including Francophone Africa, participation is skewed toward Anglophone countries, especially in West Africa (mainly Nigeria and Ghana) and East Africa (Uganda and Kenya).

Table 6: Country spread of respondents

Region	Countries Represented	Notes
West Africa	Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Gambia, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire	Strongest representation, especially Nigeria
East Africa	Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania	Uganda is a standout contributor
Southern Africa	South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, eSwatini	Good presence from South Africa
Central Africa	Cameroon	Very low representation
North Africa	Egypt	Minor representation despite active Wikimedia groups

Distribution of respondents based on years of experience

Over 43% of the respondents have more than 10 years of experience. That is, almost half of the participants are highly experienced professionals. They likely have deep knowledge of their institutions and the library or information field. Their feedback is especially valuable because it comes from many years of hands-on work. The next largest group (25.5%) have 0–2 years of experience. These are likely new professionals or recent graduates. Their views are important too, as they can give fresh ideas, reflect current training, and highlight new needs or gaps in professional development. Those with 3–5 years and 6–10 years of experience make up the rest. Together, they form about 31% of the respondents. This group combines early-career professionals with mid-level experience, and can be very active in implementing new ideas and technologies.

Table 7: Years of experience

Years of experience	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
0–2 years	26	25.5%
3–5 years	18	17.6%
6–10 years	14	13.7%
More than 10 years	44	43.1%
Total	102	100%

Level of education

The data shows that most respondents have relatively high levels of education. Bachelor's degree holders form the largest group with 40 respondents (39.2%). Master's degree holders are close behind, making up 37.3% of the sample. Doctorate (PhD) holders are only 4 respondents (3.9%). Postgraduate diplomas in librarianship also account for 3.9%. Diploma/HND holders (9.8%) and those with only certificates (3.9%) reflect more technical or entry-level educational backgrounds. A small group (2.9%) indicated they are currently pursuing a Master's degree ("Masters in view").

Table 8: Respondents' level of education

Education level	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Bachelor's degree	40	39.2%
Master's degree	38	37.3%
Doctorate (PhD)	4	3.9%
Postgraduate diplomas in librarianship	4	3.9%
Diploma / HND	10	9.8%
Certificate (Middle School, High School, etc.)	4	3.9%
Masters in view	3	2.9%
Total	102	100%

Wikimedia projects and Open Knowledge

Respondents' understanding of Wikimedia projects as Open Knowledge

Majority of the respondents, 82.4%, indicate that they understand that Wikimedia projects are about Open Knowledge. This is a positive sign, in that most people are aware that Wikimedia platforms like Wikipedia, Wikidata, Wikimedia Commons, and others are freely accessible and openly editable by the public. However, 18 respondents (17.6%) said "I am not sure". So despite the majority being aware, there is still some uncertainty or lack of clarity among a small group about what "Open Knowledge" really means in relation to Wikimedia. The high level of understanding shows that awareness of open knowledge principles is strong among the group. This could support efforts to promote Wikimedia use in libraries, education, and cultural institutions. The 17.6% who are unsure represent an opportunity. These individuals may benefit from training sessions, workshops, or guides that explain what Open Knowledge is, why Wikimedia is part of the Open Knowledge ecosystem, and how this affects access, sharing, and participation.

Table 9: Understanding of Wikimedia projects as Open Knowledge

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	84	82.4%
I am not sure	18	17.6%
Total	102	100%

Respondents' appreciation of the hallmarks of Open Knowledge resources

Over 75% of respondents correctly mentioned three key features or hallmarks of Open Knowledge, i.e. they are openly licensed, they are free to access, and they can be reused, adapted, and redistributed. About 75% of the respondents knowing this signals a strong awareness overall. They know that it should be free, openly licensed, and allowed to be reused. This shows that the group has a good understanding of what makes Wikimedia projects and other open resources special. However, some respondents are confused about internet content in general. They think that if something is online and visible, it must be open and free to use. This is not true, as many websites or resources are still under copyright, even if you can see them. Also, many think open knowledge resources keep full copyright. While technically the creator still owns the copyright, open licensing means they share their work freely under certain rules, like giving credit or not using it commercially.

Table 10: Hallmarks of Open Knowledge resources

Key Concept	Mentions (multiple select)	% of Total Responses (N = 108)
They are openly licensed	84	77.8%
They are free	84	77.8%
They can be reused, adapted, and/or redistributed according to their license	85	78.7%
All resources on the internet are open so far as you can see them	31	28.7%
All open knowledge resources have full copyright	50	46.3%

Popularity of Wikimedia projects among respondents (frequency of use)

Every respondent has used Wikipedia. This confirms its strong brand recognition and role as the entry point into the Wikimedia ecosystem. Over 70% of respondents had used Wikidata, and around 65% had used WikiCommons. This suggests growing awareness and relevance of structured data and shared media repositories, especially among library, research, and educational professionals.

On the other hand, about 37% had used Meta-Wiki, which is relatively high given that it is more technical and administrative in nature, but given that a number of Wikimedians and Wikibrarians participated in the survey, this result may not be a surprise. It is indicative of respondents' involvement in Wikimedia community projects, planning, or policy discussions.

Projects like Wikibooks, Wikiversity, and Wikinews were less used (under 20%). These are valuable educational tools but may need more promotion or contextualization in African learning settings. Specialist projects like Wikibase and Wikispecies had the lowest recognition. Overall, these projects serve niche functions like data hosting and species classification, so their limited use is expected but on the other hand, the data communicates the lack of awareness of these less popular Wikiprojects and how they align to the special service or information needs of African librarians.
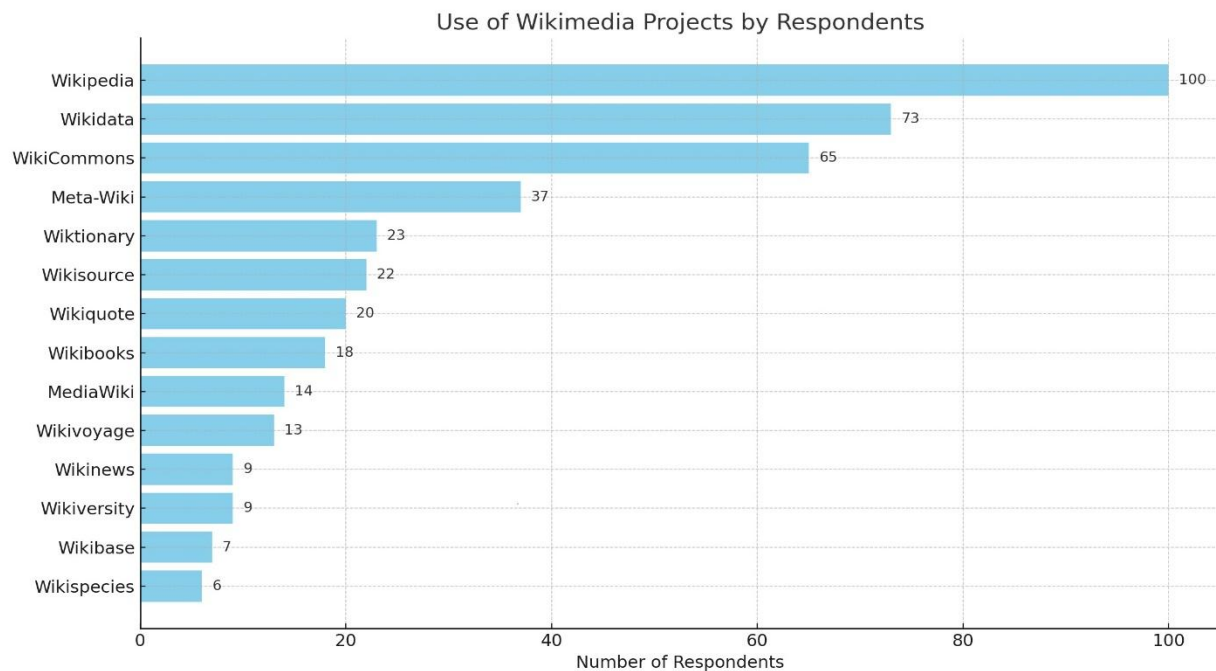

Fig 2: Breakdown of Wikimedia projects (frequency of use)

Overview of respondents' contributions to Wikimedia projects

Out of 100 respondents, 63% have contributed to at least one Wikimedia project. The remaining 37% respondents indicated that they have not made any contributions to any of the Wikiprojects before. The key observations from the data is that Wikipedia (any language) is the most contributed-to project by far, with 63 respondents (63% of total). Wikidata also sees strong participation (53%), likely due to its relevance across many Wikimedia platforms. WikiCommons, used for sharing images and media, is also popular (45%). Other projects like Wikisource, Wikiquote, and Wiktionary have very moderate engagement whereas lesser-known platforms like Wikibooks, Wikivoyage, Wikiversity, and MediaWiki had minimal contributions.
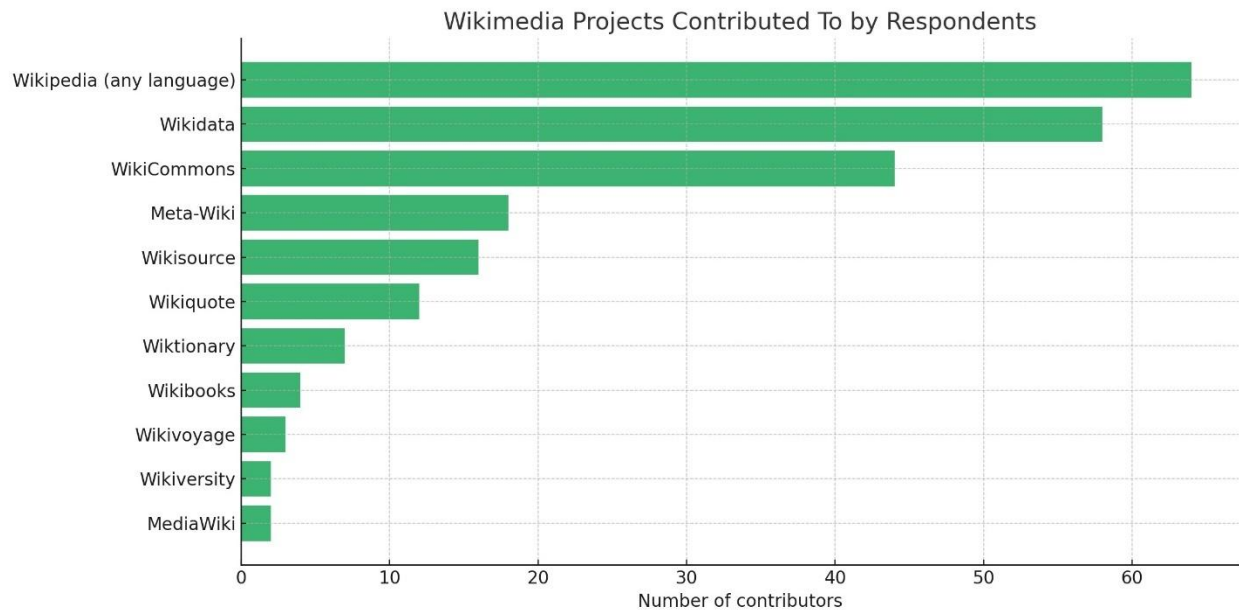
Fig 3: Popularity of Wikimedia projects by respondents' contribution

Pattern of contributions to Wikimedia projects beyond campaigns like AfLibWk, 1Lib1Ref etc.

A significantly large number of respondents (64%) either cannot remember how to contribute (31%), have not contributed in a long time (18%), or hardly contribute after campaigns (15%). This is result is instructive on many fronts, i.e. it highlights the traditional influence of community campaigns in driving contributions and enabling retention of contributors. On the other hand, it critically exposes the weakness in that framework, in that it has created a situation where contributions to these free knowledge platforms become episodic in nature. Unfortunately, that alone may not be sustainable and cost-effective since the data shows affirms significant decline in activity after the campaigns end.

Only 17% of respondents said they contribute 30 or more times per month. These are likely highly motivated or more experienced users. Close to 19% of participants said they make 10 or 20 edits per month. These individuals contribute occasionally but are not as active as the top group. The most common response was "Honestly, I can't remember how to contribute..." (31%). This suggests a need for refresher training or continuous engagement to help people retain skills and confidence.

Table 11: Patterns of contributions to Wikimedia projects beyond campaigns

Contribution pattern	Count	Percentage
30 and above edits per month	17	17%
20 edits per month	4	4%
10 edits per month	15	15%
Hardly contribute after campaigns	15	15%

It's been a long while since they contributed	18	18%
Can't remember how to contribute anymore	31	31%
Total	100	100%

Do African librarians and allied professionals have enough Wikimedia skills for working with the African Wikimedia movement?

Most respondents (55%) believe there's more to learn. Majority of participants feel that African librarians and allied professionals do not yet have *enough* Wikimedia skills and need further learning or support. This is a positive sign of self-awareness and interest in capacity building. However, 30% believe the current Wikiemdia skills possessed by African librarians are sufficient. These group of respondents feel that librarians and professionals already have what it takes to participate effectively in Wikimedia-related work. It is worth noting that majority of participants who fall within this category, constitute those who are already active contributors on selected Wikiproject. Finally, 15% said "No." These respondents directly believe that African librarians and allied professionals do *not* have enough Wikimedia skills. This is a small but important group whose views suggest significant gaps in training, confidence, or exposure.
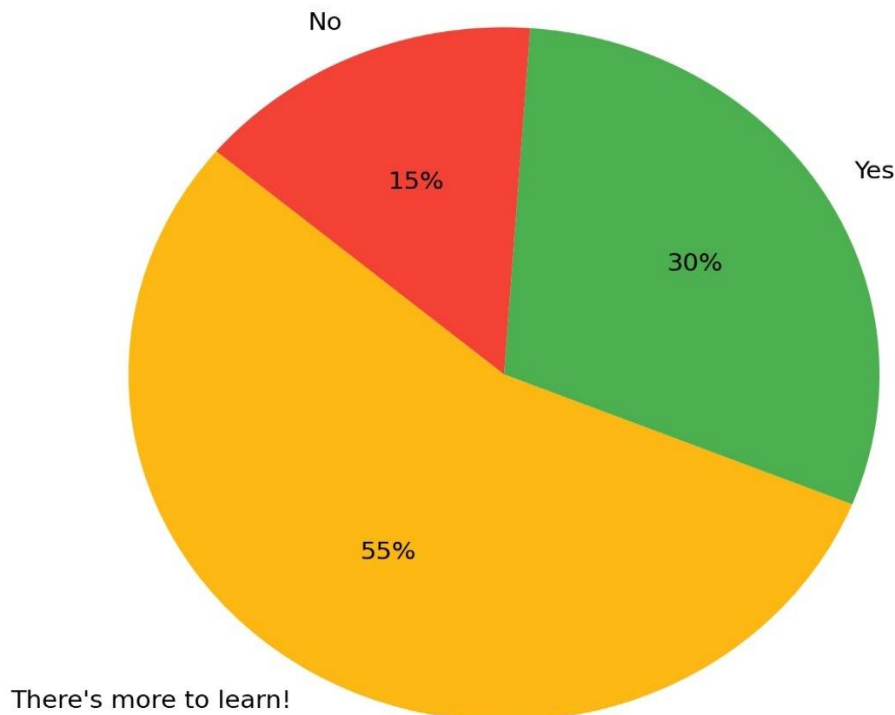

Fig 4: Perception on Wikimedia skills possessed by African Librarians

Wikimedia and libraries, archives and museums

Similarities of Wikimedia goals with GLAM goals

The data clearly shows a strong consensus about the shared goals of Wikimedia projects and the work of galleries, libraries, archives, and museums. Most responses repeatedly highlight three major areas of similarity.

First, the most consistent theme is the commitment to opening up knowledge and making it accessible. Respondents emphasized that both Wikimedia and institutions like libraries, archives, and museums aim to ensure that knowledge is not locked away, but freely available to the public. This implies a shared mission to democratize information and empower communities through access to knowledge.

Secondly, many responses mention the goal to foster openness, sharing, and the linking of knowledge. This aligns with how Wikimedia functions by encouraging collaborative editing, linking topics, and promoting free licensing. Similarly, libraries and related institutions are increasingly using digital platforms to interconnect their resources and make information discoverable across systems. This openness not only supports learning but also innovation, as users can build on what is available.

Third, a number of respondents talk about a drive for awareness, deepened acceptance, and favourable policies in the information sector. This shows that both Wikimedia and memory institutions are not just content providers, but also advocates for open knowledge principles in education, governance, and policy. They seek to influence how information is valued and managed in society, ensuring that openness becomes the norm.

A few respondents actually noted "no similarities," but these were very few and outweighed by the majority who identified overlapping goals. Overall, the qualitative responses strongly suggest that there is a natural alignment between the missions of Wikimedia and institutions like libraries, archives, and museums. This is a good and fundamental perception that needs to be harnessed by the Wikimedia Foundation and GLAM to create opportunities for deeper partnerships to promote open knowledge, enhance public access to information, and strengthen educational and cultural development in Africa.

Respondents' perception of areas with strong potential for collaboration between Wikimedia and GLAM

This section presents a summary of responses from participants on potential areas for collaboration between African libraries, archives, museums, and the Wikimedia Movement. A total of 58 responses were recorded, and the results show strong support for multiple areas of partnership.

The most frequently mentioned area of collaboration is the use of library, museum, and archive spaces, cited in 49 out of 58 responses, representing about 84% of all participants. This reflects a shared interest in using these institutions as physical venues for Wikimedia training, events, or edit-a-thons. The access to resources and repositories in these institutions follows closely, appearing in 56 responses, or about 97%, showing that participants see value in opening up collections to support Wikimedia projects and knowledge sharing.

Another major theme is the impartation of basic, intermediate, and advanced Wikimedia skills to librarians, highlighted in 47 responses (approximately 81%). This suggests a strong willingness to equip information professionals with Wikimedia editing and content development skills. Related to this is the transfer of information retrieval and reference skills, which was included in 45 responses, or about 78%. This shows that Wikimedia volunteers and editors could benefit from the expertise of librarians and archivists in sourcing credible information. The area of information literacy and fact-checking sessions for Wikimedians is also significant, mentioned by about 67% of the participants. The data suggests a recognition of the value that librarians, archivists, and museum professionals can bring to fact-based contributions to Wikimedia platforms. Lastly, leveraging Wikimedia projects to increase the visibility and accessibility of institutional collections was included in 55 responses (around 95%). This finding shows an overwhelming interest in using Wikimedia as a tool to showcase African cultural, historical, and knowledge resources to a wider audience.

Potential challenges in collaborations between the African library and information science sector and the African Wikimedia movement

A close examination of the responses reveals several key themes that explain the potential challenges that may arise when trying to build collaborations between African Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals and the Wikimedia movement on the continent. These themes point to gaps in awareness, infrastructure, mutual understanding, and coordination.

One of the most frequently mentioned concerns is the lack of exposure and understanding among LIS professionals regarding Wikimedia projects. Many respondents believe that more librarians, archivists, and museum professionals need to be introduced to the Wikimedia ecosystem to appreciate its values, goals, and practices. Without this awareness, existing misconceptions and prejudices may persist, making it difficult for libraries and Wikimedia communities to work together meaningfully. This signals the need for regular sensitization, workshops, and co-learning initiatives that target LIS professionals across Africa. Closely linked to this misunderstanding is the question of whether the existing user communities are the best fit peer-support structures for African library and information professionals. Respondents suggest the need for a regional or continental Wikimedia user community for African library and information professional, where like-minded professionals can often convene, interact and collaborate to promote knowledge on the various Wikiprojects.

Another prominent issue is the limited resources in many African libraries, archives, and museums. Many of these institutions are underfunded, lack digital infrastructure, or do not have updated or digitized collections. As a result, even when Wikimedians are interested in collaborating, the institutions may not have the necessary tools, space, or materials to support Wikimedia activities. This points to a broader structural challenge within the African LIS ecosystem where many institutions are not yet fully-equipped to serve as active partners in open knowledge production or dissemination.

A third theme highlights the uneven willingness or interest from some Wikimedians themselves. Respondents noted that not all Wikimedians are inclined to use library spaces or collaborate with LIS professionals. This could be due to logistical issues, perceptions about the relevance of libraries, or a lack of awareness of the value libraries bring to Wikimedia work. This mutual hesitancy, on both sides, creates a gap in trust and engagement that must be intentionally bridged.

Many respondents also expressed the need for more formal structures to guide collaborations. Suggestions included the creation of templates or frameworks that clearly define roles, expectations, and outcomes for

Library-Wikimedia partnerships. Such tools would provide clarity and consistency and make it easier for new collaborations to start and succeed. In the absence of such structures, partnerships may falter or fail to scale.

Related to this is the strong call for a 'central clearing house' or coordinating body to manage and vet collaborations. This would serve as a hub for matching interested libraries with Wikimedia communities, providing training, and ensuring that projects meet quality and ethical standards. A centralized approach could help build credibility, foster transparency, and encourage long-term planning across different countries and language communities.

Willingness to work with AfLIA to support the Africa Agenda in the Wikimedia Movement

Most of the respondents are willing to work with AfLIA to support the Africa Agenda in the Wikimedia Movement. Out of 94 responses, 57 people (61%) said "Yes". This shows strong support and interest in collaboration. Further, 24% said, "It may be possible and I want to learn how." These respondents are open to the idea but need more information or training to get started. A small number of people (5%) asked, "What is the Africa Agenda?" This shows that some do not know what it is and need more awareness or explanation. Only 3% said "No" or "I don't think so!" This means that very few are not interested whereas 6% were not sure of themselves.
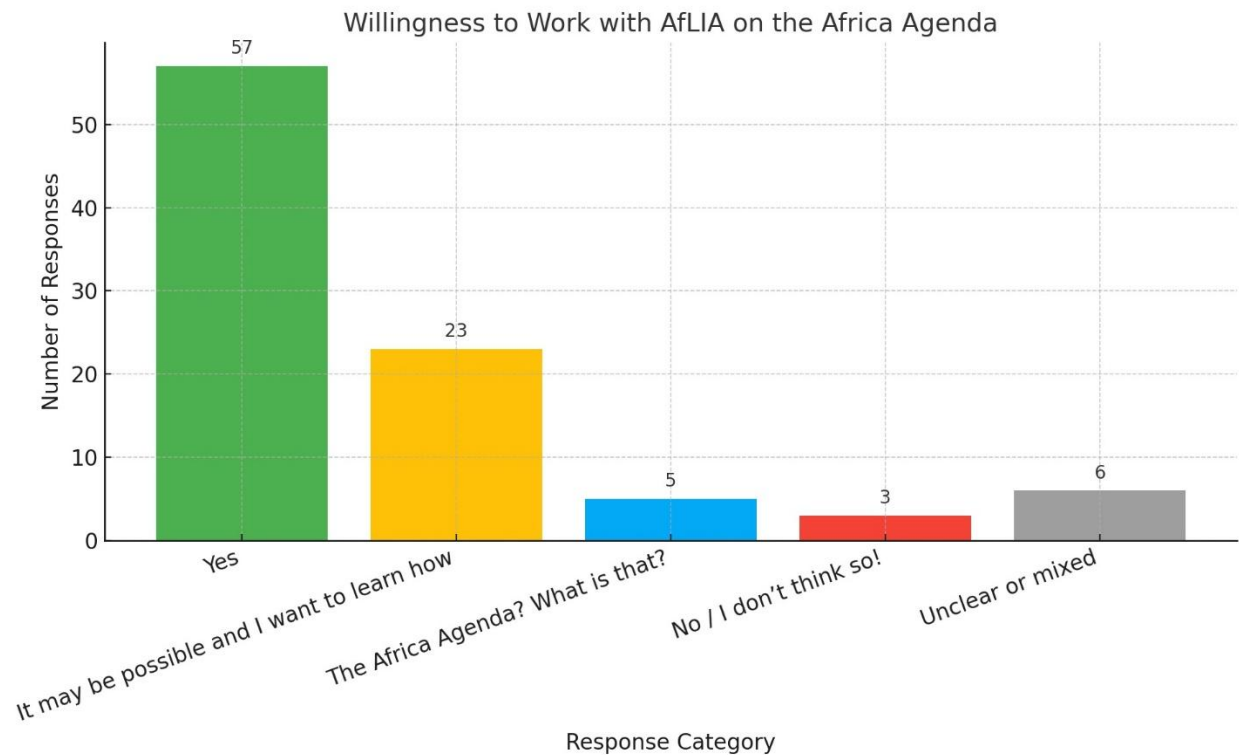

Fig 5: Willingness to work with AfLIA to support the Africa Agenda

Perception on whether integrating Wikimedia projects into the daily routines of libraries and allied institutions is possible

The results show strong potential for Wikimedia integration in African libraries, archives, and museums. Nearly 95% of respondents are either already positive or open to learning more. This provides a good foundation for future collaborations between AfLIA and the Wikimedia Movement. The responses also highlight a gap in understanding or confidence among some institutions. About 1 in 5 respondents want to learn how to integrate Wikimedia but need support to get started. This is an opportunity to develop training programs, toolkits, or peer-support systems to ease the transition from interest to action. The small number of negative responses is not surprising, as new or unfamiliar digital practices often take time to be fully embraced. These may reflect institutional constraints or concerns that could be addressed through targeted communication and success stories.

Table 12: Possibility of integrating Wikimedia projects into library routines

Response Category	Count	Percentage
Yes	70	72.9%
It may be possible, I want to learn how	21	21.9%
No	3	3.1%
I don't think so	2	2.1%
Total	96	100%

Most likely Wikiprojects suitable for integration into library routines

The data reveals a clear pattern of interest among respondents in integrating Wikimedia projects into the daily routines of libraries and allied institutions. The most frequently mentioned project was Wikipedia, cited by 96.6% of the respondents. This suggests a high level of recognition and trust in Wikipedia as a valuable, openly accessible information source. Its ease of use, wide reach, and alignment with the educational and informational goals of libraries likely make it the most appealing Wikimedia project for integration. Closely following Wikipedia in popularity for library routine integration is Wikidata, mentioned by 88.5% of respondents. This indicates growing awareness of the importance of structured, linked data in library cataloguing and digital archiving. Libraries, which are traditionally concerned with metadata and information organization, find Wikidata particularly relevant for enriching library records, supporting digital discovery, and improving interoperability between systems.

Wikibooks, selected by about 74.7% of respondents, also stands out as a practical tool for libraries, especially in educational settings. Wikibooks offers access to open textbooks and other educational resources, making it a strong candidate for libraries seeking to support open educational resources (OER) and reduce barriers to learning. This aligns well with ongoing efforts to expand access to knowledge, especially in contexts with limited resources. Mid-range mentions include Wikicommons (55.2%), Wikiversity (49.4%), and Wikisource (43.7%). These projects support multimedia access, online learning, and digitized historical documents, respectively. Their inclusion reflects an understanding of libraries as not only repositories of books but also as dynamic learning and cultural preservation hubs. Wikiquotes (41.4%) and Wikinews (37.9%) received moderate interest, indicating some potential for use in library programming or media literacy efforts. Significantly lower levels of interest were shown for Wikivoyage (28.7%), Wikibase (17.2%), and Wikispecies (11.5%). These projects may be less familiar to respondents

or perceived as more specialized. For example, Wikivoyage's travel-oriented content might not align closely with traditional library services, and Wikispecies may seem niche unless a library has a focus on biological collections or natural history.

Table 13: Most likely Wikiprojects for integration into library routines

Wikimedia project	Number of mentions	Percentage (%)
Wikipedia	84	96.6%
Wikidata	77	88.5%
Wikibooks	65	74.7%
Wikicommons	48	55.2%
Wikiversity	43	49.4%
Wikisource	38	43.7%
Wikiquotes	36	41.4%
Wikinews	33	37.9%
Wikivoyage	25	28.7%
Wikibase	15	17.2%
Wikispecies	10	11.5%

Final thoughts by respondents

We present a qualitative analysis of the final thoughts shared by respondents' which provides further insights into how Wikimedia projects can be meaningfully integrated into African libraries.

➢ Capacity building and training: One dominant theme across responses is the critical need for continuous training and capacity building. Many participants stressed that librarians must first be skilled, confident users and contributors to Wikimedia projects before integration can be successful. Respondents recommend:
  1. Regular training workshops, both online and in-person, tailored to the needs and digital literacy levels of library professionals.
  2. Mentorship programs beginning at the tertiary education level, to embed Wikimedia knowledge in library and information science curricula.
  3. Simplified and user-friendly training materials, as some noted that current processes (e.g., account creation, editing) can be discouraging.
  4. Localized content and language options to ensure accessibility for non-English speakers.

To a large extent, these suggestions form the foundation for a training roadmap that begins with foundational digital literacy, progresses to hands-on editing and project involvement, and culminates in librarians leading or facilitating Wikimedia activities in their institutions.

➢ Institutional and community engagement: Many respondents identified the need for organizational buy-in, particularly from library leadership. Encouraging head librarians to support interested staff was seen as a key enabler of integration. Additionally, engagement must extend to:
  1. Library associations and networks, which can coordinate trainings and serve as entry points for institutional collaborations.
  2. Government departments overseeing libraries, museums, and archives (GLAM institutions) to align integration efforts with national information policies.

3. Community groups and student organizations, to extend Wikimedia outreach beyond library walls.

Respondents also proposed the establishment of Wikimedia corners or kiosks within libraries to offer dedicated spaces for patrons to learn about and engage with Wikimedia projects. This suggestion aligns with ideas around creating a physical presence and visibility for Wikimedia within library environments.

➢ Awareness creation and motivation: Beyond training, several respondents emphasized creating awareness to build interest and enthusiasm among librarians and patrons. This includes:
   1. Awareness campaigns and seminars focused on the value and relevance of Wikimedia for African libraries.
   2. Competitions, incentives, and edit-a-thons to gamify engagement and attract newcomers.
   3. Celebration of local content and personalities by encouraging contributions that highlight African knowledge, culture, authors, and historical figures—especially those who are underrepresented or "unsung heroes."

➢ Technical integration and application: Several practical applications of Wikimedia tools were mentioned giving rise to a somewhat modular integration strategy. Respondents suggested:
   1. Using Wikidata for cataloguing, metadata enrichment, and enhancing discoverability in library databases.
   2. Utilizing Wikimedia Commons for digital media preservation, particularly for African cultural artifacts and oral histories.
   3. Leveraging Wikibase for cloud-based storage and linked data infrastructure.
   4. Embedding Wikipedia articles into library websites or integrating API services for real-time content display.
   5. Establishing monthly Wiki meet-ups or editor clubs within libraries to keep momentum and share experiences.

➢ Policy and advocacy for Open Knowledge: A few responses pointed to broader advocacy for Open Access and knowledge equity. Wikimedia is seen as an extension of the Open Access movement, with libraries uniquely positioned to lead the charge. Key points include:
   1. Promoting Open Access via Wikimedia Commons to increase the visibility and reuse of African content.
   2. Encouraging localized, data-free access to Wikimedia projects, especially in under-resourced areas, to democratize access.
   3. Appointing national or institutional level Wikibrarians-in-Residence to lead integration efforts and bridge institutional gaps.
   4. Establishing user community dedicated to library and information professionals

➢ Sustainability through partnerships and vision alignment: Several reflections also emphasized the importance of building sustainable partnerships. Libraries and Wikimedia communities must move beyond one-off events and toward ongoing collaboration. Ideas include:
   1. Forming formal partnerships between Wikimedia affiliates and national library services.
   2. Developing joint research and documentation projects, particularly around digitization, cultural heritage, and community archives.

3. Sharing success stories and case studies (e.g., New York Public Library, British Library) to inspire local action.

Conclusion

This survey was conducted as part of the broader IWIPALE (Integrating Wikimedia Projects in African Library Ecosystems) initiative, which aims to deepen collaboration between African library professionals and the Wikimedia movement. The goal is to strengthen how libraries contribute to free and open knowledge using Wikimedia platforms like Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons, Wikidata, and Wikisource in a more sustainable manner. This initiative aligns with AfLIA's vision of empowering libraries as knowledge hubs and supporting Open Access, digital inclusion, and local content creation. The survey was designed to gather insights directly from librarians, archivists, museum workers, educators, and Wikimedia contributors across the African continent. It was hosted online using Google Forms and was widely shared through AfLIA and Wikimedia mailing lists, social media platforms (Facebook and X), and the AfLIA website. The survey was open to anyone interested in the intersection of libraries and Wikimedia. Responses were cleaned, de-duplicated, and translated where necessary. Data was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

The results revealed strong interest and support for integrating Wikimedia projects into African libraries. A majority of respondents came from academic and public libraries, showing that the potential for impact is high within institutions that serve both learners and the wider public. Respondents recognized Wikimedia tools as powerful resources for improving access to knowledge, preserving local heritage, supporting Open Access, and enhancing information literacy. Many saw the alignment between library missions and Wikimedia values, especially in areas like knowledge creation, digital skills, and community engagement.

Key among the suggestions made by survey participants included providing regular and simplified training for librarians, promoting awareness campaigns about Wikimedia in library spaces, and starting mentorship programs at tertiary institutions. Respondents also proposed practical strategies such as establishing Wikibrarian-in-residence roles, creating Wiki Corners in libraries, hosting edit-a-thons and meetups, and using Wikidata for cataloguing and metadata enhancement. Importantly, many emphasized that integration must begin with building librarians' own capacities and interest. Without confident, knowledgeable library staff, sustained collaboration with Wikimedia would be difficult.

The way forward involves translating these ideas into action. This includes developing localized training materials, engaging national library associations and library schools, and piloting demonstration projects in selected libraries. It also means creating supportive networks between Wikimedia communities and libraries to promote shared learning and joint programming. The insights gathered from this survey, along with themes from the Virtual Conversations organized to engage library professionals as well as Wikimedians at the sub-regional level (West Africa, North Africa, Central Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa) and by language (Anglophone and Francophone Africa), is expected to form the foundation for a white paper. This document will

offer practical models and pathways for integrating Wikimedia into everyday library work. It will also recommend steps for institutions, policymakers, and Wikimedia affiliates to support this integration.