



Wikipedia:Wikipedia Signpost/2022-04-24/Serendipity

< [Wikipedia:Wikipedia Signpost](#) | [2022-04-24](#)

Serendipity

Wikipedia loves photographs, but hates photographers

By [Vysotsky](#)

Most Wikipedia articles have images to illustrate the interesting (but rather black and white) words. No one can imagine a Wikipedia article about Rembrandt or Van Gogh without pictures of some of their paintings. Stories about Biden and Putin come to life by displaying images from their youth and beginning of their career. Photographs of the city of Leiden make instantly clear that this city is small and cute. Everyone agrees about the importance of having [Wikimedia Commons](#) as a treasure trove of images, maps, videos and sound recordings, useful to illustrate the Wikipedia texts.

Hate or just neglect?

At the same time images don't pop out of the air. There is always a person who made the photograph of a famous politician, rock star or interesting monument. Yet the names of the photographers are only rarely mentioned. Does Wikipedia hate photographers, or have we decided that photographers don't matter, so we don't need to name them? But some photographers are artists, who even have a Wikipedia entry. And several of these photographers have themselves made sure their photographs were under a license that permitted Wikipedia to use the photos. Two examples pop up: the famous photographers [Erling Mandelmann](#) (from Denmark) and Belgian photographer [Michiel Hendryckx](#). (Note: the



Salvador Dalí (1939)
Photo by [Carl Van Vechten](#)



Ginette Noth (1963)
Photo by [Erling Mandelmann](#)

photographs by Mandelmann were at first even proposed for deletion!) Side note: the 82 million photographs in Commons are roughly equally divided between PD and CC-BY: 40M are Public Domain, 40M are CC-BY.

Arguments against

There are several valid arguments against mentioning names of photographers in Wikipedia articles. (1) The CC-BY license requires attribution (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>), but names of photographers can be found by clicking on the photo and reading the attribution in Wikimedia Commons. (2) Photographers could use it as self-promotion. (3) The authors of the Wikipedia articles aren't mentioned either.



Panamerenko in front of his
Aeromodeller
Photo by Michiel Hendryckx

Arguments in favour of attributing

(1) CC-BY licenses require direct attribution, near the photo. (2) Photographers are artists - and artists deserve recognition for their work. (3) Mentioning photographers stimulates the donation of photos to Commons. (4) Mentioning the names of photographers makes clear to re-users that attribution is needed.

Photos are free, but ...

Many people assume that photos used in Wikipedia are “free to use”. They are, but at the same time Creative Commons licenses require attribution. That’s why I would personally favour this good practice: photographers with a Wikipedia entry should be mentioned in the caption of a photograph. It is a shame that the beautiful photo of Salvador Dali by Carl Van Vechten (above) is used 360 times in all Wikipedia language versions, but Van Vechten’s name isn’t shown.

[← PREVIOUS "Serendipity"](#)

[NEXT "Serendipity" →](#)

[+ Add a comment \(https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?editintro=Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/Templates/Comment-editnotice&title=Wikipedia_talk:Wikipedia_Signpost/2022-04-24/Serendipity&action=edit&preload=Wikipedia:Signpost/Template/s/Signpost-article-comments-end/preload\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?editintro=Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/Templates/Comment-editnotice&title=Wikipedia_talk:Wikipedia_Signpost/2022-04-24/Serendipity&action=edit&preload=Wikipedia:Signpost/Template/s/Signpost-article-comments-end/preload)

THESE COMMENTS ARE AUTOMATICALLY TRANSCLUDED FROM THIS ARTICLE'S TALK PAGE. TO FOLLOW COMMENTS, ADD THE PAGE TO YOUR WATCHLIST ([HTTPS://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/W/INDEX.PHP?TITLE=WIKIPEDIA_TALK:WIKIPEDIA_SIGNPOST/2022-04-24/SERENDIPITY&ACTION=WATCH](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia_talk:Wikipedia_Signpost/2022-04-24/Serendipity&action=watch)). IF YOUR COMMENT HAS NOT APPEARED HERE, YOU CAN TRY .

- It's rather odd that an article about whether or not to modify MOS:CREDITS never links to that guideline. {{u|[Sd kb](#)}} [talk](#) [01:05, 25 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)
 - I wanted to await reactions, and propose a modification of MOS:CREDITS in the next edition of *The Signpost*, but I like the challenge here. The complete text on "Credits" in the Wikipedia Manual of Style is this: "Unless relevant to the subject, do not credit the image author or copyright holder in the article. It is assumed that this is not necessary to fulfill attribution requirements of the GFDL or Creative Commons licenses as long as the appropriate credit is on the image description page. If the artist or photographer is independently notable, though, then a wikilink to the artist's biography may be appropriate, but image credits in the infobox image are discouraged, even if the artist is notable, since the infobox should only contain key facts of the article's subject, per MOS:INFOBOX." Reactions welcome. I will give my reaction later. [Vysotsky](#) [\(talk\)](#) [11:37, 25 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)

I think it can make sense in some situations, such as a famous portrait painter who made significant artistic decisions in how they depicted a subject. But I think you'd have a much harder time arguing that our coverage of e.g. a building is at all improved by adding text crediting in the caption the Wikipedian who took a photo of it. {{u|[Sd kb](#)}} [talk](#) [16:23, 25 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)

- You might be right. But I found the photographs here within 5 minutes (and I don't want *any* Wikipedian photographer to be mentioned, just the ones having a Wikipedia entry. And for these photographers: not only when they have made "significant artistic decisions".) [Vysotsky](#) [\(talk\)](#) [20:34, 25 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)



Auction & Negro Sales (Atlanta 1856) (photo by [George N. Barnard](#))



52nd Straat, New York (1948) (photo by [William P. Gottlieb](#))



House in Lockland, Ohio (1944) (photo by [Carl Mydans](#))



Plaza Islas Malvinas (Ushuaia, 2012) (photo by [Christopher Michel](#))



Rijksmuseum A'dam (1945) (photo by [Charles Breijer](#))

- As a photographer myself, it doesn't generally bother me too much to see one of my photos being used on a webpage or news article if my name is not immediately visible. So long as

attribution is provided *somewhere*, even if it requires a click on the image to view, I'm fine with it. Some books credit the photographer of a photo in the caption; others save it for the appendix. I wouldn't say the latter approach is "hating" on the photographer, even though it does give the photographer less obvious recognition. I'm sure there are many other photographers that would think otherwise, though, and for perfectly valid reasons: in the age of the Internet, it's all too common to just swipe someone else's photo and use it without giving credit, or even recognizing that not all photos are free to use (and that choice should be respected). —[k6ka](#) 🍁 ([Talk](#) · [Contributions](#)) [12:29, 25 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)

- Apropos "Many people assume that photos used in Wikipedia are “free to use”. They are", while the majority of images used in Wikipedia are licensed for reuse, it is worth mentioning there are some [WP:NONFREE](#) images in articles that are not, as identified on the file page for the image. The rationale for including a caption credit for these might be even stronger. [68.189.242.116](#) ([talk](#)) [15:46, 25 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)
- What brave person will design the [WP:RfC](#) to discuss this? [Blueraspberry](#) ([talk](#)) [21:46, 25 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)
- "The writers of the text of the Wikipedia articles aren't mentioned either." ... "Photographers are artists, and artists deserve attribution." Writing good prose is an art form too and many Wikipedia editors devote hours to getting the wording of an article just right. Personally I'm all for giving clearer attribution to photographers (and other image creators - let's not forget the mapmakers, infographics creators etc.) but I'm finding it hard to come up with a good reason for limiting that attribution to images and not including the same requirement for text. [WaggersTALK](#) [10:08, 26 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)
 - Thanks for pointing out. I now tried to adapt my Dungleish a bit, and hope that's more to your taste. The reason for limiting attribution to images is clear: a photo is no teamwork - as text of Wiki articles is. [Vysotsky](#) ([talk](#)) [14:36, 26 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)
 - [Vysotsky](#), A photo by itself is usually the work of one person, but to have it properly loaded on Commons, then Wikipedia, is teamwork (proper licence, a good description in many languages, proper use in articles, etc.). Wikipedia, Commons and all other wikis are like laboratories or factories : you need many persons to get the job done properly. Regards, [Cantons-de-l'Est](#) ([talk](#)) [18:45, 2 May 2022 \(UTC\)](#)
- The comment about "the photographs by Mandelmann were at first even proposed for deletion!" is misleading. They weren't proposed for deletion because the nominator hated or neglected great photographers and wanted to strike a blow against ego or something. The nomination was that it wasn't clear that permission had really been granted. Now, it turned out that permission was there (if hiding somewhere not the image description page), but the substance of the nomination was fine: if the uploads really had been just ripping off a photographer who did not grant permission, then the pictures really should have been deleted. [SnowFire](#) ([talk](#)) [07:05, 27 April 2022 \(UTC\)](#)

IN THIS ISSUE



[24 APRIL 2022](#) ([ALL COMMENTS](#))

- [News and notes](#)
- [In the media](#)
- [Special report](#)
- [Eyewitness Wikimedian, Vinnytsia, Ukraine](#)
- [Technology report](#)

- [Featured content](#)
- [In focus](#)
- [Gallery](#)
- [Interview](#)
- **Serendipity**
- [Traffic report](#)
- [Recent research](#)
- [News from the WMF](#)
- [Essay](#)
- [Humour](#)
- [From the archives](#)

IT'S YOUR *SIGNPOST*. YOU CAN HELP US.

[Home](#)

[About](#)

[Archives](#)

[Newsroom](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Suggestions \(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/Newsroom/Suggestions\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/Newsroom/Suggestions)

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/2022-04-24/Serendipity&oldid=1193880727"

■