

# Authoritative Practices and Collective Validation: Wikidata within the Collaborative Digital Edition of the Greek Anthology

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## Introduction

The management and preservation of research data in the Humanities increasingly raises questions about its sustainability, sharing, and validation. In this context, Wikidata constitutes a powerful and collaborative tool. By challenging traditional models where researchers act as both producers and gatekeepers of authority, Wikidata redefines these issues and fosters new paradigms of collaboration.

### ! To Do

- toute l'intro

## Context

Since 2014, Marcello Vitali-Rosati and his team have been developing a digital and collaborative edition of the *Greek Anthology* (Verstraete and Mellet 2024; Verstraete 2024; Vitali-Rosati et al. 2021; Mellet 2020; Vitali-Rosati et al. 2020). The project was born out of the need to index and make accessible this important corpus, which gathers nearly all the known epigrams of ancient Greek literature. This project has led to [the creation of a platform](#). Drawing on the contributions of a wide range of collaborators, it provides, for each epigram a cluster of information. Each epigram, thus, has its own page where one can find (1) its position in the *Palatine* manuscript (the *codex Palatinus graecus* 23, the principal testimony for the *Palatine Anthology*), retrieved via the IIIF protocol through the Heidelberg Library's annotation tool linked to its API<sup>1</sup>, (2) multiple translations in various languages, (3) different keywords

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<sup>1</sup>TODO - Paris bnf

(author, cities and other thematic keywords), (3) commentaries, (4) internal and external references, and (5) cross-alignments between translations. [A REST API is available](#) for querying the dataset.

This paper focuses specifically on the use of keywords—covering entities such as (a) authors, (b) cities, and (c) others keywords collections divided in sections like deities, epithets, and epicleses – [the full list can be found on the website](#). As part of the project’s development, we introduced a rule requiring all keywords to be linked to Wikidata: any new keyword must be associated with a corresponding Wikidata identifier. This policy prompted a comprehensive reconciliation of our existing metadata with the Wikidata knowledge base.

## History of the platform(s)

Since 2014, our team has been developing a digital editorial model tailored to the *Greek Anthology*, an ancient corpus, similar to a fragmentary one. Early stages of the project focused on exploring how digital tools could enhance both access to and understanding of that material. Initial prototypes—such as a SPIP-based website—provided a foundation for collaborative enrichment and allowed us to begin identifying the technical and hermeneutic challenges of such an edition.

These early experiments revealed that designing a digital edition involves more than providing access (Sahle (2016)): it requires a coherent epistemological model to structure the relationships among texts, editions, translations, annotations, and contributors. Over time, the platform evolved to support collaborative editing, allowing users to contribute translations, metadata, and commentary: that is when the platform *Anthologia Palatina* was created. Yet, as the project expanded and new collaborators joined, the limits of the initial technical infrastructure became increasingly apparent—particularly regarding multilingualism and the lack of stable identifiers for core entities like authors, cities, or any kind of tag represented by a keyword.

Building on an initial REST API, a second platform was developed – *Anthologia graeca, augmented with an API*. It uses GraphQL and the backend schema is implemented using Django, a Python-based web framework. We focused on collaborations (with Perseus, Perseids, the Library of Heidelberg, by example), highlighting the importance of strong data structuring and interoperability, core principles in the Digital Classics community. Our model had to be compatible with broader efforts in open scholarship and heritage valorization. The platform introduced a more granular editorial model centered on the epigram as a fundamental unit. This new platform adopts a semantic web approach and is grounded in the systematic use of Wikidata identifiers<sup>2</sup>, marking a significant evolution in our editorial framework. This

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<sup>2</sup>Note that all data from previous platforms have automatically been imported into this one, though not all entities are currently linked to Wikidata—an ongoing task. This transition reflects our evolving editorial model: one that is increasingly open, decentralized, and connected to the wider ecosystem of digital knowledge production. Another second note is that the project is not finished — and never will be. This is not just a matter of ongoing development; it’s inherent to the nature of the corpus itself. It’s an anthology —

decision is a turning point. Not only does it resolve earlier issues around entity identification, but it also reaffirms the project's original commitment to collaborative editorial practices: by aligning with Wikidata, we ensure that each new contribution is embedded in a broader, federated knowledge network.

## The Authors of the *Greek Anthology*

Wikidata thus plays a central role in the AG project. From the new platform on, all new keywords used to annotate the platform are created via a Wikidata URI – note that some old keywords still have not been linked to a wikidata id yet, as we said above. This integration proved particularly useful in addressing inconsistencies within our list of authors. Since both Wikidata and our data model are multilingual, discrepancies such as missing authors, duplicate entries, and inconsistent information across languages were directly reflected on our platform (<https://anthologiagraeca.org/authors/>). To resolve these issues, we first ensured that all authors on the platform had a Wikidata URN. We then expanded our contribution by searching for author names in multiple languages (French, English, Italian, Ancient Greek, and Latin) and adding them to Wikidata. Once this information was uploaded, the Wikidata community quickly reviewed and refined our data to align it with their standards. This process not only enhanced our own dataset but also strengthened Wikidata's overall accuracy and consistency.

### ! TO DO

- Chantier Auteurs: retour d'expérience? méthodo? stat(-ish)?
- Interactions avec la communauté

## Quelques problématiques

### On co-existing informations and world visions

### ! To add (?)

- Coexistence des informations ?
- Diversité des visions du monde ?

peut-être exemplifier avec le label officiel pour les alternatives label ? (genre,

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a form that, by definition, resists closure. New readings, translations, annotations, and connections will always be possible. At present, nearly all the epigrams are available on the platform, but not all of them. Some are still being reviewed, others are pending transcription or metadata enrichment. And beyond the texts themselves, the work of annotation, translation, and linking — especially through tools like Wikidata — opens up an infinite horizon of contributions. The platform is designed to remain open, both structurally and epistemologically, to future layers of meaning and interpretation.

“je veux que ma data soit le vrai label officiel et pas relégué à un label alternatif”)

### Wikidata as a multilingual authority

! To add (?)

- à relier aux auteurs surtout ?

### On delegating the curation of academic data

As this example shows, because we have chosen to involve a wider community as an authority figure, the AG project is no longer the sole custodian of its data. By delegating part of the curatorial process to Wikidata and its contributors, we embrace a model of distributed authority that challenges traditional academic hierarchies. This delegation implies a shift not only in who validates the data, but also in how validation itself is understood — no longer as a top-down, expert-driven process, but as a collective negotiation of meaning, relevance, and accuracy.

This shift towards distributed authority has many implications.

What are the implications of this shift toward distributed authority. How can that shift in authority benefit academic research projects? Is Wikidata’s epistemological paradigm coherent with ours? Can we think of a generic epistemological framework to be effectively applied to specific academic endeavors?

### Wikidata and Digital Humanities

Since its creation in 2012, Wikidata have progressively become one of the most important knowledge graph on the web. As structured data are increasingly central to the organization, retrieval, and circulation of information online, Wikidata plays a pivotal role in shaping how knowledge is represented, accessed, and reused.

For this reason, Wikidata is growing in popularity in Digital Humanities (DH). Although there was — and to some extent still is — skepticism regarding its quality and potential as a research tool or platform, recent studies have shown that Wikidata is now widely used across DH projects (Cook 2019; Zhao 2023). It is primarily seen in this discipline as a content provider to access, publish or disseminate Linked Open Data (LOD) without the technical and financial barriers of the Semantic Web.

For others, such as GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) institutions, Wikidata is rather used as a publishing platform and metadata curation. As digitization and digital strategies have usually been independent from one institution to another, there is now different levels of accessibility and discoverability in the GLAM sector (Fagerving 2023). Thus, Wikidata is used either as a publication platform to create for the first time a digital identifier for cultural heritage enriched with LOD or as a platform to better disseminate cultural collection, link their institutional platform to Wikidata and enrich their metadata (Candela et al. 2024).

Beyond its function as a repository or a platform for metadata curation, Wikidata also serves a more connective role. Its structure as a knowledge graph and its integration with Linked Open Data principles enable it to act as a bridge between otherwise siloed datasets. By assigning persistent identifiers and encouraging alignment across vocabularies and standards, Wikidata facilitates interoperability between diverse projects and institutions.

### **Wikidata as a linking hub**

Thus, according to DH projects and GLAM institutions, one of the main advantages of Wikidata is being a hub to link different external resources and datasets (Neubert 2017). This can be done by creating external identifiers properties that will link entities of diverse databases to their correspondent Wikidata item.

Let's take for example Megara, an ancient Greek *polis* mentioned three times in the Greek Anthology (AG 7.124; 7.337; 12.129). Its Wikidata item (Q42307600) is linked to dictionaries, libraries catalogues and most importantly many databases specialized on Greco-Roman Antiquity such as Pleiades, ToposText or MANTO. By doing so, Wikidata is playing a pivotal role for easy cross-referencing informations and while becoming an authority control mechanism (Fagerving 2023). As Linked Open Data are meant to add context to data, it becomes much more efficient to enrich a dataset directly from Wikidata or by cross-querying different databases that are all linked to a single Q item.

Some even goes further and suggests that Wikidata should not be used as a centralized platform to link external resource identifiers, but should rather be used as “the” identifier (Van Veen 2019). Having too many identifiers for the same resource (like our example Megara) can be confusing and results in bad reconciliation over time. Using Wikidata as the universal identifier provider would then have many advantages such as having a single description model, offering single SPARQL endpoint and API for accessing and processing data or providing a sustainable option for data storing.

Although this position seems more radical, it does point to one other critical aspect of the relationship between Wikidata and external resources: reciprocal contributing. As demonstrated by a paper on the reciprocal relationship by Wikidata and VIAF, an international platform that combines multiples institutional name authority files, reciprocal comparison between external resources and Wikidata can improve data quality for each platform (Bianchini, Bargioni, and

Pellizzari Di San Girolamo 2021). Contributions by GLAM institutions such as libraries could then be transferred to Wikidata and vice-versa.

## **Authority and Collective Intelligence**

However, there is an obvious difference in authority figure between a contribution from an institution and one from a Wikidata editor. In academia, authority is frequently synonymous with expertise and influence, recognized and exerted within specific discipline. Outside academia, governments or GLAM institutions are also seen as a source of authority. Within any given area of scholarship, there are individuals who have published influential works and who are regarded as authorities on the subjects they research and write about. This interpretation of the authoritative figure typically establishes a top-down hierarchy, positioning traditional producers of knowledge as its sole custodians.

We argue that this top-down hierarchy is contextual and is not always what is best for knowledge dissemination, especially for digital platforms. As collaborative, crowdsourced, and peer-contributed platforms such as Wikidata increasingly establish themselves as new forms of authority both within and beyond academia, they raise important questions about the seal of authority and the reliability of the data they provide. This is primarily due to the fact that, in most cases, anyone can contribute to these platforms, which leads some to question the reliability and quality of the data.

Thus, the status of Wikidata’s editors as an authority figure is questioned because they are mostly seen by scholars and professionals as “amateurs”. [We define “amateur” as a socially engaged non-professional actor who, outside formal institutional frameworks, contributes to cultural, artistic, or documentary activities—often via participatory digital platforms. This figure is usually defined by a high level of self-taught expertise, an individual pursuit of excellence, a paradoxical sociability built on both emancipation and community, and a privileged relationship with digital platforms as new spaces for recognition and knowledge production (see Severo 2021) Despite the increasing involvement of non-professionals in cultural initiatives, particularly on digital platforms, their contributions are still often perceived as less authoritative and must be validated by professionals to be considered reliable. This dynamic creates tensions between new actors of knowledge creation and prior groups that still are ambiguous about how to integrate them.

In the case of Wikidata, this manifests in conflicting perceptions of authority: while the platform encourages collaborative knowledge production and open participation, its data is often deemed trustworthy only when curated or approved by recognized experts. Studies have shown that, while there is still room for improvement in Wikidata’s data, the platform is increasingly recognized as a high-quality knowledge graph—one whose quality is context-dependent and must be assessed on a case-by-case basis (Piscopo and Simperl 2019; Shenoy et al. 2022; Zhao 2023). Its growing community actively contributes to the growing improvement of data quality, while control mechanisms such as ShEx Schemas are gradually being implemented to ensure

that Wikidata items conform to data models collaboratively defined by the community ((on Shape Expressions (ShEx) Schemas in Wikidata, see Thornton et al. 2019; Thornton, Seals Nutt, and Chen 2024)). These community-driven standards not only support data consistency but also reflect the platform’s commitment to a decentralized yet structured form of knowledge governance.

To this end, one of the best ways to ensure the quality and relevance of Wikidata is not merely to assess it from the outside, but rather to contribute directly to it. Through engagement with the platform—making statements, creating data models, correcting mistakes, and arguing over ontologies—researchers, cultural organizations, and “amateurs” can directly shape the knowledge graph. Rather than viewing Wikidata as a finished product to be critiqued, it becomes an open and participatory space where quality is a byproduct of collective interaction.

This approach echoes with broader theories of collective intelligence. Collective intelligence refers to the shared or group intelligent derived from collaboration, collective work, and competition among thousands of actors working together within a common setting. Within collective intelligence, the wisdom of the crowd is considered superior to individual or isolated intelligences (Surowiecki 2004). Platforms such as Wikidata embody the best case of how community decentralized work may lead towards generating structured quality knowledge—provided that the contributions are supported by transparent rules, mechanisms of coordination, and mutual trust among contributors (Benkler, Shaw, and Mako Hill 2015; Bücheler et al. 2010).

As Pierre Lévy argues, collective intelligence is especially interesting and valuable for digital environments (Lévy 1994). Collaborative digital platforms are not about homogenizing knowledge or erasing differences in expertise, but about creating a space where knowledge can circulate, evolve, and converge through dialogue and participation. In Wikidata, this manifests through talk pages, project discussions, creation or modification of items and properties, and the continuous negotiation of meanings across languages, cultures, and disciplinary boundaries. It is through this ongoing process that the authority and legitimacy of the platform are constructed—not imposed from above, but co-produced by its users.

This brings us now to our case-study, the *Anthologie Grecque* (AG) projet. We will explore how the AG project is building its digital platform through collaborative participation, collective intelligence, and Wikidata to question the status of authoritative figure in academia.

## Conclusion

We suggest that Wikidata is not merely a technical tool but rather a space where methodological and epistemological debates can unfold. By engaging with this dynamic, researchers can enhance their projects while contributing to the creation of a more sustainable, inclusive, and collaborative knowledge base.

! To add

- our presentation invites reflection on the implications of this shift toward distributed authority.
- How can that shift in authority benefit academic research projects?
- Is Wikidata’s epistemological paradigm coherent with ours?
- Can we think of a generic epistemological framework to be effectively applied to specific academic endeavors?

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