

UTS DIGITAL HISTORIES RESEARCH SEMINAR

Thursday 8 October 2020, 6.00pm (AEDT)

Join via Zoom: <https://utsmeet.zoom.us/j/99750414645>

Fact Factories: Wikipedia and Writing History as it Happens

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A picture of an Egyptian protestor during the 2011 Egyptian revolution holding the Egyptian flag.
Author: Kodak Agfa. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

On the 24th of January, 2011, an Egyptian born Wikipedia editor, “The Egyptian Liberal” published the first draft of an article titled “2011 Egyptian protests” on English Wikipedia. Working with hundreds of other editors over the next two weeks, “The Egyptian Liberal” documented the events that catalysed the downfall of Hosni Mubarak as hundreds of thousands of people descended on Tahrir Square and in cities through the country to demand change. In this talk, I’ll discuss my forthcoming book, *Fact Factories*. I’ll introduce the concept of traveling facts and the mirroring (and sometimes refracting) of material realities on Wikipedia and in the streets of Egypt in ways that framed and eventually helped determine the result of the protests. The talk is about the writing of history as it happens, about the role of automated technology in our collaborative narration of events and about how Wikipedia’s narration will always be a partial one.