# Twitter Thread by Simon DeDeo

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**Donna Strickland, one of this year's Nobel Laureates, was not considered "notable enough" for Wikipedia as late as this May—reported by a number of sites, including the Independent. I dug into this a little. Here's the data—**

This is the first deletion, back in 2014. A bit hard to read between the lines, but the basic story that an admin had Stickland's page "speedy deleted"—i.e., deleted without debate. The method was something called Copyright Jujitsu.

In particular, the admin had the page deleted not because of notability, but because it included a photograph of Strickland that had ambiguous copyright status. This is a method that people developed to get rid of content they didn't want, but also didn't want to debate.

"Copyright Jujitsu" because it is usually used against spam from companies; a PR officer uploads promotional material to Wikipedia. Instead of debating whether it's neutral, the admin can say "we'd love to have it, but the material appears to violate your company's copyright".

Usually the PR office and the IP office are separate in a company, and the idea of releasing promotional material under public domain is such a legal nightmare that the PR person goes away.

In this case, it doesn't seem like a particularly good faith use of copyright concerns, but the speedy deletion went as desired by the admin.

The most recent deletion of the page is this May, 2018, was by a different admin, and it was actually a "rejected submission"—Wikipedia allows anybody to create articles, but these are increasingly subject to admin gatekeeping.

When Strickland was awarded the prize, there was a storm about it all. Wikipedia has the great virtue of remaining, still, exceedingly open about all the actions that happen online, and so the admin (Bradv, just so you can follow it) responsible for the decision was brought in.

This all spirals out like crazy, of course—and much of it involves debate over policy (the all-caps links like PROF, WP:N, RS, V, BLP, etc)—a constellation of laws that make this network, below, found in the "Article Quality" cluster.

The admin has an extended discussion of the "Strickland Incident" on their user page. It makes interesting reading. https://t.co/ny8hr2ImQ3

There's a lot going on in it, and it's an excellent window onto where the encyclopedia is now. It confirms many of the ideas in play in our 2016 article. Here's the bureaucratization/rationalization aspect—a diagram that the admin cites to explain what happened.

—a very different approach than taken at the construction of the majority of the encyclopedia's content ten or fifteen years prior. The review of an article on Strickland is now more complicated than anything in place when, say, Wikipedians wrote the articles on the Laser itself!

Another interesting feature of the admin's account is the "not my problem" aspect—the admin sees themselves as playing a role in a sophisticated hierarchy.

This is where it gets really crazy. Strickland was, at the time of the rejection, notable enough for inclusion—even under a strict interpretation of Wikipedia's WP:N policy. Strickland was a fellow of the Optical Society.

Not only that, but the claim appeared in the submitted draft, and was sourced, as required by WP:V (verifiability). However, the admin notes that really there should have been a second source; the admin says the OSA is not a reliable source about its own membership!

Bubbling in the admin's response are references to the fact that the user who created the draft was a newcomer. One might think that this would be a good thing (new editors!) but the constant references to this fact by the admin suggests that it's a cause for suspicion.

Finally (putting my close-reading hat on): scare quotes around the question of whether or not there might be bias against female scientists, and the "mention-not-mention" critique of the accusation suggests the admin doesn't think bias is a real possibility in his decision.

Sorry, here are the scare quotes, etc—

TL;DR: a female scientist was excluded from Wikipedia by an admin who was prejudiced against the article creator, who doesn't think bias might play a role in his actions, and who sees himself as a functionary in a bureaucracy where accountability is algorithmic.

You don't need to be an expert in psychology, social science, or the nature of feedback loops to think that this is going to be a source of bias in coverage going forward.