

Calvin U - Annie Rauwerda (Depths of Wikipedia) Interview & Profile

Annie Rauwerda is one of Grand Rapids' most fascinating exports. The 24 year old has taken her love of trivia and information and funneled that energy into her hilariously fascinating social media account *Depths of Wikipedia*. *Depths* entertains over 1 million followers across Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram and has given Annie the opportunity to mingle with some of Wikipedia's most prominent administrators, editors, and fans. But how did Annie get here? How did a 20 year old at the University of Michigan create the most popular wikipedia themed thing since... wikipedia? The answer lies within Annie's innate hunger for information, and how she molded the situations around her to sate that appetite.

Born in Grand Rapids Michigan, Annie grew up with the explosion of information technology that characterized the turn of the millennium. Her parents, ever wary of the possibilities of the internet, restricted Annie's use to school related work only. "Sometimes, I would make up assignments on topics like Mongolia so I could spend more time on Wikipedia," Annie told Vice in 2022. She also mentioned that she would even create PowerPoint presentations with the ill-gotten information she found. Wikipedia was not the beginning of Annie's extreme hunger for information. Long before she gained access to the internet, Annie was still hungry for information. "Annie read tons of books. She was an avid reader. It didn't matter what genre." Her brother Joey shared with me over the phone. It's this hunger for information that became a throughline in Annie's life. When identities came and went with the passage of time, one thing stayed true: Annie would do anything she could to learn as much information as possible.

Annie attended Grand Rapids Christian High School, graduating in 2016. She was a mainstay in lots of extracurriculars, particularly athletics. She ran both cross-country and track, her stellar performance in pole vault even got her through to the state championship in her senior year, where she finished 2nd overall. That 2nd overall remains in GRCHS' history, with Annie holding the 5th highest female pole vault in the school's record books. Her love for athletics didn't stop at pole vault, she also ran hurdles, and even joined the swim team in her junior year! When she wasn't dropping stellar performances on the track, Annie was finding ways to consume all of the information offered to her. Larry Borst, one of Annie's religion teachers at Christian High would regularly post the Harper's Index- a monthly section of Harper's Magazine which focused on quantitative facts and trivia- on his whiteboards. He recalled that Annie would eagerly wait for the day when they were posted, and would stay long after class had finished to familiarize herself with the new trivia.

After high school, Annie pursued a degree in Neuroscience at the University of Michigan. When she wasn't gobbling up information pertaining to her degree, Annie split her time between the triathlon club, teaching the odd pilates class (she is a certified pilates instructor), and even running a marathon. "Looking back, this feels very bizarre... But I spent all my time working out!" Annie told me during our interview. "I had no reason to be doing that... I look back and wonder if that was the best use of my time." Her love of athletics would shift dramatically during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic, which just so happened to be the year that

Annie debuted *Depths of Wikipedia*, her often-comedic but always informative Instagram page where she posts excerpts from some of Wikipedia's niche depths, like the *List of Fictional Worms*, or the *Chicago Rat Hole*. After Annie stopped most of her athletic pursuits, she needed a place to put all of that energy, and she put it all into her quest to consume knowledge. Thanks to the new-found popularity of *Depths*, her hunger for knowledge became married to an urge to share that knowledge, and she had a place to share that knowledge to whoever would listen. Annie's life has taken a wild turn since she started *Depths*. She has become a niche internet celebrity, moved to New York City, adopted a fellow influencers cat, and become one of Wikipedia's most beloved evangelists. Her work on editing and sharing the best (and most obscure) of wikipedia earned her the 2022 Media Contributor of the Year award from the Wikimedia foundation. She also has been a guest at several of Wikipedia's industry gatherings, and amassed over 1.6 million followers across her social media accounts.

Four years have passed, and Annie is still spending everyday finding new ways to consume information. She's still reading books at lightning speed, though she's a bit more discriminant with her genres. "No, I don't read everything. Right now I'm reading a lot of non-fiction." Annie told me that she was making her way through Robert Caro's library of work. "I'm halfway through the first Lindon B. Johnson book, so I have a lot of Caro left to go." She also spends time editing wikipedia, something she has been doing since her days of the Harper's index at GRCHS. She also tours the country, taking her unique live wikipedia show with her wherever she goes. It's a combination of an official Powerpoint presentation, stand-up comedy, and audience participation that takes audiences by storm. Annie even did a homecoming show in Grand Rapids in 2023, selling out Wealthy Street Theatre.

Speaking of Grand Rapids. Annie moved to New York City following her UofM graduation in 2022. When asked what she missed most from Grand Rapids, one thing flew from the top of her mind, "I miss running into people I know around town. [that] still happens in New York, of course. But it's just not the same as the people in Grand Rapids." Among the other things she misses? Schuler Books and Yesterdog, to name a few.

So where will Annie go next? Well, at the end of our chat she revealed to me that she was heading to attend the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament. There, she would observe as contestants "tackle eight original crosswords created and edited specially for this event. Scoring is based on accuracy and speed." She is also writing a book, a nonfiction account of the inner workings of Wikipedia and the incredible contributors who keep it going. Her first draft is due in December of this year, and the book will likely roll out come 2025. She hopes the book will help continue her mission of bringing awareness to open-source projects, and keeping information readily available and free for all.

Annie is one of the most interesting people Grand Rapids has ever produced. Her work and social media presence make her a unique voice on niche topics, and continue to gain her acclaim and recognition from the people and organizations she highlights. Behind it all, her lifelong quest for information has and will continue to guide her along her path through the world's deepest, strangest rabbit holes.

Calvin U - Ski News Article

Lunch. The only things on the team's mind before they all pile into their vans to make the long drive back to Grand Rapids. I had the honor of joining Calvin's Ski Team for a very sunny and very cold weekend of racing. Only a day before we had woken up at the break of dawn, sleepily shifting our gear into whoever's car had room, and made the 4 hour drive up to Gaylord, Michigan. We piled into the booths at Panera Bread and allowed our coffees to warm our bodies back up. Pockets of conversation evolved as we warmed up, some people took this time to call their families and friends, others to check on the scores of other Calvin teams' outings. We had just begun to settle in when all our thoughts were interrupted by someone from the corner yelling out "Second! Calvin got second!"

Coming in second had been no easy task. The unseasonably warm winter saw cities around the state lose as much as 28 inches of annual snowfall as of January 26th. In spite of these definitely less than ideal winter conditions, Calvin's very first ski team has made serious tracks in their inaugural season. The winter season, one of the driest in Michigan's history, has caused some ski resorts around the state to open over a month late. Thankfully for Calvin Ski, the lack of natural snow hasn't prevented resorts from providing skiable conditions for the teams. When asked how their home resort has responded to the lack of precipitation, "Otsego club has done a really great job of putting out snow and giving [good conditions]" says Junior Maggie Styf. Styf is part of the leadership structure which helped give life to Calvin's very first ski team. "Even though regular towns don't have as much snow, the hills still do. Which is a huge help."

Otsego Club, which hosts Calvin as part of their regular season races, has been able to blow snow a majority of their open days since their opening in December. Which is a major achievement considering that Gaylord, the city which Otsego Club calls home, has seen 28 inches less precipitation than it's average this year. This artificial snow has been able to make up for the lost days of natural snowfall. Artificial snow is a great way for resorts to stay open, but it is not as suited for racing. Artificial snow is great for ground cover, but for racing conditions, the counterfeit pack can feel like "racing through hummus", as *Ticket To Ride Journal's* Anna Ross puts it. Though the snow is far from ideal most days, the skiers are still able to race at an incredibly high level. "I've been pleasantly surprised," Styf said when asked how she felt the conditions have been.

Calvin Ski has averaged 3rd place throughout all competitions. This is no mean feat, as the team goes up against some of the best amateur skiers in Michigan. Their performance has been a pleasant surprise to Calvin, and a surprising fact to some of the other teams in the league. "We [came] in and no one knew what Calvin was. They all asked 'what is Calvin?' 'Where is Calvin?'" Styf said. "We're kind of a Dark Horse".

The league consists of skiers from schools all over Middle Michigan and Northern Indiana. Of their other competitors, Calvin has regularly finished above GVSU, Notre Dame, and CMU. The only boon to Calvin's success has been the stellar performances from the big two, Michigan and Michigan State.

It's not all tooth and nail competition, though. When asked if Calvin has had an easy time fitting in with the big fish, Maggie Styf said, "Everyone is way nicer than we expected. We chat while we wait in line, tell each other good luck and all that. It's really fun." The USCSA- the

official name of the league Calvin competes in- welcomes skiers of all levels, abilities, and backgrounds. Some skiers have experience racing through high school and private ski teams, while others have never set foot in a course at all. “We don’t care if you’ve never raced in your life. We’ll welcome you no matter your skill level.” Senior member Annika DeGraaf told me. “We’ll guide you through the racing process. We just won’t teach you how to ski!” She said with a smile. Luckily for me, I was welcomed along with the team, despite my rather empty history of racing. I was able to ride the chairlift with the team and get insight into the processes, while observing the fun and communal nature of racing. I sat at the bottom of the hill with groups of team parents and friends, and cheered along with them for every skier who came through the finish gates. As I watched, I noticed just how diverse the skill levels and attitudes of the racers were. Some skiers were flying through the courses, applying maximum effort and skill as they cut their way through the gates. Others were quite content to run the course at their comfort zone, many even choosing to run the courses in costumes or pajamas. One GVSU skier even made it his mission to go through the course as slow as humanly possible, rounding each gate at a snail’s pace, finishing over a minute slower than his closest competitor, and being met with a chorus of cheers and applause from his fellow skiers.

This laid-back attitude shouldn’t take away from the achievement of finishing 3rd in the team standings. The performances of Calvin’s team have been a surprise to competitors. “I think we’ve made a huge impression in the minds of other schools. It’s not easy to finish third at all.” Annika DeGraaf said about Calvin Ski’s performance. Styf echoed this sentiment: “[the other schools] are like ‘wow I didn’t even know what Calvin was and they show up and are doing really good,’” Calvin Ski has made it a point to show off their professionalism from the start. Their ethos is to be the first on the hill and the last to leave. While some of the competitors will leave the hill after races are done, Calvin joins the bigger schools like Michigan and Michigan State to pull gates from the courses and smooth out the snow, which is always cut to sheds after the races. I was lucky enough to pitch in and help the team clean up, and it was an incredible way to see just how much Calvin’s team has gelled together. “I think that the people from Michigan and State who are there day in and day out... and [they’re] like ‘this is Calvin, this is cool!’”, Styf says. Ski team’s stellar performance has shown Calvin’s Club committee that their relatively large investment has serious upside. “When they saw how much it was really costing, they got a little freaked out” Styf recalled her efforts advocating for Calvin’s investment in Ski Club. Despite a slightly slow initial investment, Styf is hopeful that Calvin will be more comfortable funding Ski Club in the future. “I think that next year is going to be less of a worry. We already have... all the gear we need.”

It’s not just the Ski Team which is expecting investment, Calvin itself expects their Ski Team to invest time into recruiting students from high school to join ski upon enrolling at Calvin. “I think the future of Calvin Ski depends on the ability to recruit and keep the excitement up.” Styf commented about Calvin Ski’s next steps. When asked if she was optimistic about the future of Calvin’s racing team, Styf rebuffed her confidence. “Yeah, I’m optimistic!” The team had a strong presence at both Cokes and Clubs events this year, and has already received large amounts of positive write-up in Calvin’s news circles.

Calvin Ski’s inception has been part of a large cohort of new athletic outlets for Calvin. Joining the likes of Men’s Volleyball, Acrobatics and Tumbling, and the blockbuster new Football program, Calvin Ski’s performance has gone a long way to be a part of Calvin’s new era of Athletics.

Calvin Ski is now off to the USCSA Regional competition. The best of their region will make the long journey up to Marquette, Michigan, where intrepid skiers will compete for fame and glory, and a spot in the National tournament in New York. The team is looking forward to the challenge.

“It’s a big deal,” Annika DeGraaf told me, “It’s not just a normal weekend for us. For some of us it could be our last race.” The group has a large majority of seniors this year, and the regional tournament’s strict standards could spell the end of their collegiate skiing careers. Regardless of the results at regionals, Calvin Ski has demolished expectations for their inaugural season, and their strides forward will carry them into next season with fresh legs, minds, and skis.