How and Why Wikipedia Works: An Interview with Angela Beesley, Elisabeth Bauer, and Kizu Naoko

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an interview with Angela Beesley, Elisabeth Bauer, and Kizu Naoko. All three are leading Wikipedia practitioners in the English, German, and Japanese Wikipedias and related projects. The interview focuses on how Wikipedia works and why these three practitioners believe it will keep working. The interview was conducted via email in preparation of WikiSym 2006, the 2006 International Symposium on Wikis, with the goal of furthering Wikipedia research [1]. Interviewer was Dirk Riehle, the chair of WikiSym 2006. An online version of the article provides simplified access to URLs [2].

Categories and Subject Descriptors

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dirk Riehle (DR): Hello! You are three leading practitioners of three different Wikipedias. Would you mind telling me what your online screen name is and what your roles are in Wikimedia Foundation (WMF) projects like Wikipedia [3]?

Angela Beesley (AB): I am Angela Beesley. I usually just use my first name as my screen name. I've been a volunteer editor at the English Wikipedia since February 2003. I was made an 'administrator' on the English Wikipedia in June 2003 and a 'bureaucrat' when that role was first invented in February 2004. I was amongst the first people to be made a 'steward', in April 2004. In June 2004, I was elected to the board of the Wikimedia Foundation by the community. I was re-elected, for a two year term, in July 2005. I've held various positions on other Wikimedia projects.

I'm a member of the Wikimedia Communication Committee. I was an initial member of the English Wikipedia's mediation committee [4], but dealing with the projects most annoying users was rarely a fulfilling task, and I resigned from that when I found my board posi-

tion didn't leave me enough time to spend with the people who needed mediating.

Elisabeth Bauer (EB): I am Elian on Wikipedia. I joined the project in August 2002 and became involved with the German Wikipedia first and with the English Wikipedia soon thereafter. I'm chiefly an administrator on the German Wikipedia and on the Meta wiki, a wiki for the operations of the WMF. I helped start the German Wikinews and was a WMF press officer. I'm now an advisor to the WMF communications committee and a member of the German press team. For its initial two years, I was a board member of Wikimedia Deutschland e.V., the German WMF. With Arne Klempert and Delphine Menard I was a leading organizer of the first Wikimania, WMF's main annual conference. I also helped set up OTRS, WMF's help desk.

Informal roles are a bit harder to describe. I don't write articles. As a professional writer, I use my knowledge to fix style problems in articles and participate in the Wikipedia review mechanisms. I help with administrative tasks (fighting vandalism, closing deletion debates). Some people see me as a mediator (there is no formal mediation committee in the German Wikipedia)—at least I get many requests to moderate. Other informal roles are establishing policies if needed and organizing polls.

Kizu Naoko (KN): Hello, I'm Aphaia on Wikipedia. I've been with Wikipedia since January 2004. The Japanese Wikipedia is the first project I joined, but I quickly got involved with other Wikipedias as well. I was involved with about every other Japanese Wikimedia Foundation project there is when they were started. I'm a sysop on several WMF projects, including the Japanese Wikiquote, the English Wikiquote, the Meta wiki, and the Japanese Wikinews. Presently I'm rather inactive, even though I occasionally check the projects for changes.

I was temporarily a sysop on Wikipedia when I worked as an election officer in the summer of 2005 and helped the board election process. I also have been a member of the communications committee, officially since May 2006. Since September 2005, I've been a board-approved editor of the WMF website.

I do a lot of authoring and editing on the Japanese Wikipedia. Topics I write about are Christianity (especially Eastern Rite), Philosophy, History and Geography. I also author and contribute to policy proposals and help their process along: drafting, proposing, discussing, voting, and, if necessary, revising a new policy. I also help other Wikipedias get connected with the Japanese Wikipedia, trying to bridge language and cultural gaps. I'm quite good at bridging between groups and interests. Because I know the German, English, and Japanese Wikipedias, I carry best practices from Wikipedia to

Wikipedia and help people learn. I do a lot of nursing and gardening.

2. PURPOSE AND GOAL

DR: Excellent, thank you. I'm curious: What is the goal of Wikipedia and what motivated you to contribute in the first place? Are there major differences between the Wikipedias?

AB: Wikipedia exists to provide a globally available, free (as in freedom, as well as money), encyclopedic (verifiable and unbiased) resource to everyone in their own language. I subscribe to this goal and I also enjoy working with people who share it with me. The goals should be the same for all projects, though the exact implementation of all but the core policies (NPOV [5], GFDL [6], Wikiquette [7], "Wikipedia is an encyclopedia") does vary.

EB: The German Wikipedia's goal is the same as that of every other Wikipedia: to create an encyclopedia. The Germans tend to take this a bit more serious than others, though. Personally, I participate because it is fun, and I've always been interested in self-organizing structures.

We have multiple languages because we are such a decentralized organization. Projects share a few common norms but everything else is left to the language communities to decide. Different cultures tend to evolve different organizational structures and policies. I once wrote up a comparison between the English and the German Wikipedia [8]. To be somewhat provocative, I'd like to repeat Wikipedia user 'lincher' who said: "The English Wikipedia strives to be the biggest encyclopedia of the world; the German Wikipedia tries to be the best."

DR: Is that a mutual understanding or is it the German Wikipedia community who feels this way?

EB: No, it's actually the English community who thinks so, see my comparison.

KN: It is like Angela and Elian said: We want to create a free (both liberty and gratia) encyclopedia, hence empowering the world intellectually. This goal motivates me personally. Also, I particularly like to help multilingualism along, as well as to improve my own foreign language skills. But in general, it is hard to say why I put in all those hours. Maybe I just like helping people.

We have different language Wikipedias, because languages matter to their people. Language is prior to experience and thinking, in my opinion. And we need to do it by hand, because machine translation doesn't work yet.

3. ROLES

DR: So, how does Wikipedia work? Let's start with roles and processes. What kind of roles are there in Wikipedia? Obviously there are readers and editors, but what else?

AB: Well, there are readers, editors, administrators, recent changes patrollers (reverting vandalism), policy makers, subject area experts (WikiProjects offers a place for people who want to focus on one topic to have a focused community within the larger Wikipedia community), content maintainers, software developers, system operators and many more. There are also all sorts of informal groups within the project. For example, the welcoming committee is a self-selected group of people who say they will help with welcoming new users [9]. A more formally selected group is the Arbitration Committee [10] [11].

KN: In the Japanese Wikipedia, in addition to readers and editors, there are proofreaders and reviewers, on several layers: Stylists check that an article follows the Wikipedia Manual of Style [12], others check the legitimacy of an article: that the contents is sound, that no copyright is violated, that nothing libelous is said, and other concerns. Most major Wikipedias have a system of informal reviews and validation in the form of 'Featured Article' or 'Peer Review'. It is not as strict as in academia, but it works reasonably well. Furthermore, there are image creators and image uploaders who basically harvest the web and the world for images that fall into the public domain and can be used on Wikipedia. And last but not least, there are translators, who translate articles from one Wikipedia to another.

Then there are maintainers and administrators. Some prefer to call maintainers janitors or gardeners. Angela already mentioned some of the work they do, like fighting vandalism. Some maintainers handle results from community discussions, like consensus gained in the deletion request process for an article. For some of these tasks, you need to be a sysop. As for administration, while in principle everyone can initiate a new policy creation process, it is usually just a small number of people who actually do this and draft new policies. I think we are still determining some of these 'legislative' roles. Some of these roles are formally defined, many of them are informal.

We have a lot of 'contact people'. Their role may be formal or informal, they may serve as points of contact within Wikimedia Foundation projects or to the outside world. There are press contacts, email contacts, and others.

Please note that I have hardly been systematic about listing roles. There is much more to be said, some of which you can find documented on the Meta wiki, some of it not.

EB: Aphaia has given a pretty good description. I only have a few bits and pieces to add.

In the German Wikipedia, there is increasingly a distinction between 'normal' authors and 'high-end' authors who are explicitly trying to get their articles 'featured'. To be featured means to get explicitly recognized for your work by the community. This may include being featured on the start page of the German Wikipedia. This is normally a three-stage process:

- peer review [13];

- candidature for 'lesenswerter Artikel' [14] (= 'notable article');

- candidature for 'exzellenter Artikel' [15] ('excellent article').

This process is addictive to some. Recently, a club of volunteer authors formed, whose members pledge to deliver a certain amount of featured articles over time.

I would play down Aphaia's emphasis on the role of translators a little. The average editor has little interest in international wiki politics or in international collaboration. Most people focus entirely on 'their' projects.

DR: Thanks! I'm curious: Is there a natural progression through roles that you have observed? Are there typical 'career paths' for contributors?

KN: Most people start out as editors or uploaders. The majority stays in that role. After that, though, many different roles are possible. Maybe the most prominent one is the administrator role. Unfortunately, some apply for this role out of a desire for power! And

then are surprised when they get rejected. (This is a kind of 'regressive career path'—from an immature editor to a banned one!)

AB: Creating fewer articles as time goes on seems fairly common as people get caught up in the politics and discussion rather than the editing, which as a newcomer is mostly all you do. There is some divergence between those who spend all their time on one project, or even one topic within that, and those who work on Wikimedia as a whole, having some influence in multiple projects, and acting on an international level.

EB: The German and the English Wikipedia (and others as well) document the roles people play [16] [17] as well as the underlying power structure [18]. It's all on the wiki.

DR: Are there explicit promotions?

AB: The procedure of applying for administrator-ship (adminship) varies across wikis, with different standards being applied. On the English Wikipedia, there is a 'requests for adminship' page [19] [20] [21] where users are nominated, or (more rarely now) self-nominate. Everyone can vote on whether that person should be an administrator. 80% support means they will be, less than 75% means they won't, and 75-80 is at the bureaucrat's discretion. The same procedure is used for selecting bureaucrats, but with higher expectations, and a higher percentage needed for the promotion to happen. In June 2003, when I was made an admin, this process was fairly easy—any trusted user would be promoted, but now people have their own expectations which influence their voting, and it's common for people to be rejected for having fewer than 3000 edits, having been involved for less than three months, or for any sort of dispute in their editing history. On the small new wikis, stewards can create admins pretty much at their discretion. If there's no community on a new language to vote, the first person who asks is usually given adminship.

KN: As far as I know, most Wikipedias have no committees for promotions, and allow their registered editors to vote, though some of them have requirements for voters. On the Japanese Wikipedia you can vote for or against an admin candidate, if you meet all of three requirements: edit counts, activity of a certain length and recent involvement. There are no strict requirements for candidates, only that you have been recommended and that you have been active for a few months at least. The election takes two weeks and has four phases: question time, answer time, additional question time, and voting. Only a sysop can close the vote and then a bureaucrat promotes the candidate, if he passes.

4. PROCESSES

DR: We've already talked about roles and thereby about processes. Still, can you describe how a 'business process' runs on Wikipedia? Let's pick a standard process like a 'request for deletion' as an example. Somebody thinks a specific page is not worthy of inclusion in Wikipedia. What does he or she do?

AB: On the English Wikipedia, there are different procedures based on the type of page (article, category, template, etc.), and based on how bad the page is (speedy deletion vs. standard deletion), as well as how controversial the deletion is likely to be (standard deletion vs. PROD, a simplified deletion process) and the reason for deletion (standard, privacy violation, or copyright violation).

Let's take a standard 'bad' page as an example. Perhaps the topic just doesn't fit Wikipedia's goals, for example, the information is on a topic that can't really be verified.

Any user can decide to list this on the 'Articles for deletion' page. Firstly, they put the deletion tag on the article by typing

> {{subst:afd1}}

Second, they create a page where this deletion can be discussed. There's a link to that page in the afd1 template, so they just need to follow that link. Once they get to that discussion page, they type

> {{subst:afd2 | pg=PageName | text=Reason the page should be deleted}} ~~~~ [22]

Finally, they add this to the daily log of articles listed for deletion [23]. They type

> {{subst:afd3 | pg=PageName}}

to make a log entry at the end of that page.

Then, everyone discusses it for five days. People vote 'support' or 'oppose', but it's not strictly a vote. Reasons matter, and the admin who closes the debate five days later is expected to take into account the reasons for deletion, relevant policies, and whether or not the article has been edited and improved since it was listed for deletion. That admin then closes the debate and deletes or keeps the article. Kept articles have their 'listed for deletion' tag removed, and a link to the discussion is put on the article's talk page (so that people know not to list it again too soon). The decision to delete or keep is based on 'rough consensus'. The policies on the English Wikipedia err towards keeping an article, so a strong reason or high level of community support are needed for something to be deleted.

It's an elaborate process. The page with the deletion rules has 37 pages plus 20 subcategories [24]!

EB: It is quite similar in the German Wikipedia. Anyone who thinks that an article should be deleted for some reason (most frequently lack of notability or quality) can propose it. He tags the article with the template 'Löschantrag' and lists it on the deletion page of the current day. For seven days everyone can add his opinion and arguments for and against deletion there. Sometimes deletion debates turn into lengthy discussions; sometimes they are short and straightforward. After a week, some random admin who feels like evaluating about 100 deletion debates closes the debate, evaluates the arguments and either removes the tag or deletes the article. It's not a vote so a minority with the stronger arguments can decide a deletion debate. If someone feels that an article was unjustly deleted, he can put it on the 'Wikipedia:Wiederher-stellungswünsche' page. Another discussion occurs and sometimes an admin restores the article [25].

KN: Same here. One difference of the Japanese Wikipedia to the English Wikipedia is the timeframe for discussion: It is one week rather than five days. Like in the other Wikipedias, requests for deletion are determined by consensus, not by majority vote. Some editors have expressed their opinion that consensus shouldn't be different from the majority vote, but presently the admin has the final word.

DR: Thanks! I find meta-processes equally interesting. How is a new Wikipedia policy drafted? Let's assume I would like to suggest a new guideline that every encyclopedia page has an etymological explanation of the term right at the top of an article page. How am I going to suggest that?

KN: There is no written rule on how to draft policies on the Japanese Wikipedia. A policy can be drafted on a certain page (for example, a new page, or an existing talk page, or a user page) either freshly or based on past discussion. People work on it, and eventually, the policy will be voted on.

Sometimes, we translate a policy from another language Wikipedia. It seldom happens on the Japanese Wikipedia, though, that a full-blown policy draft is posted without past discussion. Rather, the policy usually begins as a proposal, followed by discussion. Drafts are reviewed and some times rewritten and once the major participants of the discussion agree on the draft, it gets approved within a week. In a few rare cases, when no compromise seemed possible, we had to vote, but this is rather unusual for the Japanese Wikipedia.

EB: There are several methods a new policy can be drafted:

The policy just evolves. Someone acts in a certain way, others think it's sensible, do the same and after a while it is the standard to adhere to. These are the strongest policies.

Someone thinks a policy is necessary. He or she creates a page with the policy. It is then refined in discussions or questioned and deleted if people think it is unnecessary 'instruction creep'.

Finally, we take a poll on it that decides the matter.

AB: For the English Wikipedia, the corresponding article explains it better than I could [26].

DR: Ok, that was short and sweet. Next: What are typical conflicts on Wikipedia that people run into? What are the processes for resolving these conflicts?

AB: The most common conflicts are users being abusive or pushing a particular point of view. There are a couple of pages that describe how we resolve such conflicts [27] [28].

EB: In the German Wikipedia, typical conflicts are disagreements about the content of an article. Usually, these are just minor things. One of the biggest fights in the English Wikipedia was about the wording of the first sentence of the DNA article. Fights over deleting a page can become quite emotional.

In general, conflicts are resolved by discussion among the involved people. If this fails, we use the 'Vermittlungsausschuss' for mediation [29]. If the mediation attempt fails and we are looking at a human rather than a contents problem we may have to ban users [30].

KN: Sometimes people square off over what they think are inappropriate actions of an administrator.

5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

DR: Let's move on to one of the hot topics of the day: quality assurance. How are you trying to ensure highest possible quality, under the assumption of goodwill on the side of those who are editing pages?

EB: The German Wikipedia is approaching the quality problem from two sides: From the bottom and from the top. From the bottom, we simply use the deletion process discussed earlier to weed out poor articles. From the top we encourage high quality articles by providing extra recognition for an author's work as 'Wikipedia:Exzellente Artikel' ('excellent articles'). Such extra recognition by the community as well as the visibility to the general Wikipedia readership gives authors immaterial rewards for their work.

Another quality process we use is the WikiPress books where all articles in one area are brought up to a certain standard by the book editor.

KN: Most of the authors are working on their favorite topics. Sometimes they build a small community around their topic, so they build a portal for it. Such a portal tends to maintain a list of new articles (on that topic) and invites editors to work on those new entries. We sometimes encourage such collaborations by featuring the 'collaboration of the week'.

A biased article is usually dealt with by other authors on the talk page of the article. The article in dispute is tagged with {{観点}} ('point of view'), alerting readers that other authors consider the article biased and inviting people to join the discussion on the talk page. A usual dispute process may follow. If an author shows immature behavior, he or she may even end up being banned. Through many pains and long struggles, the Japanese Wikipedia community seems to have learned how to deal with such authors using power rather than persuasion. An example to review such struggles is the page 'Dispute on the Rape of Nanking' [31].

DR: What about the 'collective intelligence' or 'collective wisdom' argument: That given enough authors, the quality of an article will generally improve? Does this hold true for Wikipedia?

EB: No, it does not. The best articles are typically written by a single or a few authors with expertise in the topic. In this respect, Wikipedia is not different from classical encyclopedias.

KN: Elian is right. Also, most of the short articles remain short and of rather poor content.

DR: At last year's Wiki Symposium, I talked a lot with people about technical support for quality assurance. One example is reputation algorithms to measure an author's reputation and hence assigning a quality level to an article based on the participating authors' reputation. Another example is algorithms for assessing the actual quality of a page's contents. Is there any progress to report on this?

AB: We've been talking about it a lot, but nothing has been implemented [32]. One programmer, Magnus, has written code for it, but for reasons I'm not sure about, it has never gone live.

DR: Some people have a vested interest in Wikipedia. For example, search engine optimizers might want their pages to show up as external links on Wikipedia. Politicians might want that only positive information is written about them. There are known cases of attempts to manipulate Wikipedia contents to further such goals. How are you dealing with that?

EB: This works mostly by drawing community attention to the affected article. Once such a manipulator is known, there are usually a lot of people watching the corresponding articles and reverting manipulation attempts. It is the same with link spam: If someone is adding a lot of external links, his or her changes will be reverted by the vandal patrol.

KN: Also, we use a bot (ircbot) to detect new entries and provide basic information about them. If you connect to the IRC channel, this makes it easy for you to detect new articles that contain advertising. It is harder to detect advertising on existing articles.

6. GROWTH CHALLENGES

DR: OK, then let's move on to growth challenges. What challenges do you see ahead coming from the huge continued growth of Wikipedia?

AB: The biggest challenge is to maintain what made us who and what we are: the traditional wiki model of being openly editable. There are temptations to lock things down in order to placate the media who tend to focus on the inadequacies of the site.

DR: Are legal challenges to Wikipedia contents a real threat?

AB: So far, the only case that went to court was the Tron case in Germany [33].

KN: There are a couple of challenges. The biggest one is to keep the 'anyone can edit' model, as Angela just said. Most other challenges are tackled by local Wikipedias on a day by day basis. Such other challenges include:

- *Legal threats, in particular libelous edits and copyright infringements.* In general I'm optimistic, but still, a legal conflict can harm a project, even if in the end no real conflict before a court arises between the rights holder and the Wikimedia Foundation. The problem is that being in limbo might prevent further development of content and might be a source of human conflict on the project. But usually, it is nothing that can't be fixed.

- *Keeping integrity as a project.* Some Wikipedias, like the English or German one, have many editors who are also involved with global activities like the Commons, Meta, or Foundation wikis. On other Wikipedias, much fewer volunteers like these exist, and bad communication between the local level and the global level might result. This can be a severe problem for the local projects.

- *Lack of involvement.* We need a lot of people to keep a project alive! For smaller wikis, a dearth of contributors happens easily. Poor involvement of editors or even inactivity challenges the sustainability of the project. Therefore we need to go back to the first and foremost challenge: To keep the openness of the wikis that makes it easy for people to join.

- *Credibility.* Young Wikipedias need to build a certain level of credibility. If they fail to establish their credibility or take too long a time, the project might falter.

DR: Maintaining ease of contribution, the 'wiki spirit', is an interesting point. Sometimes people complain to me that Wikipedia has become such a complex system that they find it difficult to contribute. Would you agree? What would you tell someone who felt this way?

AB: It can be this way, but it doesn't have to. Today, you can still click 'edit', enter some text, and press 'save'. That degree of simplicity is still there, even though the software has evolved to allow so much more to happen. You can automate all kinds of things using complex templates, but that doesn't mean editing has become more difficult. There's no reason why any user, not just a new one, has to use these advanced functions. It's an option, and some users are glad to have them available, but if you prefer to manually type "this article is a [[stub]]" as we used to do a few years ago, you can still do that. Someone with knowledge of the correct template and stub type (and there are dozens if not hundreds of stub types now) can fix it up later. It's all part of the wiki process that one person doesn't need to know everything, and that goes as much for the syntax and editing techniques as it does for the content.

KN: We encourage users to be bold and even to ignore the rules if they prevent them from improving or maintaining Wikipedia's quality [34] [35]. You don't have to know all the templates, all the processes, you just need to be brave enough to jump in. If you are reasonable and don't try to do too complicated things right away, rest assured that people will welcome you. If you try to dive into the most complicated parts of the project, like the arbitration committee on the English Wikipedia, things might be more difficult. In a nutshell, if you show goodwill and if you assume goodwill, it's easy. If necessary, people will fix your edits and let you know how to do better next time.

The Wikipedia communities are generous in general, and it is one norm to welcome newcomers and not to bite them. On several wikis we have a 'welcoming committee', a group of users who inform newcomers of a principal set of policies and guidelines. I founded one on the Japanese Wikipedia in the early 2005, and its membership has been steadily increasing.

EB: Educating newcomers about Wikipedia policies and guidelines is certainly one challenge. It takes some time to inhale the wiki spirit. There are two things being done about it: We have an unofficial mentoring system where experienced Wikipedians welcome new users and help them. We also have tutorials as well as clear and clean documentation pages. That's the area I'm working on together with professional usability experts from the Open Usability project [36].

Another challenge is dealing with people who are portrayed in a Wikipedia biography and are unhappy—justified or unjustified—about something. This already consumes a lot of the time of the help desk and my impression is that there will be more and more cases.

DR: At WikiSym 2005, Jimmy Wales gave an invited talk, in which he spoke about the 10 things that should be free (knowledge, video, music, etc.) What kind of challenges do you see here?

AB: I agree that those ten things should be free, but that doesn't mean Wikimedia is the right place for them. There's quite a lot of opposition in the community for starting new projects these days, so I don't foresee any huge expansion beyond what we're currently doing.

7. WIKIPEDIA RESEARCH

DR: What kind of research would you like to see researchers taking on?

AB: We would like to understand our user base better and in more detail. Better demographics would be useful since it's something the media always asks about and not something we know a lot about. For example, I was asked today how popular Wikipedia is with Singaporeans and I had no idea.

KN: We already talked about some of it. We need to improve quality assurance. We need to get better at educating users, both readers and authors. Readers should be aware that Wikipedia shouldn't be used as the sole reference. Also, we would like to improve promotion to the offline world. Here, we need to raise awareness and understanding for Wikipedia with people's bosses, their professors, or parents.

I agree with Angela that we need better demographics (for example, age, sex, area, ethnic, and other interests than Wikimedia Foundation projects). I'd like to see socio-psychological analyses of each major community. Personally, I'd welcome philosophical inquiries like an analysis of a Wikipedia community using Luhmann's sociological or Gatali-Dureuses' rhizome model.

DR: To what extent is Wikipedia's inner working accessible to researchers?

AB: Wikipedia's content and workings are completely accessible. Almost everything is public other than Arbitration Committee discussions, and even then, the outcomes are public. With the Wikimedia Foundation, the situation is different. There's a worrying trend towards hiding from the public and moving discussions and decisions, and even outcomes, to private locations.

KN: For Wikipedia almost everything can be accessed on the web; in case of the Japanese Wikipedia, only a few sensible matters related to legal issues are hidden in a backyard. There are several communication channels for Japanese Wikipedians though, and you would have to ask for permission. In particular email or IRC-based communication may not always be readily available.

DR: What's the best way for a researcher to get started?

AB: They should get in touch with the people at the Wikimedia Research Network and join the Wikimedia Foundation's wiki research list [37] [38].

8. CONCLUSIONS

DR: Maybe as a final word, what's the future you foresee for Wikipedia?

AB: Nothing you wouldn't expect after viewing the growth over the last few years. I don't expect anything radically different to happen—just further increases in popularity and an ever-increasing focus on quality, accuracy, and reliability of the content. I expect many of the smaller language editions eventually to reach the same critical mass the English and German ones did and find themselves facing the same issues of needing to focus on quality and wanting to have ways of measuring that and making that clear to readers.

KN: I don't know. Wikipedia is rapidly expanding, and it is unchartered territory. Maybe something drastic will happen or we'll just keep growing. The only sure thing for me is that many of the smaller Wikipedias will face challenges similar to those the larger Wikipedias are currently experiencing or have already experienced. I can already point to examples, for example the Korean Wikipedia, which is having similar arguments to those that we had had on the Japanese Wikipedia.

DR: Excellent! Thank you very much, this was very interesting and I believe very helpful to researchers who might be interested in getting started with Wikipedia research. As an advertisement, the Wiki Symposium this year will not only have Angela Beesley giving a keynote talk on how and why Wikipedia works, it will also have a workshop in which Angela participates that also focuses on Wikipedia research. I hope to see you all at the Wiki Symposium!

REFERENCES AND NOTES

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[2]   http://www.riehle.org/computer-science/research/2006/wikisym-2006-interview.html

[3]   The Wikimedia Foundation (WMF) is the U.S. non-profit organization that runs Wikipedia and its related projects.

[4]   For an official WMF definition of 'mediation committee', see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Mediation_Committee

[5]   NPOV stands for "Neutral Point of View" and is an official Wikipedia policy, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:NPOV

[6]   GFDL stands for "GNU Free Documentation License" and is the license under which Wikipedia contents is made available.

[7]   Wikiquette stands for wiki usage behavior etiquette, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikiquette.

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[9]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Welcoming_committee

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[11]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Arbitration_Committee

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[13]   For step 1 in the German peer review process, see http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Review

[14]   For step 2 in the German peer review process, see http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/WP:KLA

[15]   For step 3 in the German peer review process, see http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/WP:KEA

[16]   http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Benutzer

[17]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:User

[18]   http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Power_structure

[19]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requests_for_adminship

[20]   http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Requests_for_permissions

[21]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Guide_to_requests_for_adminship

[22]   The wiki engine running Wikipedia, MediaWiki, expands '~~~~' to the user's name and current date to sign the edit.

[23]   For example, for June 15, the log is at http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Articles_for_deletion/Log/2006_June_15

[24]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Wikipedia_deletion

[25]   For an overview of the processes in the German Wikipedia see http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ausstellung/Kontrolle

[26]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:How_to_create_policy

[27]   For conflict resolution, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Resolving_disputes

[28]   For conflict resolution, also see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requests_for_comment

[29]   http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Vermittlungsausschuss

[30]   http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Benutzersperrung

[31]   http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E3%83%8E%E3%83%BC%E3%83%88:%E5%8D%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E8%99%90%E6%AE%BA%E8%AB%96%E4%BA%89

[32]   http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Article_validation

[33]   The case, which shortly disabled the German Wikipedia domain wikipedia.de, was eventually dismissed.

[34]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Be_bold_in_updating_pages

[35]   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Ignore_all_rules

[36]   http://www.openusability.org

[37]   http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Research_Network

[38]   http://mail.wikipedia.org/mailman/listinfo/wiki-research-l