Using Wikipedia for Good and Not Evil

Enhancing Learning Through Engagement in Global Knowledge Production

Best Practices for Incorporating Wikipedia Assignments into Your Course

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Workshop Goals

- Provide an overview of Wikipedia and its potential for supporting learning
- Explore ways of incorporating Wikipedia into course assignments
- Learn to create a Wikipedia account and the basics of creating/editing articles
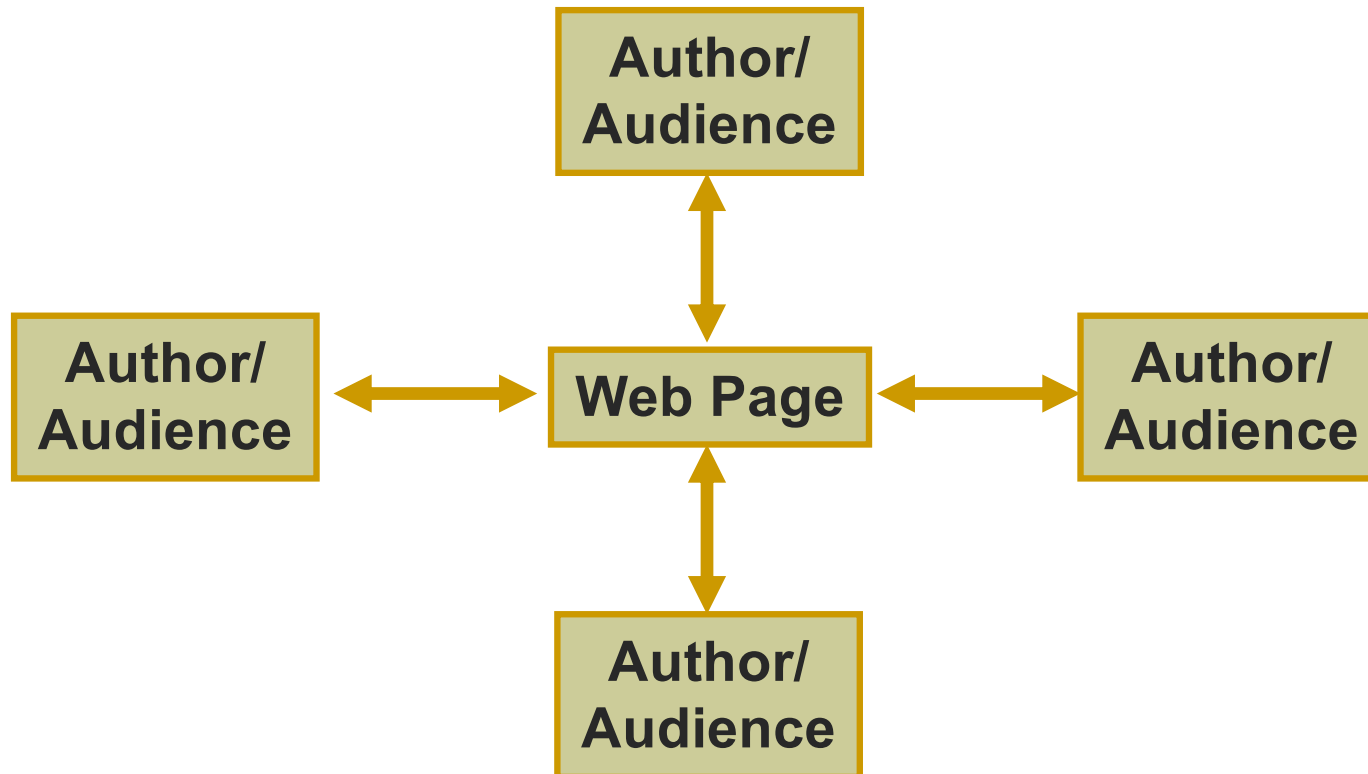- Slideshow and additional resources available at ericfox.com/wikipedia

What is a Wiki?

Traditional Web Page

What is a Wiki?

Wiki Page

```
          ┌─────────────┐
          │   Author/   │
          │  Audience   │
          └─────────────┘
                 ↕
┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐
│   Author/   │↔ │  Web Page   │↔ │   Author/   │
│  Audience   │  │             │  │  Audience   │
└─────────────┘  └─────────────┘  └─────────────┘
                 ↕
          ┌─────────────┐
          │   Author/   │
          │  Audience   │
          └─────────────┘
```

The Wiki Continuum

Pure Wiki   **Hybrid Wiki**

Anonymous	**Users and changes tracked**
Content is public domain	**Content is copyrighted or private**
Textual content only	**Embedded multimedia**
Unstructured	**Template/workflow-driven**
Consensus of its community	**Moderated by experts**
Open access	**Limited access**
Anyone can read and edit	**Permissions for users and editing**
Collective workspace	**Private workspaces**
Never finished	**Deadline-driven**
Content is "as is"	**Content edited or peer-reviewed**

Source: http://udel.edu/~mathieu/wiki/

WIKIMEDIA

- The Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. is a nonprofit charitable organization

- Dedicated to encouraging the growth, development and distribution of free, multilingual content, and to providing the full content of these wiki-based projects to the public free of charge

- Operates some of the largest collaboratively edited reference projects in the world

Projects

WIKIMEDIA

Free Encyclopedia
2,599,000+ articles

Dictionary & Thesaurus
1,019,000+ articles

Free Content News Source
13,500+ articles

Free Learning Tools
9,321+ learning resources

Directory of Species
160,247 entries

Shared Media Repository
3,463,453 media files

Free Textbooks & Manuals
30,100+ modules

Collection of Quotations
15,700+ articles

Free Source Documents
116,000+ pages

Growth and Reach

- Attracts at least 684 million visitors annually

- More than 75,000 active contributors working on more than 10,000,000 articles in more than 250 languages.

- 2,617,567 articles in English

Growth and Reach

Number of English-language Articles
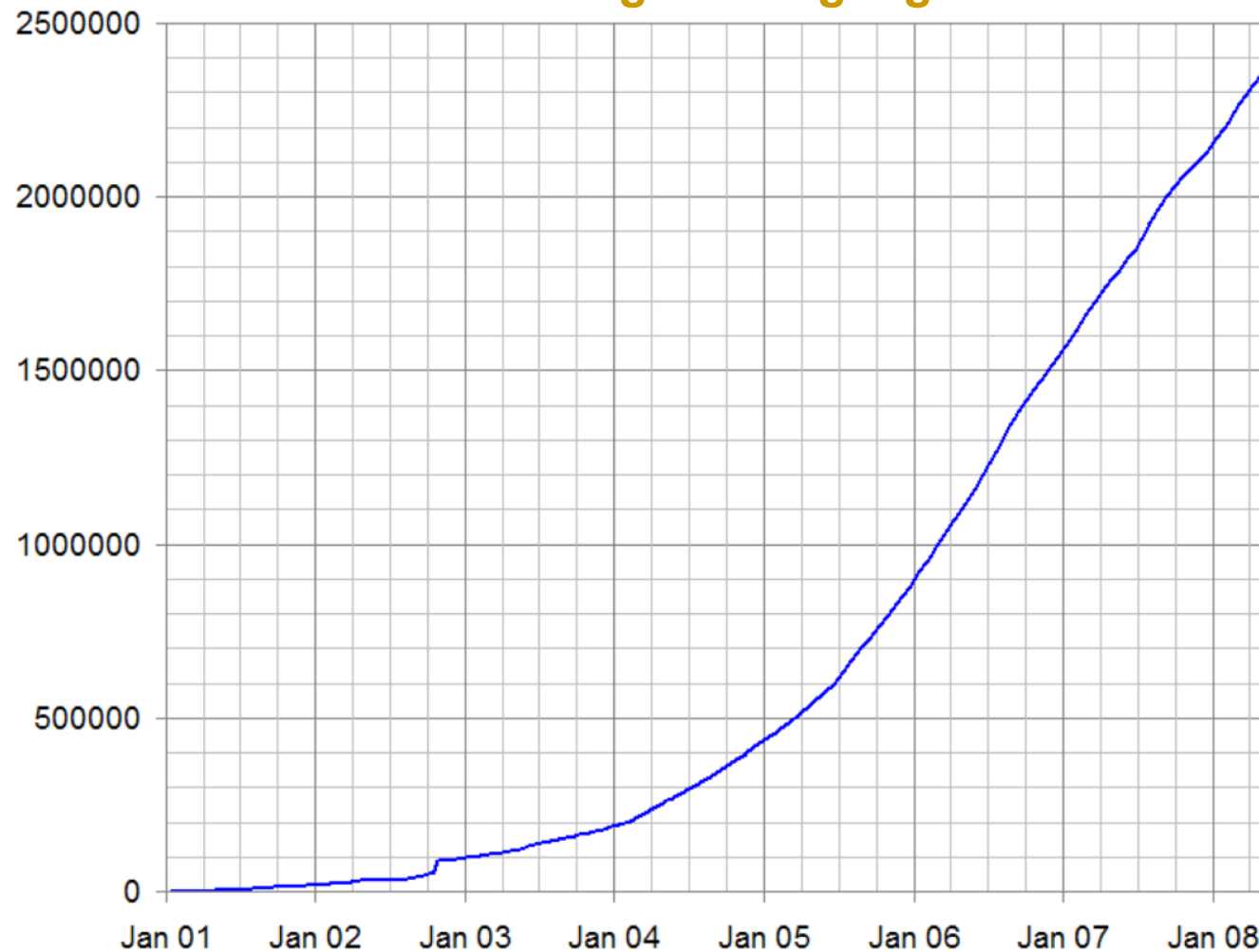
Criticisms

- Systemic bias and inconsistencies
- Favors consensus over credentials in its editorial process
- Sometimes questionable reliability and accuracy
- Susceptible to vandalism (though research shows it is generally short-lived)

Criticisms

References

Instructional design. (2008, November 3). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved

November 12, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism

John Dewey. (2008, November 11). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved November

12, 2008, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dewey

Research. (2008, November 10). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved November 12,

2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research

Stanford University. (2008, November 9). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved

November 12, 2008, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford

Criticisms

- *Nature* (December 15, 2005) compared Wikipedia to the online version of Encyclopedia Britannica for accuracy of science entries
  - Average of 4 minor errors per Wikipedia entry
  - Average of 3 minor errors per Encyclopedia Britannica entry

Encyclopedia Britannica was not impressed

Potential Advantages of Wikipedia Assignments

- Allows a term paper or other work to have an impact and role beyond the classroom

- Students may be more motivated to do better work

- Engages student in an external community and exposes them to peer review and collaboration

Potential Advantages of Wikipedia Assignments

- Improves understanding of collaborative knowledge construction and importance of verifiable knowledge (the strengths and weaknesses of Wikipedia)

- Many tasks available to Wikipedians (beyond writing new articles) that may serve different learning goals

Potential Advantages of Wikipedia Assignments

- Technology is relatively easy to use, free, and open to anyone with web access

- Who better to help improve the world's largest encyclopedia than you and your super-smart, superbly trained students?

One Instructor's Findings

- Students gained perspective on the value of credible sources, and complete citations

- Peer review became a more purposeful effort; good critiques more highly valued

- Students invested more in their work, felt greater ownership, and experienced greater returns for their efforts

- Products were generally better written than typical term papers

Student Responses to Wikipedia Assignments

This assignment felt so **Real**! I had not thought that anything I wrote was worth others reading before, but now I think what I contributed was useful, and I'm glad other people can gain from my research.

Source: http://connect.educause.edu/Library/Abstract/UsingWikipediatoReenvisio/45402

Student Responses to Wikipedia Assignments

Although I was really scared by this assignment, I really appreciate a chance to write something that might help someone else beyond myself
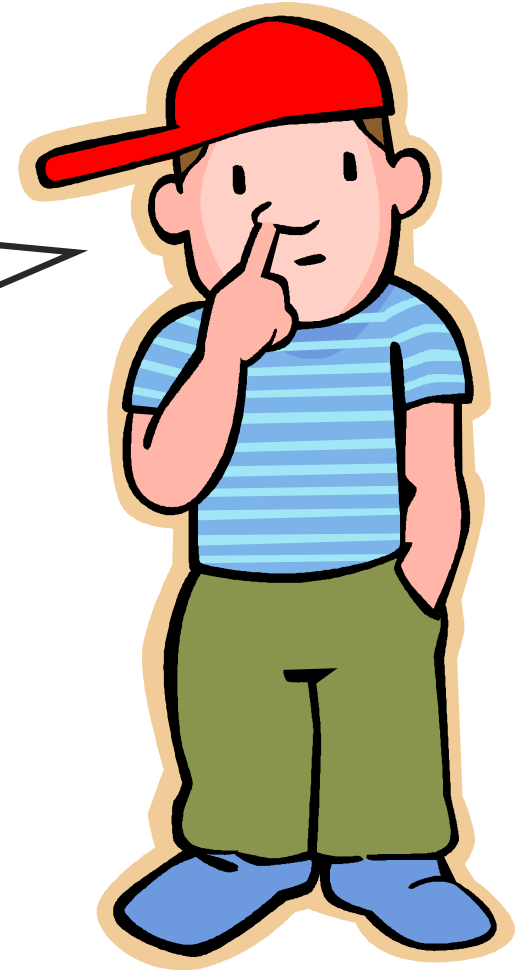
Student Responses to Wikipedia Assignments

It is a huge responsibility to put your info and credibility on the line-- online. Empowering in some ways (had never even thought that I could contribute to such a medium) but definitely scary and humbling at the same time. In the end, I thought it was one of the most interesting assignments I'd ever had.

Student Responses to Wikipedia Assignments

It seems to be a debate on who's right rather than actually getting anywhere with the article… Everyone in the discussion section seems to care more about whether they are right or not, than on whether the information is trustworthy or not.

Source: http://hatlie.twoday.net/stories/4358235

Tasks for Wikipedians

- Write New Articles
- Edit Existing Articles
- Various Other Tasks (e.g., categorizing content, adding multimedia files, providing peer review/feedback, etc.)

Writing New Articles

- Split large articles into multiple smaller articles
- Write requested articles
- Write new articles on a topic of your choice

Editing Existing Articles

Open tasks

Here are some tasks you can do:

- **Wikify:** The Junkies, Washington State Route 432, Robert Petre, 7th Baron Petre, Tafton, Pennsylvania, Health in Colombia, Health in Germany, *More...*
- **Copyedit:** Robert Michels, Highway D5, List of characters in The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy, House of Harcourt, Criticism of McDonald's, Brandon Rike, *More...*
- **Update:** Toni Daggert, Militaria, Debbie Dingle, Chas Dingle, Del Dingle, Irma Anderson, *More...*
- **Style:** Carlson Gracie, DELCA, Mulgunnia, Anna Schwartz, Tomas Brolin, CCH Canadian Ltd. v. Law Society of Upper Canada, *More...*
- **Cleanup:** Role of the professional social worker, Long Beach, Niagara Regional Municipality, Ontario, Winlaton Youth Training Centre, Joseph Lynn Leicester, 101 Battalion, Luristan civilization, *More...*
- **Verify:** Cricklewood, Boeing KC-767, List of crurotarsans/sandbox, Halkieria, House dust mite, John Howard, *More...*
- **Neutrality:** Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Stargate Project, Greyhound Lines, Anglican Province of the Southern Cone, Tim Kaine, Syed Ahmad Shaheed, *More...*
- **Original research:** Wedge Antilles, Ghostbusters (franchise), The Centurions (TV series), Euro-Trance, Jeff Tortora, African Unification Front, Carbon tax, Meritocracy, Entryism, Exit number, *More...*

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Editing Existing Articles

- **Wikify** – Improve the layout and formatting of articles (e.g., increasing links to other articles, replacing HTML with wiki markup)

- **Copyedit** – Copyediting, proofreading, fact-checking, rewriting

- **Update** – Update time-limited information (e.g., articles focusing on current events)

Editing Existing Articles

- **Style** – Improve adherence to style guidelines, article structure, etc.

- **Verify** – Provide reliable source(s) for quotations or any material that is challenged or likely to be challenged

- **Neutrality** – Help rewrite articles in a more neutral, factual manner

Editing Existing Articles

- **Remove original thought** – Remove or edit articles containing unpublished facts, arguments, research, arguments, speculation, and ideas

- **Merge/Move** – Combine similar or redundant pages or rename a page

- **Expand (or sort) stubs** – Expand brief articles or move them into topic categories

Editing Existing Articles

- **Expand other articles** – Expand substantial articles or sections of articles that still need additional content

- **Translate** – Translate existing articles into another language

Other Tasks

Fix-up projects

- Article categorization
- Articles to be split
- Articles written by a single editor
- Bad category names
- Category needs checking
- Core topics needing cleanup
- Dead-end pages
- Disambig pages with links
- Elements of Style
- External links
- Articles needing copy edit

- Linkrot
- Notability
- Missing articles
- Most wanted articles
- Most wanted stubs
- Name disambiguation
- Stub sorting
- Transwiki log cleanup
- Typos
- Unreferenced articles
- Untagged images

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Tasks & Meaningful Learning Outcomes

- Writing new articles
- Improving existing articles
- Translating articles
- Creating or improving media files
- Categorizing content
- Reviewing articles and providing feedback
- Improving citations and sources of articles

Sample Assignments

- Students were required to edit and add to the Wikipedia article on Marx's *Capital, Volume I*

- Students turned in a copy of the original article and their revised version

- Revisions had to be substantive and not just stylistic

Source: http://marxscapitalblog.blogspot.com/2008/10/wikipedia-assignment.html

Sample Assignments

- High school students worked in teams of 10 from 7 classrooms around the world

- Each team had a topic based on one of the flatteners found in Tom Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*, and edited a wiki page and provided content.

Source: http://flatclassroomproject2006.wikispaces.com/

Sample Assignments

- Students are asked to read and write a summary/description of the Wikipedia article about the high school they attended

- Students are then asked to evaluate the Wikipedia article, using specific criteria

Sample Assignments

- Students were asked to choose a Wikipedia article on a controversial subject within the scope of the class

- Student were then asked to describe the *discussion* behind the article

Sample Assignments

- Students are asked to write a Wikipedia entry on any topic from European history (or to substantially edit a stub)

- Class is encouraged to review and edit the entries posted by their peers

- At the end of the semester, students are asked to write a paper reviewing the history of what happened to their entries

Source: http://edwired.org/?p=124

Good Ideas

- Require completion of the Wikipedia Tutorial (provide learning objectives and a quiz?)

- Require students to create a Wikipedia account and provide you with their usernames

- Remind students to login each time they use Wikipedia (necessary for tracking their work)

Good Ideas

- Encourage participation in discussions before writing or editing articles

- Begin with making smaller edits to existing entries

- If having them post a new article, require evidence that article is needed and appropriate (according to Wikipedia's guidelines)

Good Ideas

- Require in-class collaboration and peer-review before posting work to Wikipedia
- Have them submit work to Wikipedia in stages so that they can witness the peer review/editing process and participate in the continual revision and discussion of the article

Good Ideas

- Require a reflective essay at the end of the project about the process and history of their article

Using Wikipedia: Basic Navigation

Using Wikipedia:
Five Pillars

- Encyclopedia
- Neutrality
- Free Content
- Code of Conduct
- No Firm Rules (Be Bold!)

Using Wikipedia

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Let's practice!

This slideshow and additional resources available at:
ericfox.com/wikipedia