

Welcome back to [occ]! (Week 5)

No stakes quiz: Explain “the zeroeth law of Wikipedia.”

In a part of Chapter 3 that was not assigned, Joseph Reagle mentions “the zeroeth law of Wikipedia”:

The problem with Wikipedia is that it only works in practice. In theory, it can never work.



Why should Wikipedia never work in theory? Considering your experiences with Wikipedia and the course material so far, write down (and prepare to discuss) the most compelling argument(s) you can think of *in support* of the zeroeth law. Be sure to identify evidence or examples to support your claims.

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After writing down responses: find someone sitting near you and explain your positions to each other. We'll discuss them in a moment.

Discuss responses for 5-10 minutes

Reminder: Keep the overarching objectives of the course in mind. Online communities/collaboration as puzzles that we are trying to explain and understand by analyzing foundations, cases, dynamics, and challenges.

Important announcements!

Online Communities & Crowds

2014-10-20

└ Important announcements!

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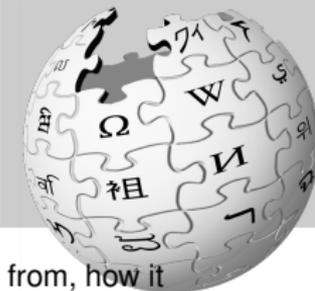
Wednesday's class will be in room 2-370

Mid-quarter course evaluation survey

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Today: A big puzzle indeed



Today's class is about beginning to explain Wikipedia. Where it came from, how it works, why it works.

Remember where we've been so far:

Foundations:

Cases:

Dynamics:

Challenges:

Online Communities & Crowds

2014-10-20

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Foundations: Cases: Dynamics: Challenges:

Remember your final projects!

Remember where we've been so far:

Foundations:

- ▶ Digital utopianism
- ▶ Early cyberculture
- ▶ Public goods
- ▶ Commons
- ▶ Selective incentives
- ▶ Institutions
- ▶ Intrinsic & extrinsic motives
- ▶ Phreaking & hacking
- ▶ Intellectual property

Cases:

- ▶ The WELL
- ▶ Packet routing (TCP/IP)
- ▶ Parks, forests, & lobsters
- ▶ wikiHow
- ▶ Gratipay & Gittip
- ▶ Wikipedia
- ▶ Northwestern students
- ▶ Pirates, phreaks, & hackers
- ▶ Nollywood

Dynamics:

- ▶ Architectures of control
- ▶ Newcomer socialization
- ▶ Norms
- ▶ Community culture
- ▶ Collective action
- ▶ Motivating participants
- ▶ Managing transgressions
- ▶ Group identification

Challenges:

- ▶ Community governance
- ▶ Managing power & conflict
- ▶ Incorporating new members
- ▶ Sustaining long-term cooperation
- ▶ Incentive design
- ▶ Innovation (knowledge discovery)
- ▶ Knowledge diffusion

Remember where we've been so far:

Remember your final projects!

| Foundations: | Cases: | Dynamics: | Challenges: |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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Today's Flight Plan:

2014-10-20

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- ▶ **Foundations:** Institutions.
- ▶ **Dynamic:** Norms, policies, and community culture.
- ▶ **Cases:** Wikipedia.
- ▶ **Challenge:** Sustaining collaboration & cooperation.

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- ▶ **Dynamic:** Norms, policies, and community culture.
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What's a wiki?

One definition: “A web application which allows people to add, modify, or delete content in collaboration with others. In a typical wiki, text is written using a simplified markup language (known as “wiki markup”) or a rich-text editor.”[1]

Another definition: “A website with pages and links that can be easily edited via the browser, with a reliable version history for each page.”[2]

[1] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>.

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_wikis.



Ward Cunningham, creator of the first wiki (cc-by-sa, Wikimedia Foundation).

What's a wiki?

- First used in a website in 1995.
- Inspired by older tools that facilitated markup and collaboration without knowing much markup language.
- Meant to be quickly editable by many people asynchronously and at large scale.

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The origins of Wikipedia

In January, 2001, Sanger proposed using a wiki to create a side project on the Nupedia mailing list:

"...It's an idea to add a little feature to Nupedia. Jimmy Wales thinks that many people might find the idea objectionable, but I think not... As to Nupedia's use of a wiki, this is the ULTIMATE 'open' and simple format for developing content. We have occasionally bandied about ideas for simpler, more open projects to either replace or supplement Nupedia. It seems to me wikis can be implemented practically instantly, need very little maintenance, and in general are very low-risk. They're also a potentially great source for content. So there's little downside, as far as I can determine."



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The origins of Wikipedia

- Founded in 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger.
- Originally a feeder project for *Nupedia*. Inspired by free software. Nupedia was slow, so Sanger and Wales were looking for alternatives.
- Platform chosen to facilitate easy, asynchronous revision, versioning, remix, collaboration, etc.
- World's largest free (as in freedom) encyclopedia.

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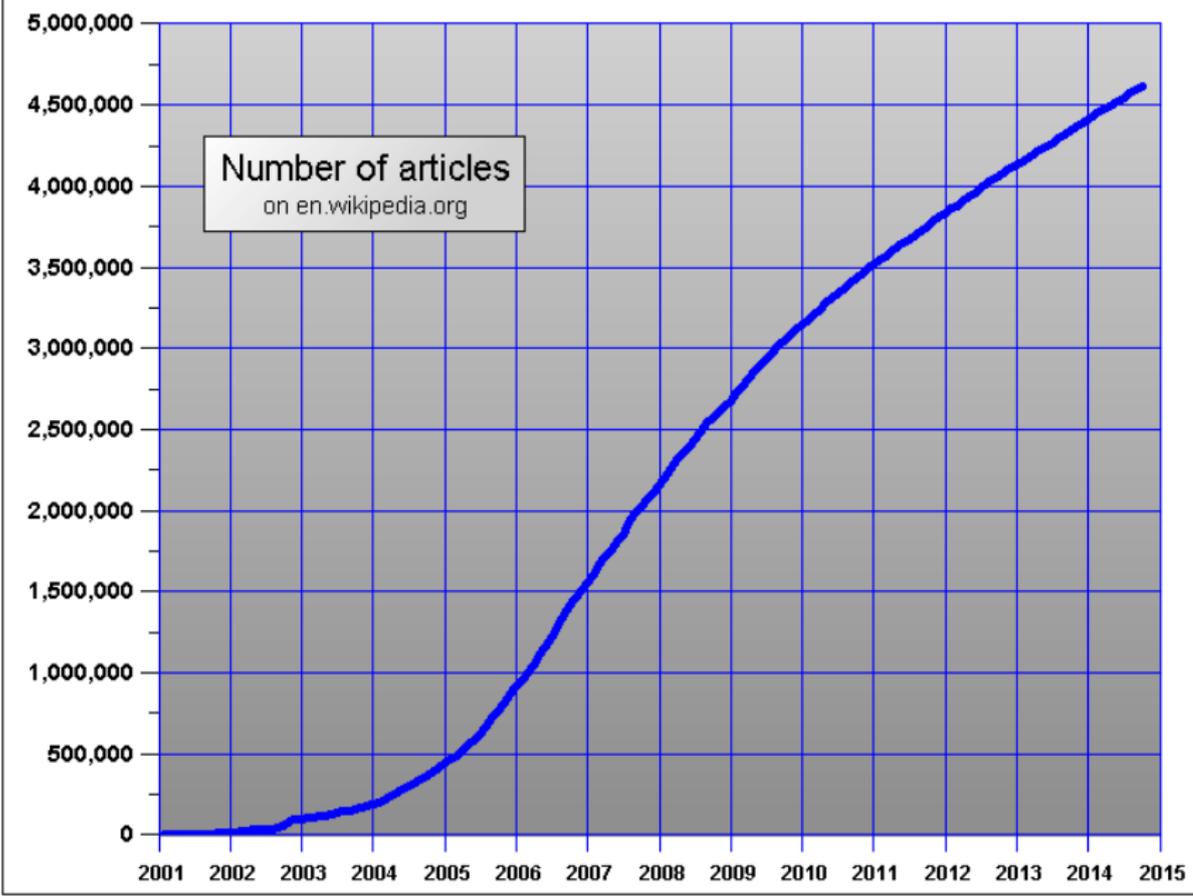
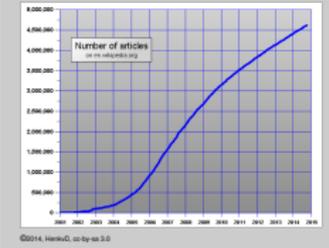


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So why does Wikipedia work?

Joseph Reagle



"Wikis are a relatively novel way of working together: online, asynchronous, possibly anonymous, incremental, and cumulative. Do these features alone explain the success of Wikipedia? Not quite."

Good Faith Collaboration, Ch. 3.

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Good Faith Collaboration, Ch. 3

Ask: So what is Reagle's answer to this question?

Reagle's explanation of Wikipedia:

Also at the end of Ch. 3, Reagle says:

*So, in addition to technology, a community's **collaborative culture** is an important factor in determining what its future holds.*

(my emphasis)

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*In the case of the English Wikipedia, there is a collaborative culture that asks its participants to assume two postures: a stance of **neutral point of view** on matters of knowledge, and a stance of **good faith** toward one's fellow contributors.*

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The five pillars of Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WP:5>

1. Wikipedia is an encyclopedia.
2. Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view.
3. Wikipedia is free content that anyone can use, edit, and distribute.
4. Editors should treat each other with respect and civility.
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In the context of your work on Wikipedia. You should go read the full text of all five pillars. Follow the links.

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└ Wikipedia's norms

So what's a norm?

Sociological maxim about norms: you know something is a norm if someone who violates it is punished for doing so.

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Quoth Reagle (Ch 3, Section 5):
In principle, there are three levels of authority associated with Wikipedia norms: *essays*, nonauthoritative pages that may contain useful insights; *guidelines*, actionable norms approved by general consensus; and *policy*, much the same but "more official and less likely to have exceptions."

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Example: The article on Evolution

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolution>

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Let's go look at the first section of the article on Evolution and the talk page. Also, let's check out the section of the article dealing w disagreements & controversies.

Ask:

- We just spoke a lot of about norms, so how do they happen?
- How is NPOV enacted in the text of the article? In the talk page?
- Can you find evidence of AGF in the talk page? (or from Reagle's discussion of it).
- What is the role of MediaWiki, the technological platform that runs the site, in sustaining all of this?

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Compare Reagle's argument to others we've encountered:



What kind of an explanation is Reagle providing?

└─ Compare Reagle's argument to others we've encountered:



Step back and compare Reagle's explanation to others we've seen:

- Olson (individuals, selective incentives).
- Ostrom (institutions & norms).
- Lessig (Architectures of control – code, laws, rules, enforcement).
- Turner (Social context/history & technological change).

Create “levels of analysis” spectrum on the board. Note that this could be done for all of the dynamics we are examining in this class...hmm, maybe I'll come back to that later.

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By Wikipedia's *collaborative culture*, Reagle means (ch 3, section 5), **"a set of assumptions, values, meanings, and actions pertaining to working together within a community."**

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Read the tutorials & pillars for more info on notability, sources, references, and copyright. These are really important for creating successful articles that adhere to the norms/rules and meet the quality standards of the community.

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