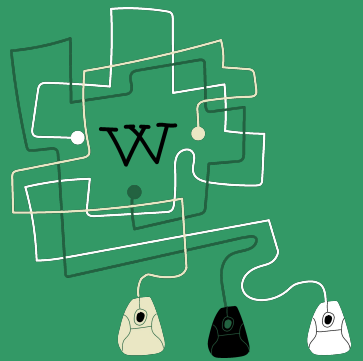
WIKIMEDIA
HACKATHON

Best practices for maintainers of high-impact tools

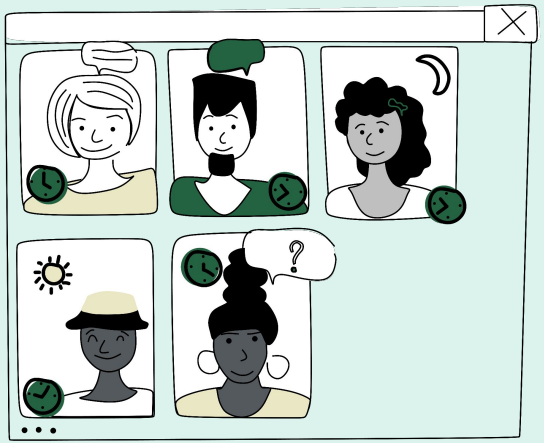
Facilitation by: Srishti & Karen



Overview

Interviewed key contributors to find out more about the specific needs and pain points of maintainers of **high-impact tools.**

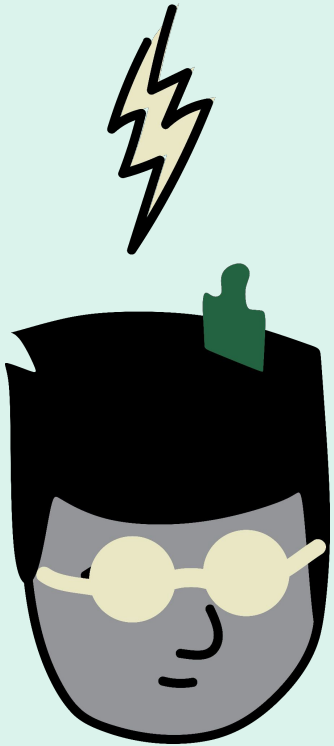
“I don't even know what to work on or what to pick up next...I wish someone could tell me the best use for my time and what value I am bringing to the users”



Wikimedia_Technical_Engagement/Practices_to_support_maintainers_and_high-impact_tools (on MediaWiki.org)

More tool problems...

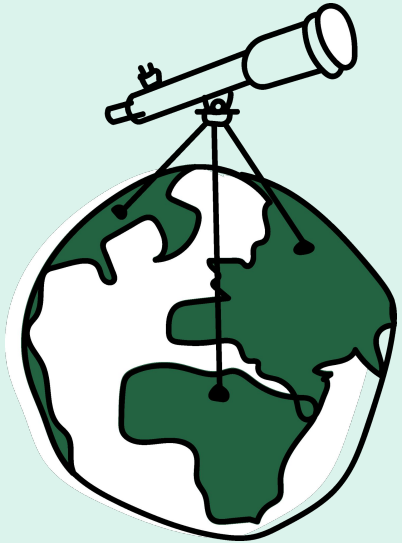
- In continuous development, lacking clear next steps, support from the community, **limited resources**, etc.
- **Finding a new maintainer**; process to transfer ownership doesn't exist.
- **Broken** due to changes to MediaWiki codebase, Toolforge environment, etc., the only **maintainer is away on a Mount Everest hike** 🏔️



Wikimedia_Technical_Engagement/Practices_to_support_maintainers_and_high-impact_tools (on MediaWiki.org)

Criteria to identify high-impact tools

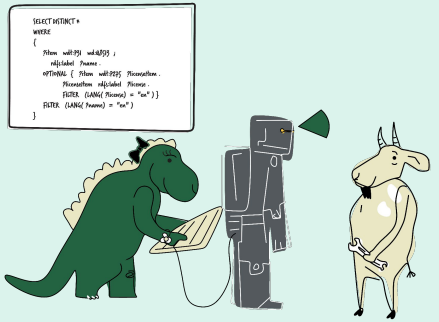
- Amount of **people screaming** when the tool is gone 😅
- Number of **edit contributions** a tool makes (e.g., mapping edits from bot accounts to tools)
- Number of **tool users** (e.g., through pageviews). Some tools may not have a lot of edits (e.g., Wikidata graphs for visualizing content).
- **Ease of use** of the tool
- Focused on enabling **underrepresented communities**



Initiate and strengthen connections with the community and other partners (T323317 on Phabricator)

Existing support mechanisms

- Mentoring initiatives such as **Wiki Mentor Africa**, **Let's Connect**, etc.
- Events like the **Wikimedia Hackathon** connect tool developers with others and help get things done.
- General **technical support** around tools in various channels (IRC, Telegram) by staff & volunteers.
- **Phabricator workboard** for project management (e.g., reporting on broken tools)
- Tool monitoring by **Toolforge admins** (e.g., when a tool/bot goes down).

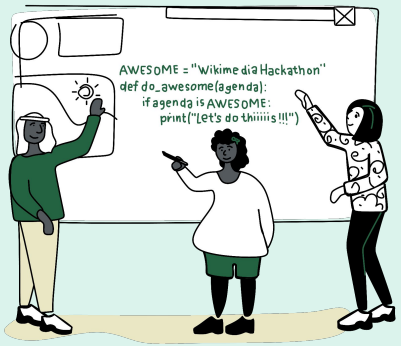


Initiate and strengthen connections with the community and other partners (T323317 on Phabricator)

Best practices: *Resources*

1. Getting-started resources that are easily discoverable (e.g., starter apps, visual database monitoring tool).

2. Tool metrics for developers (e.g., number of visits, and contributions made by a tool).

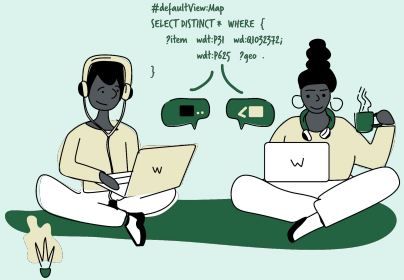


Best practices: *Support & mentoring*

3. Preventing tool developers from reinventing the wheel - empowering them to develop a tool for use by other wikis/projects. (e.g., many gadgets exist only on English Wikipedias, tools for campaigns)

4. Mentoring programs (e.g., GSoC) to bring new contributors who do not require hand-holding & become long-term maintainers of tools.

5. Dedicated technical support to tool maintainers (e.g., prioritizing & managing a project, improving code architecture quality or prototype, reviewing documentation).



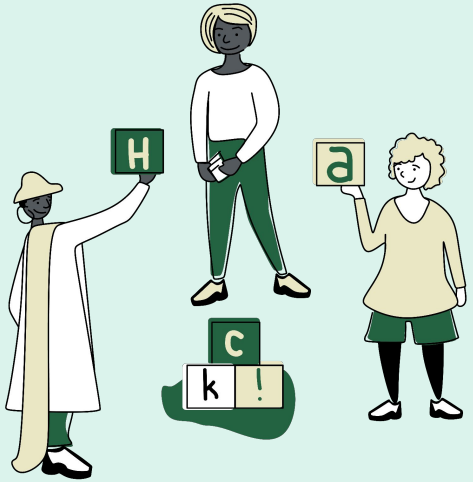
Best practices: *Processes*

6. Project workboard for developers to draw attention to their tools & issue tracking along the way to have long-term surviving tools.

7. Make finding tools easier - suggestions for alternatives for deprecated ones and allow for comparing tools with one another – **Toolhub** intends to fill that role but needs better integration into the tools ecosystem.

8. Easy process for transferring ownership or transition of a tool (e.g., from a tool to MediaWiki extension).

9. Tools integration with the MediaWiki CI system for more tracking support and better inform whether or not a change will break a tool.



Key questions & tips

- Pick one of the best practices we shared and brainstorm:
  - What will a possible solution look like?
  - How can we get there? What are the key steps to follow? (e.g., research, prototyping, testing).
  - How can we ensure its adoption by tool maintainers?
  - Do you know other practices that may work? If yes, could we recommend them to tool maintainers? Would should we change?

- **Housekeeping tips:** Time for group discussion: ~30 min; each group gets ~2 min to share the outcomes. Recruit volunteers for taking notes in Etherpad.

WMHack Session task: T333178 on Phabricator

WIKIMEDIA
HACKATHON

Presentations

WIKIMEDIA
HACKATHON

Thank you!

Find us on Telegram: Srishti (**@srishakatux**), Karen (**@karenamandah**)