

Top Stories

Iranian president says move Israel to Europe

The President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, says Israel should be moved to Europe and questioned whether the Holocaust actually took place. Ahmadinejad said that if Germany and Austria felt responsible for the massacre of Jews during World War II, they should host a state of Israel on their own soil...

Australian Senate agrees to "urgent" ban on tertiary-sector mandatory student unions

The controversial "voluntary student unionism" bill has been passed by the Australian Senate after an unexpected urgency motion. This follows similar "urgent" motions in recent weeks gagging debate on major, controversial changes to Australian law in industrial relations and in law-enforcement.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The International Atomic Energy Agency and its Director General Mohamed ElBaradei receive the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo.
- At least 103 people are killed and 7 injured when Sosoliso Airlines Flight 1145 crashes enroute to Port Harcourt from the Nigerian capital Abuja.

Interview with Jimbo Wales

While this wasn't Interview with the Vampire, getting a live interview with Jimmy Wales of the Wikimedia Foundation is requiring more work and planning than ever. Four contributors to four different Wikinews language editions (with Swedish, Netherlands, and Polish) arranged to interview "Jimbo" in the Wikinews IRC channel, squeezed in before interviews with a periodical and a cable news source.

In part, the interview was in the Wikinews IRC channel because Wikinews was one of the prime topics for the interview. The project is a bit over a year old, with the English and Deutsch editions opening their sites officially the first week of December, 2004. Since then the project has produced more than 13 000 articles in 16 languages, with recently created editions in Hebrew, Russian, and Japanese.

The project has not been without its detractors, and the questions asked of Mr. Wales reflected some of the most common criticisms.

Wikinews seems primarily dedicated to regurgitating what is already being published on main stream media news sources. Was this the vision for Wikinews? *Jimmy Wales: I would not use the term 'regurgitating', which sounds rather negative, but rather 'synthesis' which is a more subtle and more important process. This was always a part of the core vision for Wikinews, though of course we want to do a lot more in time.*

The wiki movements seem focused on local expertise; people work on things they are interested and expert in. Why is there very little local news on Wikinews, which it seems like it would be best qualified to produce? *Wiki editing thrives on local knowledge, but 'local' in an epistemological sense, not necessarily in a geographical sense. For example, I personally know a lot more about world news on topics that interest me and could synthesize much better in those areas, than I know about local politicians where I live.*

Do you believe that Wikinews, or any of the Wiki projects qualify as a meritocracy? *I hope so. :-)* *Although the wiki process sometimes strikes people as being inherently favoring egalitarianism or anarchy, there is a certain sense in which the wiki editing tool is neutral to social structures. As a matter of simple description, it does turn out that users who do quality work end up having a lot more power than users who do bad work. So in that sense, yes, it is a meritocracy, but*

Featured story

Virginia dangerous dog law bill ready for Assembly debate

The key legislative provisions of a new dangerous dog bill could mean felony criminal charges and higher home-owner insurance premiums for Virginia dog owners whose pet is deemed dangerous



an informal one.

"Current Events" is not "encyclopedic" enough to reside on Wikipedia! On many Wikipedia projects content have been moved to Wikibooks and Wikisource, shouldn't "Current Events" be transferred to Wikinews in the same way?

I have no very strong opinion about this. Encyclopedia articles about current events are in many ways different from news articles about current events. I suspect we should have some parallel work going on, and Wikinews should be more prominently featured in this way on the Wikipedia homepage. But that's a big internal community discussion that other people know more about than I do.

All Wikimedia Foundation projects currently use the free MediaWiki software, which was purposely-designed for the Wikipedia project. Which makes it an excellent tool for an online community-developed encyclopedia, but perhaps not so perfect for other forms of knowledge bases like Wikisource or Wikinews. For Wikinews, an important tool was the creation of Dynamic Page List, an extension to the software which allows lists of current articles to be built dynamically when they are published so the latest news is on the main page.

When Wikinews was started a year ago, a need for new functions quickly appeared. Dynamic Page Lists are crucial to Wikinews and several other tools should be developed as they are asked for. The situation is similar on other projects (e.g. Wiktionary), maybe a plan for developing a project specific software package should precede the creation of new projects?

I do think we could do a better job of anticipating the software needs of new projects, but it is also important to understand that a lot of needs are not readily apparent a priori. Sometimes we have to try to do things for awhile before we really have an understanding of where the problem points are.

The Associated Press has changed their copyright notice with articles to include "you may not rewrite this article." Is Wikinews creating an impact on how other news sources release their information?

I think that mainstream news sources are very much paying attention not just to Wikinews but to the entire citizen journalism movement. I think that many thoughtful people in the business understand that a sea change is happening, and are interested in figuring out how to empower more community input while still getting the best out of the old models. I had dinner with Don Graham last Friday night, and he's an example of someone who isn't reacting to new media with shock and horror, but rather with keen interest in trying to see what the trends will be and how to adapt.

Could you expand on "the best out of the old models."?

Well, to expand on 'best of the old models' -- one thing that often comes up is that you have a reputation mechanism in traditional publishing, a mechanism which sometimes breaks, but which mostly works. Citizen journalism has to find ways to generate the same kind of reputation mechanisms. Blogs are finding that, to some extent.

What is your opinion on Wikinews users gaining credentials to be used in the field?

It sounds cool to me, although I'm sensitive to the concerns that

people have put forward about it. It's something I plan to study further this month, to see how it is working in practice so far, and to see what users feel about it.

Have you had any reports back about it so far? As in experiences that people have had?

None.

The Wikimedia Foundation has turned to its constituency to cover basic operating costs as well as the ongoing capital expenditures which seem to grow at the same rate as Wikipedia's popularity: exponentially. From the first fundraiser in December/January of 2003/2004 (which raised around \$30 thousands after a server catastrophe) to the Fall Quarter fundraiser in 2005 (which raised \$244 thousands), each fund raiser has met the goals laid out for it, usually in a very brief time frame.

"We wish to cover two quarters," said Florence Nibart-Devouard, member of the Wikimedia Foundation Board.

The draft budget for just the first quarter of 2006 is projecting costs of more than \$400 thousands; and projections put the year's expenditures near \$3.2 million over all. But beyond the general goal of covering the budgets for two quarters, the foundation has not placed a specific financial goal for their upcoming fund raiser.

This fund drive is open-ended; there is no financial goal. One can find rumours there are estimates of unstated goals which start at a million dollars US and go up from there. How much money does the Wikimedia Foundation need to raise from this drive?

Rumors sounds strange to me. Rumors? Anyway, our best estimate for the bare minimum

needed in the next year just to keep the website running is \$1 million to \$2 million depending on how long and how fast traffic continues to grow. Traditionally we have been constrained in our growth by the website responding slowly during the time we are waiting for new servers to be purchased and integrated into the system.

Our _stated_ goal is to create and distribute a freely licensed high quality encyclopedia to every single person on the planet in their own language.

We know that we are achieving that goal very well in some parts of the world, and not so well in other parts of the world.

It is my intention that we should experiment with some ways that funding could help with this: for example, hiring co-ordinators for some small languages, to recruit native speakers to work on the project.

1-2 million USD is a big jump from the past budgets; is that kind of budget growth sustainable with the fundraiser model?

Well, that's an open question but I think so. Needs increase with traffic increases, but with traffic increases we have a bigger audience to ask for help. Hopefully those two things scale together reasonably well.

Ward Cunningham was discussing a distributed wiki model at wikimania, has this avenue been pursued further?

I don't know of any serious technical work being done on a distributed wiki model, but I'm personally a skeptic about whether such a model would serve our actual needs. I'm open to ideas though. :-)

Do you think having an open fundraiser will bring in more or

less money than having a fundraiser with a definite goal? Why do you think so?

I think that having an open fundraiser will bring in more money, for two reasons.

First, I think people have often looked at the pace of the fundraising and the amount being raised, and made a decision not to give based on the fact that we seemed to be meeting our goal.

Second, I just go by the general behavior of other large charities, which often have open fund drives. I assume they do so for a good reason. In any event, we should try it and see.

But is there a reason to call it a "drive" at all if there is no goal?

I often think that, as Wikipedians, we project our own ways of thinking onto our audience. We are the sort of people who look closely at budgets and think about goals and achievability. That's great for us. But a lot of people are ready to trust us and will respond better to our big picture vision. They don't care to know in grand detail (though of course we will always stand ready to tell them) where every penny is going. They respond, instead, to an appeal to the aesthetic beauty of our project.

The fundraiser is very low-key, and barely visible. If raising money is so important to the future of the project, why doesn't WMF put it front and center, giving it real space and bandwidth on the main pages and even article pages?

Well, we do that during the actual fund drive, but we're hopelessly tasteful of course, so I doubt we will ever be too horribly glaring about it. :-)

The current fundraiser is manually updated, takes place exclusively online, and so on. It's rather like a high school prom fundraiser in the USA. Have you considered

developing an integrated campaign with feedback, for example automating a graph of the funds raised and tracking the donations across countries and currencies?

Yes, we would love to have a fancier system. It is my feeling that we're going to have to pay for the development of such a system, because volunteer developers are (quite rightly) more interested in more intellectually challenging programming issues. So part of why we need to raise money is so we can be more efficient about raising money in the future.

You have become a cause célèbre, and famous with the rise of the Wikipedia project. Are you using your celebrity to encourage the rich and famous people you've come in contact with to make donations?

Yes. I'm now a full-time beggar. :)

Many traditional charity programs spend the majority of fundraising dollars on fundraisers. What is the estimate for the cost of this fundraiser, versus what you expect to raise? *To qualify this question; some of the fundraising ratios seen are upwards of 80% of funds raised go for fundraising.*

For the exact numbers, it will be best to consult with Mav (our CFO) and Michael (our Treasurer) as well as published results from past efforts. But obviously since the fund raising is done almost exclusively on the website itself (which costs no money), our efficiency is very very high. I don't know the exact numbers, but our costs are mostly just the bank fees and paypal fees.

I think it's terrible when charities are that inefficient. I think fundraising expenses should be as low as reasonably possible.

The current conflict over the Seigenthaler article has raised some ire outside the internet wikimedia community; How do you think this will affect, if at all, corporate or personal donations during this fund drive?

I don't think it will affect it. It's just news, there's always some news. If anything, I am hopeful that donations will increase just because more people are learning of us.

On what do you intend to spend this fundraiser's donations? Do you plan to use some of the funding raised to improve the reliability of Wikipedia? For example, will you hire fact checkers?

The bulk of the money will go, as usual, to hardware purchases. Some of the money will go to improving the software, which in turn will improve reliability. Hiring fact checkers is not being considered.

Fundraisers are not the only source of funding for Wikimedia Foundation. What other revenue streams, such as grants and contracts, does the Foundation currently have? What others are being applied for or worked on?

We have a small but growing amount of income from partners who pay us for the service of a realtime data stream. For people who reuse our content commercially this is a nice way for them to get a more quickly updated result. We have gotten a few grants in the past, and some grants are being worked on now. Danny Wool recently joined the foundation, working in the office as my assistant, but a portion of his time is devoted to grant applications. We anticipate that in the future he will work fulltime on grant applications after training a replacement assistant for me.

What companies are paying realtime data streams?
Answers.com for example.

You've mentioned hiring some new employees, like Danny Wool. What's the projection for increasing the budget for employee time?
I expect that in the coming year we will want to hire a minimum of 5-10 people, but depending on getting grants, I could see the number going much higher. One thing which is certainly true at the moment: at the foundation level we are overwhelmed with work.

As the interview progressed, with more and more observers, we got to that point where we really wanted to dig deeper into certain aspects of answers to our questions, but were short on time. Then it turned into a classic press conference, with interviewers tossing out questions rapid fire and Mr. Wales answering quickly and briefly to as many as he could... with all of us wishing we had more time to get more details and explanations.

Today on en.wikipedia the ability to create new pages has been turned off for anonymous users. Is The Wikimedia Foundation slowly turning away from the original wiki principles?
I don't view minor tweaks here and there to our model as either turning towards or away from wiki principles.

The mainland People's Republic of China has blocked WP, and today Onet.pl has removed WP from their search engine. Will changes in accessibility harm the fund drive?
We don't traditionally get much money from Mainland China, and I doubt if the Polish search engine example will hurt the traffic of

pl.wikipedia very much. (It will probably hurt the search engine more!)

Mr. Seigenthaler's bio, and we've just discovered Mr. Graham's, were posted by anons. The first was a smear campaign, the second a copyvio of a press release. Obviously the former is a problem, but doesn't the latter also open Wikipedia up to being an advertising site?
We don't have a huge problem with people using Wikipedia for PR purposes, although I'm sure a little of it goes on here and there. I've never seen a really convincing case.

I'm a contributor mostly on the Swedish projects. You don't speak Swedish, so I'm wondering if you ever look at non-English projects? Do you even notice us?

:)
I am learning to speak German, so I do try to read German Wikipedia. And I do look at other languages, although of course I can't read anything there. What I do to try to be useful to other languages is communicate with people as much as I can, visit people in person as much as I can, and monitor the statistics pages to see what is going on.

Comedian Richard Pryor dies at 65

Comedian, Richard Pryor, died today after a 19-year battle with multiple sclerosis, aged just 65.

He was pronounced dead of cardiac arrest at 8:00 a.m. local time in a hospital near his home. He is survived by his wife Jennifer Lee Pryor; along with his six children, Richard Junior, Elizabeth Storder, Rain Kindlin, Kelsey, Steven and Franklin Mason, and his three grandchildren

Pryor appeared in over 40 films and won Grammy awards for his comedy albums.

Former U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy dies

Eugene McCarthy, a Democratic senator from Minnesota from 1959-1971, has died at the age of 89 in Washington, D.C., his son announced.

McCarthy ran for President of the United States a total of five times, the latest in the 1992 US Presidential Election. In 1968 he ran against incumbent Lyndon B. Johnson, who later withdrew his bid for a second term (Johnson was inaugurated following the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and later won the presidential bid for 1964).

"He was thoughtful and he was principled and he was compassionate and he had a good sense of humor," his son said.

Confidence building reported between Iranian and Israeli citizens

In contrast with the increasing tensions between Iran and Israel due to remarks made by the president of Iran, the Israeli newspaper, The Jerusalem Post, and the Iranian blogger known by the pseudonym Brooding Persian have reported that confidence building measures spontaneously occurred between Israelis and Iranians during the recent World Summit on the Information Society in Tunisia.

The Iranian blogger ironically commented the lack of mainstream media attention to the article, stating that "No one was cursed, clubbed, lynched, mobbed, chased, bombed, and I guess that

accounts for lack of much interest anywhere in a recently reported contact between delegations from Israel and Iran in Tunis".

The Jerusalem Post noted that "Normally the two enemy states are separated by over 1,500 kilometers, loads of vitriol and, recently, threats and counter-threats in Persian and Hebrew. ... But in the football-field-sized space, where 18,000 participants at the UN summit milled between hundreds of exhibition booths, barely 12 short steps separated the delegations of Iran and Israel. Members of both delegations could not stem their curiosity about the other and visits began one by one."

The Iranian engineer Saeed Kharazi Zadeh told the Jerusalem Post reporter, "Iranian people's feelings toward Israelis are not as bad as you think" and continued later, "I don't want to explain the actions of my government. I want to explain the feelings of the Iranian people. It's not as you think. I want to say that Iranian people feel something good about [Israelis]. Not like they are the enemy."

The Israeli Ushi Kraush was quoted as saying, "I stood at the entrance to their booth, and told them I'm Israeli and asked them if it's ok for me to enter. I was really in shock, they were so friendly and open. You know, I thought they wouldn't allow themselves to speak to us," and later continued, "I met an ayatollah guy who was dressed in the same hat and clothes like Khomeini. We chatted and it turns out we studied the same topic: The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. He translated him to Persian."

Turkish islamic militant claims

interrogation and torture by CIA agents

Turkish daily newspaper SABAH reported that the leader of Ansar El Islam group (Soldiers of God) claimed that prior to the NATO summit in 2004 in Istanbul, "he was interrogated by three foreigners and beaten."

On 29 April 2004, before the NATO Summit, which was to be held in June in Istanbul, Alpaslan Toprak, who is claimed to be the Turkish representative of Ansar El Islam, and 15 others were detained by the police after being given information by the CIA.

Toprak was separated from others in his group. He was blindfolded and interrogated in a secret location by four people, three of whom were speaking in English. He was beaten up and a gun was placed on his head. His allegations were included in his court statement, dated 12 May 2005.

According to the SABAH, during the interrogation of Toprak, a CIA plane was in Turkey.

Bush threatens U.N. over Clinton climate speech

Officials in the Bush administration privately threatened the organizers of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Montreal, saying that any chance there might have been for the United States to sign the Kyoto Protocol would be lost if Bill Clinton spoke Friday at the meeting.

The threat was received within minutes of the Associated Press running a story on Clinton being added to the program. "It's just astounding," said one organizer. "It came through loud and clear

from the Bush people—they wouldn't sign the deal if Clinton were allowed to speak."

Clinton said, "There's no way that I'm gonna let petty politics get in the way of the deal. So I'm not gonna come." The organizers later reported that they had "called the administration's bluff." Clinton delivered his speech as planned.

In his speech Friday, Clinton described the Bush administration's opposition to Kyoto as "flat wrong."

Vice-President Dick Cheney directed the U.S. envoy to walk out Thursday, in response to comments by Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin on Thursday. The walk out is not believed to relate to Clinton's attendance.

Australian activists break into Pine Gap spy facility

Australian Federal Police (AFP) have arrested six people following a breach of security at the secretive Pine Gap Joint Defence Facility in central Australia on Friday.

The members of the group Christians Against All Terrorism (CAAT) breached base security at dawn and two of them infiltrated two perimeter fences and scaled a building, before being arrested. Two of the protesters photographed themselves atop a building inside the spy base.

A Northern Territory police spokeswoman said three men and two women had been charged over the incident while another woman would be summoned to appear in Alice Springs court next week over obstructing police. The spokeswoman said the activists had allegedly cut holes in the

external and internal fences at the defence facility. She said the combined charges carried a maximum penalty of seven years jail.

The group claims it was the first break-in of its kind at Pine Gap. The group spoke yesterday of their efforts to conceal a digital camera memory stick in the clothing of key members to avoid the images being confiscated by police.

Four of the protesters are from Queensland, one is from New South Wales and the other is from Victoria. They say they wanted to conduct a citizens inspection of the controversial Pine Gap facility. "We could not allow the US and Australian governments to continue to conceal the role of Pine Gap in the ongoing war in Iraq," said Sean O'Reilly of the group. "It's time the Australian public knew the reality of what is happening on our land".

Group member Jessica Morrison claims there is a lot of secrecy surrounding the facility. "So for me it was an attempt to come to a place that I think propagates death and start to proclaim truth," she said.

Two of the group were released on bail facing charges, including: unlawfully entering a prohibited area destroying or damaging Commonwealth property; trespassing on Commonwealth land; damaging property under the NT law. A sixth member was arrested for aiding and abetting but was released without charge.

Up to 30 police officers were stationed at a roadblock at the turn-off to Pine Gap at 6:00 a.m. local time and Gap staff were ordered to remain in their cars at the roadblock.

CAAT member Brian Law, said four of the group split into two groups and entered the base in a co-ordinated movement. He said four members walked 10km through thick scrub and entered the base at 4:00 a.m. local time. Mr Law and the fourth member arrested, former human shield Donna Mulhearn, 37, (taken hostage by militants in Fallujah in Iraq last year) were released.

Mr O'Reilly said the group conducted a citizens' inspection in protest at Pine Gap's involvement in the ongoing war in Iraq after the group had been refused official entry by Defence Minister Robert Hill. "We could not allow the US and Australian governments to continue to conceal the role of Pine Gap in the ongoing war in Iraq," Mr O'Reilly said.

It was unclear last night whether the group would be charged under the Federal Government's tough new anti-terror laws. They were bailed to face the Alice Springs Magistrates Court next

Business Brief for December 10, 2005

Alltel to spin off wireless unit
Alltel intends to spin off its local-telephone unit and merge it with Valor Communications Group. The deal, worth \$4.9 billion, will create a local-telephone company with a rural focus and 3.4 million access lines in 16 states. The deal forecasts \$40 million in cost savings annually. The deal still requires shareholder and regulator approval and if approved will close by mid-2006. This leaves Alltel to concentrate on its wireless services. Alltel said it plans a \$3 billion share buyback program after it completes the spinoff in mid-2006. Alltel stock is up 10.3

percent this year.

Internet portal Yahoo! acquires del.icio.us

On Friday, Yahoo!, a website listed by Alexa to receive the most traffic, bought out del.icio.us, a website used for sharing favorite web pages. Yahoo claims that this acquisition does not have a major financial impact on them, and that del.icio.us will still run as an independent website. del.icio.us currently has over 300,000 members since the website's creation two years ago.

Coke plans to sell Coffee under the Godiva brand

In the North American market, Coca-Cola plans to launch a line of ready-to-drink coffee in the second half of 2006, according to the industry magazine Beverage Digest. The drinks will be offered under the Godiva brand name which already sells coffee in several flavors. The spokesmen for both companies would not confirm or deny the report. Mary Minnick, Coke's marketing chief, has earlier said that Coke intends to launch "indulgence coffees" in the North American market.

In the European market Coke intends to offer Coffee, named Coca-Cola Blak, in France next month. "We believe we have created a new category of soft drink an adult product in a carbonated beverage, and a whole new drinking experience. This brand is ideal for any part of the day when people are looking for renewed energy or simply to take a break," said Coke's VP of global core brands Marc Mathieu.

Coke has attempted to enter the coffee market before. A few years ago Coke acquired the brand Planet Java forming a joint venture with Nestle. The drink never

caught on and was shelved.

Today in History

1282 - Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the last independent Prince of Wales to rule in Wales, was killed in an ambush.

1602 - Geneva successfully repelled a late night attack by Savoy, an event commemorated annually during the Fête de l'Escalade.

1931 - The Statute of Westminster gave complete legislative independence to the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

1946 - The UNICEF was established.

1981 - About 900 civilians in El Salvador were killed in the El Mozote massacre.

December 11 is Republic Day in Burkina Faso (1958)

Quote of the Day

"Woe to that nation whose literature is cut short by the intrusion of force. This is not merely interference with freedom of the press but the sealing up of a nation's heart, the excision of its memory." ~ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

About Wikinews

We are a group of volunteer journalists whose mission is to create a diverse community where citizens from around the globe (including **you**) can collaborate to report the news on a wide variety of current events. By making our content perpetually available for free redistribution and use, we hope to contribute to a global digital commons.

Got news and no computer? Call the Wikinews Hotline

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