

content

Wikimedia is many things: a software platform, a global movement, a collaborative community. But for the vast majority of our daily users^[2] Wikimedia means one thing: informational content. Readers come to Wikimedia (and largely Wikipedia) for many reasons^[3], primarily to satisfy an intrinsic curiosity, or to become more informed about something they see in other media. But no matter the motivation their satisfaction rests, finally, on one thing: relevant content.^[4] Satisfying this need for new users in new markets will be the key to encouraging growth in readership, just as it did in the early growth phase of Wikipedia.^[5]

This core user need also aligns with our strategic direction. That is, locally relevant content is not only a potential engine of growth in new markets, but filling these gaps in the content is core to combating the larger inequities in the knowledge that historically has been stored and shared on Wikimedia. By encouraging and enabling new content and topic growth in previously excluded areas, Wikimedia can drive not just growth for its own sake but equitable growth: growing specific audiences and content which have previously not been able or allowed to participate in global knowledge production and distribution.

Sections

- [Intro](#)
- [Content and Participation](#)
- [Regional Relevance](#)
- [Notes](#)
- [Sources](#)

Intro

"topics about the global south are not as strong in English Wikipedia... [Getting more content in these gaps...] that has an important effect for us as a movement, broadly. the more content there is in Wikipedia that is relevant to people in a certain part of the world, the more likely they are to use it and engage with it. It's sort of a self feeding cycle." [\[1\]](#)

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able or allowed to participate in global knowledge production and distribution.

Content and Participation

One significant barrier to wider participation and filling of content gaps by new participants with content that is relevant to new readers is the asymmetry between the experience and tools of our current editing community and the reading community whose needs they fill. Currently only about 5% of edits are made on mobile devices. However nearly 60% of our total device access comes from mobile devices. This means there is a disconnect between the people writing and curating the content and the people who consume it. Although this affects issues like presentation and content form very directly, it also means that the people writing Wikipedia do not reflect the reader population, its context or experience. It is key that we enable participation on the devices and in the context where content is consumed.

Although our ultimate goal is to fill these gaps, and satisfy the information needs of users around the world, Wikimedia also relies on a dedicated community to create and most importantly for this discussion, quality control, the information. In order to preserve the trust and reliability we must also balance the pressure between content growth and content quality and moderation systems. Merely bringing in new eyeballs with click-bait for fake news might create growth, but it undermines the value of that same content. This means that as we encourage new content contributions and the growth of new topics, we must monitor and support the curators and

administrators. However, we also must overcome the significant bias and inherent

exclusionary nature of certain policies and current community attitudes. Qualitative research[6] and user reports[7] suggest that policies, particularly around notability and reliable sourcing are especially problematic.

Regional Relevance

One way to provide relevant content for many users is to replicate the existing content in their language. This resolves one barrier for users (ie. the content is at least in a language they read and write). However, many many topics of local importance and interest may not exist on any Wikipedia. Additionally for many users English (or other large colonial language) remains the primary language of the internet and of education more generally, and users expect to search and read about their topics of interest in this global language. This means that we cannot fill these information needs and expectations purely by translating content from large to small languages. It means that we will need to ensure large global wikis like English accommodate and, indeed, encourage a multi-cultural tolerance of difference and variation, and get support for curation tools that enable this tolerance and cooperation.

For most users,[8] coming to Wikipedia to have your information needs met starts not on Wikipedia but on Google. Their journey begins by searching for keywords. If these keywords are found on Wikipedia, there is a good chance [9] they will see that result and come to us to satisfy their information need. This results in increased readership,

which in turn, should result in additional contributors and content growth. Encouraging this virtuous cycle between search, content and knowledge generation applies energy to the flywheel that is at the heart Wikimedia's content engine. By identifying and filling content gaps, in English and across languages, we add more search keywords that help readers find us. Some of those readers share and contribute, expanding the movement. These new contributors keep our collaborative community diverse and active, adding and improving content. And all this comes back to help satisfy readers needs for the sum of all knowledge.

There are many potential ways to improve and encourage this cycle, including some already underway.

Software interventions: directing interest with recommendations, improving inclusive interactions

Programmatic interventions: interest groups, project tiger, content campaigns,

Notes

[1] D.Scott, Lead Organizer of Wikimania 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTfb4dEypQk> at roughly 22 minutes in

[2] We count approx 200,000 contributors a month, and roughly 1B devices. The means 99.98% of use is non-contributory consumption. This undercounts as it doesn't account for the readers reached through massive re-publication channels, such as the Knowledge Panel.

[3] <https://blog.wikimedia.org/2018/03/15/why-the-world-reads-wikipedia/>

[4] “Interestingly, one of the barriers to adoption that this report cites is a lack of local content. “In trying to connect the unconnected to the internet, content has for many years been the forgotten ingredient, with efforts prioritised in expanding coverage and lowering the cost of ownership. These are, of course, fundamental, but so too is the question: is the internet relevant for me?”

https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Strategy/Wikimedia_movement/2017/Sources/Considering_2030:_Future_technology_trends_that_will_impact_the_Wikimedia_movement#cite_note-8 pointing to

<https://www.gsmaintelligence.com/research/?file=357f1541c77358e61787fac35259dc92&download> slide

[5] There are a number of papers and books which examine the network effect and symbiotic growth between Google and English Wikipedia in the early years of the project. Anrew Lih's is probably the most narrative. Academic version: [The Substantial Interdependence of Wikipedia and Google: A Case Study on the Relationship Between Peer Production Communities and Information Technologies](#)

[6] New Editors and New Readers research both make the case that learning and understanding policies and the suitability of those policies for other cultures or underserved topics may present significant barriers.

[7] In the commentary that follows the quote that opens this document, for example, notability and reliable sources policies are cited as barriers for African participants in English Wikipedia for example.

Interestingly Asaf Bartov recently claimed in a related discussion that notability is not the core problem faced by emerging communities, but rather reliable sourcing. In either case these are community policy issues.

[8] Search referral traffic is X% (I think like 2/3) of daily traffic.

[9] Note about search rank and CTR

Sources

J. Minor [Research and Insights](#) Other contributors¹: A. Baso, B. Davis, A. Halfaker, D. Horn, J. Katz, J. Minor, T. Negrin, M. Novotny, N. Pangarkar, O. Vasileva

¹ If your name was left off the list by mistake please contact JMinor or MNovotny

