

WikiBreathing

How communities respond to changes in public engagement with wikis

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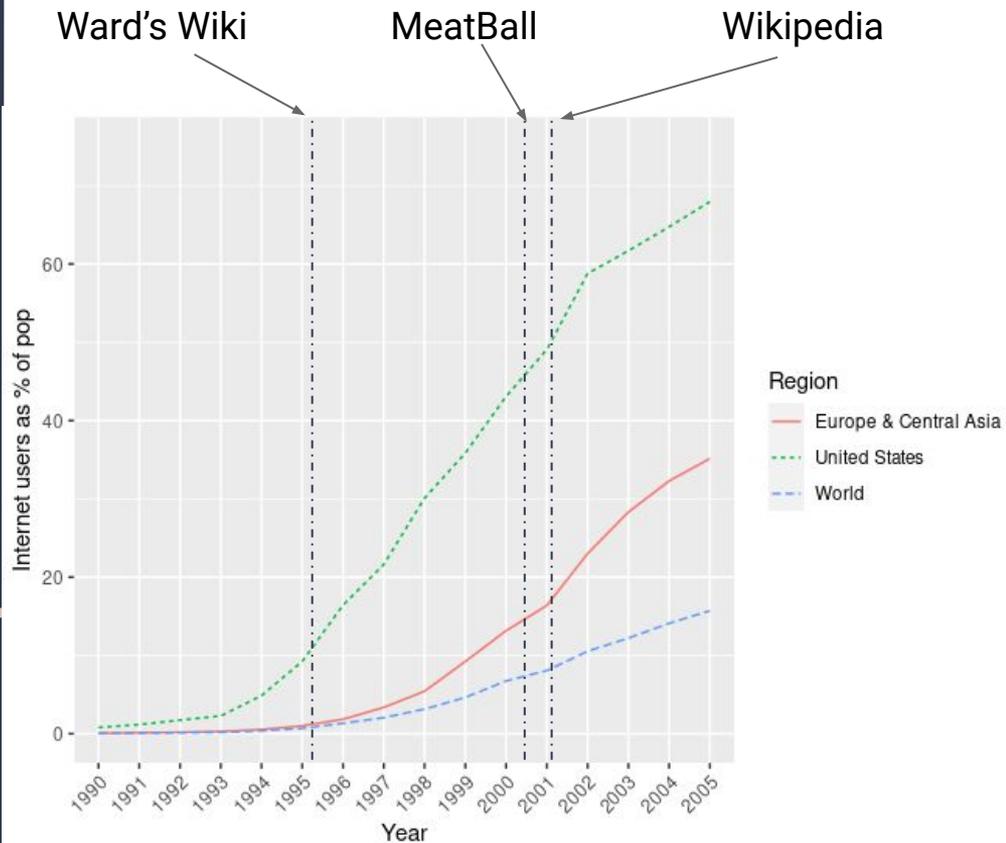
Outline

- Introduction
 - The first decade of wikis
 - Reader incursion
 - WikiBreathing
- Case study:
EnWiki unprotections
 - Methodology
 - Results
 - Discussion
- Conclusions

Introduction



The first decade of wikis



Data from the World Bank

Reader incursion

- Kiene, Monroy-Hernández, and Mako Hill (2016) findings from r/NoSleep
 - Strict and consistent enforcement
 - Participation of long-time members
 - Technical infrastructure
- Social regulation is critical
- Challenges previous findings which suggest rules and enforcement are harmful to Wikipedia
 - (c.f. Butler, Joyce, and Pike 2008; Halfaker, et al. 2012)

WikiBreathing

- Wikipedia's success catalyzed reader incursions on smaller wikis
- Ward's Wiki restricted access using an edit code word system
 - Similar to a captcha
 - Sometimes no code was given
 - Trusted contributors had codes which would work even when none was provided
- Referred to as "WikiBreathing" by MeatBall contributors

Case study:
Unprotections on the English Wikipedia



Methodology

- All articles protected prior to 2010
- 55 articles reviewed
 - 19 were edit protected
- 7 articles unprotected
 - Monitored for 31 days with active interventions
 - Left to community maintenance since
- Edits counted by hand
 - Included if not AC when edit was made
 - Non-AC edits inspected manually

Methodology

- Edits described as
 - Good faith: intended to be helpful but may have formatting problems, etc
 - Bad faith: intended to harm the article or disrupt its maintenance
 - Constructive: helped build the article
 - Unconstructive: were not particularly useful

Summary of results



Page	Status ←	Daily views ←	# Edits ←	# non-AC ←
Cattle	Indef semi	3,000	63	24
Dance	Unprot	1,000	69	26
Beckham	Indef semi	10,000	75	20
Dragon	Unprot	2,500	79	35
Flower	Unprot	1,600	135	40
Frog	Indef semi	1,800	11	4
Picasso	Unprot	5,000	76	32

Summary data for pages during the period they were unprotected

Individual page case studies
Currently protected



Cattle

Results

- Protected 30 May 2008
Unprotected 2 May 2021
- 25 edits in first 7 days
 - 6 good faith non-AC edits, 4 constructive
 - 4 bad faith non-AC edits
- 3 day protection on May 11
- 29 edits following protection expiry
 - 1 constructive non-AC edit
 - 14 unconstructive
- 3 day protection on May 23
 - 9 unconstructive non-AC edits
- Indefinite protection restored on May 27

David Beckham

Results

- Protected 7 January 2009
Unprotected 2 May 2021
- 17 edits in first 9 days
 - 9 non-AC edits, none constructive
- PC protected May 11
 - 11 non-AC edits, one constructive
- Disruption continued in June
- Indefinitely protected on 30 June

Frog

Results

- Protected 5 January 2009
Unprotected 2 May 2021
- 11 edits in first 40 hours
 - 7 were spam, 4 reverted spam
- Indefinitely protected 3 May 2021

Individual page case studies
Currently unprotected



Dance

Results

- Protected 15 January 2009
Unprotected 3 May 2021
- 6 edits in first 7 days
 - Three by non-AC, all good faith
- 63 edits since May 13
 - Long gaps of inactivity
 - 24 non-AC edits, 4 constructive

Outcomes of constructive non-AC edits

- 26 Jul: reverted, warned, IP got no response when replying to the warning
- 6 Jun: new account edited, reverted after 1 minute, no warning, no further edits
- 16 Jul: changed “though” to “however”, blocked for having “bot” in username 26 minutes later, unblock declined because template syntax

Dragon

Results

- Protected 17 January 2009
Unprotected 4 May 2021
- 43 edits by 1 June
 - 18 non-AC edits, none constructive
- One week protection until 8 June
- 36 edits since protection expiry
 - 17 non-AC edits, 6 good faith

Outcomes of constructive non-AC edits

- 29 June: IP tries to simplify language, reverted with detailed explanation
- 8 July: IP adds info to lead, reverted 11 days later with detailed explanation
- 4 Aug: IP corrects factual error
- 6 Aug: IP improves hatnote

Flower

Results

- Protected 13 January 2009
Unprotected 3 May 2021
- 35 edits in first month
 - 17 non-AC edits, 2 constructive
 - Spamming incident led to protection
- Protected one week expiring June 3
- 100 edits since expiry
 - 23 non-AC edits, 8 good faith
- Relatively quiet, still unprotected

Pablo Picasso

Results

- Protected 25 January 2009
Unprotected 22 May 2021
- 76 edits since unprotection
 - 32 non-AC edits, 14 good faith
 - 4 test edits, 10 constructive edits

Outcomes of constructive non-AC edits

- 5 Jul: IP adds info death, edit still up
- 18 June: IP removes uncited info causing editor to add new citation
- 8 June: IP adds info w/ bare URL cite, reverted for “unconventional sourcing”
- 7 June: “committed” -> “died by”, still up
- 28 May: IP changed full name causing 4 editor discussion and better sourcing

Discussion and conclusions



Discussion

- Kiene, et al. (2016)
 - Strict and consistent enforcement
 - Participation of long-time members
 - Technical infrastructure

Discussion

Strict and consistent enforcement

- Contradicts first point of Keine, et al. (2016)
- Overzealous enforcement rejects good edits
 - Cited info rejected for having bare url
 - *Dance* case shows biting
- Helpful in some cases
- Requires *interaction*

Discussion

Participation of long-time members

- IP editing has indirect benefits
- Imperfect edits prompt edits
 - IPs at Picasso prompted watchers to add two new citations
- IPs create PageChurn
 - Edits bring in RC patrollers
 - Edits bring page to top of watch lists
 - IP edits bring additional scrutiny
 - Added attention makes improvement more likely

Discussion

Technological infrastructure

- Active tools are helpful
- Passive tools are critical
 - Many reverts performed by ClueBot
 - AbuseFilters prevent vandalism before it posts
- Passive tech reduces burden on editors
 - Less stressed editors are more likely to engage with newcomers
 - Further development is recommended

Discussion

WikiBreathing as a cultural encounter

- WikiBreathing is a context
 - Wiki subculture has prevailing views on readers
 - Reader culture has prevailing views on wikis
- The outcome of these encounters constitutes WikiBreathing
- Breathing Out
 - Suspicion and Antipathy
 - Restrictions and disruption
- Breathing In
 - Trust and Apathy
 - Privilege and co-construction

Conclusion

- Readers are not evil
- Unprotected articles benefit from more than just typo fixes
- How we respond is important
- Try unprotection

Works cited

- Butler, Benjamin; Joyce, Elisabeth; Pike, Jacqueline (2008). ["Don't look now, but we've created a bureaucracy: the nature and roles of policies and rules in wikipedia"](#). *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*: 1101-1110. doi:[10.1145/1357054.1357227](#)
- Halfaker, Aaron; Geiger, R. Stuart; Morgan, Jonathan; Riedl, John (2013). "The Rise and Decline of an Open Collaboration System: How Wikipedia's reaction to popularity is causing its decline". *American Behavioral Scientist* **57** (5): 664-688. doi:[10.1177/0002764212469365](#)
- Kiene, Charles; Monroy-Hernández, Andrés; Mako Hill, Benjamin (2016). ["Surviving an "Eternal September": How an online community managed a surge of newcomers"](#). *Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*: 1152-1156. doi:[10.1145/2858036.2858356](#)

Thank you!

Questions?

On-wiki: <https://w.wiki/3rwL>

Email: brickhouse@stanford.edu

Additional slides

Currently protected		Currently unprotected	
Views	Rank	Views	Rank
10K	1		
		5.0K	2
3.0K	3		
		2.5K	4
1.8K	5		
		1.6K	6
		1.0K	7

$$U = 3$$

Wilcoxon ranks for page views by current protection level

Currently protected		Currently unprotected	
!AC/Edit	Rank	!AC/Edit	Rank
		0.44	1
		0.42	2
0.38	3.5	0.38	3.5
0.36	5		
		0.30	6
0.27	7		

$$U = 2.5$$

Wilcoxon ranks for percentage of non-autoconfirmed edits by current protection level

The first decade of wikis

- 2003:
 - 100k articles on EnWiki
 - 500k global articles
- 2004:
 - Size doubled: over 1 million global articles
 - Wikipedia cited in US federal court opinion
- 2005:
 - Fastest growing and largest educational site
 - 12 million annual readers, up from 3 million
 - Final 9 months saw 20 million edits

The first decade of wikis

- Wikis were an integral part of the early internet
- In 1995 internet usage was at:
 - 10% in the US
 - 1% in Europe
 - 1% in the rest of the world
- By 2000 in the United States the internet was used by
 - 53% of Whites
 - 38% of Blacks
 - 81% of those making >\$75k
 - 34% of those making <\$30k
 - 67% of those with some college
 - 40% of those with only high school

Reader incursion

- Growth is the goal
 - Are there only upsides?
- Success brings new members to the community
 - A “reader incursion” when large numbers of readers simultaneously begin to contribute
- New members need to be socialized
- Community may not scale
- What does a successful strategy look like?

“ During a "breathe out" the access to a wiki is made a little more difficult. For the regulars this will not be a problem. Others will feel repelled or slightly offended and will move on, looking for other communities that fit themselves better. This may be necessary for a successful community which has attracted too many people ”

-- WikiBreathing,
Meatball contributors