Wikipedia in Indigenous Languages
Threats and Opportunities

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Chapter Outline

1. Wikipedia Overview
   - Size and influence
   - (Re)presentation

2. Local research activities
   - Challenges, opportunities
   - Research results

3. Outlook
   - The way ahead
   - Available resources

The 21ˢᵗ century encyclopedia

WIKIPEDIA

- Started 2001, open source, content licensed under `CC-BY-SA`
- 2005: accuracy comparable to *Encyclopædia Britannica*
- 36 million articles, 291 languages
- Largest edition: English, 5.2 million articles, 10 billion page views
- Written by about 90,000 volunteers
- the Internet's largest and most popular general reference work
- Invaluable teaching resource
- 21ˢᵗ century's outline, bibliography, and definition of knowledge

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Wikipedia's relevance for Namibia

- available in English, German, Afrikaans, Chinese, Portuguese
  - . . . the native tongues of former and current colonial masters
  - Three editors actively writing about Namibia—two Germans, one Australian
  - ⇒ 'Namibian narrative' again told from an alien perspective
- Setswana Wikipedia: 603 articles
- Other Namibian indigenous languages are in Incubator at best
  - Otjiherero: 80 articles
  - Oshindonga: 54 articles
  - Khoekhoegowab: 1 article
  - Silozi, Rukwangali, Ju|'Hoansi, Oshikwanyama, Taa, Thimbukushu, . . . zero articles
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Challenges and Methods

1. **Apathy** of educators and learners $\Rightarrow$ outreach, communication and persuasion
   1. Outreach, training, raising awareness
   2. Consultations, demonstrations, motivational interventions
   3. Games, feedback, encouragement, competition
2. **Systemic bias** of Wikipedia $\Rightarrow$ analysis, case study, experiment
   1. Analysis of inconsistency of regulations
   2. Participating observation of prejudices and hive mind
   3. Case study on Oral citations for English Wikipedia
   4. Experiment to collect reliable and independent oral sources
3. **Cultural differences** $\Rightarrow$ design a prototype of a local language edition that suits local communities

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Opportunities

1. **Relevance**
   - No commercial encyclopedias to fight against
   - Urgent need by mother–tongue instruction
   - Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

2. **Access**
   - To the Internet: School labs under–utilised, mobile network coverage
   - For researchers: Communities 'around the corner'

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Preliminary results

1. **Persuasion works**, but only for its duration
   (Masters thesis by M Mushiva, NUST, August 2014)

2. **Systemic bias** entrenched beyond voluntary self–reflection
   (Book chapter with M vd Velden, University of Oslo, pre–released August 2013)

3. **Self–censorship** prevents access to oral knowledge repositories
   (Several conference talks in 2013 and 2014)

4. **Indigenous knowledge** is accessible, verifiable, peer–reviewed
   (Workshop for PDC 2014 in Windhoek)

5. **Value clash** Indigenous communities ⇔ Wikipedians
   (Papers with H Winschiers–Theophilus, GK Kapuire, C Stanley, D
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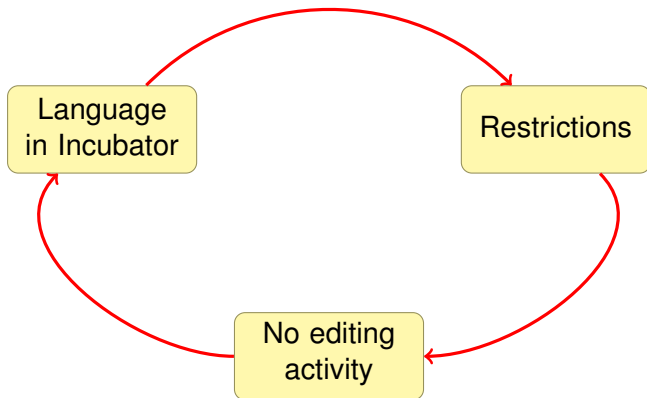
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Vicious Circle

Break the vicious circle

- No readers ⇒ no writers
- Required seed content:
  - Somewhat useful encyclopaedia: 5,000 articles
  - No Board of Editors ⇒ self–selection of topics
- **You can help!**
  - Do mother–tongue class work on Wikipedia
  - Use the computer lab for biology, life skills, maths, et cetera
  - *Primary level*: "The elephant is a mammal in Africa." "Grass is green."
  - *Secondary level*: Describe Kepler's second law of planetary motion. Explain the terms "loan" and "repayment".
  - *Tertiary level*: Translate article X into language Y. Assemble the bibliography of scientist A in APA style.

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Who can help?

- Wikimedia Foundation: brochures, syllabi, sample tasks and assessments
- Wikipedia ambassadors in your country: Ghana, South Africa, Tunisia
- Email me: Teacher training, remote support, individual help
- There is a network, there are funds!
- **Knowledge wants to be free**

End of Presentation

"Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That's what we're doing."

—Jimbo Wales

Any questions?

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