Community Communications

or, how do we talk to 10,000 people?

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Well, being honest...

...badly
A hard problem

- On enwiki alone, **10,000** active people
  (plus on-and-off users)
- Different levels of involvement
  (some don't care about “meta”)
- Different interests, expectations, priorities
  (but everyone wants “the important things”!)
Not looking at...

- Translation and language issues
- Cross-cultural communication
- “Public communication” (press, outreach)
- “Editorial” communication (related to editing)

...all important, but we don't have long!

So: consider how “the movement” interacts with the average user on en.wiki...
Important points

• We're all trying – no-one hides anything! (this is not beating up WMF...)

• Things are already changing for the better

• I don't claim to have an answer!
Where are we?
We tell people about...

- **Movement**: WMF elections, major policy & legal discussions or changes
- **Local**: Local meetups, events, and Chapter activity
- **Technical**: Upcoming & recent changes, patches, requests for testers
- **Project**: Policy discussions, elections, meta-RFCs, wikiprojects, and **thousands** of editorial issues

(...but oddly, **very rarely** job openings.)
We do this with...

- **The site**  
  Central/site notice, watchlist notices, geonotices

- **The project**  
  Noticeboards, village pumps, wikiprojects, newsletters, many talkpages, {{central discussion}}, RFC lists, notifications

- **Offwiki**  
  Mailing lists, IRC, social media, metawiki, MediaWiki-wiki, press, chapters, direct email, personal contact (hi, we're at Wikimania!), bugzilla... probably some others
Big numbers, all guesses

• Movement  ~10 times/year
• Local      From never to 50/year (depends where you are)
• Technical  Varies – all things 50+/year, big things maybe 6/year
• Project    Anything up to 300+/year

Obviously, not everyone sees everything!
Informal notice triage

Central/site notice
WMF Elections, “WP is going down”, rare RFCs

Watchlist notice
Tech announcements, RFCs, etc. – most important

Central discussion
"

Signpost
"

Village Pumps
"
– moderately important

Noticeboards, direct to users, wikiprojects, Echo notifications, etc
Most other discussions
There are many problems

- User frustration at constant bombardment
- Overload: too many venues & channels
- Indiscriminate: sorted by priority, not interest
- Many notices easily missed
- Bad for cross-project things
- Can lead to disengagement
But they're important

- We can get a lot of attention if done well
  “Having the site notice up for those four or five hours doubled participation in the RfC, leading to about 100 editors leaving an opinion” - VE discussion, 1/8/13

- Publicising discussions gives legitimacy
- Invitations to participate are positive
- Potential to deepen participation
Going forward
New tools

- Notifications (Echo)
  - Direct messages to users with read flagging
  - Generally well received (!)
  - Already very innovative things happening

- Commons watchlist messages
  - Compact “sliding” system
  - Selectable subjects of interest
  - ...but currently broken?
Notifications

- Mary Dunlap and 1 other posted on your talk page.
  "Great article on Tam Valley!"
  6 minutes ago | View changes

- Mary Dunlap thanked you for your edit on Tamalpais Valley
  "Does anyone have references about Coyote Ridge?"
  11 minutes ago | View changes

- Fabrice Florin mentioned you on Talk: Tamalpais Valley
  "Here are some tips on Coyote Ridge, to improve your Tam Valley Page."
  35 minutes ago | View changes

- Kaldari reviewed a page you started: Tamalpais Valley
  44 minutes ago
Message topics and types

Select the topics you would like to get notifications about

1. New policies:
   Request for Comments about new policies or adoption of newly introduced policies

2. Policy changes:
   Recent or intended changes to policies

3. Election of important positions:
   Election of people requiring a high level of trust such as checkusers

4. New features:
   New technical features

Display

Adjust how the messages are displayed

- Show only one message at once

[Disable watchlist notes]

[Save] [Cancel]
Technical suggestions?

- Rationalise some notice methods
- Implement Commons-style watchlist notices
  - Geonotice, watchlist notice, central discussion
- Consider expanding Notifications
  - Sitenotice, central discussion, some RFCs
  - Formalise guidelines to ID relevant users
- ...and wait to see what Flow does!
Until then...

- **Workarounds**
  - Leave plenty of time for word to spread
  - Consider escalating notices
  - Per-user messages good if possible

- **Consider audience priorities**
  - Will it affect the interface or workflow?
  - What has previous discussion involved?
Any thoughts?

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