

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**

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!

Part I

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

Part II

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

Watchlist note configuration



Message topics and types

Select the topics you would like to get notifications about

- New policies:**
Request for Comments about new policies or adoption of newly introduced policies
- Policy changes:**
Recent or intended changes to policies
- Election of important positions:**
Election of people requiring a high level of trust such as checkusers
- 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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