How not to reinvent the wheel: learning from others in the Wikimedia movement

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WIKIMEDIA
F O U N D A T I O N

We are all learning things all the time.

[Facilitator]
We are all learning things all the time… because we are doing things all the time.
The first access to knowledge is experience.

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[Facilitator]
Experiential knowledge is defined as knowledge gained through experience, as opposed to that gained a priori, or through a textbook (called descriptive or propositional knowledge). [1]

Take the example of this kid. He doesn't need to know about atmospheric pressure, evaporation, or the chemical composition of the soap, to have a successful bubble. He may do it once, and the second time, he might blow slower to get a longer bubble.

Experiential knowledge is the first, most basic level of knowledge we develop, and the questions about why what happens happens, is what leads us to create more structured forms of knowledge.

How can we capture experiential knowledge?

[Facilitator]
Capturing or documenting experiential knowledge is key to move from the anecdote into shared learning, a resource that others can both relate to and apply in their own context.

Understanding what you learn

There are two key elements to experiential knowledge:

1. **Process**

2. **Assumptions**

Public Domain, NACA

Describing your process

Think of the steps you take to run a programmatic activity or event.

- What do you achieve in each step?
- Why is it important?

Example[3]:
To run an edit-a-thon, you need to:
1. Define a clear set of goals.
2. Determine logistics:
    a. Size
    b. Internet access
    c. Computers
    d. Refreshments
    e. Access
3. Recruit active Wikipedia Editors and research experts
4. Prepare reference materials
5. Determine how to create user accounts
6. Provide a way for people to find out about the event and sign up to attend
7. Have appropriate forms for data collection afterwards

Stating your assumptions

When you assume something, you believe without proof that something is true or that something will happen.

Reflecting back on your assumptions, after the activity took place, helps you to see what assumptions were correct and which ones were wrong, and adjust your activity as a consequence.

Example [4]:

We understand that extracurricular editing is competing for students' time with other priorities. For this reason, our target student group audience includes those who we consider "high achieving" in their field as well as those with the potential interest in Wikipedia editing.

We believe students involved in honor societies and other extracurricular student clubs are meeting to discuss topics they are passionate about. We posited that passion should lead to high-quality contributions to content gaps in their fields, and may lead to students continuing to edit Wikipedia after the term ends.

[Facilitator]
When a programmatic activity or event fails, it is usually related to a wrong assumption. We assume things will happen based on our previous experience, but until we try, we don't know how it is going to work out. In the example, from Wiki Edu Foundation, the hidden assumption is that students would edit Wikipedia without any incentives. This was a wrong assumption.

Sharing experience: One learning pattern at a time

User: Spiritia | Vassia Atanassova | Wikimedians of Bulgaria User Group

When is your experience worth sharing?

- When you are the first / only one to do something (e.g. you invented / coded / performed ... it)
- When you have done something many times and under various conditions, and know the difference
- When you have performed better than the others, and know the reasons why ☺
- When you have failed epically, but understood the reasons why ☺

What we learn from?

OUR FAILURE → OUR SUCCESS

THEIR FAILURE   THEIR SUCCESS

How to share experience in learning patterns?

- Try walking again in newbie's shoes. Learn from it.
- Don't take for granted that others know what is obvious to you.
- Specify who is the target user of your learning pattern. And why.
- Find the right balance between being *Unique* and being *Similar*.
- Find the right balance between too *Abstract* and too *Concrete*.
- Divide your experience in larger or smaller, but "chewable" bites.
- Give examples, things to consider, ideas for adapting the LP.

What makes you unique and outstanding?

A novel idea

A new approach to implementing an existing idea

Exclusive access to resources or settings

Specific profile of the people involved

Something else?

What makes you similar to others?

Size / dynamics of wiki community

Problems with content / users (copyvio, machine translation, tests)

Engagement with GLAM / Education

Engagement with media and audiences

Cultural settings (e.g. attitudes to volunteering)

Legal status (chapter / informal user group / none)

Whom you share experience with?

Individual → Individual

User group → User group

Chapter → Chapter

How can experience, shared in a learning pattern, be adapted in order to help others?

Implement in another wiki project
Mind the project-specific rules (e.g. no fair use in some versions of Wikipedia, or in Wikisource). Mind the local wiki community's size and internal dynamics.

Increase the scale of the project
For example: 20 ≻ 60 people. Can be very tempting, but may open a lot of new, unexpected issues. Worth considering: venue capacity, wifi bandwidth, time for processing, queues, parking.

Implement in another language
This may require preliminary preparation for translation and localization of project pages and interface messages. Again, mind the local wiki community's size and internal dynamics.

Modify the goal or the scope
Not always possible ☺ Experience from a GLAM project with an Archaeological Museum may not be directly transferrable to a project with a Museum of Modern Arts (due to copyrights).

Change the time or duration
For example, some countries organize the Wiki Loves Earth contest in different months. A wiki education project can be rescheduled for the summer, not in the school year, etc.

Modify only the budget
Not always possible ☺ Experience gathered from a funded project may not always be directly utilised in a project without a budget. True the other way round, too.

How to share experience

- Try walking again in newbie's shoes. Learn from it.
- Don't take for granted that others know what is obvious to you.
- Specify who is the target user.
- Find the right balance:
  - Unique vs. similar
  - Abstract vs. concrete
- Divide your experience in digestible bites
- Give examples!

Why share your experience?
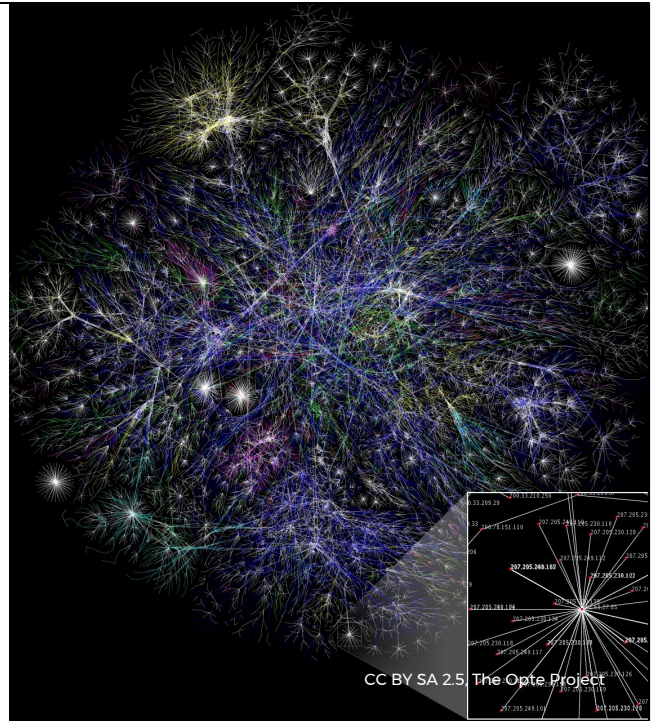
Some things make you unique

- A novel idea
- A new approach to implementing an existing idea
- Exclusive access to resources or settings
- Specific profile of the people involved
- Something else?

Some things make you similar to others

- Size / dynamic of the wiki community
- Problems with content / users (copyvio, machine translation, tests
- Engagement with GLAM / Education
- Engagement with media and audiences
- Cultural settings (e.g., attitudes towards volunteering)
- Legal status (chapter / user group / none)

A network of knowledge

Within a specific location, there can be certain education, public policy, GLAM, community building needs that are relevant to that city / country. Making the context clear allows others to resonate with certain characteristics, and adapt your experience.

(MC)

How do you bring *your local context* to the world? How do you bring the *world* to your local context?

In the movement's mission, global and local elements have to be combined to reach shared goals.
Within a specific location, there can can be certain education needs that are relevant to that city / country (eg, professional training, educational software), as well as a certain cultural Agenda (eg., appraising of local history, awareness of local contemporary artists, etc).

By identifying these needs on the local level, program leaders and community members can design projects that include global products, yet fit the local context in the appropriate way.

This is known as Glocalization, a means of combining the idea of globalization with that of local considerations. The picture is a network analysis of the internet in 2005, and it helps us to describe how each node is unique, but still contributes to expanding the network even further.

When a program leader or wikimedia organization makes their context clear, they are making relevant why it is important to have Wikimedia programs (like Wiki Loves Monuments, Wikipedians in REsidence, etc) and products (like Wikipedia, Wikimedia
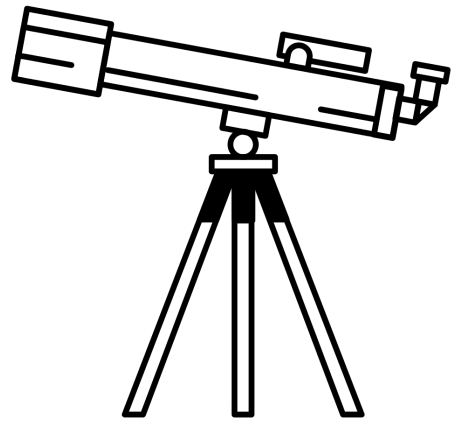
Commons, Wiki Books, Wiki Voyage) in a certain location.

Look around you, stay up to date with the news from the movement. Who in the movement is in a context that is similar to yours? Which groups are working in your thematic area? Think of the things you have in common, and how you can support them, or how they could support you.

Question to the group:
- Can anyone think of a Wikimedia group or community member that can relate to their work?
- Who are they, and how would you connect with them?

Glocalization

Contribute
what you
know; find
what you are
looking for.

Wikimedia Resource Center

Find what you're looking for.

The **Wikimedia Resource Center** is a new portal designed to be a single point of entry for Wikimedians all over the world to access specific Wikimedia resources, including documented best practices, program support, toolkits, and financial resources. See disclaimer.

Not sure where to go? Try our **walkthrough**.

| Search all resources | | Search | Search full text |

For Program Coordinators

Resources for people organizing initiatives, including training and outreach programs.

For Contributors

Resources for those who contribute content to our projects.

For Developers

Resources for those who contribute code to our projects, writing bots, Lua modules, and contributions to MediaWiki itself.

For Affiliate Organizers

Resources for those with governance roles in their affiliates, including chapter board members.

View All Resources | Documentation | Translation | Give Feedback

Have any questions?

Ask a question

Recent questions

For an editathon I would like to make a list of articles in a special category that are stubs (so less than 2500 bytes or thereabouts). I see that there is a page_len field set in the page table so I was wondering if I could query this somehow through the api? Question from Jane023 16:19, 25 January 2017 (UTC)

View discussion

Can one get a professional certification in Wikimedia use for education? Pharos (talk) 19:08, 20 June 2017 (UTC)

View discussion

Is there a system in place to semi-automate the renewal process for a WMF Rapid Grant? Checkingfax (talk) 17:18, 2 July 2017 (UTC)

View discussion

Dear,

I am working on a separate wiki but this wiki does not allow me to use annotated images. I tried to export and import the template:annotated_images_4, but this doesn't work. How can I transfer the image annotations to another wiki? Mactwyver (talk) 18:54, 12 July 2017 (UTC)

Challenges

- Should we have standard templates for documentation? What sections should exist?

- Classify guides and documents by level of experience?

- Rate most useful documentation?

Thank you!

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References

[1] Definition of Experiential Knowledge: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experiential_knowledge

[2] Science behind the bubble: https://www.kidsdiscover.com/teacherresources/bubbles-for-kids/

[3] How to run and edit-a-thon: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:How_to_run_an_edit-a-thon

[4] Wiki Education Foundation Outreach Pilot: https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wiki_Education_Foundation/Outreach_Pilot_final_report

[5] Sharing Experience: One learning pattern at a time - Wikimania 2016 poster: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sharing_experience-One_learning_pattern_at_a_time_-_poster_-_Learning_Days_-_Wikimania_2016.pdf