

WikiLearn

A new online learning platform
for the movement

WIKIMANIA



Who? What?



- We are **Simona Ramkisson** (top right) and **Asaf Bartov**, from the Community Development team at the Wikimedia Foundation.
- We're here to talk about the **past, present, and future** of a new **online learning platform** for the entire movement!

Why?

- To become the essential infrastructure of the ecosystem of free knowledge, as our Strategy calls for, we need to invest in skills and leadership development.
- There is a clear need for **up-to-date, high-quality** training resources across the movement.
- Much of the existing training materials are **under-utilized**, even by people who would gladly have used them had they **known** they existed.
- Other training materials are **incomplete** or **unmaintained** (and out of date).
- And many things just don't have any training materials available **at all**.

Why?

- **Access** is a significant barrier to skill development in the Wikimedia movement.
 - Learning and development experiences happen at movement convenings (travel, language, time off, funding)
- In-person training is great, but also exclusionary and limited.
- Online learning addresses many of these downsides (and has its own).

What would be ideal?

- Ideally, the Wikimedia movement would have a platform where:
 - Structured, up-to-date learning resources are available for anyone to study.
 - Materials are available in multiple languages. (Text translated, videos subtitled)
 - Volunteers can contribute and not just consume learning materials.
 - Grading and automated assessment are available for self-study.
 - Grading, mentorship, and qualitative assessments are available for human-taught interactive courses.
 - Materials can be easily forked and modified.
 - All on free software.

How?

- Knowing the problem space is *enormous*, we decided to **experiment** with a Learning Management System (LMS), and ran **two interactive pilot courses** on the free-software **Moodle** platform.
 - Self-paced courses pose fewer unknown.
 - Two courses is 100% more data than one :)
- We picked two strategic topics: **identifying and addressing harassment** and **partnership building**. We developed custom curricula, in English, and taught for **8 weeks** in two-hour live session of instruction and discussion, supplemented by written assignments, graded by the instructor.

Some design considerations

- The courses were to **teach** principles and the learners were to **apply** them in real-life tasks, with written feedback.
- **Grades** were personal and private
- Live lessons were **recorded**; videos and slides were made available inside the platform
- The assignments were designed to **add up to a toolkit** or scaffolding for a project each learner could build on, in their local community and context.
- Easy integration with existing Wikimedia identity using OAuth
- Course materials (slides+video) will be made **available on Commons**

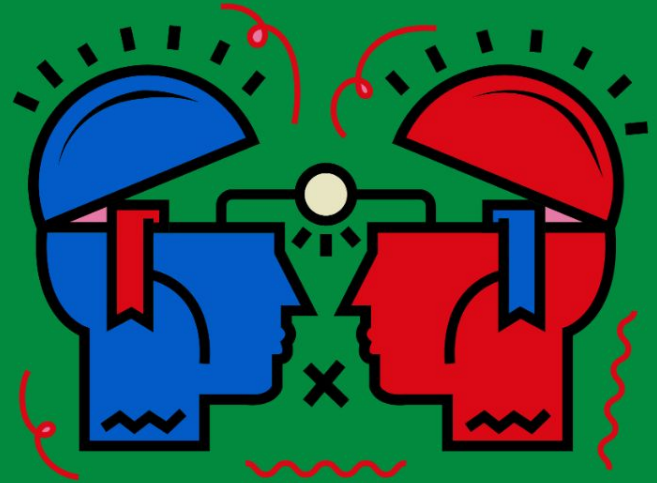
Why not Wikiversity?

- Wikiversity is a poor fit for our purpose. It is, *at best*, a collaborative environment for **developing** curricula. It is a very poor **learning** environment. It misses basic features modern Learning Management Systems do have:
 - The concept of **enrollment**. The concept of a **cohort**.
 - Mechanism for submitting, reviewing, and grading **assignments**, *privately*.
 - Learner **inboxes**, **threaded discussion** forums.
 - Smooth **integration** with (free-software) BigBlueButton **video calls**.
 - Plugins (e.g. quizzes)

Partnership Building

Developed and taught by Asaf Bartov

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Course overview

- Conceived as "an introduction to partnership building", teaching *basics from the ground up*.
- Its target audience was *experienced Wikimedians* who are *inexperienced at partnership-building*. In other words, no prior knowledge of partnership-building was assumed, but good familiarity with Wikimedia norms and workflows *was* assumed.
- There was an **emphasis on practical, Wikimedia-specific examples**, and the assignments were designed to exercise skills and cement understanding of principles in a context that's Wikimedia-specific and relevant to the learner.

Course Outline:

Week	Learning Objective
Week 1	Preparing to partner: Knowing and presenting ourselves ; effective mission statements ; effective self-presentation
Week 2	Preparing to partner: Knowing our prospective partner and partnership; Recognizing the importance of your group/affiliate's ecosystem ; Mapping stakeholders and potential partners; Studying a prospective partner via their public Web site, social media presence, press releases, etc.
Week 3	Preparing to partner: Theory of change and partnership pitch ; Distilling the "value proposition" of your partnership; Documenting expected cause and effect in a theory of change, and devising metrics for measuring progress against goals; Pitching a partnership: adding persuasion to the value proposition
Week 4	Negotiating partnerships: Preparing for partnership meetings ; Practicing alternatives to a negotiated agreement; Recognizing when and how to say no ; Supporting the pitch with an evidence toolkit
Week 5	Running partnerships: Informing and involving the volunteer community ; Planning action and sharing reality
Week 6	Sustainability and Evaluation: Evaluating partnerships beyond the programmatic work; Refining and revising partnerships; Ending partnerships
Week 7	Troubleshooting and dealing with setbacks: recognizing setbacks in partnerships; communicating problems to partners; identifying common problems ; planning mitigations
Week 8	Final projects: Choosing a structure and flow for your pitch presentation; Participating in ongoing learning

Assignments

- Assignments in this course focused on practicing specific skills and tasks taught and demonstrated each week.
- assignments were centered on *a single, actual potential partner* of the learner's group, in order to both *make the assignment maximally relevant to the learner's context* and *make its outcomes practical and useful for actual partnership-building work* with that potential partner outside the course.
- Assignments received detailed feedback; learners were encouraged to re-submit with improvements.

Final project

- Assignments built up toward the final project: **design and deliver an actual 20-minute partnership pitch** to an audience made up of the course instructor and two fellow learners, who listened and gave feedback first on behalf of the prospective partner (role-playing) and then as instructor and peers.
- This final pitch required **incorporating multiple elements practiced separately earlier** (e.g. self-presentation, partner research, value proposition, evidence toolkit, theory of change), and integrating them into a single, compelling whole.

Key findings

- Of the **39** learners who started the course, **23** graduated with passing grades, having submitted all course assignments.
 - Half the attrition due to personal circumstances; half due to lacking interest to engage and prepare assignments.
- Some learner feedback:
 - I really liked very practical examples and content from other students' homework.
 - It made my week better and I really liked the way the activities were structured. :)
 - The presenter did a great job with his presentation skills and feedback on assignments.
 - An initiative like this is a good way to improve the skills of Wikimedia community volunteers especially by having a good mentor like Asaf, I really like the way he teaches, calm and easy going.

Final survey results

Statement	% agreeing or strongly agreeing	n =
I feel more confident in my ability to initiate a partnership	100	18
I intend to apply what I learned to my Wikimedia work.	100	18
I have new or different ideas about how I might do my Wikimedia work in the future.	100	18
I gained practical skills relevant to my activities in the Wikimedia movement.	94	18
I gained knowledge relevant to my activities in the Wikimedia movement.	89	18
I better understand how to prepare for and pursue a partnership.	89	18
I found the course interesting.	100	18
Submitting assignments and getting feedback on them provided significant value to me, beyond the frontal lesson.	89	18
I am likely to recommend this course to other Wikimedians.	100	18
I would be interested in another online course from the Wikimedia Foundation's Community Development team.	94	18

Some testimonials

- "We will have three events around the country just like I planned for the partnership, but **I realized** going through your course that as a group **we are not ready for a proper partnership with a big government agency yet**. We have the numbers to have some impact, but as editors some of us don't know each other very well yet (we met nationally for the first time [recently]) so that presents **a level of risk** I wasn't very comfortable with. That was **such a valuable thing to realise!** And I think some smaller donation of data and images type relationships will help us develop our confidence as a group.
- I have however Wikified a local book festival just last week and had a quick **elevator pitch** to the director, with a follow up meeting planned soon, so am **happily using the knowledge I have gained from the training.**"

Some testimonials

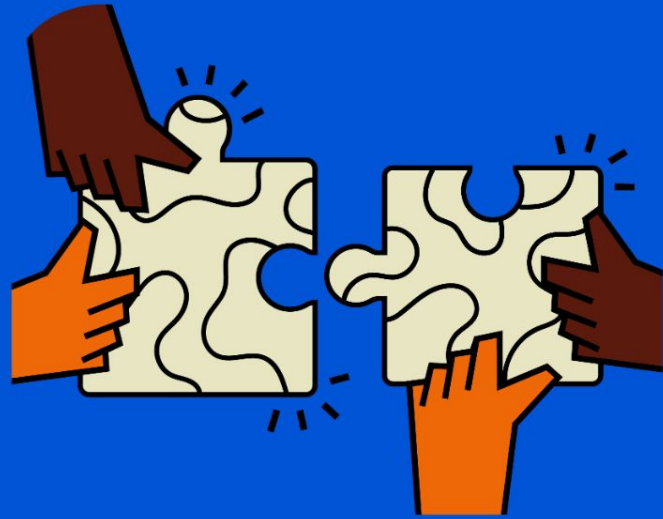
- "Yesterday I had **a meeting with the director of the National Park** [...X...] and [...] we have [made] a verbal **partnership agreement**, but we are also preparing a [memorandum] for cooperation.
- At the meeting, which lasted two and a half hours, we talked about education, field work, research, volunteering, adult training from the institution, camps, editorial competitions and awards... People received me very well just because I come as a Wikimedia educator and **they liked my idea more than I expected.**
- The Partnership Building course for me means: **confidence, security and support** in everything I do for Wikimedia. I'm happy about that!"

Some testimonials

- "We actually had a **mission statement** before, but it was focused on the generation of content. Thanks to this course I realized that our mission [statement] could be improved. I asked people at my [user group] to help me come up with a new definition. We are now **redefining our mission statement to focus on people** and their ability to develop new skills rather than content.
- We want to focus on people being able to **learn the wiki way**. Also, we want to work on languages other than [...X...] under free licenses using information and communication technologies."

Some testimonials

- "Would you mind if I did a mini-course with your material for [my language] Wikipedians who are interested in learning some partnership skills? Not a full course, just a sort of summary in [my language]."



Identifying and Addressing Harassment

Developed and taught by
Simona Ramkisson

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Identifying and Addressing Harassment

- The focus of the Identifying and Addressing Harassment course was to introduce principles of **harm reduction** and **empathy** to administrators when managing cases of harassment.
- Participants were introduced to the forms and impacts of harassment and **how other online communities address harassment** by leaders in online moderation and safety.
- The weekly session utilized a **lecture and discussion model** that encouraged participants to analyze and discuss concepts presented during class.
- Assignments in this course focused on preparing learners for the final course project, a **strategic plan that outlined actions** they planned to take when addressing harassment in their administrator roles once they have completed the course.

Course Outline:

Week	Learning Objective
Week 1	Discuss movement definitions of harassment and explore the impact on different roles/personas involved in online harassment.
Week 2	Recognize the role of implicit/unconscious bias when addressing harassment.
Week 3	Explore the fundamentals of empathetic communication when addressing targets of harassment, a critical need when intending to reduce harm .
Week 4	Participants practiced communicating and providing feedback to actors of harassment and developing best practices to ensure personal safety.
Week 5	Participants completed a self-reflection exercise to map their current practice as administrators and determine critical areas where they could immediately begin embracing harm reduction practices.
Week 6	Participants welcomed a panel of speakers who discussed how different online communities address harassment during online moderation.
Week 7	Participants began working on their end-of-course project, a plan to achieve a specific action related to reducing harm when addressing harassment they wanted to accomplish in their administrator roles.
Week 8	Participants presented their final action plans to the cohort and received feedback to improve the outcomes of their plans.

Assignments

- Each week, participants completed assignments designed to take about 45-60 minutes per week to complete. Activities consisted of forum discussions, case studies as well as personal reflections.
- The focus of assignments was to enhance concepts discussed during live sessions and not be time-intensive.
- Course instructors provided in-depth feedback on each activity, and participants were encouraged to resubmit assignments with integrated feedback for higher grading.

Final project

- Assignments built up toward the final project: **develop a concise action plan** that focused on participants taking one action that would reduce harassment in their roles as administrators.
- This action plan required **utilizing** a S.M.A.R.T goal which ensured that participants were pursuing an action plan that was possible and more likely to be successful.
- Participants presented their action plans to the entire class and received critical feedback to strengthen their plans.

Key Findings and Outcomes:

- **21** volunteers completed all **8** sessions in the course, with **18** action plans developed in full.
- These action plans represent several projects such as **providing unconscious bias training to local communities** and **online development tools to address micro-aggressions on the projects**.
- A participant from the “Identifying and Addressing Harassment” course began sharing a summary of each weekly live session in French. The motivation for the summary was interest from other French-speaking volunteers who were also interested in addressing harassment that encourages harm reduction

Final survey results

Statement	% agreeing or strongly agreeing	n =
I feel confidence in my ability to now support targets of harassment in a way that encourages empathy.	100	14
I feel I can directly address harassment on the projects to reduce harm to targets of harassment.	93	14
I gained relevant skills.	93	14
I intend to apply what I learned in the course to my Wikimedia work moving forward.	93	14
I would recommend this course to other Wikimedians.	93	14
I now have new or different ideas about how I may approach my Wikimedia work in the future.	86	14
I developed new connections with other volunteers through the course am interested in continuing those connections by developing a community of practice.	71	14

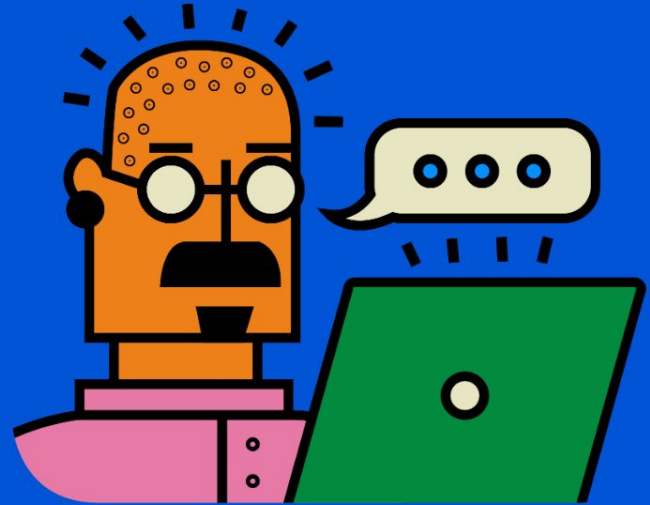
Testimonials:

- *I learned many things, that I believe I should **spread to other volunteers** who might be vulnerable or confused on what to do in cases of harassment*
- *The WikiLearn proved to be **an incredibly useful exercise in perspective taking**. It helped me to better understand the limitations of our on-wiki systems and how they can exclude certain viewpoints from the projects. This is a critical time for our projects as they come under attack from organized campaigns intending to skew our content which challenges our claims to a neutral point of view. If harassment is unchecked, and causes contributors to leave the projects, our adherence to founding principles and five pillars are at risk*

Next steps

Present steps based on this pilot year

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Long-term learning platform

- A learning platform based on the free-software **Open edX**.
- Both pilot courses will be modified to suit self-guided learning and made available publicly, and ready to be translated into other languages.
- Learning content creators from across the movement will be invited to develop both self-guided and interactive/live courses on the platform.
- We have lots of questions!

Discussion questions



We want to hear your thoughts about the **future!**

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Discussion questions

- **Need**

- What topics of online courses would you find helpful to your Wikimedia work?
- What features would you find helpful on an online learning platform?

- **Governance**

- When we open the platform to community curation, what governance measures should we put in place to handle abuse and spam?
- Do we need some distinction between complete, maintained, and up-to-date courses and the various in-progress or low-quality courses that would appear on the platform once open? If so, what might that look like, and who would be creating and maintaining it?

- **Personal interest**

- Would you like to be recognized for completing a full course on the online learning platform? If so, how? Printed certificate, barnstar, ...?
- If you are interested in developing your own courses that could be featured on the learning platform, what type of support would you need to be able to do so? Do you have some topics in mind that you would like to develop courses on?

==> Let's all go to Building 6, floor 3 on Remo, so I can see and hear you! <===



THANK YOU

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