



How to create a **WIKIPEDIA TOWN**

The story of Monmouthpedia



Scan me
for more!



The story of the idea



It all started at a TEDx talk given by Roger Bamkin and Steve Virgin, two Wikimedia UK directors, about how QRpedia codes had transformed Derby Museum. The talk inspired John Cummings to ask whether there was interest in rolling a similar project out across a whole town. In a flash, the idea that was to capture so many people's imaginations was born.

Monmouthpedia is the first Wikimedia project in the world to cover a whole town – Monmouth, in south Wales. The project aims

to cover on Wikipedia every single notable place, person, artefact, flora, fauna and anything else related to Monmouth in as many languages as possible, but with a special focus on Welsh.

This booklet tells the story of Monmouthpedia and offers a step-by-step guide on how to create your own Wikipedia town. First though, we need to know what QRpedia codes are, since the project depends on these codes for its multilingual functionality.



What is QRpedia?



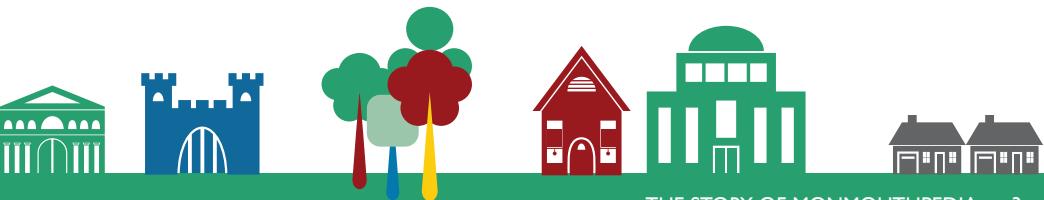
Scan for a short video about the project

QRpedia was conceived by Roger Bamkin and Terence Eden. Normal Quick Response (QR) codes when scanned by a smart phone can direct a user to a web page, QRpedia works by directing users to Wikipedia pages and takes a further step by going to the appropriate page in the user's own language. So, if you were to scan the code on the Shire Hall in Monmouth with a smart phone that usually operates in French, you'd be taken to the French Wikipedia article about the building.

If the Wikipedia article is not available in the user's language, then they are offered a list of languages to choose

from. However the real answer is for that person to create the missing translation. It's interesting that QRpedia delivers translations, but the more important change is that museums and galleries are trusting their visitors to edit the museum's knowledge.

The technology was first unveiled at Derby Museum, England, in April 2011. In the short period of time since then the technology has been used in Australia, Bulgaria, Catalonia, Estonia, Germany and the United States, as well as in the UK. The source code for the project has been made available under the MIT license.



Why Monmouth?

This is a commonly asked question, partly because many people have never heard of Monmouth! At first glance, it may seem an unusual choice. After all, it's not a large city, nor is it especially famous. However, these factors work in favour of Monmouth, along with the fact that the council also has a legal requirement to support the Welsh language.

Monmouth was actually chosen because it was John Cummings' home town and because they were enthusiastic. There were

no Wikipedians that we knew of who lived in the town. What was important was that Roger, John and Steve presented the concept and the town agreed to move the idea forward. Previously wiki-projects had been based around a core of Wikipedians. On this project we planned to train people and use remote e-volunteers. We think this worked.

Over 550 articles relating to Monmouth were created during the project in 30 different languages. Over a thousand QRpedia codes are on display around the town



Key opportunity

Tap into local knowledge, pride and enthusiasm to create lists of existing and potential content.

on buildings, street lights, museum artefacts, by local businesses – even in local library books.

We were lucky to choose a council who had recently committed to use open licenses. With the encouragement of the project, local people and institutions have released over 1,000 images and videos into the public domain. It is important for partners to realise that we believe in sharing information freely. We had some lengthy discussions but the council wanted to be open; the project was able to show them how to do it.



Key risk

Be democratic and inclusive – don't let the project seem like it's a private club.



Some key comments about Monmouthpedia

Glyn Moody, writing for Techdirt, questioned whether Monmouthpedia was the future of Wikipedia. He described the project as creating “a kind of fractal Wikipedia” likening it to the 2010 film Inception, potentially enabling “Wikipedia within a Wikipedia within a Wikipedia.” Within days of the launch, the initiative had led to widespread interest. Stevie Benton from Wikimedia UK reported that the project page had been viewed 10,000 times. He also reported there had been inquiries from towns in Norway, England, France, Scotland and Texas, USA. One test of success will however be the project’s ability to attract more tourists to the town.

Anthony Cope, a local Wikipedian, said: “Getting involved with

Monmouthpedia was an easy choice for me to make, as I was born and bred in Monmouth, and it seemed like a good way to promote Monmouth and to document the local history which I have learned and researched over the years. The more I got involved with Monmouthpedia, I learned more new information and facts which proved to be interesting and enthused me even more.”



Core stakeholder engagement

A large feature of this project was the way it managed to bring various groups with different interests together to unite behind a common goal. It wasn't just Wikipedians involved: Monmouthshire County Council, residents, businesses, cultural institutions such as Monmouth Museum and students all played important roles in making Monmouthpedia a success. The council, in particular, threw their weight behind the project by installing a free wi-fi network across the town and allowing the installation of QRpedia code plaques on civic buildings.

Businesses showed their support by displaying codes in their windows, and showed more than a little imagination. A bakery, for example,

hosted codes linking to articles on bread, baking and cake. The local museums opened up their archives to volunteers as a resource, not just for research but to share images and documents on Commons.

Local historical societies teamed up to share their local knowledge and objects too.

In essence, it was all about the spirit of widespread collaboration that makes wiki projects possible, distilled and drip-fed through a town.





Getting started

You need a few things to create a Wikipedia town. The most important thing you can have is motivation. It's a big project and one which takes a long time. There's a lot that needs organising, lots of pieces to get in place and a huge amount of work. Unless you're very rich you will require funding.

What are your objectives? Monmouthpedia identified installing 1,000 codes, getting Wikimedia UK on TV and raising the profile of the town as objectives, but it was implicit that we allowed the people of Monmouth to own the project. If you visit the town today then everyone

knows about Monmouthpedia, QR codes, smart phones and how useful Wikipedia can be. Some people like the local library and the council's web developer are using ideas and technology they discovered whilst helping with this project.

You can ask people for help but remember you have the world's best and free encyclopedia backed by 100,000 volunteers. Make sure you feel that the volunteer's role is in line with our mission. Some potential partners will find it difficult to understand that we demand that all information is shared and we don't allow our web site to be exploited. Make sure that you are happy that they understand our values and they are willing to adapt theirs where necessary. John was installed as the project manager supported by a steering group with a representative from Wikimedia UK, Monmouth County Council and the local university.

Key opportunity

Make friends! Many hands make light work



Next you need a list of existing articles relating to your town. You can do this by creating categories. It's important to record what it looked like before the miracle happened.

You will need a list of those that could be created. The only way to do this is to ask others to help. Build relationships with galleries, museums, the local council / government, community associations – anyone with local knowledge who can help you with the content.

Tell schools, colleges and universities what you're up to. Roisin Curran, a history student, chose to do her work placement with Monmouthpedia at Monmouth Museum. She knew very little about editing Wikipedia when she started, but she left with "Wikipedian In Residence" on her CV. The project also attracted seven post graduate researchers from several universities who are studying this project. Some are interested in the QR codes and our ability to use augmented reality, but others are interested in journalism and the way that we work together:



Don't forget your local chapter or the Foundation. They can offer merchandise, help with promotion, contacts and money.



Promote your project in the community and among Wikipedians. Every wiki project likes to create and edit good content and learn about new topics. If you intend to do a town then you will need a better method of attracting help. The method devised by Andrew Dalby for the Derby project was to create a multi-lingual challenge. We found enthusiastic Wikipedians who work in languages such as Esperanto, Hungarian and Welsh. Some editors are interested in languages and others are interested in geotagging, nature reserves, historic ships or ancient buildings. Your project needs to follow and reward other people's enthusiasm. Small prizes attract large contributions. Some contributors created over 50 articles! Search for the Charles Rolls Challenge for more details.

Key risk

People may not buy your vision – be prepared to work hard to sell the idea



Making and sharing QRpedia codes

At first glance QRpedia codes look pretty daunting and confusing. It's just a lot of black and white squares! Visit qrpedia.org – the only site that works in the way required and simply take your Wikipedia URL and paste it into the field on the site. Hey presto! Your freshly minted code appears on the screen. Click on the code and it instantly downloads to your computer. The page also shows you how many languages the

page appears in – the article about Wikipedia will load in 250 languages, for example.

Sharing the codes is an area in which you can be really creative, but the real difficulty in Monmouth was permissions. In Monmouth for important articles, the codes were printed on ceramic tiles and cemented on to the front of buildings. For an important Welsh building you need the permission from three public bodies in addition to the owner of the building and the owner of every logo that you intend to use. Do not underestimate this task.

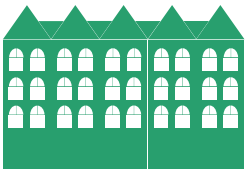




A simpler task is to create the tiles themselves. In our case we used an art therapy workshop in Monmouth and a local ceramicist. Some of the codes were printed on promotional posters around the town, on bookmarks, on labels for museum objects, the inside cover of library books, on stickers for shop windows and doors... letting others decide how to do this means that they will realise that it's their project.

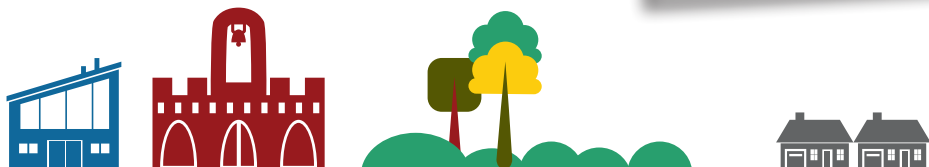
Do bear in mind that QRpedia codes aren't effective when working in isolation. Rather, they need some context to encourage people to actually scan them so don't forget to give them an appropriate label.

Realise that many people won't understand what the codes are for or how they work so when you're promoting the project in your town let people know how to access them. We found that any free QR code scanner works perfectly well so there's no need for people to pay for one. Find one you like and let people know how they can download the app and how to use it.



Merchandise

Don't underestimate the value of attractive and impactful merchandise. People love give-aways! As you can see, we came up with all kinds of goodies for visitors and participants. T-shirts, beer mats, posters, pens, badges... speak to your local chapter as they may well be able to help. Don't forget to read the important legal stuff about using logos related to Wikipedia and Wikimedia before commissioning any materials.



The legal stuff

You need permission to use Wikipedia and Wikimedia logos. Your local chapter has some leeway, but if a town wants to use a Wikipedia logo then it needs an agreement with the Wikimedia Foundation. The Foundation are well aware of the value of the logo and they will need to be convinced that your project will improve the brand's image.

More important than the brand permission is the agreement that you make with the town and your project. In Monmouthpedia's case this agreement was made by the chapter. This is important where volunteers are involved, especially if the chapter is supporting the project.

Normally there is a contract that ensures both parties comply with an agreed purpose. Where the agreement does not involve money then it can be tempting to think that agreements are not

required. This is not the case. It is more important to have a firm agreement when there is only a small amount of money involved.

If volunteers give freely of their time and expertise then it is imperative that the project is not abandoned. It is tempting to abandon volunteer projects when the going gets difficult as the cost of cancellation is small. A good agreement ensures that both sides do their best.





Scan for a quirky
Taiwanese news video!

Promotion and press

Probably the two key bits of promotion were not the obvious ones. The project was reported in 300 different newspapers in over 30 countries, but why? One reason was because Monmouth was first, another was because of the Wikipedia brand and another was that the idea could be easily explained and understood. However our most important communication tool was the local weekly newspaper:

Every other issue it wrote about the project and the first time this happened the news of the project went around the world for the first time. The other communication tool was Wikipedia itself. Articles about Monmouth appeared on the front page 50 times. On St David's Day and "Monmouthpedia Day" we had articles about Monmouth numerous times

a day. All of this creates mentions of "Monmouth" within the Wikipedia community. This wasn't just on the English wikipedia as we saw Monmouth being mentioned on the front page of the Danish and German Wikipedias. Tell Wikipedians how successful the project is. Editors like to work on successful projects.



An important first for this project was the work that Steve Virgin put in to crowdsource our PR. Steve had been working with PR companies on behalf of the UK chapter because of the scandals arising out of the misuse of Wikipedia entries. As a result of our efforts to assist them the PR agencies volunteered to help with a cool project. Sam Downie created an entire web site whose sole purpose was to support PR volunteers and their press contacts. On the launch day we had a PR team of about twelve people. Press releases were written for national newspapers, local newspapers, technical journals and Wikipedians.

We also asked two PR industry bodies - the CIPR and PRCA - to approach their membership and ask them to get involved in the launch of Monmouthpedia. The idea behind this was to get PR professionals working alongside Wikipedians on a project of common benefit. It was also to show the value of the work that Wikipedians do in a fresh light to public relations professionals, starting the process of deepening the level of

understanding of each other's ways of working on both sides.

The Monmouthpedia press campaign involved a number of agencies who produced some fabulous communication support. With agencies such as Montpellier PR working with the Wikimedia UK communications team, the press campaign created immense value to the town of Monmouth and to the technological innovation-driven notion of hyper-localism using multi-lingual Wikipedia pages.



Monmouthpedia is a Grand Project



Monmouthpedia is a “Grand Project”. It isn’t a GLAM project, though it contains at least four GLAMS. It isn’t a university collaboration though we had at least three involved. It could be seen as a QR code and augmented reality project but these are not its drivers.

This project was formed when John Cummings saw the collaboration that Wikimedia UK had made with Derby Museums. He made the outrageous proposal that we should take what we had done for a small museum and apply it to a town. Here we tell you how we found that this “outrageous idea” was a meme that everyone understood and wanted to help with.

The project created a partnership between a County Council, the Town council, Wikimedia UK, QRpedia, Monmouth Civic Society, Monmouth Archaeological Society, 3 schools, 3 museums, 2 universities, 1 college, a library, a primary school, an art therapy centre, 200 businesses, a newspaper, TV producers, the wiki community oh and the people of Monmouth.

Monmouthpedia is an experiment into the integration of free and easily accessible knowledge into people’s everyday experience of the world and the use of wikis in the public sector, charities and private sector. The project includes GLAMs and engages with WikiCulture concepts like digital literacy, deletionism, minority language support, open software usage, augmented reality and editor retention. Key to this are the communities historic research and cultural heritage.

We have involved educational institutions but we have also created some educational opportunities. The project has experimented with novel technology and in the process of installing its own dedicated open access wifi infrastructure throughout the town... and it was all created by the Wikimedia community. It’s amazing that we have a movement that can give so generously.

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