

# What the Wikimedia Foundation does



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Wikimania 2016, Esino Lario, 26 June 2016

# The Wikimedia Foundation in a nutshell

- US-based charitable organization
- Operates Wikipedia and the other Wikimedia websites, develops their software, raises funds, defends projects legally, etc.
- ca. 277 employees, in San Francisco and remotely

What the Wikimedia Foundation does **not** do:

- Content of Wikipedia and its sister projects is entirely written by volunteer communities (who are supported by WMF)
- Projects are self-governed by communities, within WMF mission and Terms of Use

# About this talk

- Overview over the Wikimedia Foundation as an organization, by department
- Focus on its work, role and structure
- (See elsewhere for: Vision, strategy, budget, governance etc.)

## Myself:

- Wikipedia volunteer since 2003
- working for the Wikimedia Foundation since 2011 (initially in the Communications team, currently as an analyst in the Reading team [see below])

# Very short early history of WMF

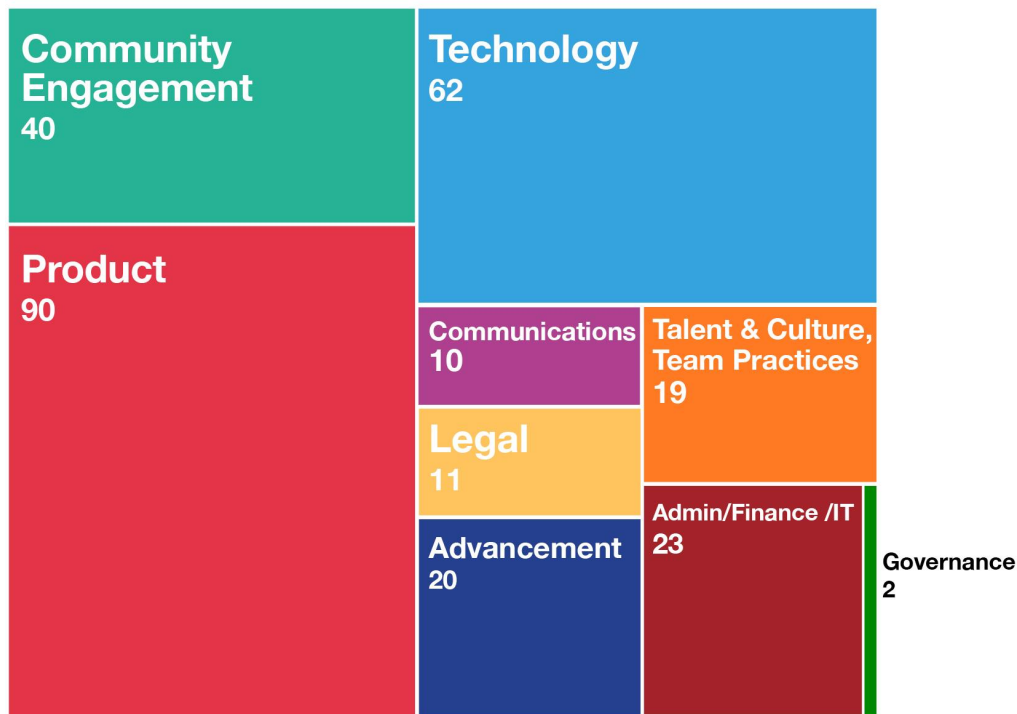
- 2001: Wikipedia is founded, as a website run by Jimmy Wales and his (for-profit) company
- 2003: As suggested by community members, Wales founds the Wikimedia Foundation and hands over domain names and servers to the new non-profit
- 2003/04: First fundraiser, for new servers
- 2005: First employee
- 2007: 7 staff + 3 contractors; Sue Gardner becomes executive director
- 2007: WMF moves from St. Petersburg, Florida to San Francisco, California



The Board in 2006 (Gus Freedman, CC BY-SA 2.5)

# Departments of the Wikimedia Foundation

Distribution of staff by department (277)



From the [2016/17 Annual Plan](#) (approved by the Board this week)

- **Technology** = site and software infrastructure
- **Product** = user-facing software features
- **Advancement** includes fundraising
- **Talent & Culture** = Human Resources

Cf. <https://archive.org/donate/> :

“The Internet Archive has only 170 staff but runs the ~#250 website in the world. “

# Technology department

“The technology department supports global access to the Wikimedia projects that is reliable, fast, and secure.”

Teams:

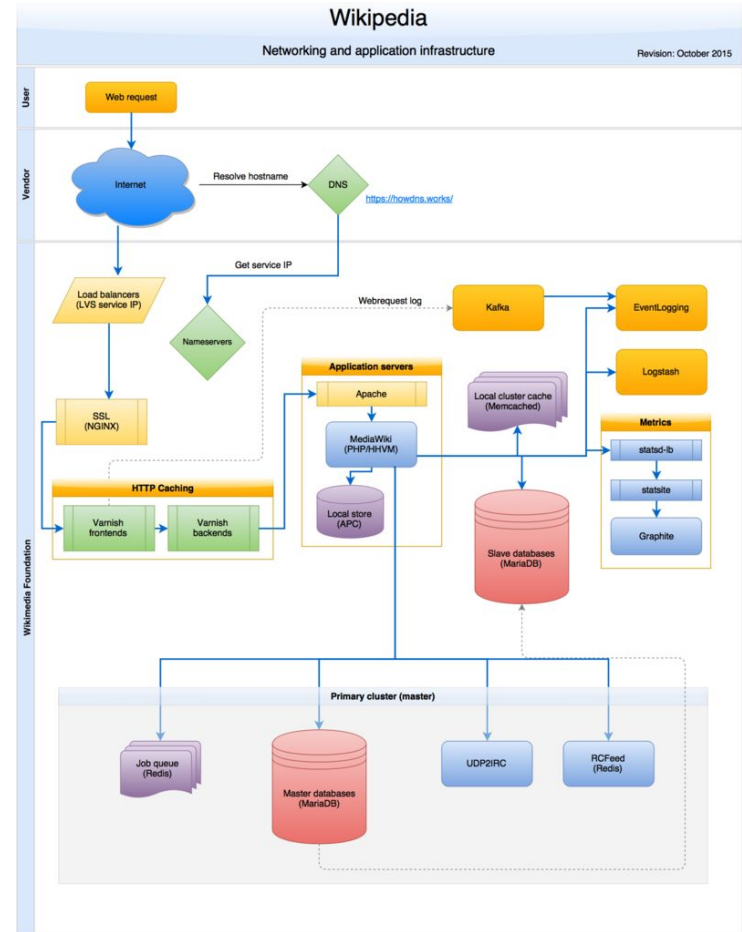
Operations, Analytics,  
Research & Data, Design  
Research, Release  
Engineering, Performance,  
Security, Services



Papaul Tshibamba in the Dallas data center (photo by Victor Grigas, CC BY-SA 3.0)

# Technology department: Operations team

- **Connectivity:** Keep one of the world's largest web sites online
  - Build and maintain Wikimedia's presence in data centers, handle peering etc.
- **Server infrastructure:** Manage over a thousand servers (also for many auxiliary services like mailing lists, OTRS, Etherpad, ...)



Path of a Wikipedia webrequest through WMF server infrastructure  
([Timo Tijhof](#), CC BY-SA 3.0)

# Technology department: Operations team

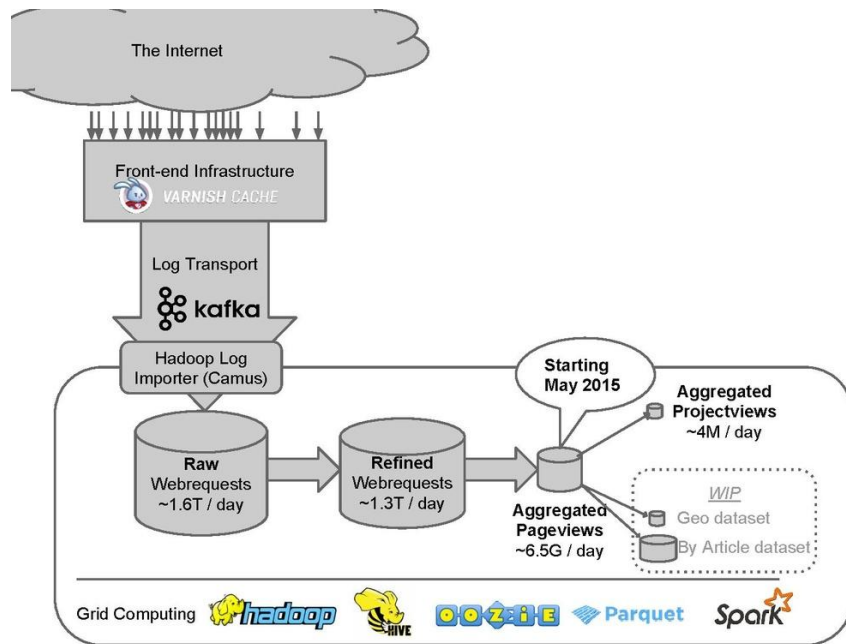
- **Labs:** Provide a space for tool hosting and experimentation to the community
- **Data dumps:** Make sure others can fully reuse the community's freely licensed work



# Technology department: Analytics Engineering team

**Make Wikimedia-related statistical data available** for querying and analysis, to both WMF and the different Wiki communities and stakeholders

*(formerly combined with Research team)*



Part of the Analytics infrastructure: Pageview data processing pipeline (Joseph Allemandou, CC BY-SA 3.0)

# Technology department: Research & Data and Design Research teams

## Research & Data:

- Use data to **understand and empower readers and contributors**. E.g.:
  - ORES (automated quality scoring of articles revisions),
  - Article recommendation tool for translators
  - survey research to understand reader needs
- **Support product development** with research insights
- Facilitate **external research** with data; collaborate with external researchers

## Design Research:

- **Usability testing** with individual users

# Technology department: Release Engineering and Security teams

## Release Engineering:

- Manage **rollout of software changes** to Wikimedia sites (almost daily), ensuring that every new deployment does what it's supposed to do, building critical testing software

## Security:

- Protect Wikimedia sites and the MediaWiki software against **hacks**

# Technology department: Performance and Services teams

## Performance:

- Make Wikimedia sites **faster for readers and editors**, or prevent them from getting slower

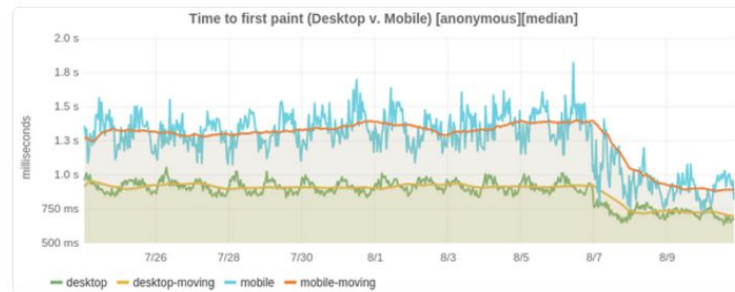
## (Technology) Services:

- Implement **backend services**, support move towards a service-oriented architecture



Noticed Wikipedia got a lot faster since Friday?  
asynchronously now all We JavaScript load.

[phabricator.wikimedia.org/T107399](http://phabricator.wikimedia.org/T107399)



RETWEETS

513

LIKES

402



3:17 PM - 10 Aug 2015



513



402

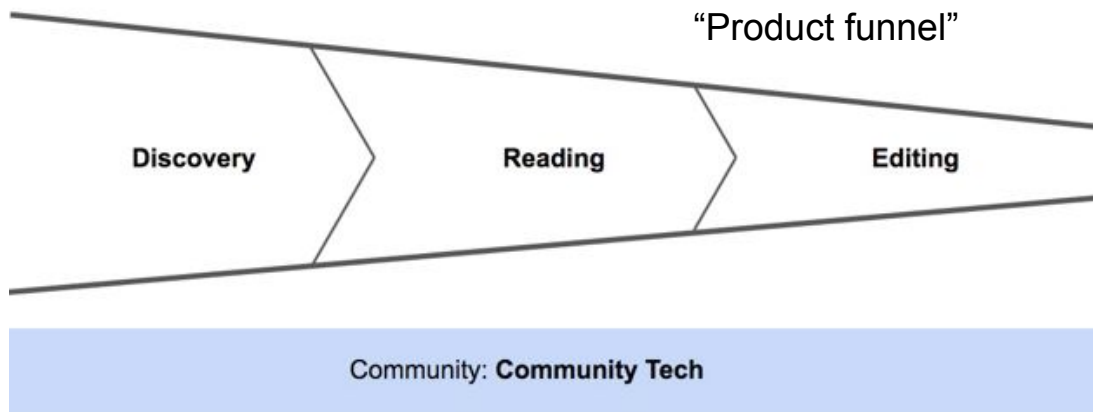


# Product department

“The Product department, alongside the community, builds, improves and maintains the **user facing features** on all the Wikimedia projects.”

Teams:

- Editing, Reading, Discovery
  - = audience “verticals”
- Community Tech
- Fundraising Tech



# Product department: Editing vertical

## VisualEditor team

- Develop VisualEditor (**rich-text editor** that does not require editors to learn wikitext markup)
- Maintain and improve standard **wikitext editor** and many editing-related extensions

## Collaboration team

- Develop tools facilitating **collaboration between editors**, e.g. Echo (notifications) and edit review/curation tools

# Product department: Editing vertical

## Language engineering team

- **Localization** (L10n) and **Internationalization** (i18n): make the interface of Wikimedia sites available to readers and editors in their own language, by enabling community translators
- Content **translation tool** for translating Wikipedia articles

## Parsing team

- Work on Parsoid, which **converts wikitext to HTML and back** (the basis for VisualEditor and other software)

“Wikipedia is far and away the language leader [among the top 25 global websites], with content in more than 270 languages.”

*The 2016 Web Globalization Report Card*

# Product department: Reading vertical

- Web team (mobile and desktop)
  - Maintain and improve the **web interface seen by readers** >500 million times a day
  - E.g.: make Wikimedia sites more usable on 2G (slow mobile) connections
- Android app team
- iOS app team
- Reading infrastructure
  - maintain APIs and many MediaWiki extensions
  - E.g.: revamp authentication (login mechanism)
- New readers (in specific countries); collaboration with other teams



## Product department: Community Tech team

- Meet the **needs of active contributors** for improved, expert-focused curation and moderation tools
- Implement software suggestions from the **community wishlist**

# Product department: Discovery vertical

“build the anonymous path of discovery to a trusted and relevant source of knowledge”:

- search function
- Wikipedia.org portal
- Maps
- Wikidata Query Service
  - in collaboration with Wikimedia Germany (main developers of Wikidata)

## Product department: [Fundraising tech](#)

Technical work supporting the Wikimedia Foundation's fundraising efforts

- **Banner** infrastructure (CentralNotice)
- **Payment** systems

The Fundraising team itself is part of a separate non-tech department (Advancement)

# Community Engagement department (CE)

Teams:

Support and Safety, (Community) Resources, Program Capacity and Learning, Technical Collaboration

*Predecessors: Community Advocacy, Grantmaking & Programs, ...*

## CE department: Support and Safety team

SuSa serves the Wikimedia Foundation, readers and contributors by providing support on Foundation initiatives with a focus on **community consultations, governance, and training**.

- E.g. Annual Plan community consultation, harassment survey
- 24/7 [emergency@](#) responses threats of harm

# CE department: Community Resources team

**Grants** for individuals and organizations:

- Travel and Participation Support (TPS) grants
- Individual Engagement Grants (IEG)
- Project and Event Grants (PEG)
- Annual Plan Grants (APG, via FDC)

Wikimania support

# CE department: Program Capacity and Learning team

- Develop capacity for **success evaluation** of grant-funded projects, and of other programs in the Wikimedia movement
- **Education program** (students editing Wikipedia as coursework)
- **The Wikipedia Library** (give Wikipedia editors access to paywalled sources)
- **GLAM-Wiki** support (collaborations with cultural institutions such as museums)

## CE department: Technical Collaboration

- Community Liaisons: help developers build features in collaboration with editor communities
  - Previously called *Community Engagement (Product)*
- Developer relations: Support volunteer developers



# Communications department

- media and public relations: Answer press requests about Wikipedia, etc.
- strategic messaging and issues management
- brand management and campaigns (e.g. 15th anniversary of Wikipedia)
- digital production and communications (e.g. blog, social media, video)
- audience development for content and product
- communications capacity building for global contributors and affiliate organizations
- support for written and visual products of the Wikimedia Foundation

## Legal department

- Protect “Wikipedia” and other **trademarks** related to the projects, while enabling mission-oriented use
- Resist **demands to remove content or provide nonpublic user information**, unless compelled by facts and law
- Support **community members against lawsuits** in relation to their legitimate activities on the projects
- **Public policy work** (jointly with Wikimedia communities), e.g.: government works in California should be in the public domain
- Negotiate and approve **hundreds of contracts per year** for all WMF departments (vendors, services, leases...)

# Advancement department

## Fundraising:

- Online fundraising (donation banners in many countries, and emails)
- Foundations and Major Gifts (large donations)
- Endowment

## Partnerships and Global Reach

- Wikipedia Zero

# Talent & Culture department, Team Practices Group

## Talent & Culture:

- Human Resources work (recruit and support employees)
- Organizational culture and leadership, benefits, etc.

## Team Practices Group

- “facilitates the use of practices that support team health”, in particular Agile software development in Product and other engineering teams

# Finance / Admin / Office IT department

## **Finance:**

- Core financial responsibilities (process financial transactions - several thousand payments per year - , report on them, annual audit etc.); coordinate work on Annual Plan
- Provide financial expertise for **grantmaking**

**Office IT and Administration:** Provide the physical and IT infrastructure staff need for their work. E.g. office space in San Francisco, work laptops, travel support, etc.

# Governance

Executive director, with assistant

Leads the organization, interacts with the board, etc.

C-level team = department heads + executive director

# Questions?

Read more:

- [https://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Staff\\_and\\_contractors](https://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Staff_and_contractors)
- [2016-2017 Annual Plan](#) on Meta-wiki
- [Quarterly reports](#) / [Quarterly reviews](#) on Meta-wiki