What the Wikimedia Foundation does

Tilman Bayer
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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

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

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

Cf. [https://archive.org/donate/](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

*Image credit: 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
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@](mailto: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)
- [Quarterly reports](https://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Quarterly_reports) / [Quarterly reviews](https://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Quarterly_reviews) on Meta-wiki