

Good afternoon, I'm mxn at Wikipedia and Minh Nguyen at OpenStreetMap. (Minh also happens to be my user name in meatspace.) First of all, thank you for sticking around.

I mentioned it in the abstract for this talk, but I'm not going to have time to walk you through the mechanics of editing. This talk is about understanding and navigating the OSM community from the perspective of a Wikipedian, so there will be a bit of jargon at some point.

“It’s the Wikipedia of _____”

Do you ever hear this? “It’s the Wikipedia of ____”? I live in Silicon Valley, so I hear it wayyyy too often.

“It’s the Wikipedia of encyclopedias!”

Oh, well, fortunately I don’t hear this one.

“It’s the Wikipedia of maps!”

But OpenStreetMap *is* the Wikipedia of maps, and it isn’t just trading on Wikipedia’s good name.

7. Free the Maps!

- “What could be more public domain than basic information about location on the planet?” - Stefan Magdalinski
- FreeGIS software, Free GeoData
- This will become increasingly important for open competition in mobile data services



Jimmy Wales, “Ten Things That Will Be Free”
Wikimania 2005

Was anyone here at the inaugural Wikimania in Frankfurt? Jimmy Wales is basically talking about OSM as a coconspirator in the free culture movement.

OpenStreetMap

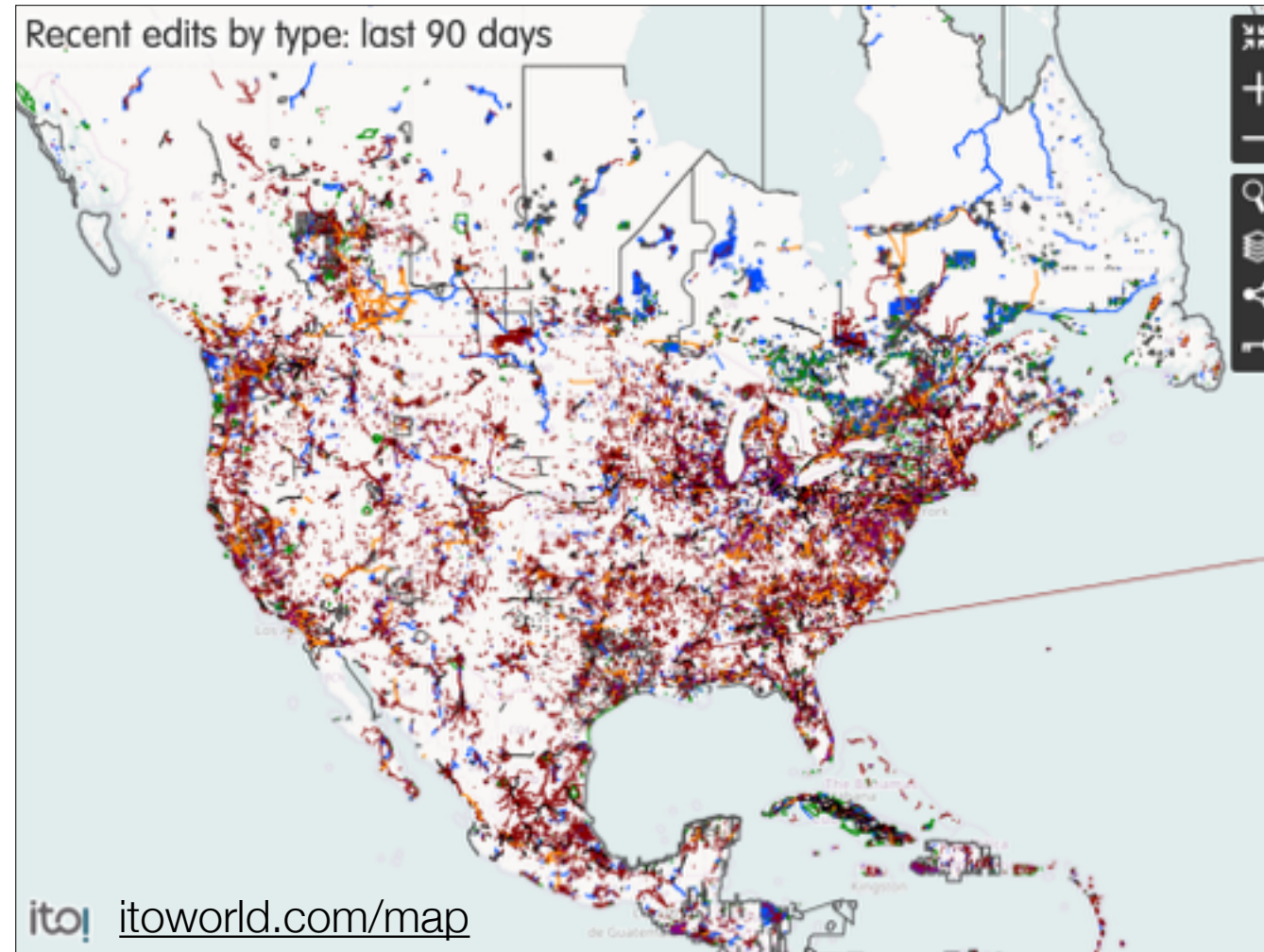
- openstreetmap.org
- Ecosystem
- Foundation and chapters

The name “OpenStreetMap” can actually mean a few different things.



The most obvious is the [osm.org](https://openstreetmap.org) website. Front and center is what we call a “slippy map”. You can drag it around, search, get directions. Looks kinda like Google Maps, except for two things: an Edit button at the top, and a Donate button at the bottom.

Please, when you get a chance, create a free account, zoom into your hometown, and get annoyed enough about something that’s missing or wrong to click the Edit button.



You may have some company. Here's a really dreadfully zoomed out look at where folks have been editing over the past month and a half.

Now, one thing I often hear and that I've heard at this conference is that it's very intimidating to make your first Wikipedia edit and especially intimidating to see it get wiped away unceremoniously. Well, see all that whitespace there? That isn't all wilderness. There are plenty of cities and towns across Canada, the U.S., and Mexico that await your human touch. So even if you aren't interested in interacting with the community at first, there are plenty of options.





Quite a bit of it looks like this. I'll come back to this screenshot in a bit, but I want to point out that a lot of mapping is "armchair mapping", done from the comfort of a chair that has arms, using aerial imagery.



We also have mapathons just like Wikipedia has editathons. We've been holding them for many years in Europe, and we've started to hold them more regularly in the U.S. as well.



And conferences! This is State of the Map U.S., this summer in Seattle.

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How to Apply

Insert prominently in all relevant locations a statement such as (replacing [DATA(BASE)-NAME] with the name of your data/database):

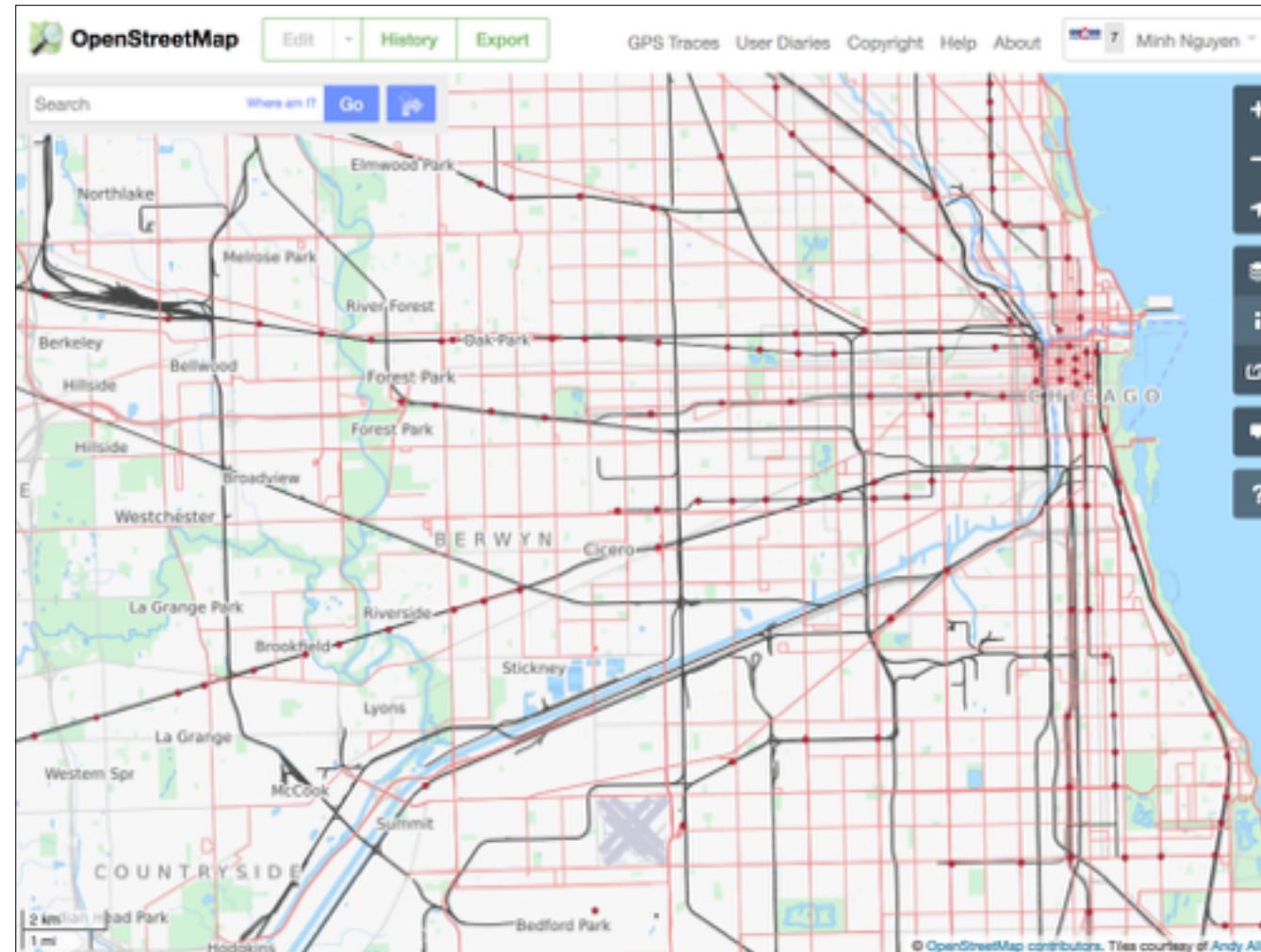
This [DATA(BASE)-NAME] is made available under the Open Database License: <http://opendatacommons.org/licenses/odbl/1.0/>. Any rights in individual contents of the database are licensed under the Database Contents License: <http://opendatacommons.org/licenses/dbcl/1.0/>

Notes

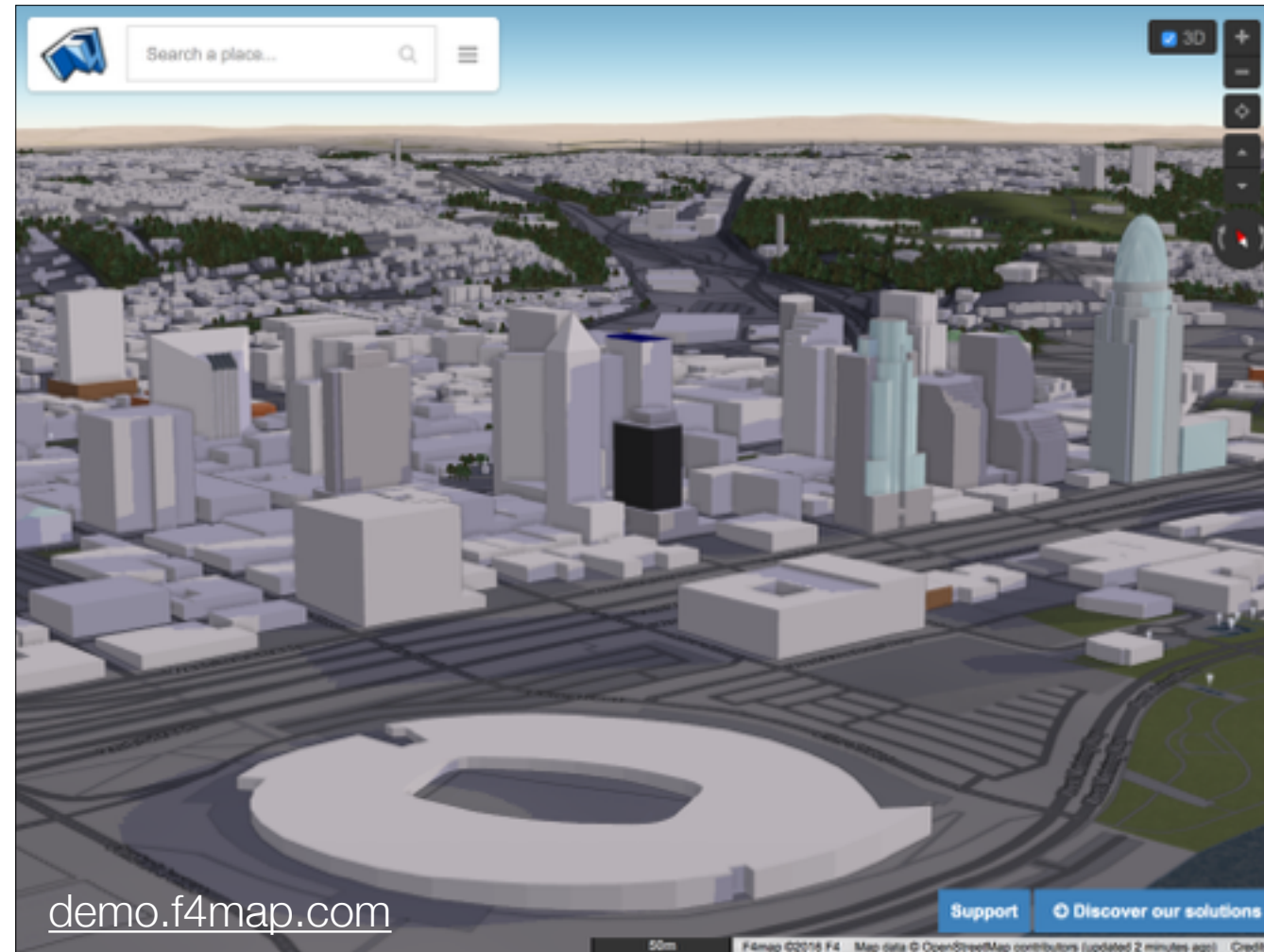
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3. **Why a separate license for the contents?** See the [relevant FAQ](#).

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Like Wikipedia, we have a free license. The ODbL is akin to the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license that most Wikimedia projects use, except with wording geared towards geographic databases.



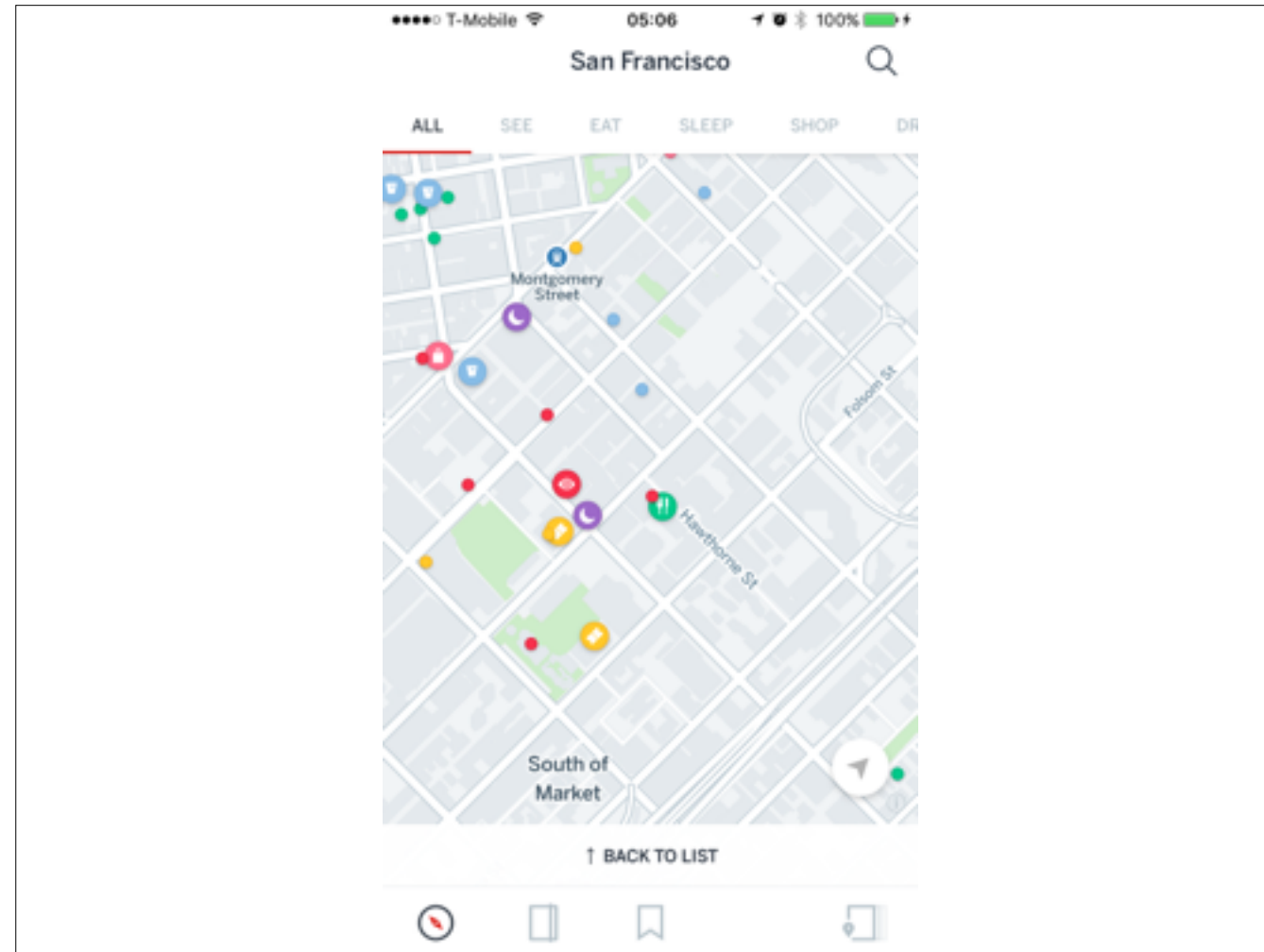
And that's an important point to make: it's a database, with an ecosystem that's much larger than osm.org. So that's the second meaning of OSM. You can get the raw data and transform it into a map that looks like anything you want. This is a transit map that just happens to be featured on osm.org.



Here's a 3D map, and what I like about this map is that it shows the lengths that mappers will go to to enter data that doesn't even show up on the default [osm.org](https://www.openstreetmap.org) map, like building heights, parts of buildings, colors of walls, and shapes of roofs.



Or you can go old-old school. Here's a paper bike map with angry fruit salad colors that a friend of mine printed and distributed.



Here's an iOS application, Lonely Planet, that uses OSM data. (Full disclosure: my day job at Mapbox is making apps like this possible via an iOS framework for maps.)



Here's a photo of Red Cross volunteers mapping out in the field. The American Red Cross and other groups are developing Portable OSM, a toolkit to help humanitarian agencies use and edit the map while they're in the field, offline. When they get back to the grid, their changes get merged in. It's like the Internet-in-a-Box concept but for humanitarian agencies. (Apologies for making you miss that talk going on right now.)



The third meaning of “OpenStreetMap” is the OSM Foundation and its local chapters. This here is the OSM Foundation. I’m almost not kidding. The Foundation consists of a board and a band of volunteer sysadmins and conference organizers. Every fundraiser is a server fundraiser.

Policies

- [[WP:OR]] 🙌👍👍
- [[WP:N]] ㄒ_(ツ)_/
- [[WP:COI]] 👍
- [[Template:Cite map]] 🙋
- [[WP:BOT]] 😞

This is going to be the most information-packed slide in the presentation. A minimal Foundation isn't the only big difference between Wikimedia and OSM. There are also a few big policy differences that you should know about as an editor. I've linked a few well-known Wikipedia policies as a point of comparison.

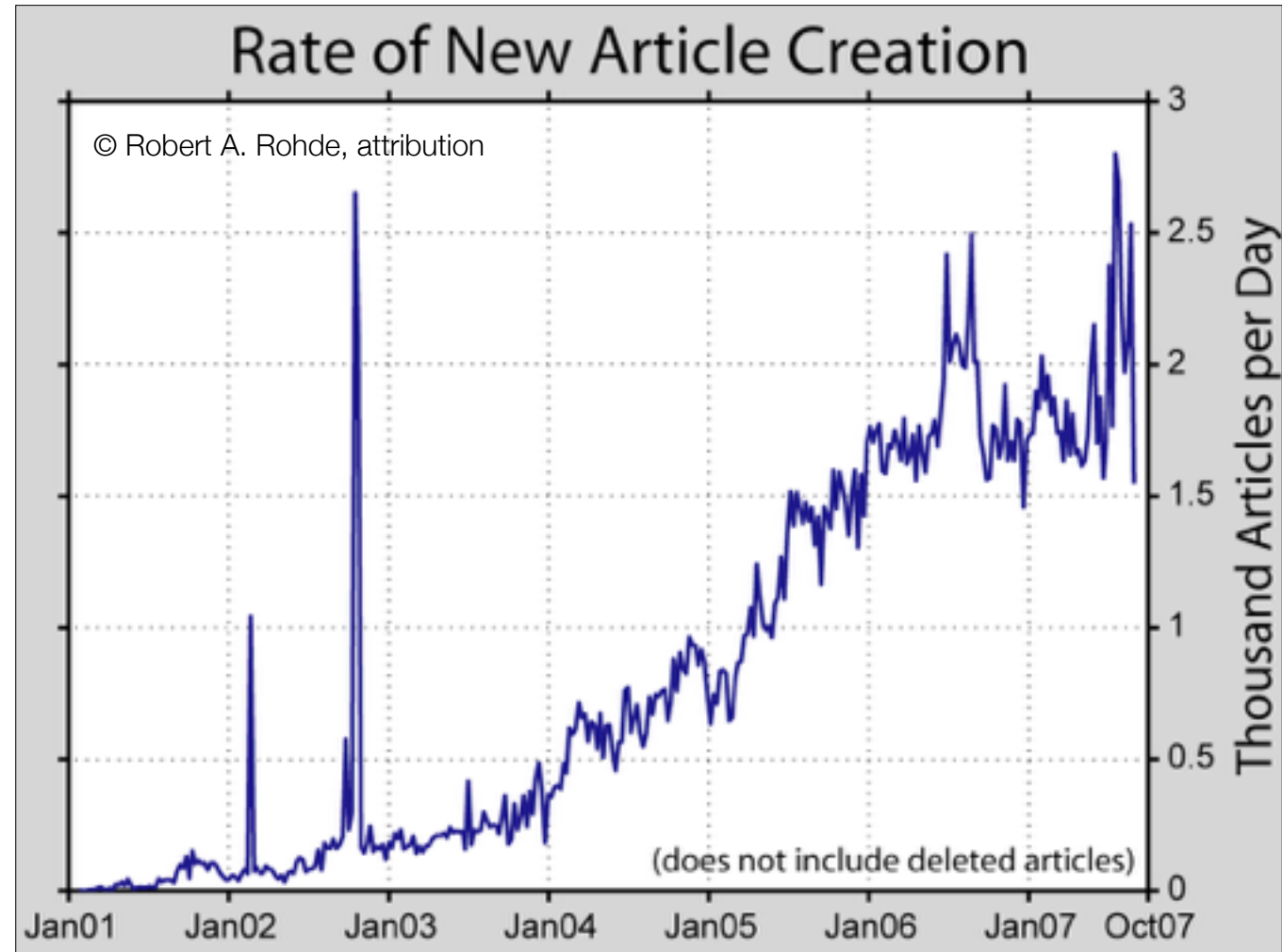
Whereas original research is frowned upon at Wikipedia, original research is not only allowed but celebrated at OSM. The project started out as a guy biking around a London park with a GPS receiver in hand. When there's a content dispute, armchair mappers are expected to defer to locals, and the locals are supposed to map what's actually "on the ground".

There's no notability guideline. Feel free to draw in a non-notable road, building, park bench, or tree. What matters is that it exists in real life at least semi-permanently. In fact, we joke that in some parts of Europe, they're getting so granular that they'll soon be mapping individual blades of grass – we call that "grass roots" mapping.

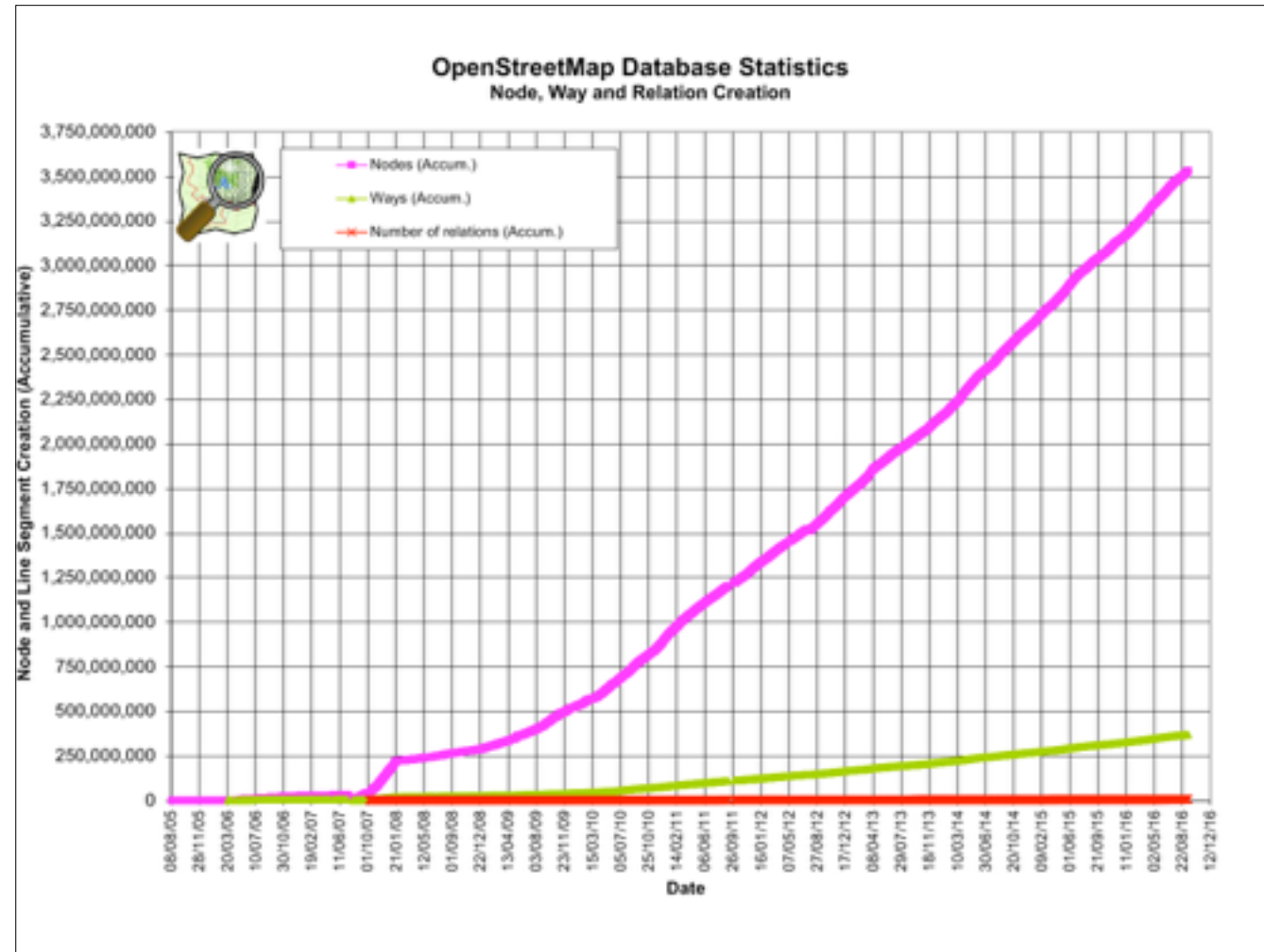
Conflict of interest isn't as big a deal on OSM as it is on Wikipedia. Companies with a financial interest in OSM's success pay editors to map. And people map their businesses all the time just like they map their houses. But they still have to map accurately: no mapping your pizza parlor as a place=city just so it shows up when the map is zoomed way out.

This isn't a Wikipedia policy, but I linked the "cite map" template. OSM is very strict about copyright, or more accurately, about the provenance of the data you enter. So it isn't OK to copy from Google Maps even if you cite Google Maps. In fact, if you cite Google Maps, that's a red flag. But copying from public domain and out-of-copyright sources is OK.

OSM has a painful history of import bots that may sound familiar to Wikipedia old-hands.



This is a chart of the rate of new articles at Wikipedia. In 2002, suddenly there was a huge spike as Ram-Bot “wrote” thousands of formulaic articles about places in the U.S. based on U.S. Census data.



Something very similar happened at OSM. This is a different kind of chart, cumulative, but you can see a big bump here in 2007. Before 2007, the U.S. was essentially blank on OSM. Then, in 2007, Dave Hansen imported all the roads in the U.S., adding roughly 250 million nodes (points along a line) using – you guessed it – U.S. Census data. We call it the “TIGER import”.



And we're still cleaning up after that import, nearly a decade later. While mapping in West Virginia last month, I encountered scenes like this all the time. This road is misaligned; this one, I'm not even sure what it's supposed to be. Fortunately, most of OSM has been improved well beyond what you see here. But the sheer amount of work that went into TIGER cleanup over the years led to very strict community guidelines about automated edits and imports. We care about two things in particular: copyright and maintainability.

September 2016 Archives by thread

- Messages sorted by: [\[subject \]](#) [\[author \]](#) [\[date \]](#)
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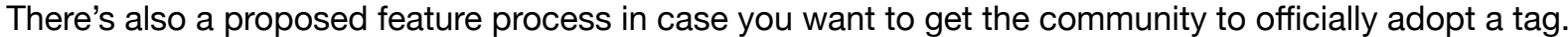
Starting: *Fri Sep 2 01:56:53 UTC 2016*


Ending: *Fri Sep 30 16:57:54 UTC 2016*

Messages: 65

- [\[Talk-us\] Freeway exit tagging](#) *Jack Burke*
 - [\[Talk-us\] \[Tagging\] Freeway exit tagging](#) *Paul Johnson*
 - [\[Talk-us\] Freeway exit tagging](#) *David Mease*
 - [\[Talk-us\] Freeway exit tagging](#) *Paul Johnson*
 - [\[Talk-us\] Freeway exit tagging](#) *Jack Burke*
 - [\[Talk-us\] Freeway exit tagging](#) *David Mease*
 - [\[Talk-us\] weeklyOSM #319 08/23/2016-08/29/2016](#) *weeklyteam*
 - [\[Talk-us\] Whole-US Garmin Map update - 2016-09-01](#) *Dave Hansen*
 - [\[Talk-us\] Deleting / Closing / Renaming all places in a chain](#) *Elliott Plack*
 - [\[Talk-us\] Deleting / Closing / Renaming all places in a chain](#) *Shawn K. Quinn*
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 - [\[Talk-us\] Deleting / Closing / Renaming all places in a chain](#) *Brian Stromberg*
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 - [\[Talk-us\] Deleting / Closing / Renaming all places in a chain](#) *Rory McCann*
- [\[Talk-us\] Reimport complete: New York State DEC Lands](#) *Kevin Kenny*
- [\[Talk-us\] SoTM - Local Chapters Congress](#) *Clifford Snow*
- [\[Talk-us\] ImproveOSM new beta](#) *Martijn van Eel*
- [\[Talk-us\] weeklyOSM #320 08/30/2016-09/05/2016](#) *weeklyteam*
- [\[Talk-us\] Southern California mappers plan to map island](#) *Jonathan Schleuss*

But I'm getting ahead of myself here. You might not be ready to automatically import data – you're still wondering how in the world to map a particular structure or landmark. The OSM community communicates primarily on mailing lists. If you have a question, post to one of these mailing lists.




taginfo

English

Data from: 2016-10-10 00:59 UTC

[KEYS](#) · [TAGS](#) · [RELATIONS](#) · [PROJECTS](#) · [REPORTS](#) · [ABOUT](#)

power

For marking and tagging facilities for the generation and distribution of electrical power.

Filter: No filter

Comparison list (0 items)

[XAPI](#) [JOSM](#) [Level0 Editor](#) [Overpass turbo](#)

[Overview](#) **[Values](#)** [Combinations](#) [Similar](#) [Map](#) [Wiki](#) [Projects](#)

Values used with this key

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JSON

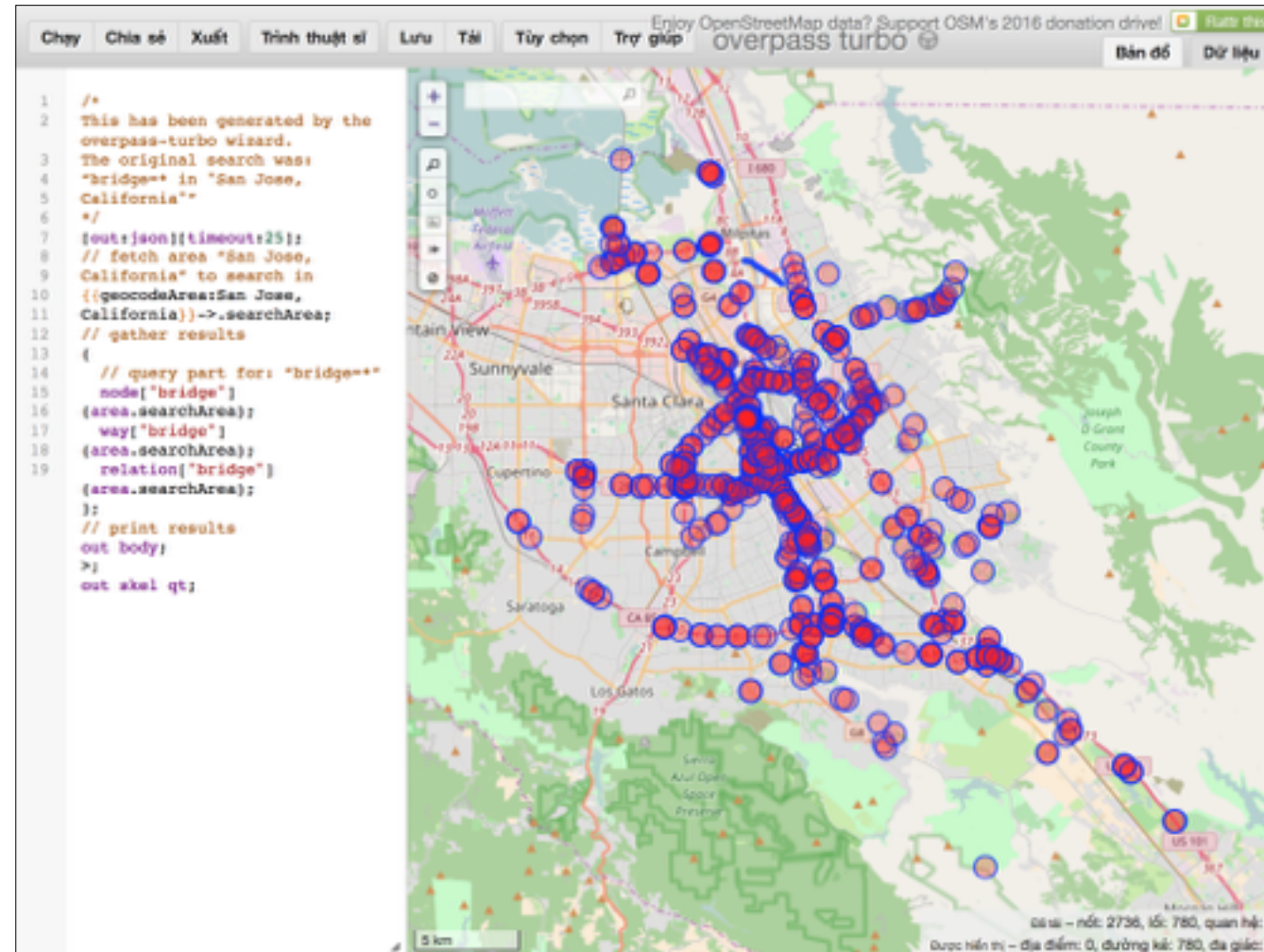
Displaying 1 to 15 of 304 items

Value	Count	Wiki	Description
tower	8 493 248 65.21%	✓	For towers or pylons carrying high voltage electricity cables. Normally con
pole	3 253 912 24.98%	✓	A single (often wooden or concrete) pole carrying medium/low voltage ele
line	399 827 3.07%	✓	High-voltage power lines supported by towers or pylons.
generator	296 005 2.27%	✓	A "device" converting kind of power to another.
substation	187 710 1.44%	✓	Power substation.
minor_line	177 532 1.36%	✓	Minor power cables, supported by poles and not towers/pylons.
sub_station	42 991 0.33%	✓	Deprecated tag for substation
transformer	40 656 0.31%	✓	A static device for transferring electric energy by inductive coupling betwe
switch	23 346 0.18%	✓	A device which allows operators to power up & down lines and transforme
portal	18 885 0.14%	✓	Power supporting structure composed of vertical legs with cables between
station	14 699 0.11%	✓	Deprecated tag for substation
busbar	12 421 0.10%	-	
cable_distribution_cabinet	11 733 0.09%	✓	Cable distribution cabinet
cable	9 389 0.07%	✓	An underground electricity cables, such as the local 0.4 kV network betwe
catenary_mast	7 366 0.06%	✓	A catenary mast supports system of overhead wires used to supply electri

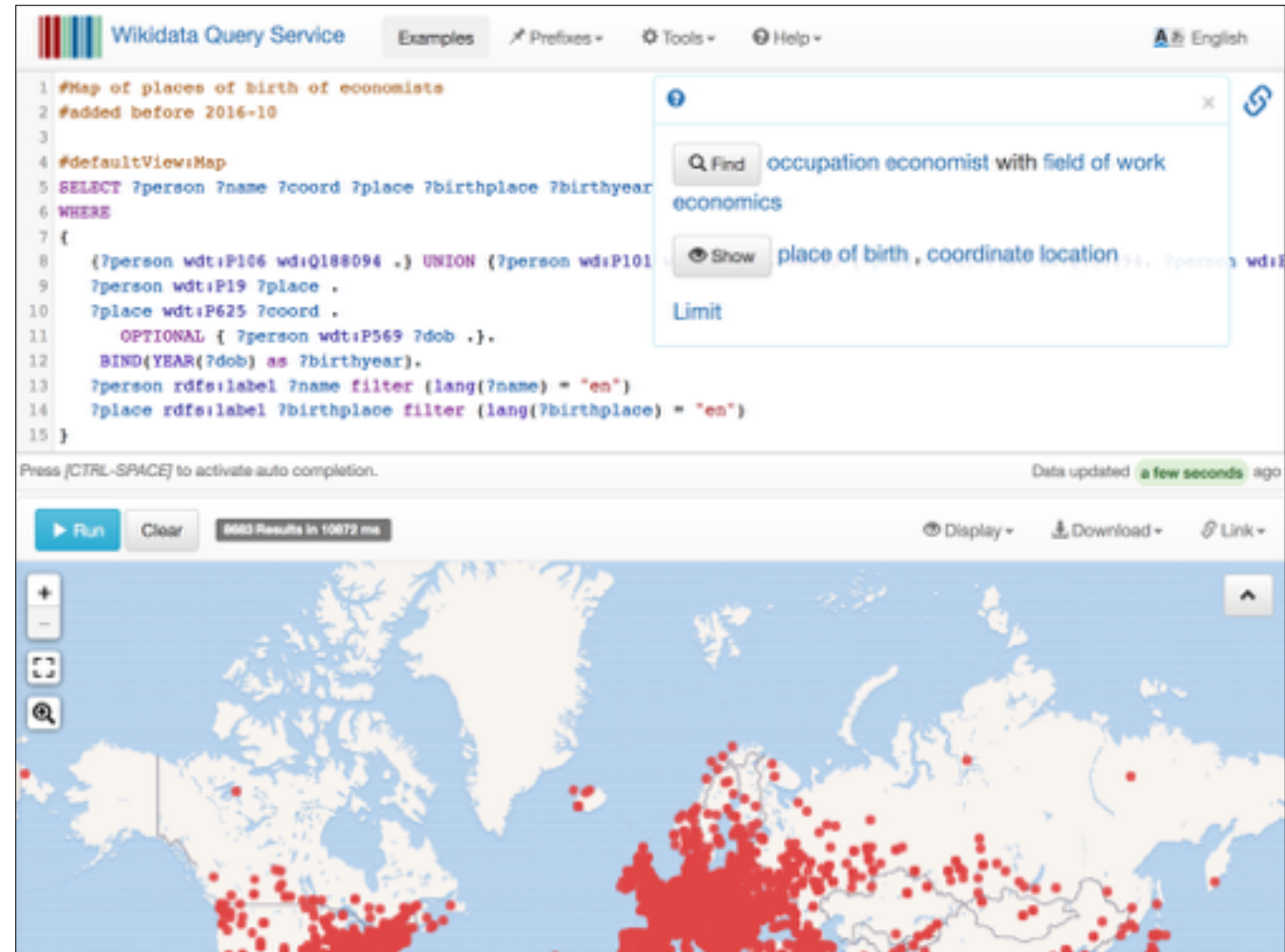
→ [OpenStreetMap](#) · Data © OSM contributors (ODbL)

[Sources](#) · [Download](#) · [API](#) · [Help](#) · → [Wiki](#)

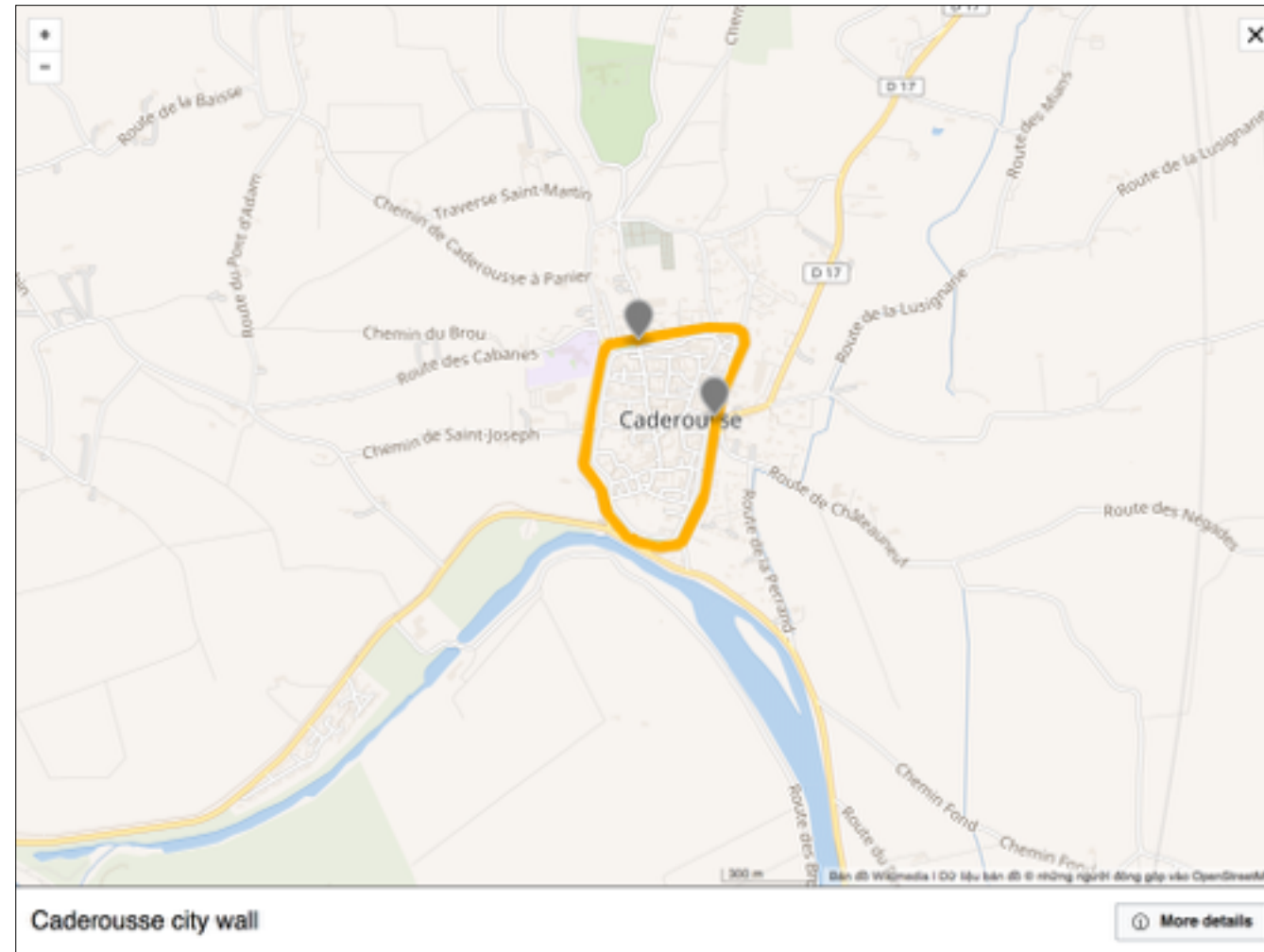
But that official process is relatively unimportant. What matters is what tags mappers actually use. OSM has a lot of third-party tools, sort of like the Wikimedia Toolserver tools. Taginfo provides statistics about tag usage so you can make an informed decision. Developers of editors and map viewers also use this information to decide what features to support.



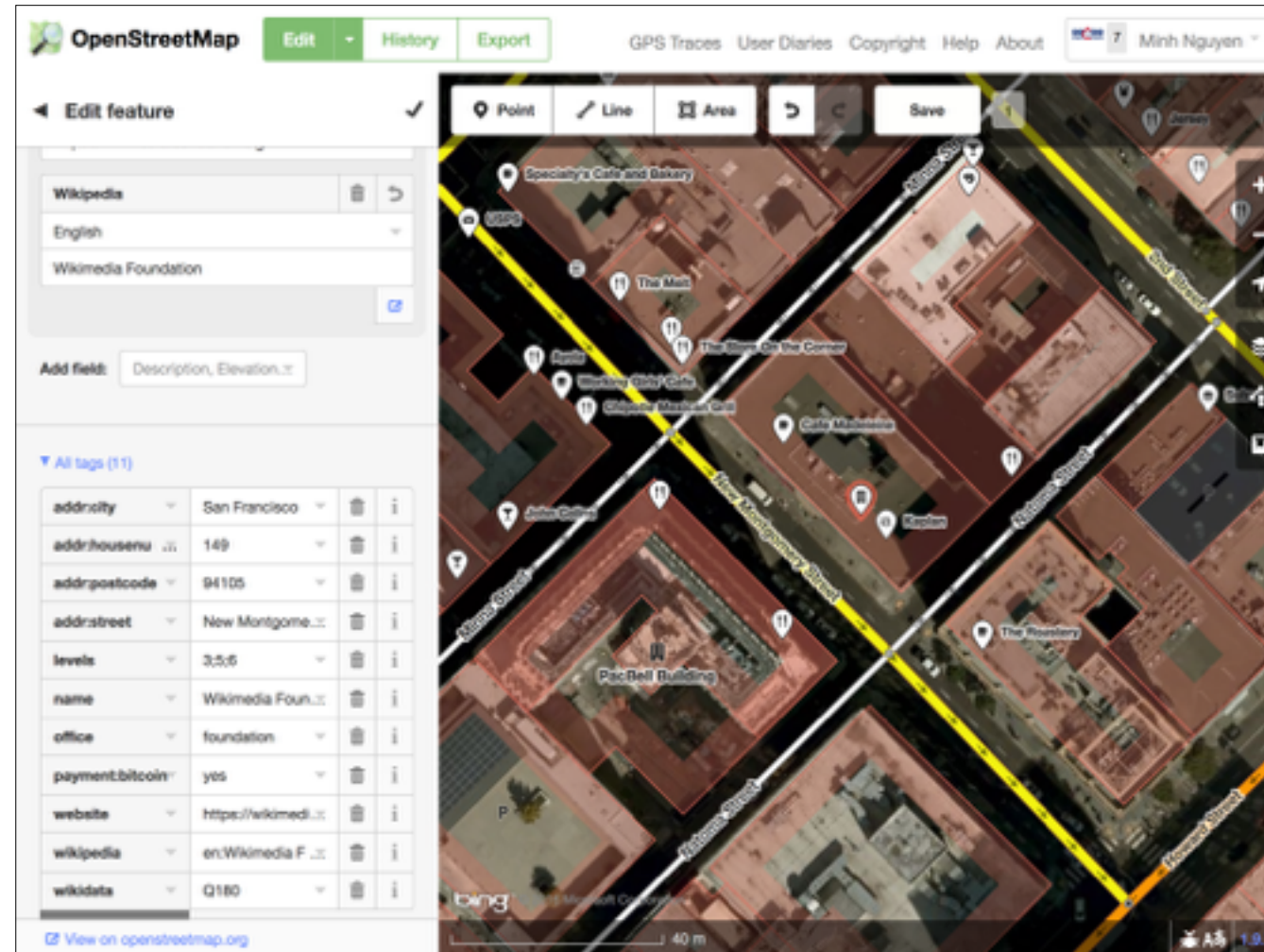
There's also a popular OSM query tool called Overpass Turbo. It's very similar in spirit to the Wikidata Query Service. It uses its own language rather than SPARQL, but the Wizard lets you enter something more natural-language, like in a search engine.



Speaking of Wikidata Query Service, Wikidata Query Service can now plot results on a map.



It's one of many ways Wikimedia and OSM are growing closer together. Soon you'll also be able to embed maps like this inside Wikipedia articles. They'll be interactive, and you can plot lines and points related to the article content. Yuri and MaxSem from the Foundation have made all of this possible.



On the other end, OSM's default editor makes it easy for you to link a particular feature – in this case, a non-profit foundation's office – to a Wikipedia article, and a link to a Wikidata item comes along for the ride. This makes it possible for apps to use Wikipedia and OSM together in novel ways.

Help wanted

- Tag OSM features with Wikipedia articles
- Use OSM maps in Wikipedia articles
- WikiProjects: a good topic needs a good map
- Join forces with OSM at your next editathon

But there's only so much software developers can do. We need help at the content level too. When you write or edit a Wikipedia article, find the corresponding feature in OSM and tag it with that Wikipedia article.

Use OSM maps in Wikipedia articles, either directly via the Kartographer extension or by crafting a static image based on OSM data. The more eyes we have on the map, the more likely it is we'll see improvements to that data, and those improvements will make their way into the article.

Wikipedia is full of enthusiasts about specific topics, and WikiProjects are a natural way to organize around these interests. Think about the WikiProjects you're a member of: as you review an article for A-class or Good Article status, consider improving OSM's coverage of the topic, just as you'd make sure the linked Wiktionary or Commons coverage is at least presentable.

Finally, join forces with OSM at your next editathon slash mapathon. This can be a good way to build critical mass around your local wiki meetup scene.

Learn more

- “Wikipedia Maps”, State of the Map U.S. 2016
<http://stateofthemap.us/2016/wikipedia-maps/>
- talk-us mailing list
<https://lists.openstreetmap.org/listinfo/talk-us/>
- LearnOSM
<http://learnosm.org/en/>
- Minh Nguyễn
[[User:Mxn]] <mxn@1ec5.org>
<http://www.openstreetmap.org/user/Minh%20Nguyen/>

And here are some places to learn more, along with my contact information. Feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions.

Thank you!