

The Sad, Sad Story of Social Wikipedia

A long and drawn-out tale of change, more change,
and no change whatsoever.

Necessary disclaimer

Dates may be horribly wrong; assumptions of cause and effect may be terribly faulty; and general conclusions may be utterly arbitrary.

This is all pieced together rather after the fact by someone who wasn't really there for any of it.

Please don't eat me.

The Before Times

- 1999: Nupedia
 - Precursor to Wikipedia, not really the same thing at all
 - Died horribly
- 2001: Wikipedia created using UseModWiki
 - Page-based storage engine written in perl
 - Discussions were inline or on the pages themselves

UseModWiki

[StarterPages](#)

[UseModWiki](#) | [RecentChanges](#) | [Preferences](#)

If I am going to implement my own [UseModWiki](#) instance, is there an easy way to transfer all the user help pages from this site (like [TextFormattingRules](#) etc.) as well? I tried a bit of c be most annoying.

-- Michael Harwerth

I've just got [UseMod](#) running on some hosted web space (bit of a struggle with permissions, but sorted eventually) and now I'm looking around here for a set of "starter pages" (tutorial spot on. I'd really like to know the answer as well.

-- John W

Well, I just created my own set of starter pages, but they probably won't be of interest, since they're in Dutch :-). The good thing about this is that you learn a lot about wiki in the process.

-- Jurriaan

Thanks Jurrian. I agree, learning-by-doing is good. Though I still think if someone could come up with a generic set of starter pages, that would be really great. Meanwhile, although I s people's pages, I've now filled the gap by making links to other sites (making the links bring up a new window, so my visitors don't go away to more interesting places!).

-- John W

Why not use direct links? Edit the text of this to see how...

The content is easy to change, just press "Edit text of this page" on the bottom of every page. If you are new to the [\[WikiWay\]](#) you may want to look at the [\[TextFormattingRules\]](#), but th ScratchPad? for you to practice on.

If you have sections to add just use the "Edit text of this page" link on the bottom of every page.

When editing a page, you can link to a new page by removing the spaces between two or more words, and starting each word with a capital letter. After you have saved your changes,

2001-2002: Phase 2 and Phase 3

- Transition to new PHP platform
 - Phase 2: PHP attempt #1
 - Phase 3: PHP attempt #2 - MediaWiki

It looks basically the same.

2002: MediaWiki

But what made it different?

- Wikitext
- Organisational tools
 - Namespaces
 - Watchlists, RecentChanges, Logs, and other special pages
 - Email notifications

Discussion is now no longer in the articles themselves - separate namespaces are created as talk pages.

Talk page formatting

- Discussions are separated with a header or a line between each
- Comments are signed and replies indented
- All formatting done manually

Top of talk page

Why do the instructions say to put this on the top of the talk page? I would never look at the top of my talk page for a message (until I can't find the new message at the bottom). -- [Mufka](#) ^(u) ^(t) ^(c) 12:24, 21 October 2008 (UTC)

Well I guess that's been resolved. -- [Mufka](#) ^(u) ^(t) ^(c) 14:29, 21 October 2008 (UTC)

Yes, I removed it because no-one was doing ot anyway... — [Edokter](#) • [Talk](#) • 21:26, 21 October 2008 (UTC)

Talk page editing

== Top of talk page ==

Why do the instructions say to put this on the top of the talk page? I would never look at the top of my talk page for a message (until I can't find the new message at the bottom). -- Mufka [[User:Mufka|^(u)]] [[User talk:Mufka|^(t)]] [[Special:Contributions/Mufka|^(c)]] 12:24, 21 October 2008 (UTC)

:Well I guess that's been resolved. -- Mufka [[User:Mufka|^(u)]] [[User talk:Mufka|^(t)]] [[Special:Contributions/Mufka|^(c)]] 14:29, 21 October 2008 (UTC)

::Yes, I removed it because no-one was doing ot anyway... [[User:Edokter|''''E''dokter'']] • [[User talk:Edokter|Talk]] • 21:26, 21 October 2008 (UTC)

But why is this as good as it got?

The state of online communication in 2003

- Forums, comments, usually with no threading (reply by quoting what you're replying to first)
- Mailing lists
- Chatrooms: IRC, various chat apps, etc

Dumping chat on a page is basically on-par with the rest of the internet.
Formatting it with nested replies is a bit *weird*.

2004: Facebook

In 2004, Facebook is released, marking the start of social media as we know it today. Most wikipedians totally ignore it.

Time goes on

Nothing much changes in terms of the infrastructure. Discussions become more common as the encyclopedia gets bigger and more users join, and interact.

Conventions arise.

Processes form. User scripts and bots are created.

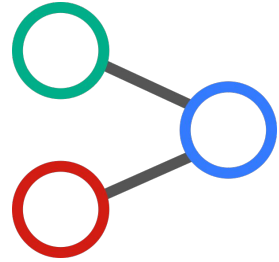
Other projects are started.

Third-party MediaWiki projects

Third-party projects also using MediaWiki develop their own tools.

- WikiCities (Wikia; est. 2004)
 - Free wikis, began looking much like Wikipedia
- ArmchairGM (2006)
 - Sports wiki backed by its own company; later acquired by Wikia
 - Developed a set of tools including SocialProfile and related extensions
- wikiHow (2005)
 - How-to wikis
 - Completely independent; redid the entire MediaWiki interface for collaboration

ArmchairGM and SocialProfile



Full array of social tools

By 2007:

- SocialProfile
- Comments
- Voting and polls
- Games for pictures, quizzes, competing against and with other users
- Video support
- Ratings for and labelling favourite SportsTeams
- UserStatus
- InviteContacts

user page | discussion | edit | watch

Pea
Add as Friend | Add as Foe | Send a Message | Contributions | Wiki userpage

Friends 1 of 1

Pea2

Custom Information

Custom 1 this is my custom 1
Custom 2 this is my custom 2
Custom 3 this is my custom 3
Custom 4 this is my custom 4

Personal Information
Real Name DP

Board
Message Type public

Send

DPLForum

- Doesn't change the discussions themselves, just how they're listed
- Automated listing of new pages, archival of old

[View recent changes for this forum](#)

Pages: << **1** 2 3 4 5 >>

Topic	Last Edit
 VOTE Top 10 of 2015 by Sir Peasewhizz	18:46, 5 October 2016 by Banzaikitten
 Uncyclopedia is in a Magazine by Miley Spears	00:36, 5 October 2016 by Miley Spears
IM BACK TO WREAK HAVOC by 4.252.99.182: the sequel	17:53, 21 September 2016 by 4.252.99.182: the sequel
So this place is still going? by lwillkillyou333	16:55, 19 September 2016 by 50.182.8.254
I'm new by 1337 master	22:42, 28 August 2016 by 1337 master
Super awesome happy "Seven deadly sins" competition where Shabidoo will win and everyone else colapses into suicidal depression fun week!!! by Shabidoo	14:32, 18 June 2016 by Shabidoo
The PBS article is a straight copy from RationalWiki by 103.253.75.154	15:34, 16 June 2016 by Banzaikitten
HI by 50.182.8.254	03:18, 28 May 2016 by Bizzeebeeper
Astounding by 50.182.8.254	01:48, 17 May 2016 by 50.182.8.254
Spam Month 2016 by Lost Labyrinth	23:12, 4 May 2016 by MyOwnBadSelf

LiquidThreads

Used on MediaWiki.org and other projects for some time

[\[Edit?\]](#) [\[History?\]](#)

Start a new discussion

Search terms:

Sorting order:

Contents

Thread title	Replies	Last modified
Using the screenshots elsewhere	0	16:18, 20 August 2010
"Discussion" versus "Topic" versus "Thread"	11	18:54, 16 August 2010
Discussion status	3	17:11, 16 August 2010
Summaries	2	14:44, 16 August 2010
Avatar visibility	11	10:01, 7 August 2010
Search Results Behavior	0	17:35, 4 August 2010

Using the screenshots elsewhere

[History](#) [Summarize](#) [Change subject](#)

I would like to use some decent screenshots as depictions at [w:Wikipedia:LiquidThreads](#) and [commons:Commons:LiquidThreads](#). Why are they not GFDL? There are no WMF copyrightable elements in the images, just maybe few avatars might not be free, which can be removed...

Kozuch 16:18, 20 August 2010

 [Reply](#) [More](#) ▾

"Discussion" versus "Topic" versus "Thread"

[History](#) [Summarize](#) [Change subject](#)

I think most everyone is agreed that the word "Thread" is not as user-friendly as we would like. To that end, I've been standardizing on "Discussion". However, there are some places where that word becomes awkward (at least in English). I have thus been thinking about using the word "Topic" as well, though I'm not keen on using *both* terms simultaneously.

Right now, I'm leaning towards having it be a "Discussion Page" that contains multiple "Topics", which are comprised of a single "Summary" and n+ "Posts":

- Page
 - Discussion Page
 - Topics (n+)
 - Summary (0-1)
 - Posts (n+)

The big value here is readability of buttons and actions ("New Topic", "Drag Post", etc.) .

Does anyone have any thoughts?

Jorm (WMF) 23:00, 3 August 2010

 [Reply](#) [More](#) ▾

Hi Jorm, I am not very happy with threads either. Your proposal sounds good. Why not saying dialogue page instead of discussion page? I think this is what it is all about. Discussion has a slightly negative touch. Cheers --kgh 10:18, 4 August 2010 (UTC)

kgh 10:18, 4 August 2010

 [Reply](#) [Parent](#) [More](#) ▾

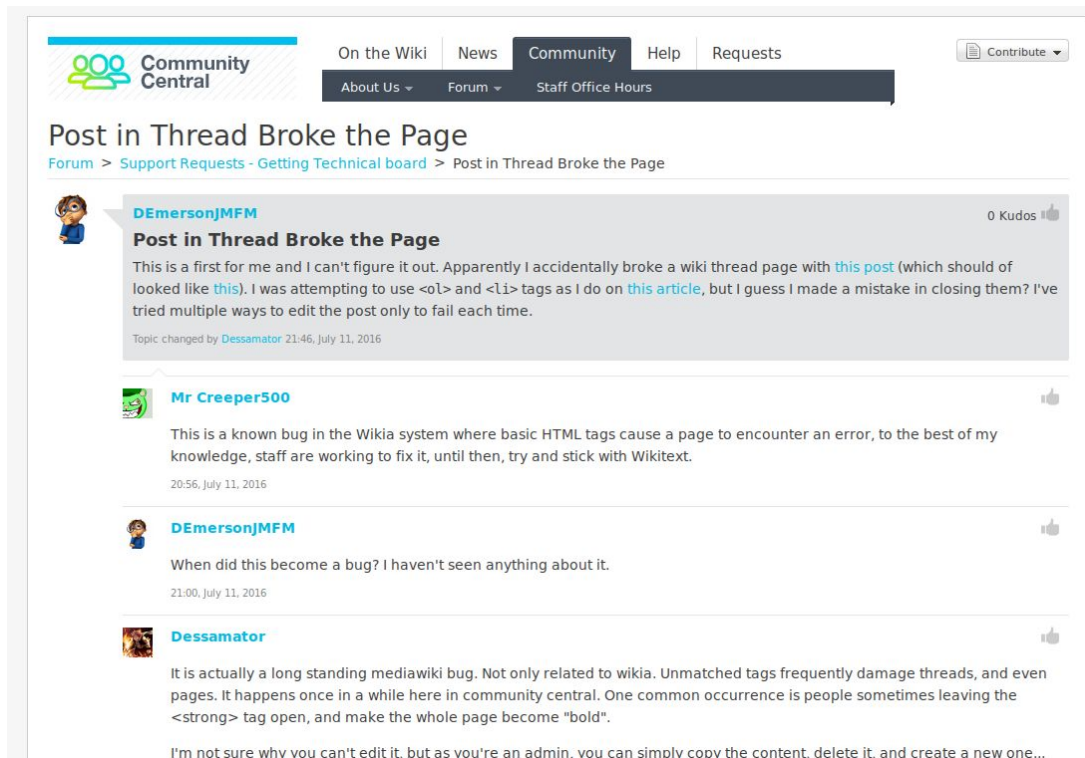
"Topic" is hardly translatable, please avoid it. What's the problem with "Discussion"? A discussion, multiple discussions in the *discussion page*, or talk page if we use the same name as now (in English).

Nemo bis 11:02, 4 August 2010

 [Reply](#) [Parent](#) [More](#) ▾

Wikia UserWall

- Fully linear; no nesting
- Replies done at the end, without loading new page/edit form



The screenshot shows a forum thread on Wikia. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'On the Wiki', 'News', 'Community', 'Help', and 'Requests'. Below this is a sub-navigation bar with 'About Us', 'Forum', and 'Staff Office Hours'. The thread title is 'Post in Thread Broke the Page' and the breadcrumb trail is 'Forum > Support Requests - Getting Technical board > Post in Thread Broke the Page'. The first post is by user 'DEmersonJFMF' and contains the text: 'This is a first for me and I can't figure it out. Apparently I accidentally broke a wiki thread page with [this post](#) (which should of looked like [this](#)). I was attempting to use and tags as I do on [this article](#), but I guess I made a mistake in closing them? I've tried multiple ways to edit the post only to fail each time.' Below this is a note: 'Topic changed by Dessamator 21:46, July 11, 2016'. The second post is by 'Mr Creeper500' and says: 'This is a known bug in the Wikia system where basic HTML tags cause a page to encounter an error, to the best of my knowledge, staff are working to fix it, until then, try and stick with Wikitext.' The third post is by 'DEmersonJFMF' and asks: 'When did this become a bug? I haven't seen anything about it.' The fourth post is by 'Dessamator' and explains: 'It is actually a long standing mediawiki bug. Not only related to wikia. Unmatched tags frequently damage threads, and even pages. It happens once in a while here in community central. One common occurrence is people sometimes leaving the tag open, and make the whole page become "bold". I'm not sure why you can't edit it, but as you're an admin, you can simply copy the content, delete it, and create a new one...'



Post a reply

Topics for this thread:

 Comments

 Edit Topics

Extensions on Wikimedia

- Gadgets
 - Allow user-developed solutions
- Babel
 - Language labelling and tracking for coordinating who speaks what
- Article feedback tools (various versions)
 - Various versions of Comments for Wikipedia
 - Included article ratings and various canned questions
- Moodbar

But mostly Wikipedia remains the same

- Some gadgets for social tools, some different ones on various languages
- Bots for auto-archiving of discussions
- Project: pages for central forums
- Templates
 - Talkback, outdent, archiving...

Discussion and project coordination remains in wikitext.

Wikitext solutions

- WikiProjects
 - Community spaces dedicated to specific subjects or goals
 - Implemented as project pages with resources and discussions listed
 - Often maintained by hand, or using bots
- Esperanza
 - WikiProject of sorts intended to gamify wikipedia by adding social networks and competition between users
 - Resulted in caballing, fierce competition, and was deemed un-wiki-like
 - Possibly the cause of some of the later hatred for all things social network

Echo, Flow, and CollaborationKit

- Echo provides sane notifications.
- Flow is the successor to LQT.
- CollaborationKit reimplements WikiProjects programmatically, removing the need for manual user maintenance





These are probably the future.

Echo/Notifications

- Fine-grain notifications
 - Mentions, emails, edit reverts
 - Allows other tools to hook into it
- Cross-project support
 - Can get notifications from other languages, etc

Zonthrep 0 0 [Talk](#) [Sandbox](#) [Preferences](#)

Alerts

-  The page User:Zonthrep/sandbox was patrolled by **Quiddity**
1 minute ago
-  Quiddity mentioned you on the Quiddity talk page in "Wikidata weekly summary #186".
2 minutes ago | [View changes](#)
-  Quiddity thanked you for your edit on User:Zonthrep.
5 minutes ago
-  Welcome to Wikipedia, Zonthrep! We're glad you're here.
24 minutes ago

[> All notifications](#) [⚙ Preferences](#)

Flow

Managed discussion, built-in reply features, notifications support, threading etc

Notifications from deleted topics, how can they be made disappear, and why are they there anyway?



2 comments • a month ago

Sänger



I just wondered why there were 4 new notifications in my top bar, but none showed up in the list. In the list was just old stuff from yesterday. I had no possibility to say **Alle Mitteilungen als gelesen markieren**. I managed to get the number 4 disappear by marking one read topic as unread, and after that I could use **mark all read**, but still I had no clue what I had marked read, as even on [Special:Notifications](#) nothing was shown.

After that I went to my watch list, and there I saw 4 deleted spam posts for the [Flow forum](#). I think they were the culprits for the ghost notifications. How come, that they are not markable without some minor hacking skills? Either they are in my notifications, or they are not. If nothing's in there, the number should be **0**.

Reply • Thank

a month ago

Quiddity (WMF)



Thanks, I've noted this at [Phab:T93673#2607119](#).

Reply • Thank

a month ago

Reply to "Notifications from deleted topics, how can they be made disappear, and why are they there anyway?"

Special:Notifications does not have a filter for cross-wiki notifications



8 comments • 2 months ago

WhatamIdoing



[Special:Notifications](#) has buttons for "All Read Unread" at the top. But it has no information for cross-wiki notifications. Perhaps that should be added as an option?

Reply • Thank

4 months ago

JMatazzoni (WMF)



Right, as Quiddity points out below, we do have that feature. But you can access a given remote wiki from the Notifications page only when you have unread notifications on that remote wiki. [@WhatamIdoing](#), is that good enough? Or were you wanting something more?

Reply • Thank

3 months ago

Quiddity (WMF)



That's [phab:T129366](#) ("List wikis and pages with unread notifications in the Notification Page left nav") - see task for

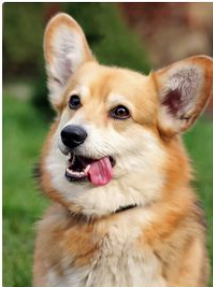
CollaborationKit

- Managed WikiProject handling, no need for wikitext
- User-generated lists for tracking pages, making worklists

More on this on monday.

Project page [Discussion](#) [Read](#) [Edit](#) [View history](#) [☆](#) [More ▾](#)

WPX:WikiProject Dogs





The wonderful dogs you know and love!

Announcements [\[Edit\]](#)

- A new collaboration hub has been set up! 01:40, 3 October 2016 (UTC)


Meet our members!


-  **Harej**
-  **SuperHamster**


[View full list](#)

[Join](#)


Project contents

 [List 1](#)


 [Sad missing dogs](#)

 [Lorem](#)


[List 1](#) [\[View\]](#) [\[Edit\]](#) [\[Remove feature\]](#)



Golden Retriever
Sweetheart!



German Shorthaired Pointer
The weird cutie!



Icelandic Sheepdog

Why has this taken so long?

- Cultural inertia
- Focus on content creation (direct collaboration) over discussion (indirect collaboration)
- Technical difficulty and high standards in production

This is the same project where people rarely used the talkpages for the first several years because they just didn't have much to talk about.

Conclusion

I don't know.

Pictures

1. <http://www.usemod.com/cgi-bin/wiki.pl?StarterPages>
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template_talk:Talkback/Archive_1&action=edit
3. <https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:LiquidThreads>
4. http://en.uncyclopedia.co/wiki/Forum:Village_Dump
5. <http://community.wikia.com/wiki/Thread:1071064>
6. <https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/File:Social-tools-logo-concept-1.png>
7. <https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Talk:Notifications>
8. <https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/File:Notifications-Flyout-Screenshot-08-10-2013-Cropped.png>
9. https://wpw.wmflabs.org/w/index.php/WPX:WikiProject_Dogs