Testing Ideas for Flourishing Communities

CivilServant
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Goals & Agenda

What can experiments do for Wikipedia?

How to design a simple experiment

How to think about research ethics

Design simple experiments Together

Introduction to Experiment Design & Ethics

Develop Experiment Ideas In Groups

Review Ideas, Challenges, and Solutions
Can symbolic rewards increase newcomer retention in German Wikipedia?

The Award „Edelweiss with Star” honors on a monthly basis a selection of those users who have made their first contributions to the German-language Wikipedia in the previous month. Awardees who continue their engagement can receive two further awards besides the original award: “Edelweiss with two Stars” and “Edelweiss with three Stars”.

The award recipients shall be considered as representative for all those new users who have constructively contributed to our common project. Welcome!

Idea and Realization

With the Edelweiss-Award, a group of authors of the Portal Switzerland wishes to honor new users and their valuable contributions to the German-language Wikipedia. They deserve our gratitude and our recognition.

The idea for such an award emerged from the Wikipedia roundtable in Zurich. After that, the award “Edelweiss” was for the first time bestowed in July 2012. The suggestions that were made after the first round of bestowals were intensively discussed and carefully integrated into the present award concept on consecutive roundtable meetings.

In case of questions, suggestions or criticism, please feel free to directly contact one of the users present at the roundtable meetings (for instance, [7 user names]). We are eager to preserve the positive spirit of this award and to abstain from dragging new users directly into discussions.

Edelweiss with Star

Out of more than 4,000 candidates who were for the first time active in the German-language Wikipedia in May 2015, we have awarded the following users in early June.

Note. “XYZ” is a placeholder for the pseudonyms of the award winners, which are displayed there.
Experiments

Provide different interventions to different groups and compare the outcome

Receive the Eidelweiss Award with Star

Non-bot newcomers

Measure the first month retention rate

No Intervention (Group B)

Figure 1. (Color online) Mean Retention Rates

Notes. Focusing on first month after awarding date. Error bars indicate the 95% confidence intervals.

What is an Experiment?

How Can Your Community Design an Experiment?
We work together with communities to discover effective ideas for change and to test the impacts of digital technologies in society.
How can (language) Wikipedia better welcome newcomers?
Who actually signs up for Wikipedia?

- What is the newcomer experience?
- What factors are associated with contribution over time?
- What support do newcomers need?
- What interventions increase newcomer participation?

Interviews & Ethnography

Surveys

Data Analysis

Community Discussion

Design

Experiments
Who actually signs up for Wikipedia?

What is the newcomer experience?

What factors are associated with contribution over time?

What support do newcomers need?

What interventions increase newcomer participation?

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Experiments
Who actually signs up for Wikipedia?

What is the newcomer experience?

What factors are associated with contribution over time?

What support do newcomers need?

What interventions increase newcomer participation?
Experiments ask **what-if questions** and **test ideas for change**.
Experiments
Test ideas for change

If new Wikipedians are given an award, how will that increase retention?

If more experienced editors thank newcomers for their edits, will that increase retention?
Experiments: Provide different interventions to different groups and compare the outcome.

- **Receive Intervention (Group A)**
- **No Intervention (Group B)**

Measure and Compare Outcomes
Civil Servant Software

Collect Data

Civil Servant Datastore

Coordinate Intervention

Civil Servant Software

Manage Ethics
How can your community design an experiment?

Goal:

Intervention:

Unit of Assignment:

Measure(s):
**Goal**

What do you want to see change in your Wikipedia?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>What</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We want people who have just joined a Wikipedia</td>
<td>to increase the quality of their contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people who aren’t joining a Wikipedia</td>
<td>to contribute more to Wikipedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to keep contributing over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiment Design

**Goal:** We want people who have just joined a Wikipedia to keep contributing over time

**Intervention:**

**Unit of Assignment:**

**Measure(s):**
Intervention

What could you do to implement your theory of change?

Social

Policy & Process

Software & Design
What causes some people to contribute to Wikipedia longer?

Offer support after conflict or harassment

Provide branding & identity they can show their friends

Send thanks to tell newcomers how you value their contributions
Goal: We want people who have just joined a Wikipedia to keep contributing over time

Intervention: Wikipedians send thanks to newcomers to inform them about how Wikipedians value their contributions

Unit of Assignment:

Measure(s):
Where can you vary an intervention for comparison?

Receive Intervention (Group A)

No Intervention (Group B)

Measure and Compare Outcomes
Unit of Assignment

Where can you vary an intervention for comparison?

**Individuals**
Send some people Thanks but not others

**Cohorts**
Send some groups of Wikipedians Thanks but not other groups

**Articles**
Make the Thanks feature available for some articles but not others

**Wikipedias**
Turn on the Thanks feature for some Wikipedias but not others

**Important**: good experiments need a large enough sample of units, usually in the hundreds or thousands
Experiment Design

**Goal:** We want people who have just joined a Wikipedia to keep contributing over time.

**Intervention:** Wikipedians send thanks to newcomers to inform them about how Wikipedians value their contributions.

**Unit of Assignment:** Individual Wikipedians

**Measure(s):**
**Measurement**

How will you measure the outcome that matters?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observe Behavior</th>
<th>Wikipedia Data: how long someone contributes to Wikipedia (survival/retention)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask People</td>
<td>Survey: How much do they believe that other people value their contributions?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiment Design

How will you measure the outcome that matters?

Goal: We want people who have just joined a Wikipedia to keep contributing over time.

Intervention: Wikipedians send thanks to newcomers to inform them about how Wikipedians value their contributions.

Unit of Assignment: Individual Wikipedians.

Measure(s):
- Survival/Retention
- Belief that others value their work.
Questions
Research Ethics, Collaborative Design & Community Consent

Research Ethics
Protecting individual participants

Collaborative Design
Supporting and protecting the community

Community Consent
Ensuring that research is accountable to the community
Principles of Research Ethics: Protecting Participants

Benefits: will this study benefit participants & society?

Risk: are the risks from this study:
  - routine
  - duration: reversible / long-term

Do benefits outweigh the risks?

Procedures to protect subjects
  - Consent and Debriefing
Collaborative design: supporting & protecting the community

Maximize *benefit*

Ensure experiment is *valuable*..
- Goals that matter to the community
- Interventions that are practicable

Ensure experiment is *good*…
- Understand how the community works (avoid "gotchas")

Minimize *risk*

Minimize short-term harm

Ensure experiment respects the *integrity of the community*...
Community Consent

How? Depends on community...

- Village Pump
- Project / chapter with trust of community

Community can agree

- Benefit outweighs risk for community
- Benefit outweighs risk for individuals
Form groups of 3-4 with people next to you

1. Pick an experiment to design
2. Complete front & back of experiment card
3. If time, work on 2nd experiment
Describe Your Experiment Idea

Goal:

Intervention:

Unit of Assignment:

Measure(s):
How can you ensure integrity and consent of community?

What might be one risk to the community and how would you minimize?

What is the best way to ensure you have consent of community?

(Optional) Name _____________________ Username ________________________ Email ____________________________
Share Your Ideas

Discuss Challenges

Questions
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