

User Experience in Wikipedia: How Can We Improve It?

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I would like to improve the Wikipedia User Experience*

- *User Experience comprises “all the aspects of how people use an interactive product: the way it feels in their hands, how well they understand how it works, how they feel about it while they’re using it, how well it serves their purposes, and how well it fits into the entire context in which they are using it.”*

– [Alben \(1996\)](#)

* <http://www.allaboutux.org/ux-definitions>



Because having a better UX will help growing communities in both size and diversity.



How Can We Improve Any Technological Product's User Experience?



Through a Process of User-Centering It

User-Centered Design*

- Iterative
 - Simplifying tasks
 - Making things visible
 - Getting the right mappings
 - Understanding the user needs
- Designing according to the user limitations



Good User Experience* comes from User-Centered Design process

* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User-centered_design

*Terms coined by Don Norman

Factors that influence Wikipedia User Experience (UX)

Because since everything is decided by the community, members directly or indirectly influence newcomers' User Experience.

- a) Content*
- b) Editors' behaviour (communication,...)
- c) Norms
- d) Technology & design
- e) ...



When decisions on these factors provide friction to users, UX is bad.

What is the current situation of UX?

Potential problems (some not solved):

- Experienced editors block newcomers contributions at content and policy level.

Halfaker, A., Geiger, R. S., Morgan, J. T., & Riedl, J. (2013). The rise and decline of an open collaboration system: How Wikipedia's reaction to popularity is causing its decline. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(5), 664-688.

- Experienced editors' reverts with lack of communication discourages newcomers.

Suh, B., Convertino, G., Chi, E. H., & Pirolli, P. (2009, October). The singularity is not near: slowing growth of Wikipedia. In *Proceedings of the 5th International Symposium on Wikis and Open Collaboration* (p. 8). ACM.

Halfaker, A., Kittur, A., & Riedl, J. (2011, October). Don't bite the newbies: how reverts affect the quantity and quality of Wikipedia work. In *Proceedings of the 7th international symposium on wikis and open collaboration* (pp. 163-172). ACM.

- Etcetera.

We have a long list of negative aspects detected/researched but not solved.

We have research explaining the benefits of many changes and ideas to increase editor retention...(that remain unimplemented).

- **The Article Feedback”** experiment called the attention of readers to contribute.
Halfaker, A., Keyes, O., & Taraborelli, D. (2013, February). Making peripheral participation legitimate: reader engagement experiments in wikipedia. In *Proceedings of the 2013 conference on Computer supported cooperative work* (pp. 849-860). ACM.
- **MoodBar** allowed editors to send feedback about their first experience in Wikipedia.
Ciampaglia, G. L., & Taraborelli, D. (2015, February). MoodBar: Increasing new user retention in Wikipedia through lightweight socialization. In *Proceedings of the 18th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing* (pp. 734-742). ACM.
- **New editors invited to the Teahouse (English Wikipedia)** are retained at a higher rate.
Morgan, J., & Halfaker, A. (2018). Evaluating the Impact of the Wikipedia Teahouse on Newcomer Retention.

Potential solutions (not always implemented):

- Experienced editors block technology implementations (tools) that **might be positive for newcomers (or simply not the average profile)** but... are not implemented.

visual
editor

e.g.



Why is this happening? Why UX is not improving as much as possible?

I can only think of three reasons:

1. Low degree of knowledge or awareness of the problems.
2. Lack of communication between those who are aware and the actors (communities/WMF).
3. Consensus decision-making mechanisms and governance block UX improvements.



Two unique Wikipedia characteristics are especially challenging to User-Center it:

- **Consensus Decision-Making**
- **Content-Centered Architecture**



I will try to propose some mechanisms to user-center Wikipedia.

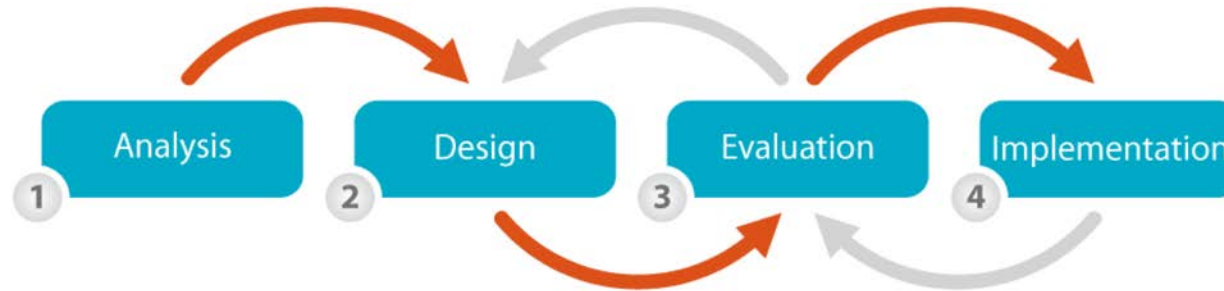
First Challenging Characteristic

(!) Consensus Decision-Making

In a usual product implementing a User-Centered Design process:

new ideas (company managers)

decision-making (company managers)



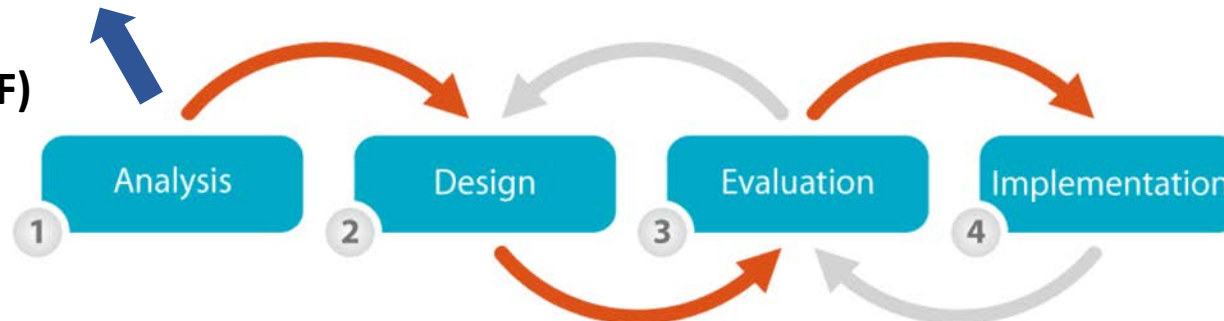
research evaluation (trusted team)

In Wikimedia Technology Design process:

new ideas (often experienced editors)

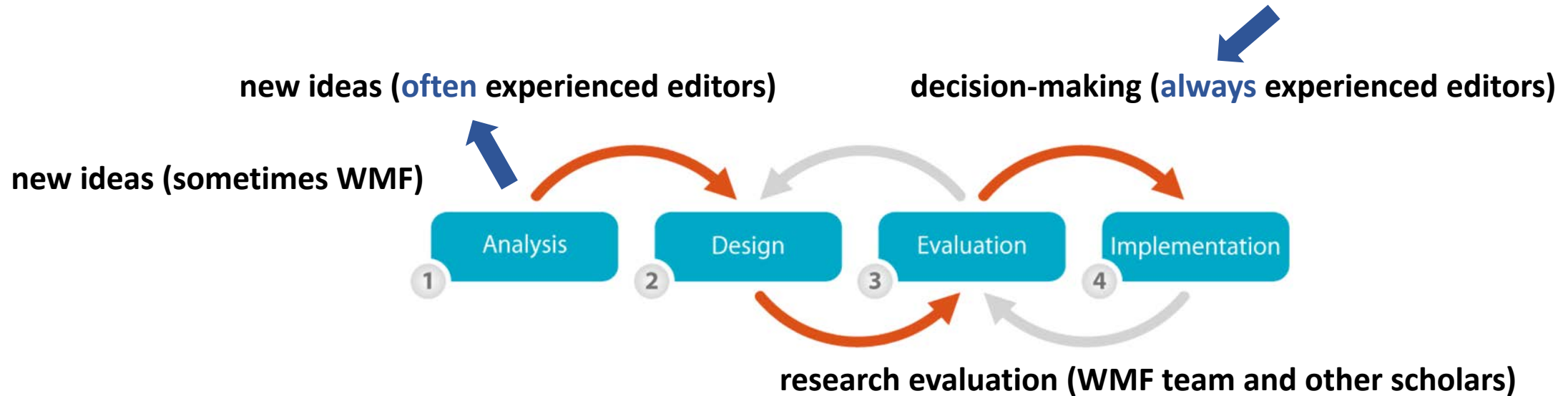
decision-making (always experienced editors)

new ideas (sometimes WMF)



research evaluation (WMF team and other scholars)

In Wikimedia Technology Design process:



Where should new ideas for community growth appear from?

User-centered design can be strategic to design to grow in number of users, in Wikipedia it responds to the needs of the current users.

“If I learnt it, anyone can”.
You may be self-empowered, but not realistic.




And we are full of cognitive biases!

Disease of familiarity <https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-major-flaws-in-Wikipedia>

“Open knowledge” mission vs. Controversial design features False Debate

“Do you think the WMF sometimes loses sight of the project’s core ‘open knowledge’ mission when investing huge chunks of human time and money into controversial design features like VE, MediaViewer, Flow, Gather, and others?”

There is no such a debate between new tools and free knowledge commitment.

 **Benoit Landry** shared a link to the group: **Wikipedia Weekly**. ...




7 Jun at 22:12 • 🌐


Do you agree with this anonymous ex-employee's 2014 advice to the WMF?


— "The political commitment to free knowledge matters more than product design."



Do you think the WMF sometimes loses sight of the project's core "open knowledge" mission when investing huge chunks of human time and money into controversial design features like VE, MediaViewer, Flow, Gather, and others? 🤔
Genuinely curious about your thoughts. 😊 — 📖
reading **Glassdoor.com**.

GLASSDOOR.CA
Working at Wikimedia Foundation
See what employees say it's like to work at Wikimedia Founda...

 Like  Comment  Share

 🤔 13

 **Jim Hayes**
i kinda agree, however i would say it this way, the open knowledge mission which

 Write a comment...  

Or should we write articles using the Terminal*, at night, and without dinner, to prove our commitment?

```
x - □ fossbytes@Fossbytes: ~
fossbytes@Fossbytes:~$ wikit
Usage: $ wikit <query> [-flags]

Quotes are not required for multi-word queries.
Flags can be placed anywhere.

Flags:

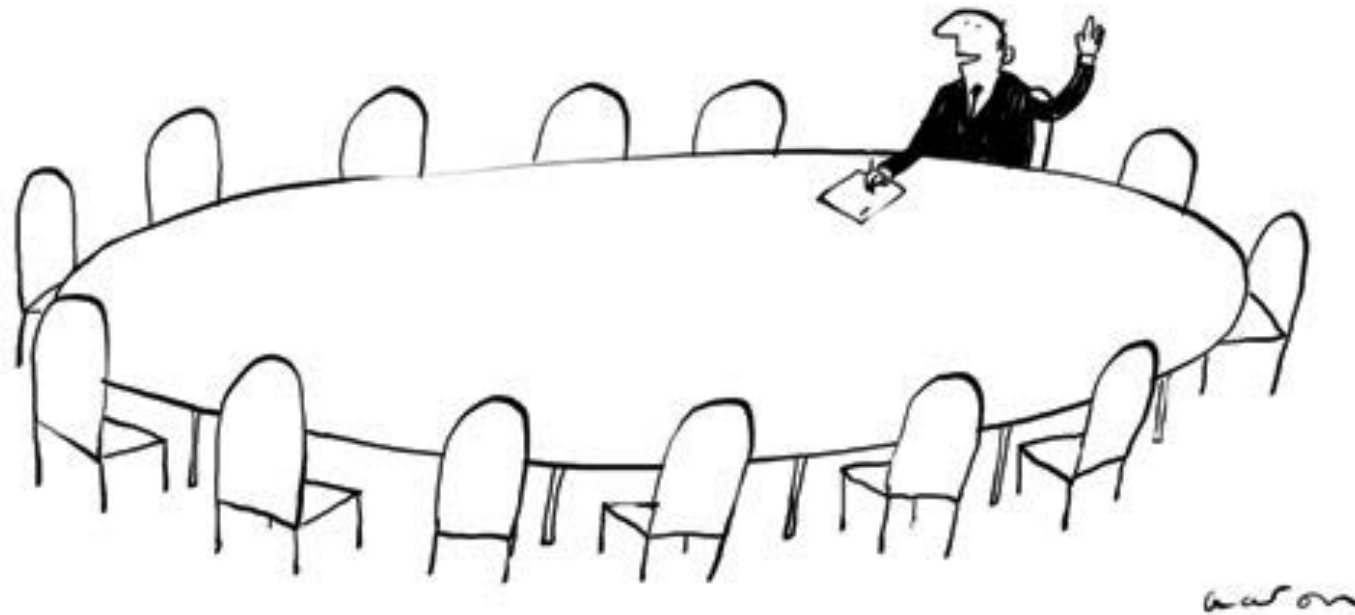
  -b           Open Wikipedia article in browser
  -line <NUM> Set line wrap length to NUM (minimum 15)
  -lang <LANG> Specify language;
  -l <LANG>   LANG is an HTML ISO language code
  -d           Open disambiguation page in browser

Examples:

$ wikit nodejs
$ wikit empire state building
$ wikit linux -b
$ wikit jugo -lang es
fossbytes@Fossbytes:~$
```

* <https://fossbytes.com/use-wikipedia-terminal-wikit/>

This is why consensus can sometimes become a closed-feedback loop in which members of the same community or one of its subgroups dominate the decisions.



"It looks like we have a consensus."

**Newcomers seat?
Which one?**



Are communities able take decisions for the benefit of every editor and potential new editor? In every aspect?

Should consensus be limited to content?

Should we find another decision-making model for technological changes?

Proposed Solution:

We could represent the potential editors by introducing a new public appointed role(s): **the 'User Experience flag(s)'**.



Autopatrolled



Bureaucrat



Admin



UX

Flags were introduced to manage content, why not to represent users and ensure UX?

This flag would care for the community renewal and every factor affecting the user experience.

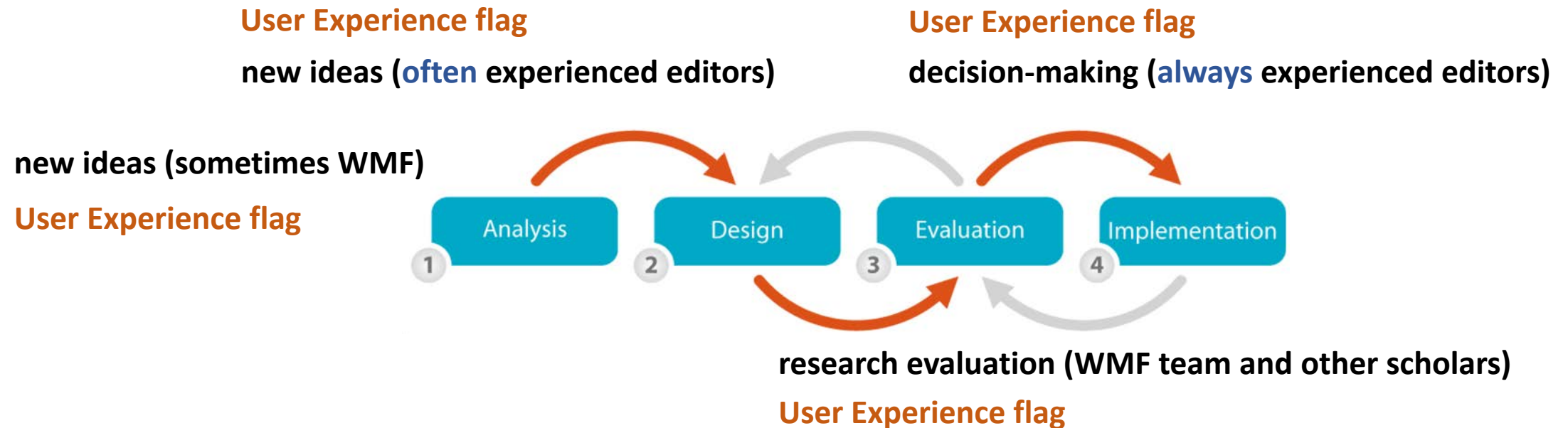
Key Functions:

- 1. Represent diversity and newcomers in consensus with available data.**
- 2. Ensure communication between WMF developers, researchers and communities to implement software changes to the benefit of everyone (especially newcomers).**
- 3. Follow community stats and re-introduce feedback in community discussions, event planning, etcetera.**



- I. **“We need to represent both the (potential and experienced) user needs in the consensus”.**

In future **Wikimedia Technology Design** process the **UX flag** is at every step:



2. This UX role(s) must be IN THE COMMUNITY, NOT IN WMF.

User Experience research and community engagement stats must be community information in order to take decisions.

UX would promote this information Flow!

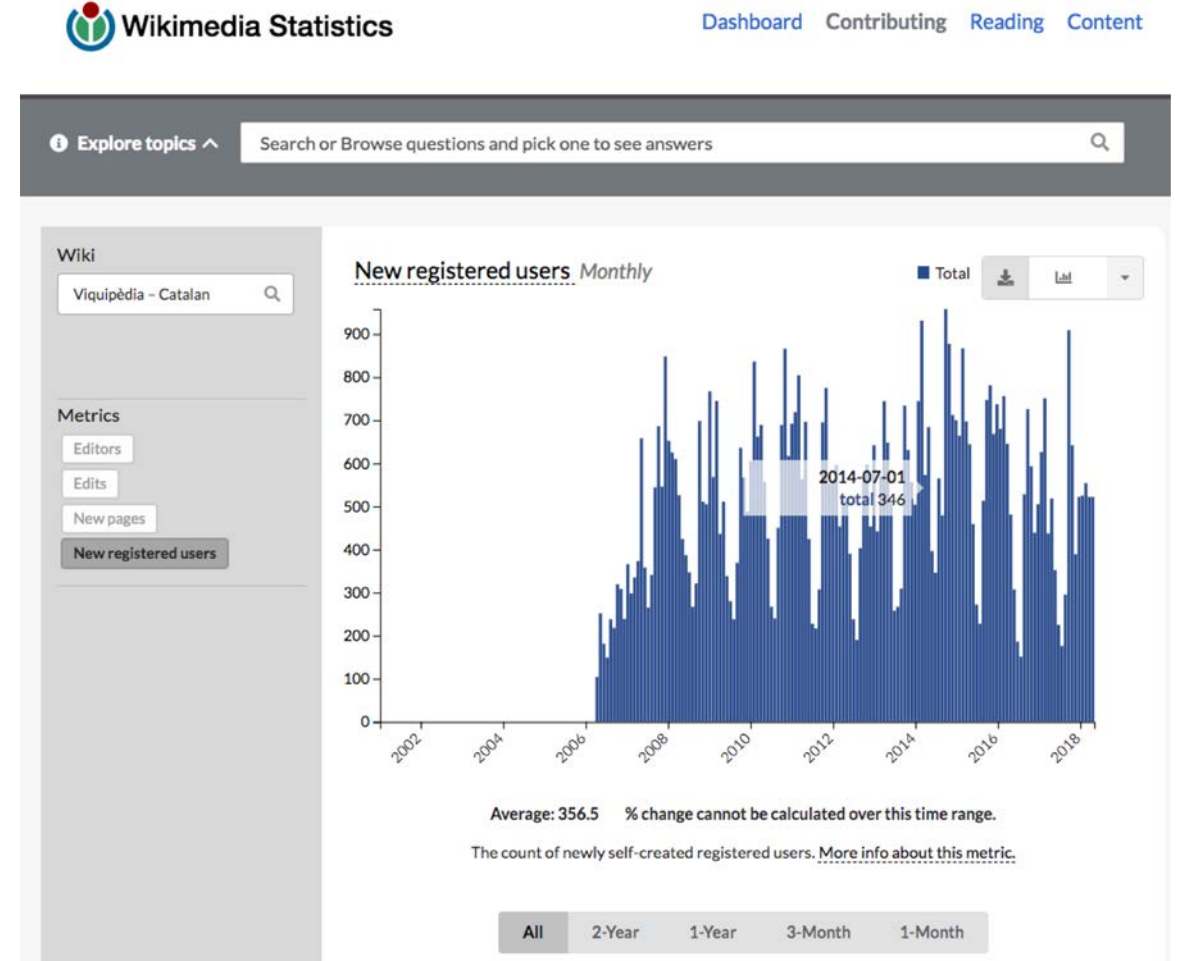


3. Editors do not generally know the current state of the community engagement.

UX Flag would follow rich Community Stats not because of curiosity, but to influence community decisions, events, etcetera. It must inform.

Useful metrics:

- Newcomers retention, core-periphery interactions, etcetera.
- Most active editors, by topic, by featured articles.
- Reverts, Harassment, etcetera.



<https://stats.wikimedia.org/v2>

“The sum of human knowledge” MAIN MOVEMENT GOAL

“The best knowledge service experience” NEW GOAL



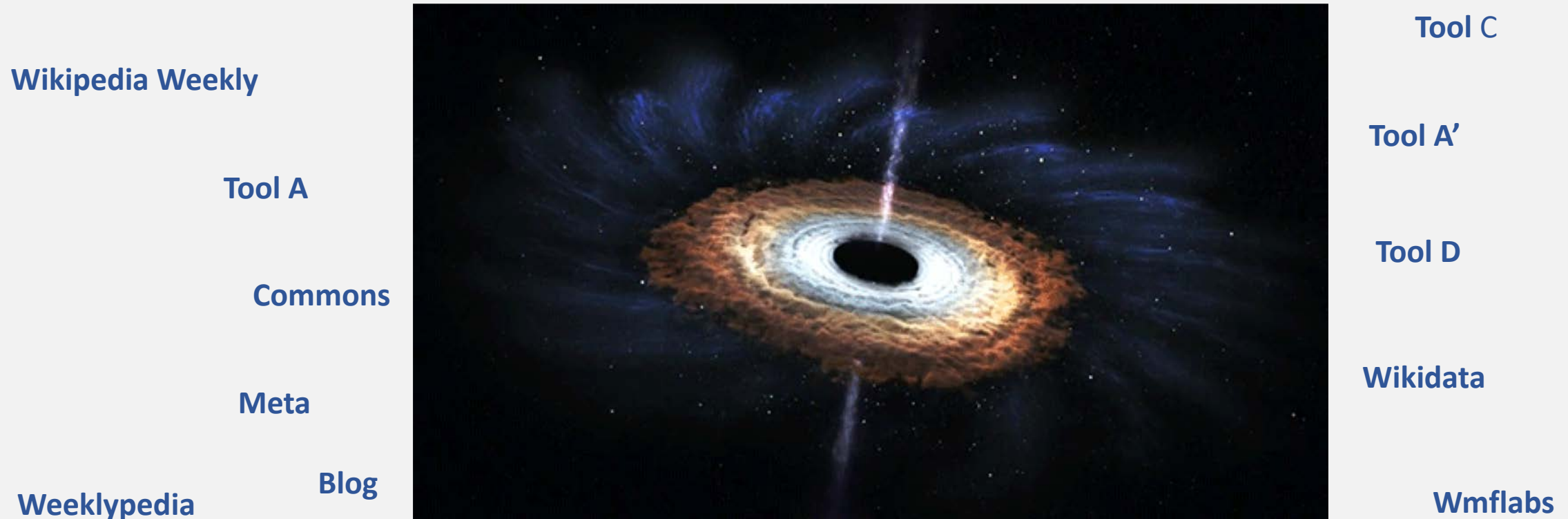
FOR NEW UX FLAG

Knowledge as a service (2030): “**Knowledge as a service:** To serve our users, we will become a platform that serves open knowledge to the world across interfaces and communities. We will build tools for allies and partners to organize and exchange free knowledge beyond Wikimedia. Our infrastructure will enable us and others to collect and use different forms of free, trusted knowledge.”

https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Strategy/Wikimedia_movement/2017/Direction

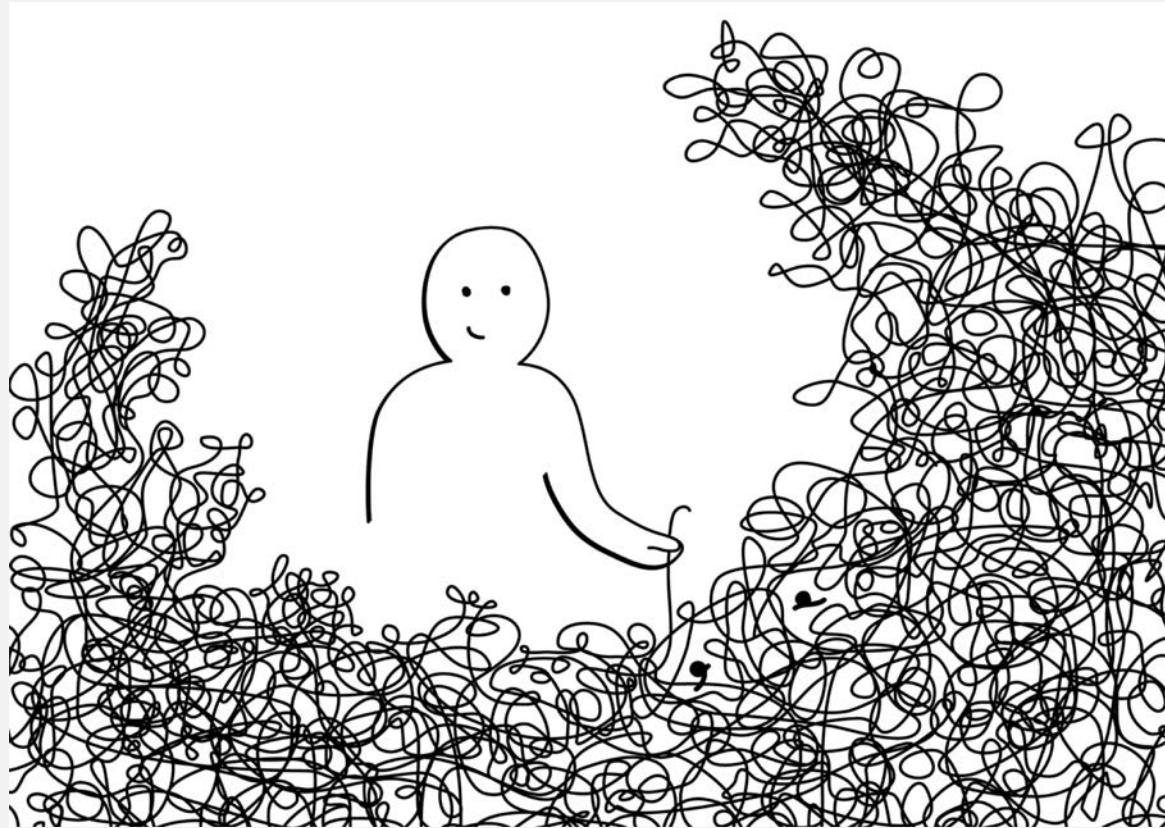
Content-Centered Architecture

Content is the center. Wikipedia has grown by accretion.



When complexity brings friction to someone getting in, UX is bad.

Me: “Multiple creators can only create complexity....”
You: “But...hey, this is the power of **Wikimedia**...!?”



Content-centered architecture



*With more UX concerned people,
little by little we could turn WP into
a much more....*

User-centered architecture

If I was a **User Experience flag** and could I influence in consensus, I would ask the **WMF** to use a **User journey map**.



1. **Before registering**
2. **After registering**
3. **While contributing**
4. **While engaged**
5. **Re-engaging**

THESE ARE FIVE WAYS TO USER-CENTER WIKIPEDIA

#1 Before registering

There is an important percentage of people that do not know that there is even a place to start editing.

- “Oh, I did not know it was editable”*.
- “I did not know what to edit”.

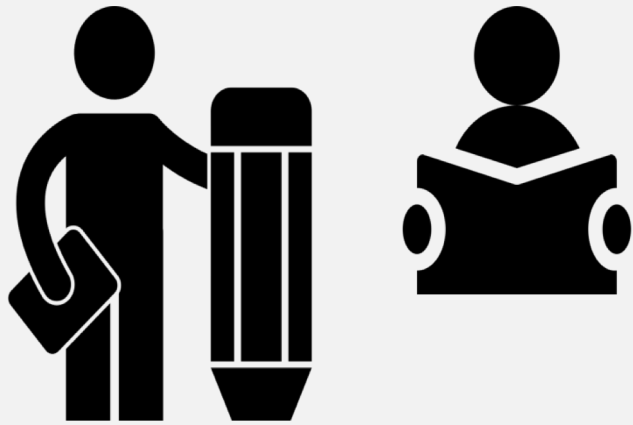


A bold or bigger edit button IS NOT a solution.

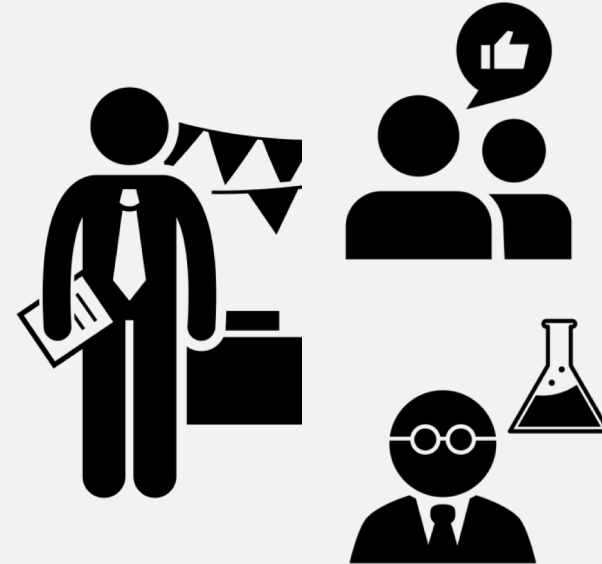
https://usability.wikimedia.org/wiki/Usability_and_Experience_Study

Shaw, A., & Hargittai, E. (2018). The Pipeline of Online Participation Inequalities: The Case of Wikipedia Editing. *Journal of Communication*, 68(1), 143-168.

“Dethrone the distinction between editor-reader”



editor-reader



Many other profiles

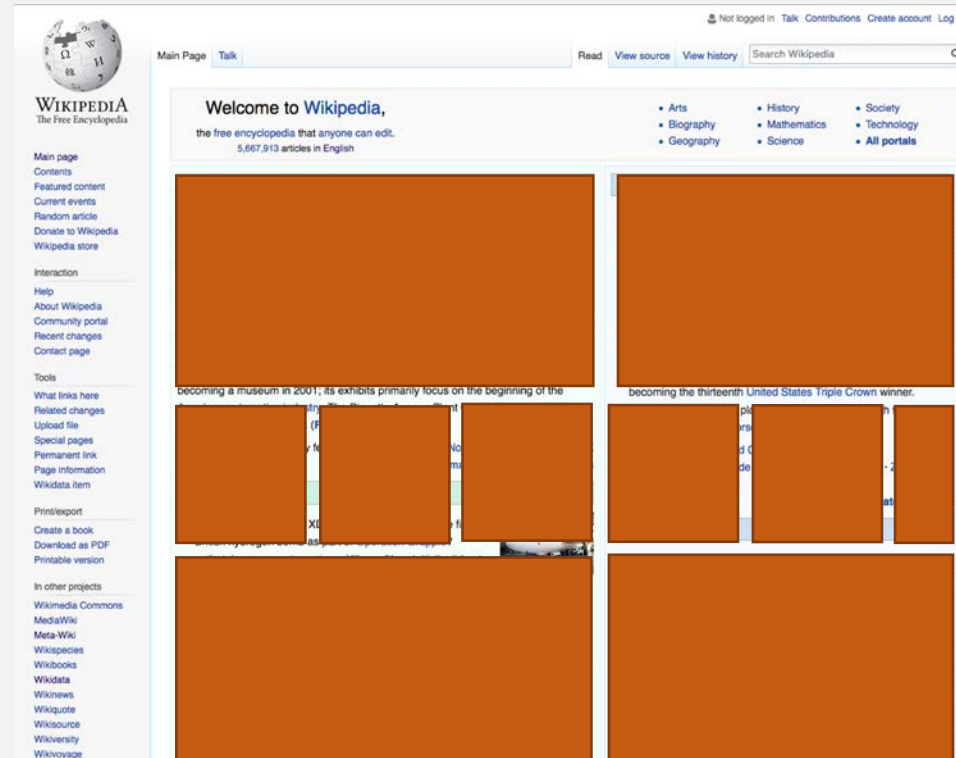
This polarization makes it more difficult for users to become **contributors**

All sort of users should be **appealed by** the site to become a contributor in some way.

Wikipedia Homepage

Most popular article

Tasks:
Typo., topic missing,
relevant translations,
citation needed, etc.



Upload pictures

Upcomming
community events

Glam partnerships

Different profiles and tasks should be visible to stimulate new users.

Remember **User-Centered Design** principle: “Making things visible”

#2 After registering

- Is it easy to learn? Is it easy to know what learn? Should every user learn the same things?

“In video games, an **onboarding plan** are useful to game designers to set priorities and goals for each kind of user to learn the basics of the game, mechanic by mechanic, according to her profile.”



Fortnite onboarding plan

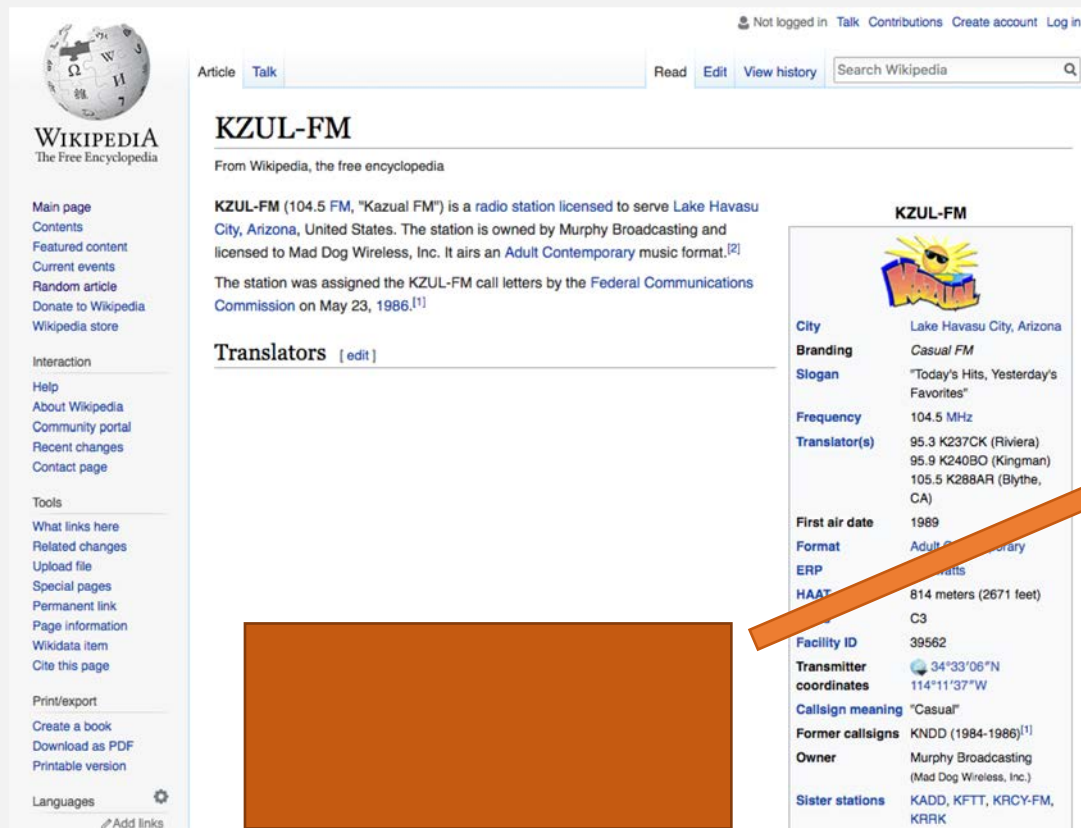
Prio	Features to teach	Difficulty	Tutorial order	Onboarding plan (player's perspective)	Narrative wrapper
1	Home Base is player's persona	Medium	1	This is me in the game. I start by naming and choosing a banner for my Home Base.	Player receives a distress beacon and discovers his/her Home Base to command.
2	Core movement and combat	Easy – dynamic tip	2	I know how to move and shoot, just give me a quick tip if necessary.	N/A
2	Scavenging	Easy – dynamic tip	2	I quite naturally destroy the environment, just give me a quick tip that all is destroyable.	N/A
2	Crafting	Medium	2	Crafting enables me to make more powerful weapons and items. I must know how to do this to have fun in the game.	The player needs a harvesting tool. Safe environment.
3	Commanding a roster of heroes	Medium	3	I'm managing multiple heroes, each having specific skills.	The player has to choose his/her first hero among 2 classes to send it to the 1 st mission.
2	Building	Hard	4	Building enables me to make forts that protect me from evil. I must know how to do this to have fun.	The player is in a pit and needs to build stairs to escape and start exploring. Safe environment.

It cannot be something detached from real Wikipedia: a new editor just want every session to be meaningful, a unit of meaning. No time constraints either.

Remember The Wikipedia Adventure?: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WP:TWA>

#3 Once contributing

- Let's take advantage of context to **anticipate the right assistance / further actions.**



Tool enabled for newcomers with suggestions / assistance to check:

- Rules: NPOV, Notability, etc.
- Templates used
- Contact top contributor
- ...

Less usability requires a greater motivation

UX principle: Recognise is easier than to recall

The screenshot shows the Wikipedia article for 'Paneer'. The article text reads: "Paneer (pronounced [penɪr]) is a fresh cheese common in South Asia, especially in Indian, Pakistani, Afghan, Nepali, Sri Lankan, and Bangladeshi cuisines. It is an unaged, acid-set, non-melting farmer cheese made by curdling heated milk with lemon juice, vinegar, or any other food acids. Its crumbly and moist form (cheese curd or acid-set cottage cheese) is called chhena in eastern India. It is known as fonir in Sylhet." Below the text, a 'Suggested content you may want to add' box is visible, featuring a 'Media' section with three image thumbnails and a 'More from Commons' button. Below the media section, there is a 'Sections' section with links for 'Etymology and history', 'Preparation', 'Use in dishes', and 'Similar cheeses'.

Suggest content to add based on other languages.

Pau Giner (Pre-hackathon 2018)*

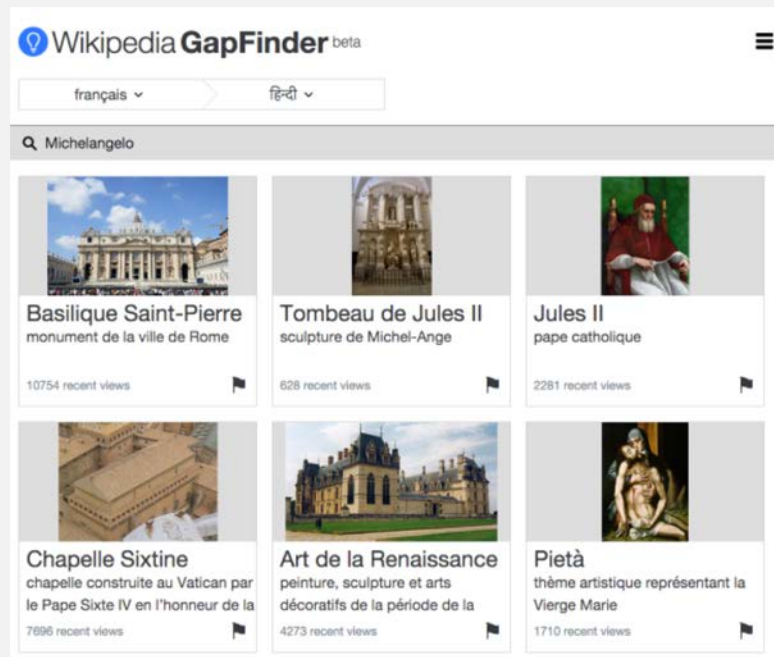
Less usability requires a greater motivation

* https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5c/Olot_prehackathon_-_design_explorations.pdf

#4 While engaged

- The only **findability** Wikipedia is good at is content (articles and text).
Not tools, people, tasks or communication.

Complexity can be reduced by aiding discovery with recommenders and searchers.



e.g. GapFinder recommender (articles)

How about a searcher for urgent tasks, user's with similar preferences, useful tools, tutorials, blog pages, events, etcetera.?

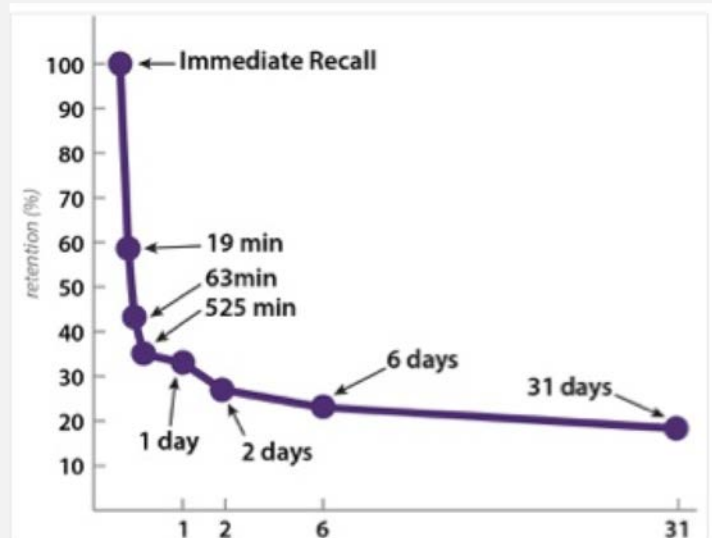
Searchers and recommenders for TOOLS, PEOPLE and TASKS

Less usability requires a greater motivation

#5 Re-engaging

- Complexity introduces cognitive load, and it is also easier to forget what you learnt. After a wiki-vacation it may be hard to keep track or hard to remember.

The forgetting curve

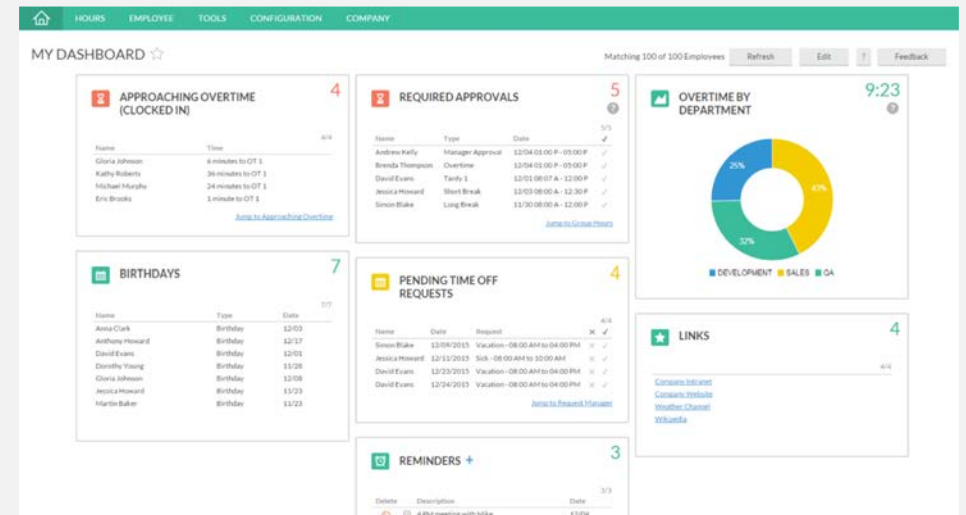


Creating a user-centered space (a sort of atelier) as a **dashboard** would be a solution to keep the tools and resume tasks and connections.

Information would flow between users much more easily and synergies would be created as editors and outsiders share efforts in addon creation.

User dashboard with:

- Community engagement stats
- Page creation stats
- Watchlist
- Template manager
- Spreadsheet tools
- Research tools based on Wikipedia content.
(Omnipedia, Contropedia, Manypedia, etcetera)
- Speech engine for visually impaired
- Topical Coverage Visualizations
- Chapters addon (activities, calendar, outreach, etc.)
- Chat channels (synchron. communication tool)
- Language learning tools
- Wikimedia blogs



e.g. Windowed dashboard from TimeClockPlus

UX principle: Recognise is easier than to recall

These are some possible ways to improve Wikipedia User Experience



**It all would be easier with UX roles in the
communities and in the WMF.**

Community *User Experience* roles key functions:

1. Represent diversity and newcomers in the community consensus (lobbying) and defend a UX (users first) mindset.
2. Ensure communication between WMF developers, researchers and communities.
3. Follow Community Stats and re-introduce feedback in discussions, event planning, etcetera.



**UX would improve as a consequence of implementing User-Centered Design
UX values would permeate the communities and counterbalance tech.**

If you agree, please share and comment to make it happen.
This is an experiment at the moment.

- **Who should I talk to?**
- **How could this role be created?**
- **Should this start in a big Wikipedia?**
- **...**

@marcmiquel

Thank you very much!

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This talk/experiment is part of the following work:

- Miquel Ribé, M. *Identity-based motivation in digital engagement: the influence of community and cultural identity on participation in Wikipedia* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitat Pompeu Fabra).

Chapters 6 and 9.

- Miquel Ribé, M. *Augmentem la Participació I la Diversitat de la Comunitat: Centrem Viquipèdia en els Usuaris*. Viquitrobada 2016 (26-27 November in València). Catalan Wikipedia gathering **(Talk)**