

rich content

The [Open Knowledge](#) movement encompasses much more than Wikipedia articles. Reading long-form text is not currently the only, or optimal, way people choose to gain knowledge. In fact, [a recent study](#) shows that only 20% of Wikipedia consumers are in-depth readers, no matter what language you consider.

And while Wikipedia is mainly associated with long-form, informative, encyclopedic text content, several [Wikimedia projects](#) already offer much more than that. [Commons](#), while flawed, is an established source for freely licensed multimedia files. [WikiVoyage](#), though largely unknown, is full of rich and useful crowdsourced travel content. [Wikisource](#) has a small but dedicated community of transcribers, translators, and archivists who combine imagery and text into useful digital reproductions of old publications.

Our existing projects already offer rich opportunities to expand beyond encyclopedic content and give our users useful and fulfilling experiences, so it won't be a stretch for us to continue to explore all types of media and formats to accomplish our goals.

Sections

Roadmap for the future?
An Omni-channel approach
Three types of knowledge
 Factual
 Instructional
 Experiential
Video : The Elephant In the Room
Tactical & Technical Takeaways
Audio - the forgotten format
Images: a long way to go

Text : Fix it
Interactive
Priorities
Notes
Sources

Roadmap for the future?

The National Geographic Society is one of the most well-known and successful global non-profits. They began with a magazine, which stood as their only media platform from 1888 until 1964 when they aired their first television content on CBS.

Today, in partnership with 21st Century Fox, the Society still operates the magazine that got them started, but they have also branched into other forms of media including TV channels, films, a website that features extra content, worldwide events, and other media operations. After decades of exclusively being a magazine brand, today “NatGeo” is truly a successful omni-channel presence. We should seriously consider using this approach as well.

An Omni-channel approach

Disruption. It is perhaps the one word that best describes what happened to the print industry in the past 20 years. Technology didn't kill print, but it certainly gave it a mortal wound. Disruption wrecks companies, and the best defense against it is diversification.

What would National Geographic be today if they had not ventured into other media? What if they'd remained strictly a magazine

company? In the early 1990s the company's flagship publication (National Geographic Magazine) boasted 15 million subscribers. That number was estimated to be closer to 3.5 million [in 2015](#).

Although it is possible that National Geographic would still be around if they'd stuck with magazines, they wouldn't have been able to do so without a massive restructuring, and there's no question that their current setup increases their outreach to millions more people than they could ever hope to reach with just a print magazine.

How does all this apply to us?

It is doubtful that we'll see another online encyclopedia rise to compete with Wikipedia, but that's mainly because the encyclopedia business isn't exactly a growth industry these days. Sooner or later, something will disrupt our model. It might be that our donations dry up, or larger companies grab all our data and start their thing (think Wikitravel but in reverse), or Artificial intelligence algorithms perfect the automatic creation of articles based on news. Something's going to happen, and it's in our best interest to diversify so we have defenses against the inevitable and the unforeseeable.

Three types of knowledge

Before we focus on the content formats we should consider for the future, let's talk about "types" of knowledge. Our vision statement mentions "a world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge", but what does that really mean? There are at least 3 types for us to target:

Factual

This is already a strength of Wikipedia and its straightforward, neutral, "citations needed" format.

However, the same things that are Wikipedia's strengths are also its weaknesses. They make it hard to find new editors who want to work in the intimidating and often conflict-laden processes of the Wikipedia world. Few people feel like factual experts, and even fewer feel like vigorously defending their claims.

Instructional

This is a weakness for Wikimedia projects. Wikipedia is very good at describing things but very bad at telling you how things work.

You can see how bad we are at this with a simple experiment. Go to Google and search for "rocket". The Wikipedia article for rocket shows up very early in the search results. Now try "how do rockets work" and see what happens (hint: you're gonna have to go to the dreaded page 2 of search

results).

This isn't just an artifact of poor SEO - the rocket page really does not do a good job of simply explaining how rockets work.

Experiential

This is an important area where we again are lacking useful content. People want to know what it's like to be X or do Y or visit Z. Knowledge of someone's else's experience is just as valuable as discrete facts, and a key element of getting humans to understand each other.

Now, let's talk about the content formats we can use to convey knowledge - Video, Audio, Images, Text, and Interactive.

Video : The Elephant In the Room

"What are we going to do with video?" is a question often asked not only within the Foundation, but within our community as well. Video has become the most preferred learning method for the majority of Millennials and GenZ. In the next 3-5 years it will be crucial for us to expand the Foundation's video capabilities. [1]

Factual Video: "Explainer" videos are a popular genre. We should give users the ability to create their own videos explaining certain topics or giving highlights of their favorite Wikipedia articles.

Instructional Video: Even the most talented writer in the world couldn't write an article to teach you sign language. But it

would only take a decent teacher to make a useful sign language course with video. That, in a nutshell, is the advantageous power of video when it comes to instruction.

YouTube, solely through the power of its user community, has become a prime hub for learning how to do things. Although much of this content consists of frivolous things like makeup tutorials and video game tips, there is a large body of knowledge-based instructional content, from life skills like cooking to professional skills. It is even used by [surgery trainees](#).

The Wikimedia Foundation has the unique opportunity to learn from the YouTube model and improve it with openly licensed instructional video content that is translated, vetted, and highly curated by our communities for joyful consumption by all.

Experiential Video: Imagine free, openly licensed video content that provides detailed and compelling stories of the experiences of a wide variety of people, cultures, events, and walks of life. Think “Wikipedia originals”

Documentaries are a time-tested form of information sharing that can raise awareness and enter the social consciousness. It makes natural sense for Wikimedia to explore this medium, but not in the typical way.

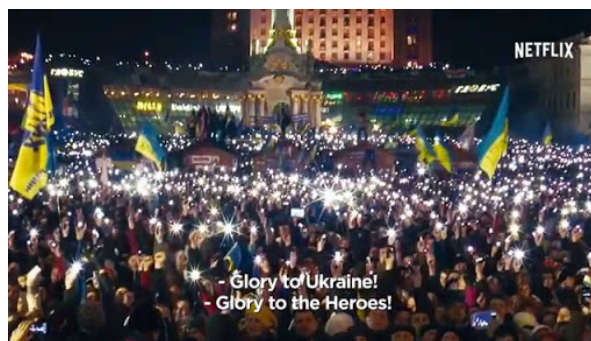
Other organizations already do documentary content; the BBC, Discovery

Channel, and even National Geographic and Smithsonian. But all of these organizations focus on telling stories from a limited number of perspectives. Our strength is the Wiki way - allowing multiple perspectives and contributors.

Fortunately, we don’t have to guess or theorize about what this might look like. There’s a perfect real-world example in the form of [Winter on Fire](#), an Oscar nominated, Emmy nominated, feature length, Netflix original documentary that chronicles the deadly anti-government protests in Kiev, Ukraine that took place in 2013.

Winter on Fire utilized footage from dozens of sources, including cell phones used by protestors during the conflict

Winter on Fire had 28 credited cinematographers, using video footage captured by ordinary people who were on the ground during the conflict. In many ways it was a crowd-sourced film.



Winter on Fire utilized footage from dozens of sources, including cell phones used by protestors during the conflict

From the director of the film:

"We got footage from people's phones, from GoPro cameras, from TV crews, from wherever we could. Without these volunteer cinematographers and the variety of technology available, it would have been impossible to document the movement."

The parallels to the Wikimedia processes and movement are clear.

Tactical & Technical Takeaways

Tactical To Do's

- > Embrace video as a cornerstone of our media strategy going forward
- > Invest in architecture, policies, and community members that support online editing tools for video
- > Invest in architecture, policies, and community members that support online editing tools for video
- > But also support static, immutable content that is created by collecting disparate pieces of Wiki content and combining it into a finished "work" that is greater than the sum of its parts (ala [Winter on Fire](#))
- > Answer an important question: Do we have to limit ourselves to the Internet as our only distribution method?

Technical To Do's

- > Figure out how we're gonna serve and store all this dang video! :)

- > Explore and invest in collaborative online video editing solutions like Popcorn.js
- > Devise tools that enable admins to vet and moderate video content

Audio - the forgotten format

When most people think of audio content they think of music, but there's so much more to hear. Text-to-speech technology, in the form of personal assistants like Siri and home smart speakers like Amazon's Echo, are creating a new renaissance for audio content. And audiobooks are more popular than ever.

In their [2018 Consumer Sales Survey](#) (US only), the Association of Audio Publishers found the following:

- > audiobook sales in 2017 totaled more than \$2.5 billion, up 22.7% over 2016, and with a corresponding 21.5% increase in units
- > This continues the six-year audiobook trend of double-digit growth year over year.
- > 54% of audiobook listeners are under the age of 45 (in other words, it's not just for the olds)
- > 24% of listeners said they have listened on a smart speaker and 5% said they listen most often on a smart speaker
- > The top three activities while listening to audiobooks are: driving (65%), relaxing before going to sleep (52%), and doing housework/chores (45%)

- > 52% of people said borrowing from a library/library website was important or very important for discovering new audiobooks. 43% of listeners said they downloaded an audiobook from a library

If audiobooks are a growing form of media as a “port” of a type of long-form text content (books), perhaps we can adopt that model as well, but for Wiki articles. And perhaps we can serve as the library source for audiobooks in areas that simply don’t have a lot of libraries.

Factual Audio - factoids in audio form, and beyond: What does the fox say? We can answer that question with recordings of fox sounds that are openly licensed and freely available as part of a Wiki database of animal sounds.

“Alexa, in what year was Nelson Mandela released from prison?” Audio facts like that are already being provided by products using our platforms, however, we can enhance that work with “links” to audio files. For example, with structured data we can link topics to available media on that topic, so when someone asks about Mandela getting out of prison we can programatically suggest the user listen to the public domain speech Mandela gave after he was released.

Instructional Audio - audio can teach you more than just French: Imagine a young person in India learning to speak the indigenous language of their region, or an

art student in Canada listening to a public domain podcast that is produced by a group of women in Quebec and focuses on traditions of Inuit art.

And, yes, we could also have language courses so you can learn French.

Experiential Audio - listen to someone tell their story: Oral histories have been a hot topic within the foundation for some time, and they are just the kind of experiential knowledge that we’ve largely neglected. However, oral tellings don’t just expose us to mythology and history of esoteric cultures in far off lands. They can be used to give us deep connections to topics most of us only scratch the surface of.

Imagine a CC0 collection of audio recordings from Holocaust survivors recounting their personal stories.

Tactical & Technical Takeaways

Tactical To Do’s

- > Don’t forget audio! It is a flexible and easy to use file format
- > Invest in obtaining/acquiring rich histories in audio format
- > Explore what it would take to become a repository of all the sounds in the world (machine, animal, and other)

Technical To Do’s

- > Consider ways to use data to link topics/facts to available audio related to that fact

- > The audio playback experience for our files on the web is terrible now. Commit to fixing it.
- > File formats. We have MP3 support now (patent expired). What else might we need to do to provide good streaming audio quality?

Images: a long way to go

Commons falls far short of expectations for a modern image sharing platform. There. Now that we have that out of the way, let's talk about the kind of image content tools we should have going forward.

Factual Imagery: Photos are a type of fact that ordinary people feel comfortable adding. What exactly does the Bambino cat breed look like? It's a simple question with a simple answer (just show me a picture of one), but [you won't find it on Wikipedia](#) or Commons because we don't have an image for it.

Commons has numerous and varied knowledge gaps, and doesn't get close to being a great tool for even illustrating Wikipedia articles, let alone being a source for visual reference for all knowledge.

A large part of this problem is that Commons itself provides a poor experience as a destination. Its UI and design are outdated, it lacks features people have come to expect on platforms like Flickr and Instagram, it has almost no social component, and its processes are even more obscure than Wikipedia's.

Put simply - we can't get great, comprehensive image coverage because people don't want to use the site.

So the first step is to change that. We've enlisted the help of gurus like George Oates to give us outsider perspective on [what's wrong with Commons](#), but changing Commons is an expensive and time consuming task (as anyone on the SDC project can tell you). The more prudent approach seems to be to forget the idea of Commons as a destination for the masses and instead use it as a piece of infrastructure maintained by people who like that sort of thing.

Imagine a world where we do image campaigns like Wiki Loves X every week instead of every quarter. Imagine a massive social media campaign like #WikiLovesWednesday, where every Wednesday we ask the whole world to donate photos of that week's topics.

But we can't do that now because directing millions of people to Commons would make them hate us and ask why we made them go to that terrible, terrible place and they're never coming back.

We propose a New Commons, which would include the creation of a purpose-built, user-friendly new presentation layers on top of Commons. This is still just in the concept phase, but has gotten some support so far.

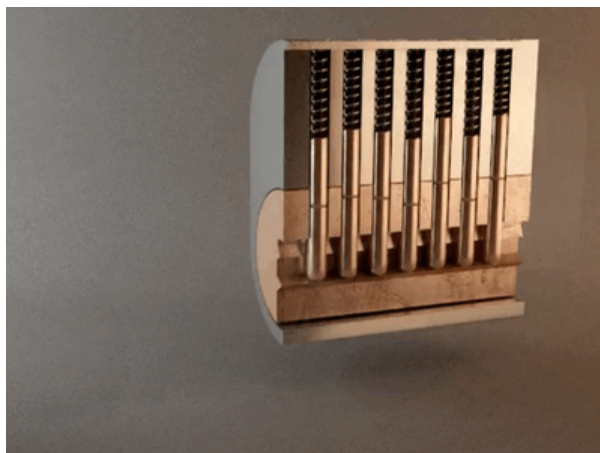
Instructional Imagery: Images are often

much more efficient at explanation than text (and usually don't need translation). Let's say you're trying to learn how ordinary door locks work.

Which experience do you find more elucidating? This text from the Wikipedia entry....

“The pin tumbler lock uses a set of pins to prevent the lock from opening unless the correct key is inserted. The key has a series of grooves on either side of the key's blade that limit the type of lock the key can slide into. As the key slides into the lock, the horizontal grooves on the blade align with the wards in the keyway allowing or denying entry to the cylinder. A series of pointed teeth and notches on the blade, called bittings, then allow pins to move up and down until they are in line with the shear line of the inner and outer cylinder, allowing the cylinder or cam to rotate freely and the lock to open.”

Or this GIF explaining How a lock and key work?



Experiential Imagery: Everyone can be a photojournalist. Social photo sharing is a common activity now, with people sharing their personal experiences of travel, dining, and events both mundane and fantastical. The good news is that the Wiki way - where everyone and anyone is invited to contribute - nicely meshes with broader internet usage patterns, and other hugely popular platforms have already trained the masses to always have their smartphone camera at the ready.

Additionally, we can take a page out of the National Geographic book and encourage people to capture ordinary life in extraordinary places. We've seen some good photo essays come out of Wiki Loves Africa, but they're wasted on Commons, which simply doesn't have the reach or format to really showcase this content.

With the right tools and design and a motivated community, we can do what many photojournalistic outlets do, but at a scale they can't achieve.

Tactical & Technical Takeaways

Tactical To Do's

- > Invest in at least one (possibly more!) welcoming, useful, and usable place for people to share/donate their images
- > Animated GIFs have made a strong comeback. They are also fantastic for informational and instructional content. Support and explore the idea of static

images having less prominence in the future.

- > Encourage experiential storytelling through imagery

Technical To Do's

- > Make frictionless mobile image contribution a priority

Text : Fix it

Wikipedia isn't perfect, but it works. Its success is undeniable, and it will stand in history as a world-changing project. If you're the kind of person who loves deep dives into complex topics, and you don't mind spending time with text that can be challenging, Wikipedia's current format totally works for you. There are certainly parts of its formula that work and should be left alone.

But there are other Wikimedia projects that are heavily text-based and far more accessible than Wikipedia. They are in drastic need of some attention and fixes.

Factual Text: Facts matter, but we don't have all of them yet. Wikisource is a fantastic...well...source, for all sorts of information that just wouldn't work on Wikipedia. Want to read a biology text for kids that was published in 1875? It's there! Want to read the One Thousand and One Nights story in the original Arabic? It's there!

There are countless rich and engaging

pieces of public domain or freely licensed text content out there. Some of them are digitized already, but many are not. A lot of stuff is locked away in archived books sitting in vaults (Charlotte's Culture Outline touches on this). There's a large opportunity for us to facilitate the process of freeing this text and bringing it to the people.

Sometimes, however, the content we want won't be under a license we like. Recent out-of-print content can still be under copyright, but perhaps there's room for us to fund the process of purchasing the rights for valuable content and then releasing it to the public domain or CC0 license.

Instructional Text: Video is king, but text is still like...a duke or something. Video is still the most engaging and powerful medium if you want to tell someone how to do something, but video is not always easy to create, much harder to edit, and not as portable as well-written text instructions.

As we've discussed earlier, Wikipedia is terrible at instructions. But Wikisource and Wikivoyage are pretty good at it! You can find an entire book on how to teach yourself Chinese on Wikisource, and Wikivoyage has a wealth of content like [how to buy a kimono in Japan](#).

Experiential Text: Good writers can make text descriptions come alive. This is another area where Wikisource and Wikivoyage can shine if we let them. Wikipedia's neutral point of view rule makes the content fair

and less prone to bias (although not impervious to it), but that rule also makes the content bland and no fun to write.

Investing in our other projects with less stringent content rules will help attract new readers looking for something less dry, and contributors who can really write and want to use that skill for a good cause.

Tactical & Technical Takeaways

Tactical To Do's

- > Spend money on Wikisource
- > Spend money on Wikivoyage
- > Spend money on acquiring rights to books, articles, and other text content we want (then make it free)

Tactical To Do

Much of Wikisource is held together with string, gum, and hope. Volunteer developers have kept it working with many disparate hacks over the years. We'll have to either commit to fixing it or, perhaps even better, create a new platform that is purpose-built for this use case.

Interactive

This is a complex topic, best described in slide deck form. See [Future of Commons Deck, Path #3](#).

Priorities

This is our recommendation for how to prioritize investment in the rich media types described in this paper:

1. The first thing we need to invest in

Notes

[1] [The Next Generation of Learners](#)

[2] xxx

[3] xxx

Sources

R. Isley [Research and Insights](#)

[https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Characterizing Wikipedia Reader Behaviour/Human development index and Wikipedia use cases](https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Characterizing_Wikipedia_Reader_Behaviour/Human_development_index_and_Wikipedia_use_cases)

Five things you need to know about millennial media habits

September 22, 2017 | By Damian Radcliffe, Carolyn S. Chambers Professor in Journalism—University of Oregon @damianradcliffe

<https://digitalcontentnext.org/blog/2017/09/22/five-things-need-know-millennial-media-habits/>

27/11/2017 Huffington Post

The Media Habits Of Millennials, Generation Z, And The Rest Of Us: In Five Key

Charts https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/the-media-habits-of-millennials-generation-z-and-the-rest-of-us-in-five-key-charts_uk_5a149436e4b0815d3ce65ac5?guccounter=1&guce_referrer_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xILmNvbS8&guce_referrer_cs=hkCzYDU0_kr_tHiPSqxiAg

Ana Gotter — October 24, 2017

Desktop vs. Mobile Video Consumption: What You Need to Know

<https://www.business2community.com/video-marketing/desktop-vs-mobile-video-consumption-need-know-01937184>

Surgical education on YouTube

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/fbc3/96b2d3f4fcd3a3844e2e02866992204c6032.pdf>