Indigenous knowledge for Wikipedia

Bending the rules?

Peter Gallert

Namibia Knowledge Portal
www.nkp.na
Wikipedia Ambassador

11 August 2013
Chapter Outline

1. Introduction
   - What is Indigenous Knowledge?
   - The Value of Indigenous Knowledge

   - From the Community to Wikipedia in Many Steps

   - Shorten the Chinese Whispers Chain
   - Alternative View on Wikipedia Policy
   - Bending the Rules?

4. Namibia Knowledge Portal
Introduction

What is Indigenous Knowledge?

The Value of Indigenous Knowledge

Current Transformation for Wikipedia

Future Transformation for Wikipedia

Namibia Knowledge Portal
**Terminology**

- **Indigenous**: originating in, and characteristic of, a particular region or country
- **Knowledge**: justified, true belief (Plato)
- **Indigenous Knowledge (IK)**: “the body of historically constituted (emic) knowledge instrumental in the long–term adaptation of human groups to the biophysical environment” (Purcell 1998)
  - not codified in writing but in stories, songs, customs, artefacts
  - practical rather than abstract
  - deduced from spiritual rather than scientific patterns of thought
Introduction

What is Indigenous Knowledge?

Terminology

- **Indigenous**: originating in, and characteristic of, a particular region or country
- **Knowledge**: justified, true belief (Plato)
- **Indigenous Knowledge (IK)**: “the body of historically constituted (emic) knowledge instrumental in the long–term adaptation of human groups to the biophysical environment” (Purcell 1998)
  - not codified in writing but in stories, songs, customs, artefacts
  - practical rather than abstract
  - deducted from spiritual rather than scientific patterns of thought
**Terminology**

- **Indigenous**: originating in, and characteristic of, a particular region or country
- **Knowledge**: justified, true belief (Plato)
- **Indigenous Knowledge (IK)**: “the body of historically constituted (emic) knowledge instrumental in the long–term adaptation of human groups to the biophysical environment” (Purcell 1998)
  - not codified in writing but in stories, songs, customs, artefacts
  - practical rather than abstract
  - deducted from spiritual rather than scientific patterns of thought
Introduction

What is Indigenous Knowledge?

Terminology

- **Indigenous**: originating in, and characteristic of, a particular region or country
- **Knowledge**: justified, true belief (Plato)
- **Indigenous Knowledge (IK)**: “the body of historically constituted (emic) knowledge instrumental in the long–term adaptation of human groups to the biophysical environment” (Purcell 1998)
  - not codified in writing but in stories, songs, customs, artefacts
  - practical rather than abstract
  - deducted from spiritual rather than scientific patterns of thought
Value of Indigenous Knowledge

- **IK = knowledge**
  - Its assertions are true
  - It is believed
  - It is justified

- **IK ≠ traditional knowledge**
  - Not just the peoples’ history and culture
  - Ecology, agriculture, medicine, navigation, astronomy, bookkeeping, mechanics, metallurgy, ...

- **Oral knowledge transfer works**
  - A few hundred years ago, all knowledge was indigenous
  - Writing is ≈ 2,000 years old
  - Knowledge is at least 50,000 years old
  - Had knowledge not been codified in oral form...we wouldn’t be sitting here
Value of Indigenous Knowledge

- $IK = \text{knowledge}$
  - Its assertions are true
  - It is believed
  - It is justified

- $IK \neq \text{traditional knowledge}$
  - Not just the peoples’ history and culture
  - Ecology, agriculture, medicine, navigation, astronomy, bookkeeping, mechanics, metallurgy, ...  

- Oral knowledge transfer works
  - A few hundred years ago, all knowledge was indigenous
  - Writing is $\approx 2,000$ years old
  - Knowledge is at least 50,000 years old
  - Had knowledge not been codified in oral form...we wouldn’t be sitting here
Value of Indigenous Knowledge

- **IK = knowledge**
  - Its assertions are true
  - It is believed
  - It is justified

- **IK ≠ traditional knowledge**
  - Not just the peoples’ history and culture
  - Ecology, agriculture, medicine, navigation, astronomy, bookkeeping, mechanics, metallurgy, . . .

- Oral knowledge transfer works
  - A few hundred years ago, all knowledge was indigenous
  - Writing is ≈ 2,000 years old
  - Knowledge is at least 50,000 years old
  - Had knowledge not been codified in oral form... we wouldn’t be sitting here
Value of Indigenous Knowledge

- **IK = knowledge**
  - Its assertions are true
  - It is believed
  - It is justified

- **IK ≠ traditional knowledge**
  - Not just the peoples’ history and culture
  - Ecology, agriculture, medicine, navigation, astronomy, bookkeeping, mechanics, metallurgy, . . .

- **Oral knowledge transfer works**
  - A few hundred years ago, all knowledge was indigenous
  - Writing is ≈ 2,000 years old
  - Knowledge is at least 50,000 years old
  - Had knowledge not been codified in oral form...we wouldn’t be sitting here
IK is *exciting* knowledge. **Did you know...**

- ...that the 1st century BC *Antikythera mechanism* is considered to be the world’s first *analog computer*?
- ...that *Unilever* bought the patent on the appetite suppressant *Hoodia gordonii* some 10,000 years after the *San* first used it?
- ...that the meaning of *Talking knots* (*example pictured*) has never been deciphered?
- ...that *terra preta* soil regenerates itself more than a thousand years after its creation?
- ...that indigenous Africans build houses with *fridge, air conditioning, lighting*, and *stove*, without using electricity and only utilising clay, cast iron, and glass?
Outline

1. Introduction

   - From the Community to Wikipedia in Many Steps


4. Namibia Knowledge Portal
Step 1: An Elder Tells a Tale

- A village elder in his environment, sharing knowledge
Step 2: A Visitor Enters the Scene

- His environment? Not quite:
Step 3: The Visitor Publishes his Findings

- Might have misunderstood the context, the meaning, the intended message, or a combination of these:
  - Not all variables are communicated in verbal form
  - Might not be sufficiently literate in the language
  - Or the translator might skip something
- Will select facts and explanations that are relevant to his/her research
- Peer review might lead to a change in the explanation, triggered by scientists that were not even present
Step 3: The Visitor Publishes his Findings

- Might have misunderstood the context, the meaning, the intended message, or a combination of these:
  - Not all variables are communicated in verbal form
  - Might not be sufficiently literate in the language
  - Or the translator might skip something

- Will select facts and explanations that are relevant to his/her research

- Peer review might lead to a change in the explanation, triggered by scientists that were not even present
Step 3: The Visitor Publishes his Findings

- Might have misunderstood the context, the meaning, the intended message, or a combination of these:
  - Not all variables are communicated in verbal form
  - Might not be sufficiently literate in the language
  - Or the translator might skip something
- Will select facts and explanations that are relevant to his/her research
- Peer review might lead to a change in the explanation, triggered by scientists that were not even present
Step 3: The Visitor Publishes his Findings

- Might have misunderstood the context, the meaning, the intended message, or a combination of these:
  - Not all variables are communicated in verbal form
  - Might not be sufficiently literate in the language
  - Or the translator might skip something

- Will select facts and explanations that are relevant to his/her research

- Peer review might lead to a change in the explanation, triggered by scientists that were not even present
Step 4: A Wikipedian Looking for Reliable Sources

- **Good approach:**
  1. Read the paper in its entirety
  2. Write a summary for Wikipedia
  3. See in which article the summary fits

- **Not so good approach:**
  1. Spot a redlink, an empty section, a {{Citation needed}} tag
  2. Google the keywords
  3. Locate the relevant paragraph
  4. Rephrase to avoid copyright violation and plagiarism

- Which side are you on?
- Talking about rephrasing: This can twist the meaning yet again!
Step 4: A Wikipedian Looking for Reliable Sources

- **Good approach:**
  1. Read the paper in its entirety
  2. Write a summary for Wikipedia
  3. See in which article the summary fits

- **Not so good approach:**
  1. Spot a redlink, an empty section, a {{Citation needed}} tag
  2. Google the keywords
  3. Locate the relevant paragraph
  4. Rephrase to avoid copyright violation and plagiarism

- Which side are you on?

- Talking about rephrasing: This can twist the meaning yet again!
Step 4: A Wikipedian Looking for Reliable Sources

- **Good approach:**
  1. Read the paper in its entirety
  2. Write a summary for Wikipedia
  3. See in which article the summary fits

- **Not so good approach:**
  1. Spot a redlink, an empty section, a {{Citation needed}} tag
  2. Google the keywords
  3. Locate the relevant paragraph
  4. Rephrase to avoid copyright violation and plagiarism

- **Which side are you on?**
  - Talking about rephrasing: This can twist the meaning yet again!
Step 4: A Wikipedian Looking for Reliable Sources

- **Good approach:**
  1. Read the paper in its entirety
  2. Write a summary for Wikipedia
  3. See in which article the summary fits

- **Not so good approach:**
  1. Spot a redlink, an empty section, a {{Citation needed}} tag
  2. Google the keywords
  3. Locate the relevant paragraph
  4. Rephrase to avoid copyright violation and plagiarism

**Which side are you on?**

**Talking about rephrasing:** This can twist the meaning yet again!
Step 5: The Editor Community

- Some of our rural knowledge bearers:

  - Encyclopedicity, notability, due weight
  - as defined by the editor community, which is predominantly
    1. male, educated, 15–49 years old
    2. white-collar worker from a developed country
    3. liberal, technically inclined, English speaker
Step 5: The Editor Community

- Some of our rural knowledge bearers:

  ![Image of rural knowledge bearers]

- Encyclopedicity, notability, due weight
- as defined by the editor community, which is predominantly
  1. male, educated, 15–49 years old
  2. white-collar worker from a developed country
  3. liberal, technically inclined, English speaker
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Narrative
- Alien influence
- Translation
- Selection

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Narrative
- Alien influence
- Translation
- Selection
- Peer review

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Narrative
- Alien influence
- Translation
- Selection
- Peer review
- Google
- Publication

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Narrative
- Alien influence
- Translation
- Selection
- Peer review
- Article
- Paraphrase
- Google
- Publication

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Narrative
- Alien influence
- Translation
- Selection
- Peer review
- Article
- Paraphrase
- Google
- Publication

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors

The same? Or Chinese Whispers?
A Nine–Step Visualisation

- Narrative
- Alien influence
- Translation
- Selection
- Peer review
- Article
- Paraphrase
- Google
- Publication

- Only one abstraction step (rule bending)
- Publications are riddled with errors
A Nine–Step Visualisation

Current Transformation for Wikipedia

From the Community to Wikipedia in Many Steps

Only one abstraction step (rule bending)

Publications are riddled with errors

Narrative → Alien influence → Translation → Selection → Peer review → Publication

Article ← Paraphrase ← Google
Outline

1. Introduction


   - Shorten the Chinese Whispers Chain
   - Alternative View on Wikipedia Policy
   - Bending the Rules?

4. Namibia Knowledge Portal
A Shortcut

Narrative → Peer review

Article → Selection
Peer Review?

- **Indigenous knowledge is published knowledge**
- **Orally published, that is**
  - Oral knowledge publication is predictable and will occur, for example:
    - at anniversaries and commemorations
    - when a medicinal plant is ready to be harvested
    - event–triggered
    - in response to a good–faith request
- Like a museum director asked about a particular item... will always offer more or less the same narrative
- **Indigenous knowledge is peer–reviewed knowledge**
- Contentious narratives will attract immediate commentary
Peer Review?

- Indigenous knowledge is published knowledge
- **Orally published**, that is
- Oral knowledge publication is predictable and will occur, for example:
  - at anniversaries and commemorations
  - when a medicinal plant is ready to be harvested
  - event–triggered
  - in response to a good–faith request
- Like a museum director asked about a particular item... will always offer more or less the same narrative
- Indigenous knowledge is peer–reviewed knowledge
- Contentious narratives will attract immediate commentary
Peer Review?

- Indigenous knowledge is published knowledge
- Orally published, that is
- Oral knowledge publication is predictable and will occur, for example:
  - at anniversaries and commemorations
  - when a medicinal plant is ready to be harvested
  - event–triggered
  - in response to a good–faith request
- Like a museum director asked about a particular item... will always offer more or less the same narrative
- Indigenous knowledge is peer–reviewed knowledge
- Contentious narratives will attract immediate commentary
Peer Review?

- Indigenous knowledge is published knowledge
- **Orally published**, that is
- Oral knowledge publication is predictable and will occur, for example:
  - at anniversaries and commemorations
  - when a medicinal plant is ready to be harvested
  - event-triggered
  - in response to a good-faith request
- Like a museum director asked about a particular item... will always offer more or less the same narrative
- Indigenous knowledge is peer-reviewed knowledge
- Contentious narratives will attract immediate commentary
Peer Review?

- Indigenous knowledge is published knowledge
- Orally published, that is
- Oral knowledge publication is predictable and will occur, for example:
  - at anniversaries and commemorations
  - when a medicinal plant is ready to be harvested
  - event–triggered
  - in response to a good–faith request
- Like a museum director asked about a particular item... will always offer more or less the same narrative
- Indigenous knowledge is peer–reviewed knowledge
- Contentious narratives will attract immediate commentary
Indigenous knowledge is verifiable knowledge. You just have to:

1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the indigenous knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request a re-publication (orally) which will likely be granted

“Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.” (Wales, emphasis mine)

An indigenous community member, wanting to verify a Wikipedia fact referenced to a library item would have to:

1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the western knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request the item which will likely be granted
Indigenous knowledge is verifiable knowledge. You just have to:
1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the indigenous knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request a re-publication (orally) which will likely be granted

“Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.” (Wales, emphasis mine)

An indigenous community member, wanting to verify a Wikipedia fact referenced to a library item would have to:
1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the western knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request the item which will likely be granted
Indigenous knowledge is verifiable knowledge. You just have to:

1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the indigenous knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request a re-publication (orally) which will likely be granted

“Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.” (Wales, emphasis mine)

An indigenous community member, wanting to verify a Wikipedia fact referenced to a library item would have to:

1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the western knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request the item which will likely be granted
Indigenous knowledge is verifiable knowledge. You just have to:

1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the indigenous knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request a re-publication (orally) which will likely be granted

"Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge." (Wales, emphasis mine)

An indigenous community member, wanting to verify a Wikipedia fact referenced to a library item would have to:

1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the western knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request the item which will likely be granted
Future Transformation for Wikipedia

Bending the Rules?

WP:V

Indigenous knowledge is verifiable knowledge. You just have to:

1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the indigenous knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request a re-publication (orally) which will likely be granted

“Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.” (Wales, emphasis mine)

An indigenous community member, wanting to verify a Wikipedia fact referenced to a library item would have to:

1. Travel to the particular location
2. Learn the language
3. Understand the organisation of the western knowledge
4. Gain the trust of the community
5. Request the item which will likely be granted
Allow oral citations!

- Sub-case of {{Template:Cite}}
- Narrator name and role
- Context
- And some standard further information

Cite Oral

{{Cite oral
|narrator-last= Riruako
|narrator-first= Kuaima
|narrator-role= Paramount Chief of the [[Herero people]]
|community= Herero proper
|occasion= 90th anniversary of the reburial of Herero Chief Maharero
|context= Speech of the Paramount Chief prior to the horse parade
|date= 23 May 2013
|place= Okahandja, Namibia
}}
Outline

1. Introduction
4. Namibia Knowledge Portal
Indigenous knowledge for Wikipedia

11 August 2013
Any questions?

These slides are available on Commons.
