

Watchlist and Task Prioritization

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Summary

This report is the deliverable of a [FY 2024-2025 project](#) to:

- 1) Determine investment areas for the Moderator Tools team's Q4 work; these will target the highest priority findings from the research (cross-referenced with the watchlist-related wishes in the [Task prioritization focus area](#)) where the scope is relatively limited for expedient development and implementation, and
- 2) Explore how moderators and patrollers are currently discovering, managing and prioritizing their on-wiki tasks, and additionally note whether a [centralized](#) moderator 'location' is broached as a salient concept among participants.

[Moderators](#) play a crucial role in upholding the quality and integrity of knowledge on Wikipedia, and supporting moderators is one of the key priorities for Wikimedia Foundation in FY2024-2025. Motivated by a series of [Community Wishlist](#) requests categorized within the [task prioritization focus area](#), in this research we explored moderators' pain points prioritizing their on-wiki work and monitoring edits using the Watchlist page in particular.

Through interviews with 16 users across English and Romanian Wikipedias, we investigated watchlist usage and experience of the Watchlist page and examined the challenges moderators face in discovering, managing and prioritizing on-wiki tasks. We learned that while Watchlist is a key destination page for moderators to perform on-wiki tasks, they face significant usability issues, visual clutter, and limitations to getting their work done in a clear and efficient manner. We further learned that task discovery and management is relatively decentralized and haphazard for moderators. We provide recommendations for product and feature developments, in addition to recommendations for further research, to improve moderators' experience on Wikipedia.

Methodology and participants

16 total interview sessions were held:

- With 15 English Wikipedia and 1 Romanian Wikipedia participants whose usernames are associated with the [sysop](#) (also known as administrators, who have special technical rights to perform special actions on their respective wiki projects such as un/blocking users, IP, un/protect pages, un/delete pages, etc.), [patroller](#) (members check whether new pages conform to content [policies](#)), and/or [abusefilter](#) (members are able to set specific actions when actions by users match certain criteria) user groups,
- Who have a number of watched pages ranging from 48 to over 26,000, and
- Who are relatively active in their watchlist activity.

To better understand the details of participants' watchlist experience and activity, we initially aimed to speak with 5-10 participants from both English and Romanian Wikipedias to understand how watchlist activity might differ between a larger versus smaller wiki (respectively). However, due to the condensed timeline for this project and the lower response rates from relatively active watchlist users from Romanian Wikipedia, we ultimately expanded the number of English Wikipedia participants to further unearth and solidify findings, while understanding that small and medium size wikis should remain an area of further exploration.

Why did we select this particular profile of participants?

We made the assumption that moderators and patrollers would best represent the users who utilize the watchlist relatively actively and outside of a reading list use case, and would be best able to speak to a range of related workflow needs and experiences. While content editors are likely also a large standalone contingent of watchlist users, we felt that the cohort of participants interviewed reflected enough overlap with content editors' use cases that they would be adequately represented.

For the purposes of more targeted recruitment on a limited timeframe, we reached out to individuals who belonged to the above user groups and utilized a screening survey that confirmed:

- Their usage of watchlist,
- What other page(s) they visit for the purposes of moderation/patrolling activity,
- Device(s) used for this activity,
- What wikis on which they engage in this activity,
- And finally how often they visit the watchlist and for what purposes.

Moderation activity and the watchlist

From our Foundation [research](#) on moderators and moderator activity, **we have defined moderation work as wide ranging and the aggregation of social, technical, and governance work needed to sustain an online community**. The work consists of a large selection of largely measurable, partially measurable, and some mostly immeasurable tasks.

Though it is only one of many pages where feeds, logs, and other documentation of on-wiki activity occurs, the watchlist page is unique and of particular interest due to the fact that it is a personally¹ curated feed of changes. Most moderators who take the time to establish a watchlist utilize it as the primary means of keeping track of pages for which they have a particular interest, whether the origins of the interest are more content or moderation-related. The watchlist is often the starting point or a key destination for these users to engage in moderation activities, whether this involves content, other users, technical changes, governance and/or communications work.

Context

As an element of the [Future of the Wishlist](#) endeavor, wishes were allocated to defined moderator focus areas and workstreams. The Moderator Tools team found that the [task](#)

¹ A caveat: often, watchlist users will watchlist pages after making an edit due to default settings within the editor itself or tools like [Twinkle](#).

[prioritization](#) focus area, with many wishes related to the watchlist, might be one of the most likely to move the needle on improving user satisfaction on a moderation-related product.

The task prioritization category of wishes aims to empower moderators and patrollers to “review and uphold the quality of content on their wikis”, with listed success metrics such as reduced review queues and higher moderator satisfaction. The interview explorations surfaced watchlist user needs and experiences, from which we can then derive findings, triangulate with the existing requests in the focus area, and deliver recommendations for watchlist improvements that materially enhance user satisfaction and increase user efficiency in identifying tasks for review and reducing time spent on the queue.

The Moderator Tools team is also embarking on an upcoming [project](#) regarding the concept of a centralized location for moderators. While not the main focus of this project, a few task prioritization queries were included within a wider array of questions that included the topics of task discovery, tracking and management, which yielded some insights that can help guide upcoming research.

Overall, the watchlist participant interviews served as a means of better understanding these users’ experiences. By gathering their feedback, we identified specific and discrete features that can be implemented more immediately, larger challenges that may require more holistic solutions, and areas that merit further exploration.

Further details on insights and recommendations are provided below.

Findings and insights

The interviews unearthed many details of participants’ watchlist use patterns and experiences, forming the following clusters of insights:

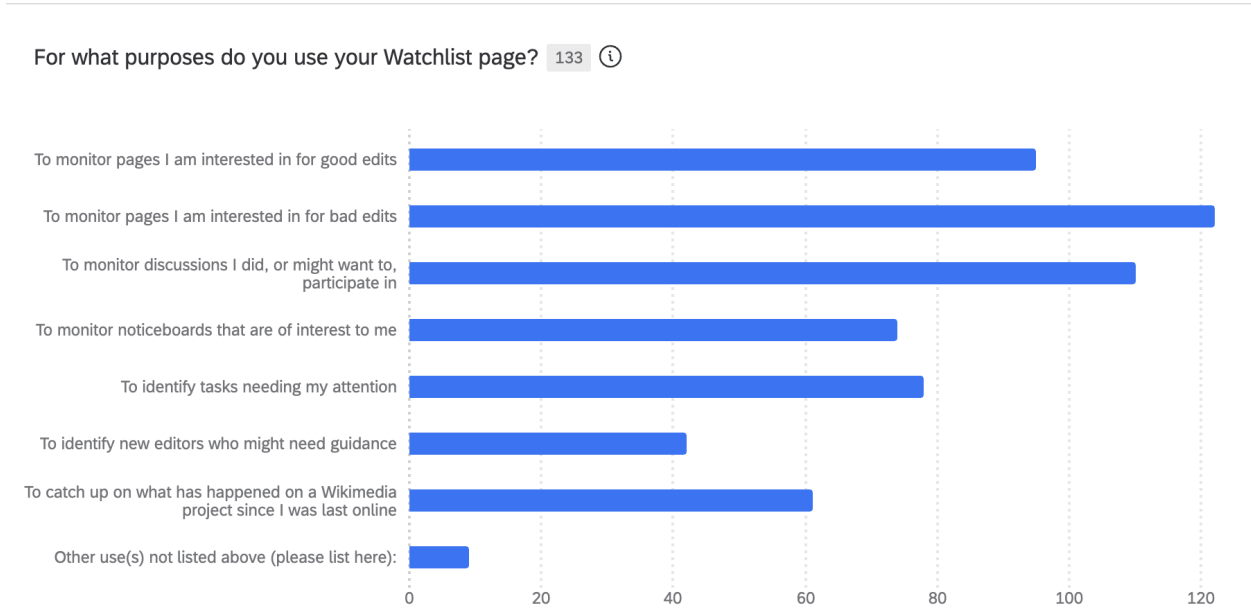
Theme	Description	Key findings and observations
Interface and user experience		
Watchlist usage patterns	A primary, curated ‘hub’ for	Often the watchlist is the first

	moderator and patroller work	stop on Wikipedia for participants. Feed receives regular review, ranging from quick scans to extremely thorough explorations. Content editing and moderation/patrolling actions often intertwine.
Interface usability & discoverability	Relatively low awareness, curiosity, and accessibility of watchlist filter/setting features	Features are visually cluttered, hidden, and/or unintuitive to use. Participants request features that already exist on-page.
Indicators of importance	No set standard for what constitutes an 'important' edit for review	Participants rely on a range of personal heuristics; indicators like byte changes, edit summaries, tags and quality scoring metrics are used and trusted inconsistently.
Device barriers	Mobile remains unsuited for moderation purposes	Mobile is still used for reading and scanning, but rarely for limited watchlist actions. Desktop remains preferred to view details and avoid UI mishaps like accidental misclicks on mobile. Often, desktop view is preferred on mobile.
Behavior and engagement models		
Watchlist clutter and maintenance	Easy to unintentionally overload the watchlist	A range of behaviors is observed, ranging from abandonment, ongoing pruning, periodic large culls. Though features like temporary watch help mitigate this issue, lack of differentiation/prioritization functionalities limits the

		watchlist.
Use philosophies	Mix of engagement styles and mental models around watchlist work	Watchlist activity can reflect a mixture (sometimes concurrent) of meticulous order-seeking, even (self-described) compulsive review and also targeted or more relaxed scanning.
Tooling and signals		
Notifications	Fragmented, confusing or missing notification/reminder ecosystem	Decentralized system (watchlist, alert/notice, talk section subscription, email) and a lack of consistency and understanding around expectations and discovery.
Tooling ecosystem	In conjunction with/or in lieu of utilizing on-page functionality, participants utilize a range of user-generated tools to customize their Wikipedia and watchlist experience	Scripts, gadgets, browser extensions, etc. are used to provide for and supplement existing functionalities. Additionally, external venues like IRC and Discord are utilized for discussions
System/cross-project concerns		
Task discovery, management and prioritization	Users lack a centralized or consistent way of approaching this issue	Discovery of tasks to accomplish on-wiki is ad hoc and informed by personal awareness, moods and social cues; tracking and prioritization varied in content, tools, and platform
Cross-wiki concerns	Mixed sentiments regarding cross-wiki watchlist visibility (i.e. Wikidata updates on Wikipedia watchlist) and concept of a centralized watchlist	Some find this informative and others call it 'clutter'. Centralized watchlist elicits similar lack of consensus on benefit and skepticism about interface implementation

Interface and user experience

- 7 of the 16 participants use **watchlist as their Wikipedia landing page**.
- **Primary use cases for the watchlist** are listed as follows, and additional actions are listed in the [Appendix](#):





(note: all survey images reflect respondents from initial English Wikipedia survey outreach, not of participant subset interviewed)


- **A majority of participants use the watchlist “as-is”, leaving filters and other settings overlooked.** Many became aware of the existence of filters and other feed settings on the page during the interview, and some others acknowledged they bypassed it entirely or after encountering usability issues at the onset. Those who had some experience with the filters and settings felt that the interface was visually flat (did not invite interaction) and unintuitive (in particular, the workflow of saving filter settings). Even limited use of the filters can be unintuitive in practice; a participant filtering out bots added the one

filter repeatedly instead of using the save workflow, and another using a set of filters was observed to revisit the URL reflecting the active filters also in lieu of the save workflow.








“I don't use the filter feature at all. Not clear how it functions” - P3




 **Edit your list of watched pages**



 **Mark all changes as seen**

 **Saved filters** ▾


Active filters [Hide](#)

Latest revision 
Page edits 
Page creations 
Logged actions 
Account creations 



 Filter changes (use menu or search for filter name)
 **Namespaces**  **Tags**

 **Live updates**
 **250 changes, 3 days** ▾

▼ List of abbreviations (help):

- D** Edit made at Wikidata
- r** Edit flagged by [ORES](#)
- N** [New page](#)
- m** [Minor edit](#)
- b** [Bot edit](#)
- (±123)** Page byte size change
-  Temporarily watched page

- **Many watchlist feature requests made by participants already exist on-page, and collectively hint at a need for an interface and workflow refresh.** This further indicates issues with awareness, visual clutter, and discoverability. Some of these requests include:

- Filtering by namespace
- Hiding page category changes
- Group edits by page (a participant intentionally does not watch certain pages thinking they would clog up the feed, not knowing about this setting)
- View talk, or article pages only

- Auto-refresh (in this case, the participant was using either a specific skin or setting that disabled javascript)
- Blue dots look like bullet points instead of a “review” indicator, and are not clickable or interactive (re-reading or re-reviewing items in the watchlist occurs when no other “read” indicators are active)
- **Simplify or not to simplify.** A constant refrain among participants is that the watchlist is cluttered, and some do indeed utilize the page as-is, whether intentionally or not. The immediate overload of dense information can create enough cognitive load that users simply default to what exists and use it only as immediately needed. A few indicated feeling a high barrier for entry when they first started using the watchlist and believe beginners would continue to find the page very intimidating and difficult to understand. At the same time, quite a few of their requests for settings and functionalities are reflected in the existing feature set. In addition, simple or more complex use cases described in the interviews can necessitate deployment of targeted settings and features. P13 vocalizes this dilemma well:

"it's just a lot" ... "I wouldn't want to lose any features [and make] it massively minimalist" - P13

"it would be a bit nicer if there's just less clutter there" - P6

"More difficult to use as more metadata has crept in over time" - P8

The answer likely is somewhere at the intersection of initial simplicity and organized, centralized customizability and discoverability.

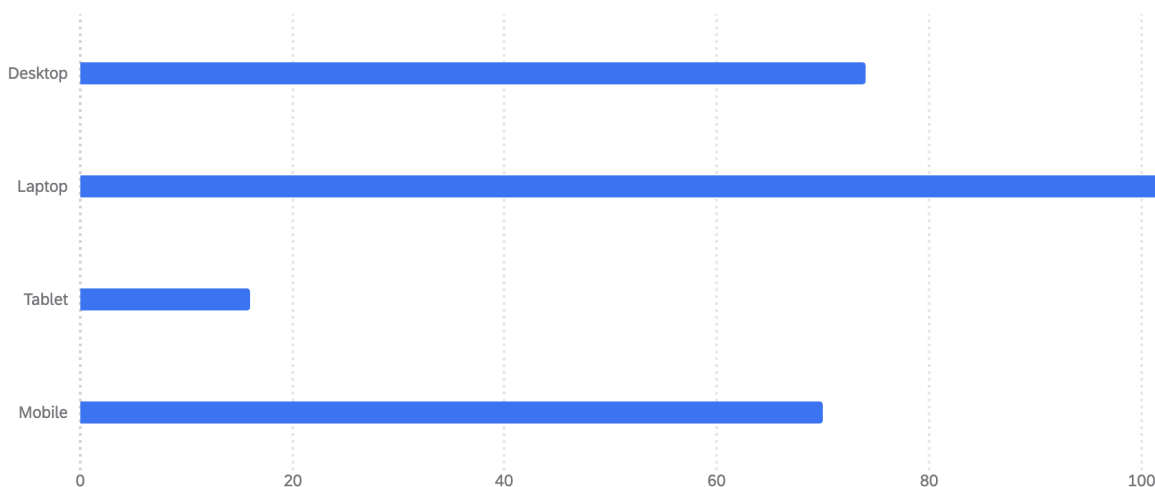
- **Documentation locations and configuration options are numerous, but there is a lack of overarching structure and framework of discovery.** Below is an assortment (and likely not comprehensive) of pages just from English Wikipedia providing for documentation, settings and customization. Similarly to their treatment of watchlist

on-page filtering and other settings, even these more experienced participants can be surprisingly unaware.

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Watchlist>
 - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Watchlist>
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Wikipedia_watchlist
 - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Preferences#mw-prefsection-watchlist>
 - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Preferences#mw-prefsection-gadgets-gadget-section-watchlist>
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Customizing_watchlists
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:User_scripts
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:User_scripts/List#Watchlist

This page contains a long selection of existing and suggested potential additions to watchlist functionality.
 - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Watchlist#Options>
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Hide_Pages_in_Watchlist
- **Settings interface inconsistencies**, like Watchlist [preference settings](#) only partially mapping to settings on the page itself, also add to the confusion. Enabling the “group changes by page” option, for example, only lives in the Recent Changes [preferences settings](#) even though the feature exists on both pages.
 - **The mobile device medium remains a barrier for moderation and patrolling activities**. Even though mobile is still used relatively often overall, only 5 of the interviewed participants use it for moderation work and a majority of this is limited to quick reverts and small content edits. The most common use case for mobile activity remains for reading content and quick on-the-go scanning on pages like the watchlist. Using the desktop view on mobile is not uncommon due to less information availability in mobile view.

What device(s) do you use to access the special page(s) indicated? 148 ⓘ



- Whether it was a basic need to indicate a subset of pages as higher priority or create multiple buckets by category and use case, nearly all participants broached the topic of **separate lists within watchlist to enhance prioritization**. Some bucket examples include: user talk pages where warnings were issued, all pages within a specific wiki project, and only noticeboard type pages. While most participants wanted the ability to highlight pages to prioritize and highlight, one participant in fact indicated a need for a lower priority collection of pages, but one where the number of updates are still shown within the visual implementation.

“I don't know if you use Gmail, but they let you set priorities on conversations in Gmail. So, you can just see the top priority conversations.” - P1

"ability to have separate watch lists would be really really convenient" - P14

- There are a few main **attention signals for potential action, but participants lack consensus regarding what constitutes a good indicator**. In some cases the utility of each indicator is a personal preference, and in others it reflects the validity of the indicator itself.

- **Byte count differential.** Though a few participants use this metric, some admit it is flawed. The metric reflects the total change in page byte size; smaller byte sizes do not necessarily represent small changes, as it could simply be that a large selection of existing data was removed and replaced.

“byte size doesn't always tell me everything I need to know. because it's often quite misleading” - P4

“[I want to know the] scale of change, not just byte change” - P8

“[byte change] tells me nothing” - P13

- **Edit summary and minor edit tag.** Some participants take these at face value, and others don't trust them based on their experiences verifying underlying edits.

“Edit summaries are hit or miss” - P4

- **Edit quality ([Lifewing revscoreing](#)) filters.** Some participants have these filters active and review based on them, but others do not trust, without a clear rationale, that the assessments are accurate. In other online contexts², machine learning classifiers for directing moderator attention are found to largely increase response ratios and reduce response latency.

Behavior and engagement models

- **Maintenance of the watchlist** is done on a case-by-case basis or at varied intervals depending on the individual's use cases and habits, and maintenance tooling can be improved. The [Edit](#) watchlist page is where most participants go to perform watchlist maintenance. The [Edit raw](#) watchlist page doesn't have many clear use cases; deletion is neither quicker nor simpler, batch adding pages in the text format is a rare event for

² D. Milne, K. McCabe, R. Calvo. “[Improving Moderator Responsiveness in Online Peer Support Through Automated Triage](#)”.

participants. While both pages are relatively straightforward, neither provides a streamlined export functionality or ability to sort.

- **It is relatively easy to unintentionally inflate the watchlist.** Taking any action on a page typically results in users automatically watching it, along with actions taken on tools like [Twinkle](#) and when longer watched pages are broken down into shorter ones, the resulting pages are all watched. As a watchlist expands in watched pages and associated activity beyond a certain point (which certainly varies by person), it loses its core identity as a curated, personalized feed or repository. The new changes populate at an increasingly high rate, akin to an overflowing mail box filled with subscription messages and spam of unknown or unclear origins, and the user is apt to disengage as a result.

One user, upon experiencing this, abandoned the watchlist on their main account and created a secondary account for the purpose of re-establishing another watchlist, with only prioritized pages.

“I used to check it every day [...] the boiling frog analogy. Now it is unusable” - P1

“did not realize that it was automatically adding those [...] pages to my watch list” - P4

- Relatedly, it is also **common for pages, provenance unknown or forgotten, to appear on watchlists and in some cases, set off time-consuming investigations.** 10 of the 16 participants specifically mention this occurring at various frequencies; 3 of whom state that they will take time to explore and review whether they can recall that initial reason.

“I can't even remember what they are, let alone why they're on there” - P1

“must have been important for some reason” - P16

- **Temporary watch is a useful feature and can be optimized with some slight improvements.** Quite a few participants mentioned the utility of the temporary watch and credit it for keeping their watchlist sizes manageable. However, some participants would prefer to have greater awareness of an expiring watch, and an option to extend in that scenario.

- **Philosophy of use varies across participants.** Some participants exhibit tighter control, wherein the feed is under constant supervision and review, new entries must be reviewed and marked as such, and follow-up protocols are established. Notifications, if activated, are screened by order of importance. Others are more relaxed, exerting more control over particular areas of focus, while simultaneously accepting that they cannot realistically catch and act on every item that arises.

“healthy to sort of let go of stuff. If it's something that particularly interests me I'm probably returning to it from time to time anyway” - P1

“Someone else will address it if needed” - P12

- **Overall, watchlist usage has many parallels to that of an email inbox;** items all in theory pertain to the user to various levels of importance, but some items (like subscriptions or newsletters) appear and users may not recall whether these were intentionally added or not. Behaviorally, users vary in their management approaches and that manifests as keeping “inbox zero”, letting the numbers increase, or somewhere in between. The “inbox” analogy also aligns with some of the design and UI concerns noted in the previous interface section.

Tooling and notifications

- **Various tools mentioned that participants use in their work.** Some scripts used provide same or similar functionalities or UI tweaks to those that already exist on the watchlist page.
 - [Twinkle](#); gadget providing autoconfirmed users and administrators with a library of functionalities for maintenance and patrolling tasks
 - [Navigation pop-ups](#); gadget that shows diff and other page previews, shortcuts for page, revert, warn/block, and other functions via mouseover pop-ups
 - Browser extension for copying link text
 - Sitewide script for highlighting links in various colors based on type
 - Script on watchlist showing newest changes in green
 - [IRC](#) - general chat/discussion with various channels

- [Discord](#) - general chat/discussion with various channels, and addressing/discussing ban appeals
- [Mix'n'match](#) - lists entries of some external databases, and allows users to match them against Wikidata items
- **Notifications *appear somewhat centralized but settings are in fact inconsistent, and awareness, expectations and usage vary.*** They exist in the form of [alerts and notices](#) on the top right corner of the page (and its corresponding [preferences](#) page). [Topic subscriptions](#) (i.e. talk page sections) live there, but are activated on talk pages and participants expect these subscriptions to appear on watchlist. In terms of inconsistency and difficulties around discovery, activating email notifications to the watchlist only lives in the “User Profile” [tab](#) of preferences, not in the watchlist nor notifications tabs. While some participants actively engage with these options and find them “*supremely important*” (P16), others ignore them to varying degrees and some entirely. Often, they are not fully understood nor explored, and other times they are under-utilized because the resulting outcome is not expected nor ideal (e.g. subscribing to a talk page section does not add it to the watchlist).

System/cross-project concerns

Though there is a plethora of academic literature on the topics of moderation and moderators in a general sense, there was a negligible amount of content on how the work of moderation is prioritized on the Wikimedia projects and even on other online communities. However, we did manage to uncover some insights into the areas of task discovery, management and prioritization.

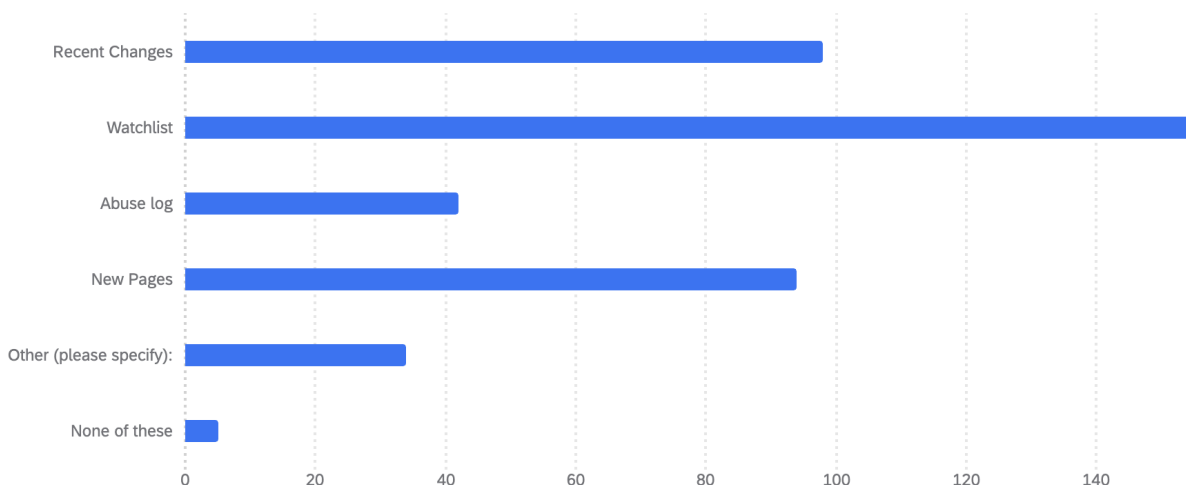
- **Watchlist does not currently serve the need for keeping track of pages that have specific problems unrelated to patrolling.** Watchlist behaves similarly to the Recent Changes feed, and its current structure does not afford for use cases outside of patrol actions. Participants who use watchlist for this purpose are only doing so indirectly in

the sense that they hope the page will provide a reminder by way of showing up in the feed at some point.

- **Task discovery for this cohort of participants is not centralized nor structured.**

Engagement in tasks associated to the special pages indicated below and other spaces like the [Admin Noticeboard](#) and [Community portal](#) is contingent upon existing prior knowledge and awareness of these pages. Participants are not proactively provided pathways for tasks to do on-wiki. As a result, some focus on the primary special pages and others receive suggestions from other on-wiki collaborators, participate in official pushes to drive specific editing behaviors, review specific niche backlogs, and may rather haphazardly jump around various types of tasks based on interest and attention.

Do you visit or use any of these special pages? Please select any that apply. 170 ⓘ



“I kind of just feel like doing something different each day.” - P5

“Just going to ... see what’s out there” - P6

“What I’m interested in at the time [goes in phases]”, “flurries” - P7

“Fun new thing .. then you get a barnstar ... [I get] sucked into the gamification of it”

"not being reminded that there's all kinds of things out there that i could be doing" - P16

- **Task management and prioritization are very manual, even improvisational.**

Participants employ a wide array of management and tracking mechanisms that range from highly structured to almost arbitrary:

- On-wiki
 - Using and scanning the **watchlist** as described above to be reminded of pages needing content editing or other follow-up
 - Using and **scanning one's own contributions page** to provide reminders
 - **Creating lists** (of tasks, articles, etc.) on one's own user page, subpages, or sandboxes
 - Utilizing **notifications** (alerts and notices) as task reminders
- Off-wiki
 - Posting on social media about specific on-wiki actions or created pages, and relying on these third party 'memories' features as reminders to check back on wiki activity
 - When drafting content, will use outbound information requests (specifically the corresponding response messages) as a means of prompting attention back to the draft
 - Using an external task tracking app like a native mobile text editor or Todoist, that lists tasks with corresponding checkboxes and deadline dates, and allows for sorting by project/categories
 - Creating lists on external spreadsheets, documents, or in physical notebooks
- Browser-based solutions

- Opening to-dos in tabs, and only closing them when the corresponding task is completed
- Bookmarking article pages with corresponding tasks
- **Cross-wiki concerns.** While some participants appreciate cross-wiki visibility in the form of seeing, for example, Wikidata updates on Wikipedia watchlist, others find these “generate clutter”.

Equally, sentiment is mixed on whether a centralized, cross-wiki watchlist would provide value. Ease of monitoring changes is in theory the primary benefit of centralization, but the resulting challenge would be how the multiple watchlists would be visually presented. Additionally, taking follow-up action on the various watchlisted pages would necessitate navigating to those pages’ respective wikis.

Other observations

- Even very experienced Wikipedians can be **stumped by wiki terminology**. When perusing filters, one participant remarked on the ‘namespace’ option being unclear and esoteric.
- **On small wikis, participants use [Recent Changes](#)** page in lieu of establishing a watchlist, as overall page count is lower and many of the active users are mutually aware.
- **Enforcement of Universal Code of Conduct [policy](#) feels inconsistent** across communities. A participant expressed a desire for the Foundation to assist with facilitating policy uptake³.

³ Can be similar to the approach for the NPOV [initiative](#).

A few key Journey Maps

Watchlist overload

Stage	User Actions	Pain Points	Opportunities
1. Set-Up	- User customizes or begins to use watchlist to follow a few pages/projects	- Initial setup is fine, but lacks onboarding to deeper features	- Offer onboarding for filters/settings, temporary watch, and grouping options in particular
2. Automatic Growth	- Edits, moderation/patrolling actions and/or use of tools like Twinkle unexpectedly add many pages	- No clear feedback when pages are added; can't easily see what's newly added	- Provide clearer opt-in/opt-out prompts when watchlist is updated, along with undo add options
3. Clutter	- Watchlist grows with irrelevant or unrecognized pages	- Signal-to-noise ratio drops, causing longer review times	- Add categorization, priority tagging, and supported options for quick remove
4. Dis-/over-engagement	- Avoids the noise altogether, scans more liberally, or increases	- decreasing impact and utility to time spent	- Surface "recently added," "pages you haven't visited in X

vigilance and time spent

days,” or “archive/delete” options

- Support multiple watchlists or “focus mode” for prioritized page groups

Watchlist feature exploration/discovery

Stage	User Actions	Pain Points	Opportunities
1. Initial exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perhaps wants to filter out bots, group changes by page, or otherwise customize the watchlist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No guidance on feature availability - Settings are buried across multiple pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show a walkthrough for new users with onboarding tips
2. Feels overwhelmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can't figure out how to save filters - UI feels flat and unintuitive - Ignores options or feels like they're more trouble than potential value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Filters undiscoverable or not trusted - Workflow for saving not obvious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revamp UI on watchlist (e.g. overall look, “Save filter” workflow, on-page settings)

3. Accidental discovery	- Learns about filters during interviews, or about scripts through other on-wiki experiences	- Late discovery of helpful features - Discovery overall is haphazard	- Add tooltips and contextual help in the UI - Provide centralized help documentation and corresponding tooling and script resources
4. Piecemeal adoption	- May use some elements of watchlist on-page features, some scripts, or will access filter sets via URL instead of the save filter workflow	- Confusing ecosystem of functionalities (native and supplemental), and resulting arbitrary adoption	- Provide a simple canvas, and an organized, centralized array of advanced options for those who have the need or preference
5. Gaps remain	- Relatively advanced users remain unaware of some basic available features (e.g., filters generally, group by article)	- Not motivated to explore due to complexity	- An initial walkthrough

Task discovery and management flow

Stage	User Actions	Pain Points	Opportunities
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1. Task discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explores a feed, hears of a community push, or otherwise notices a task or area that needs work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No centralized location for task discovery - No built-in way to flag or save tasks for later - Watchlist currently unreliable for some future work reminders - Tasks can be multi-part or otherwise complex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create suggested tasks dashboard with customizable feeds/lists, and an integrated personalized task list
2. No tracking mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can't find a space to save it in-platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No personal to-do list or task manager - Task gets lost if not addressed or documented quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Task board as per above
3. Workarounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses sandboxes or social media posts as reminders - Writes down links and tasks in spreadsheets or notebooks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manual and somewhat arbitrary process - Context and details can be lost - Tools used are disjointed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow tagging, deadlines, sorting and other prioritization options within watchlist and proposed task board

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| 4. Resulting varied follow-through | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Returns through personal impetus or external tool - Or forgets and loses track | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reliance on external apps (Todoist, social media, etc.), and ‘just remembering’ - Lack of accountability or structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enable notifications or ‘overdue’ reminders on task board |
| 5. Mood-based work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Picks random tasks or returns to what feels interesting in the moment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No progress tracking, especially for more complex tasks - Motivation tied to “vibes” or gamification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide streaks, badges, or modular project suggestions based on user history or project needs |

Other journeys

Name	Theme	Pain Points	Opportunities
Mobile frustration and avoidance	Using mobile for moderation and patrolling is too limited	Interface is physically limited, but need for detail remains	Responsive layout on mobile view that caters specifically towards lower-stakes, smaller-scope actions
Notification confusion	There are too many different ways of receiving notifications, and places to set them up	Options and settings locations are scattered and overwhelming, and outcomes are	Defined, streamlined notification options Centralized settings hub with sources and corresponding

not always as notification options (means,
expected frequency)

More detailed recommendations to address elements of the core findings are presented in the next section.

Recommendations

High impact, low estimated effort

- **Allow users to add a note or reminder when initially watchlisting a page.** When a majority of participants indicate they've struggled to recall this when specific page updates are shown on their watchlist, it stands to reason that adding this functionality would help remove this uncertainty. Furthermore, more conscientious users will avoid spending significant aggregate time exploring the page history and diffs to investigate the reason for the initial add. A suggestion for the note design is to show it as a tag, something easily visible and expandable for editing.

Tangentially, one participant mentioned this is also relevant for the [Articles for Creation](#) pages and workflow, where patrollers need quicker visibility to the history of an article's review process to avoid doing repetitive work.

- During watchlist review, **allow users to flag or pin watchlist items to indicate to-dos** that need more dedicated attention after processing other quicker items.
- If feasible, **implement a metric change from byte change → bytes different**, which would provide users with a clearer understanding and signal for edit review.
- **Add ability to receive reminders and extend timeframes for temporary watched pages** when they are nearing expiration.

High impact, high estimated effort

- **Empower users to establish buckets for their watchlisted pages.** Participants indicate a variety of use cases (where certain groupings of pages have higher or lower priority levels, activity levels, and/or reflect different subjects or actions) for which this functionality can provide improved organization, access, and separation from the ‘noise’ of the larger watchlist. Additionally, users who have larger watchlists could potentially utilize these smaller buckets as a means of bypassing the technical issue of review timeout as indicated in this [wish](#). This functionality is also reflected in the [customWatchlists](#) user script.

Other implementation options include bucket-specific notification, highlighting, priority level settings. Each bucket should be easily accessible and visually indicate whether new edits have occurred within them to alert users for review.

- **Improve content moderation functionality on mobile devices;** some [endeavors](#) in this area are already in progress. Continue to consider focused, smaller-scale tasks for this medium due to its inherent display and context limitations resulting in participants’ reporting of misclicks and unintended results.
- Systematically determine and streamline how **settings, preferences, notifications, subscriptions** should coexist in the context of the watchlist, pages like Recent Changes, and the larger wiki project. Reducing inconsistencies, the sheer number of locations where these can be found, and providing users with clear call to actions and resultant expectations/outcomes is paramount.
- **Increase awareness and discoverability** - establish a centralized repository of watchlist page and its related functionalities, settings, and customization options documentation. Providing all watchlist users with a quick initial walkthrough of its features⁴, with clear tooltips and explanatory language where needed, and the centralized documentation will help clarify the purpose of the page and allow users to determine the extent to which they need or want to customize the page for their own use cases.

⁴ [Onboarding page for the watchlist on Android app](#)

- *(contains elements of other recommendations)* Revisit a **UI refresh of the watchlist interface** overall, including the filters section, save filters workflow, and view settings. Consider that desired watchlist views and functionalities elicit many email metaphors and comparisons, which merit consideration when implementing potential changes.

The default view should likely remain relatively streamlined and simple. The goal is to avoid cognitive overload and establish a common denominator initial state, while providing users a full view of what functionalities are available for their needs to customize as needed.

An additional suggestion for visual clarity is snapping the watchlist feed into a tabulated or grid view, structures common to email inboxes and CRM interfaces. Items can be delineated and marked clearly as read/unread (in lieu of the blue dots/bullets that currently exist), selected for deletion, and labeled or sorted into buckets, receive associated notes and tags, and contain reminders or 'last viewed' indicators for better triage.

Medium impact, low estimated effort

- **To avoid unintentional expansion of watchlist**, users can review and set up their watchlist preference settings as part of an initial walkthrough. Additionally, provide a tooltip the first time users encounter screens where watching a page (or not) is an option (e.g. submit edit page, or on Twinkle).
- **Setting/filter requests**
 - Set group-by page as default
 - Filters that indicate whether a particular user is likely a good editor or malicious actor, if feasible. This could also manifest as specific combinations of other filters, such as account age and number of reverted edits.
- **Quick-remove option for pages directly from watchlist** (*exists in Preferences; consider as default or a 2-step confirmation like in email/CRM workflows*). Many users utilize the [Edit](#) watchlist page to regularly trim and/or periodically perform larger page removals.

Though this may not reflect a significantly impactful change, allowing users to delete pages directly from the watchlist feed can reduce overall time spent.

Medium impact, medium estimated effort

- Integrate a **visual means for quickly scanning and investigating overall page activity/stability over time** instead of skimming the history page.
- Allow users to **watch sections of a page**, akin to the current ability to subscribe to talk page sections, and show both types of updates within watchlist.

Low impact, low estimated effort

- **Mobile app users do not appear to receive warning notifications**, and are unaware that their activities are problematic. Continued warnings, seemingly unheeded, may then escalate to a block, all while users are in the dark.

Low impact, medium estimated effort

- **Create more options for watchlist maintenance**, such as sorting alphabetically, initially added, edited, or visited. Should watchlist buckets be implemented in the future, include them in the view option as well in addition to the default organization by namespace. Visually indicate that ‘clear watchlist’ will have a confirmation page. Add an export capability for the full article list, optionally with various activated sorting and grouping views activated.

Task discovery, prioritization and management

“Would like something centralized so that I could interact with more Wikipedia elements [... a] dashboard would make me more motivated to do tasks and also add pages to watchlist.

Want to have a to do list, to note down different tasks on specific wiki project pages” - P5

- Currently the ecosystem of task discovery, prioritization and management is all rather disjointed. Discovery is dependent on inherent motivation levels, prior knowledge, community initiatives and randomness, and the prioritization and management occur

in a variety of equally haphazard ways. The creation of a **suggested tasks dashboard** with customizable feeds/lists, and an **integrated task list/board** could be a welcome addition for both users newer to editing and moderation and more experienced users.

- For both the watchlist and this potential dashboard, the task list/board can help centralize that additional layer of organization needed beyond feed review. Similarly to the email/CRM view suggested for the watchlist, this feature can also be simple to start and user-customizable to their desired levels of complexity (i.e. task description, source and references pages, tags, deadline reminder/notifications, and other elements).
- As an alternative or supplement to providing an assortment of feeds and suggested tasks (increasing awareness and visibility of the options), this central place can also suggest **tracks for users to pursue**, similar to what Salesforce [Trailhead](#) did with training and learning modules. Tracks could be goal-based (i.e. I want to reduce backlogs, become a patroller or admin) or persona/interest-based (i.e. I want to improve articles on a certain topic, I want to monitor category changes only, I want to be suggested new tasks of a certain category to tackle every month to keep things exciting, I only want to work on low-sensitivity tasks as a newer user).

Future explorations

To further confirm the findings and recommendations of this project, a deeper exploration of **small- and medium- sized wikis** can be undertaken to evaluate whether differences in size and context have any demonstrable effects in activity and experience. Are watchlists commonly used, and if so, among what types of users? How do their use cases differ from those on English Wikipedia?

The **idea of a centralized watchlist** was broached during this project, but uncertainty around interface implementation and language concerns appeared to elicit caution over the interest in a convenient, singular watchlist hub. Some experience and usability elements to consider are minimizing and mitigating visual noise and the multilingual facet of, for example, receiving

Wikidata updates (metadata in an assortment of languages) and working cross-wikis (i.e. needing to block a problematic user on other language wiki sites).

Quantitative-focused approaches like the Moderator Tools' Patrol Tools Satisfaction [survey](#) can be undertaken to better understand the ecosystem of tooling utilized and **evaluate sentiments and types of tasks completed at scale, and over time**. Future instrumentation on Special pages can provide more targeted activity metrics for analysis.

To best establish a 'starting point' for the upcoming centralized moderator space, surveys and something akin to a cardsorting or mapping exercise can be structured to better visualize moderator tasks on a continuum of content editing to moderation/patrolling actions, and capture subtasks that occur within each edit or action that can be operationalized especially among the newer editor populations.

Relatedly, **editors who focus on content and not as directly on moderation tasks** is an area of further exploration, especially in the context of task discovery and the central place concept⁵. Many participants self-describe the watchlist as a curated Recent Changes. In practice, this can reflect a wide range of use cases spanning moderator work⁶, a major concentration of which include patrolling, admin actions, editing, or a combination thereof. Of note is that while all participants in this research are from moderation-aligned user groups, some still “don't really use [watchlist as a place] to store pages [for content] edit[ing] later” (P5). This is reminiscent of a Suggestbot exploration⁷ wherein a disconnect existed between users' watchlisted pages (which would've informed the bot's task suggestions) and their content editing interests. It will be interesting to understand the placement of the watchlist in relation to a central place with task suggestions that span content editing and moderation/patrolling tasks.

Looking (very?) forward, **integration of (efficient, ideally) AI tooling** can potentially allow watchlist users to dictate in a natural language what they'd like to review in that particular session (establish, save, and call up existing filter sets), ask for other custom watchlist

⁵  Central Place: Core Experiences Offsite (WE1.3 FY 25/26)

⁶ D. Trumper, et al. [Develop a working definition for moderation activity and moderators](#)

⁷ D. Cosley, D. Frankowski, L. Terveen, J. Riedl. [SuggestBot: Using Intelligent Task Routing to Help People Find Work in Wikipedia](#)

configurations (the tool could scan for and install tools and scripts and activate settings as requested), and perform the review and associated task without needing to click through each action. Anthropic’s Computer Use, Google’s Mariner and OpenAI’s Operator already have been utilized in similar ways in presumably more technical and high-risk healthcare settings, and this could be a way to harness these capabilities to reduce cognitive overload and ‘discovery debt’ for our users.

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Appendix A: other stated use cases

- Ensure authored/reviewed articles pages maintain quality and aren’t vandalized
- Check on targeted pages
- Track pages that are marked for deletion
- Check for student editor changes
- Welcome new editors
- Checking up on IPs that vandalize for more warn/blocks
- Monitor blocked users, and identifying bad actors
- Help with requested unblocks (category unblock)
- Check for updates on collaborators’ talk pages, both to keep up to speed on projects and better understand general goings-on
- Track draft pages for progression updates
- Follow particular talk page discussions