

# Bringing collaborative approaches from Software Development into other partnerships

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Software Development for the Wikimedia projects doesn't happen on an island somewhere in Europe. Or somewhere near the Atlantic Ocean.

# Challenge & Fun

Building software for the Wikimedia projects:

- Everything is connected and changes have impact on all projects
- There are a 1000 options where to start to improve the software
- Diverse users & contributors with different requirements, interests and goals

-> Collaboration is key

-> Focus is key

-> Good planning and communication is key

Working together  
within the Wikimedia movement

# Example 1: The Technical Wishlist



The screenshot shows the Wikipedia page 'Wikipedia:Umfragen/Technische Wünsche'. The page title is 'Wikipedia:Umfragen/Technische Wünsche'. Below the title, there is a navigation bar with links like 'Hauptseite', 'Themenportale', 'Von A bis Z', 'Zufälliger Artikel', 'Mitmachen', 'Artikel verbessern', 'Neuen Artikel anlegen', 'Autorenportal', 'Hilfe', 'Letzte Änderungen', 'Kontakt', 'Spenden', 'Drucken/exportieren', 'Buch erstellen', 'Als PDF herunterladen', 'Druckversion', 'Werkzeuge', 'Links auf diese Seite', 'Änderungen an verlinkten Seiten', 'Spezialseiten', 'Permanenter Link', 'Seiteninformationen', 'Sprachen', and 'Links hinzufügen'.

The main content area is titled 'Wikipedia:Umfragen/Technische Wünsche'. It contains a box with the following text:

Diese Umfrage war zeitlich beschränkt: Vom 1. September 2013 bis 30. November 2013

- Phase 1: Wünsche sammeln bis 2. Hälfte Oktober
- Phase 2: Wünsche priorisieren/bewerten durch Unterschrift bis 30. November
- Phase 3: Sichtung und Bearbeitung der Top 20 durch Wikimedia Deutschland seit Februar 2014

Below this box is a table of contents titled 'Inhaltsverzeichnis [Verbergen]':

- 1 Problemstellung
- 2 Ziel
- 3 Umfang
- 4 Wünsche
- 5 Auswertungsphase
- 6 Quo vadis, technische Wünsche, oder: Tech on Tour

The 'Problemstellung' section is titled 'Problemstellung [Bearbeiten]'. It contains the following text:

Der Großteil der Softwareentwicklung für MediaWiki geschieht heutzutage durch angestellte Programmierer der *Wikimedia Foundation* bzw. für Wikidata durch Mitarbeiter von Wikimedia Deutschland. Was genau gemacht wird, ist öffentlich einsehbar: *mw:Wikimedia Engineering*.

Bei den Autoren des Projektes zur Erstellung einer Enzyklopädie namens Wikipedia regt sich immer mehr Widerstand gegen „von oben“ verordnete neue Features, weil manches im Betastadium als Standard aktiviert wird oder einfach für unnötig erachtet wird.

Dem Autor dieser Umfrage (*Raymond*) ist jedoch kein gezieltes Befragen der Community nach ihren technischen Wünschen bekannt. Welche Features für MediaWiki fehlen, sind dringend nötig oder wünschenswert?

The 'Ziel' section is titled 'Ziel [Bearbeiten]'. It contains the following text:

Ziel dieser Umfrage soll eine (priorisierte?) Liste von technischen Wünschen sein, die an die WMF und die Chapter weitergegeben wird in der Hoffnung, dass die WMF erkennt, wo den Autoren der technische Schuh am meisten drückt. Chapter, die sich überlegen, wofür sie Spendengelder ausgeben möchten, sind herzlich eingeladen, sich ihrem Budget entsprechend Punkte heranzurechnen.

## Regular surveys since 2013

**Problem:** Before that, no one has ever asked editors for their most wanted features and committed to address those wishes

**Target groups:** All users, focus on editors

~ 22% of the active editors participated in the last survey

Approach to identify and prioritize technical requirements from diverse users in a collaborative way.

# The Technical Wishlist: Best practices

- Initiative and discussion of technical requests by the community
- Prioritization by the community and estimation/prioritization by the WMDE Team
- Commitment by WMDE's Software Development Department
- Close collaboration, transparent development and communication process
- Collaboration with WMF teams and volunteer developers: Partnership with the Community Tech Team, collaboration with other teams and contributors on a project based level

- Möglichkeit, eine Kategorie auf neue Artikel hin zu beobachten ([Bug 7148](#))

1.  **Pro** [Rookjameson](#) ([Diskussion](#)) 21:53, 1. Nov. 2013 (CET)
2.  **Pro** -- [.Φ.](#) [hugarheimur](#) ***RIP Klara Winter*** 10:33, 4. Nov. 2013 (CET)
3.  **Pro** --[Hoff1980](#) ([Diskussion](#)) 11:31, 9. Nov. 2013 (CET)
4.  **Pro** --[Reinhard Müller](#) ([Diskussion](#)) 18:16, 13. Nov. 2013 (CET)
5.  **Pro** [IW](#) 18:45, 15. Nov. 2013 (CET)
6.  **Pro** --[Karl432](#) ([Diskussion](#)) 00:37, 26. Nov. 2013 (CET)
7.  **Pro** ... [«« Man77 »»](#) 01:25, 29. Nov. 2013 (CET)
8.  **Pro** [Patrick Stützel](#) ([Diskussion](#)) 14:18, 30. Nov. 2013 (CET)

*Voting for show changes in category membership in 2013*

# The Technical Wishlist: Challenges

- \* Mainly contributors who are already active in meta discussions are participating in the Wishlist survey -> Outreach to more editors (e.g. via central notice)
- \* A technical wishlist might be too technical for editors -> Offer other formats in addition, such as workshops
- \* The international communities need to be involved, too -> project description at least in English, translatable help pages, multilingual announcements, partnerships with tech ambassadors of other language communities

# The Technical Wishlist: Challenges

Trade-off between addressing a request fast & improving Mediawiki

-> find a good mix to address both, stay focused & know what you can do and what not

Other teams are working in the same field and might already have a vision for that

-> you need to explain and defend your idea

-> come up with a thoughtful concept that has already been discussed within the team and with community members

-> be open to modify your proposal based on feedback

More infos: [https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WMDE\\_Technical\\_Wishes](https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WMDE_Technical_Wishes) (current work),  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WMDE\\_Technical\\_Wishes\\_Concept.pdf](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WMDE_Technical_Wishes_Concept.pdf) (Technical Wishes concept)





# Advanced Search Workshop



## At the workshop we

- discussed desired search queries
- created a search mapping and connected desired search queries with existing search keywords
- designed proposals how to integrate those options into the special:search page

Approach to focus on a specific problem and discuss solutions with diverse users in a collaborative way. No technical knowledge required.

# Advanced Search Workshop: Follow Up

What happened so far:

- Prototype has been built
- Workshop results and prototype has been introduced to the WMF's Search team and the project has been discussed at the Developer Summit 2017
- Feedback was collected
- Improved prototype has been built
- Feedback on German WP and from other developers is collected

Next steps:

- Prototype will be tested with another project community
- Technical implementation is planned to start in May

# Advanced Search Workshop: Best practices

- Identify a good topic
  - Getting to know existing search options was interesting for different users from beginners to very experienced users
  - Only taking into account what already exists provides a clear definition for the mission and scope of a project
- Find partners
  - The idea and concept for the workshop series was developed collaboratively
  - The relevant team at the WMF (Search team) got involved early, a joint session was held and a new productive collaboration started
- Format: Real life workshops
  - The workshops gave the chance to dive deeper into the topic and use different methods
  - The workshops were helpful for non-techies to bring in their questions and ideas
  - It was fun!

More Infos: [https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WMDE\\_Technical\\_Wishes/Advanced\\_Search\\_Workshop](https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WMDE_Technical_Wishes/Advanced_Search_Workshop)

Based on research & prototypes



**Theme: Community centered Software Development**

**Focus on the problem:** No one has asked before for the editors' most wanted features and committed to address those wishes (**Why**)

**Process & Development: (How)**

- Wishlist
- Workshops
- Events
- Transparent information
- Clear contacts
- Regular feedback iterations
- Feature development based on feedback & research
- Not “the hacky way”/Mediawiki improvement
- Continuity & constant improvement of both, process & products

**Why we do it**  
**How we do it**  
**What we do**

-> **Collaboration & partnerships** with users, teams, volunteer devs

**Product:** New/improve features to support contributors & a **new way** of working together (**What**)

# Community centered Software Development as a theme

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
1st Technical Wishes survey		2nd Technical Wishes survey  <i>1st international survey</i>	User-specific workshops  <i>2nd international survey</i>	3rd Technical Wishes survey
Commitment by the WMDE software development department	Start development work. Plan: A dedicated Technical Wishes team/A collaborative process	Continue development work Build up a team Build a process Conduct improved survey Collaboration with communities + Community Tech	Continue development work Test new formats Collaboration with communities and other teams	Continue development work Test new formats Collaboration with communities and other teams Conduct improved survey
		<b>Share lessons learned with other teams &amp; the movement</b>		

Working together with partners from external organisations, but for the movement

## Example 3: Ladies that FOSS



<https://wikimedia.de/wiki/LadiesthatFOSS>

**Projects participants could choose to work on:** Mozilla Firefox, RIOT, MediaWiki, Wikidata, Inventaire, coala, Nextcloud, LibreOffice and Sourcefabric.

**Hackathon in October 2016 with 35 female coders and mentors from 9 different FOSS projects, monthly meetup since March 2017**

In collaboration with Mozilla and other Open Source organisations

**Problem:** Only 11% of people in FOSS are women or identify as non binary, agender or genderfluid. Very few women are contributing to Mediawiki/Wikidata.

**Focus group:** Female coders who want to join a FOSS project but don't know where to start.



# Ladies that FOSS - good practices & challenges

The event was a “good guideline into the FOSS world, I’m much less scared now to contribute”  
(participant @feedback survey)

- Identify a good topic
  - Only 11% of people in FOSS are women or identify as non binary, agender or genderfluid
  - Wikimedia has a problem of attracting and keeping volunteer developers in general
  - Know why you want to do a event for women: People might question it!
- Find partners & attendees
  - Other FOSS organisations have the same problem and are interested in new approaches and solutions, too - it is easy to find partners for a Ladies that FOSS hacking event
  - A wide range of projects attracts more people
  - A broad communication is needed to reach out to possible attendees: The biggest challenge, but it worked.

# Ladies that FOSS - good practices & challenges

The event was a “good guideline into the FOSS world, I’m much less scared now to contribute”  
(participant @feedback survey)

- Workshop setup

- Personal introduction to the projects and direct contact with the mentors lowered barriers and helped participants to get the relevant infos immediately
- Small tasks and clear goals for the day allowed fast success
- The diversity of projects gave participants the opportunity to get to know different projects and match to a project according to their interests and skills

-> Continuity: In March 2017 the first Ladies That Foss meetup took place

# Key learnings

- Bringing multiple perspectives together gives the most valuable impact
- Focus on your strengths – you don't need to do everything
- Know about your own vision, the scope of the project and how far you want to go
- Find out who is doing similar work, who might be interested in your idea or who might be affected by your work
- Identify a common topic with your potential partner
- Gather feedback for your ideas: Drop an idea, if it is really bad
- Scale your idea down in smaller steps
- Expectation management: Communicate clearly what you can do and plan to do and what not

Thank you!

Birgit

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Wikipedia:Umfrage Technische Wünsche (First technical wishes survey on German Wikipedia)  
[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Umfragen/Technische\\_W%C3%BCnsche](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Umfragen/Technische_W%C3%BCnsche)