Designing a Lecture Course on Wikipedia and Wiki Technologies

Vassia Atanassova (User:Spiritia)

Maya M. Marinova (User:Maymay)

Photo: Grigor Gatchev, Wikimedia Commons
• Bulgarian Wikipedia:
  – Established in December 2003
  – Language speakers: ~ 9.1 mln people
  – #34 by number of articles (119,000+)
  – #21 by speakers per article (76.50)
  – #27 by edits per article (28.76)
  – #12 by sample of articles

• University wikiprojects in BG WP:
  – Organized as of Fall 2007/2008
  – In 3 Bulgarian universities
  – In 5 different subjects
### Introduction

- **Title:** “Wikipedia and Wiki Technologies” (elective)
  
  *NB! This is the first university lecture course in Bulgaria especially devoted to studying Wikipedia and wikis.*

- **Lecturer:** Vassia Atanassova (User:Spiritia)

- **Duration:** The 3 trimesters of the 2011/2012 academic year, 10 weeks per trimester, 4 hours per week

- **Students:** Open to all students in Maths and Computer science, 2-4 grade, 30 students per trimester
Introduction

• **Host institution: Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics at Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”**
### Designing the lecture course

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- Theoretical pedagogic foundations from the book “Design of a University Lecture Course” by Dr. Roumiana Peytcheva-Forsyth (in Bulgarian)
- Studying a number of research papers on the role of wikis in education
- Research of existing syllabi, mainly
  - “Using Wikipedia as a teaching tool: Sample syllabus”
- Public consultation with other editors from BG WP
- Our own experience 😊
• Goals of the course:
  – To build an **in-depth understanding** of the philosophy and technology of wikis, and especially of Wikimedia.
  – To promote **contribution and positive attitude** to Wikimedia within a promising target group.
  – To present the opportunities of **applying wiki technology** in other contexts, relevant to the students.

• Objectives:
  – To discuss contemporary **problems and trends** within Wikimedian community.
  – To facilitate the acquisition of **knowledge and skills** needed for more efficient use of wikis and Wikipedia.
Expected competences

• **Knowledge:**
  – the key principles and policies of Wikipedia,
  – the main rules for editing and organizing the Wikipedia content,
  – the specifics of the free content, free software and free licenses used over the Internet,
  – the criteria of notability of subjects in Wikipedia articles,
  – the criteria of text and multimedia encyclopedic content.
Expected competences

• Skills:
  – to freely navigate and use all functionalities of wikis,
  – to adequately use and cite Wikipedia as a source of information in the rest of their studies and work,
  – to critically evaluate their sources of information,
  – to express themselves in an encyclopedic style,
  – to create, edit, format wiki pages, use texts, tables, multimedia, templates, etc.,
  – to install, configure and administrate a wiki website.
The syllabus itself

• **Topic #1: Introduction**

  – Encyclopedias – definition, overview, history of worldwide and Bulgarian encyclopedias.


  – Navigation. Elements from the interface, namespaces, search, recent changes.

  – Account registration. Preferences. Personal user space.
The syllabus itself

• Topic #2: Edit mode and wiki mark-up
  – Editable namespaces.
  – Read mode and edit mode, menus, page history, watchlist. Minor edit, edit summary, preview, show changes.
  – Sections, bold, italic, indent, bulleted and enumerated list, table of contents box. Links, categories, interwikis.
  – Citing sources.
  – Moving and redirecting pages.
The syllabus itself

• **Topic #3: Principles of writing in Wikipedia**
  - Verifiability, Neutral point of view, no original research, biographies of living people.
  - Notability criteria.
  - Specifics of the encyclopedia style of writing:
    - *content structuring*,
    - *admissible verb tenses*,
    - *no temporary expressions*,
    - *impersonal expression*,
    - *no peacock and weasel words*,
    - *punctuation*,
    - *stay on topic*,
    - *provide context*,
    - *make omissions explicit*. 

**Introduction**

**Design phase**

**Objectives**

**Competences**

**The syllabus**

**Conclusion**
• **Topic #4: Copyright and legal issues**
  
  – Copyright issues. Free software and free licenses. Public domain, fair use, freedom of panorama.
  
  – Wikimedia licensing policy for texts and multimedia.
  
  – Terms of use and terms of contribution.
  
  – Translations from other Wikipedias and external sources.

*Guest lecturer: A lawyer, specialized in copyrights.*
• Topic #5: Wiki etiquette and psychology
  – Communication and interaction. Assume good faith, Civility, Consensus, Conflict resolution.
  – Psychology of the wiki community. Inclusionism, deletionism, immediatism, eventualism, etc.
  – Article / user talk pages, Village Pump.

Guest lecturer: A fellow wikipedian sharing experience with privacy issues, and vandals, trolls and spammers.
The syllabus itself

- **Topic #6: Multimedia**
  - Criteria for encyclopedic illustration
  - Policies in Wikimedia Commons. Licensing (again 😊).
  - Creation and sharing of multimedia. EXIF data.

*Extensive hands-on practice. Visit of a museum and/or a public event and taking photos to illustrate articles in Wikipedia.*
The syllabus itself

- **Topic #7: Organization of the information.**
  - Organization of the information in categories, lists and templates. Wikiprojects and portals.
  - Types of templates, types of parameters. Transclusion and substitution. Parser functions.
  - Special pages and logs.
  - MediaWiki namespace. Translation and localization of interface messages.
The syllabus itself

• **Topic #8: User groups and rights**
  
  – Main user groups: Anonymous users, autoconfirmed editors, administrators, bureaucrats, bots.

  – Main administrative rights: Protection, blocking, deletion.

  – Other user groups and rights.

  – *Guest lecturer: Bot operator*

Photo: Arria Belli, Wikimedia Commons
• **Topic #9: Wikis beyond Wikipedia**
  
  – Wikimedia sister projects.
  
  – Applications of wiki websites in business and education.
  
  
  – MediaWiki and other wiki distributions.

• **Topic #10: Installation**
  
  – Installation of a MediaWiki website.
  
  – Configuration with selected extensions.
• The lecture course is elective, so we expect that it will be mostly attended by interested and motivated listeners.

• This academic experience will be a chance for Bulgarian Wikipedia to get an invaluable feedback from users, as well as turn these into fresh and well trained contributors.
Conclusion

• Related publicity activities can draw positive attention from the academic circles and media.

• After the full academic year we will share the results and the good practices with the members of the Wikimedia Outreach.
Thank you for your attention!

Vassia Atanassova (User:Spiritia)
vassia.atanassova@gmail.com

Maya M. Marinova (User:Maymay)
mayammarinova@gmail.com

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