What we know about newcomers and how to nurture them

Growth Team
Wikimedia Foundation
Summary

- Very few newcomers continue to edit.
- Newcomers are definitely looking for help.
- We need to help them succeed on their first day.
- Growth team features provide promising opportunities to help newcomers succeed.
The problem of retention
new active Wikipedia editors

From Abbey Ripstra and Neil Patel-Quinn (Wikimania 2018)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wiki</th>
<th>Activation</th>
<th>Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
94% of new editors don’t come back.

From Abbey Ripstra and Neil Patel-Quinn (Wikimania 2018)
New editors have diverse motivations

Reactive Corrector
Josef

Social Changer
Jae-Hee

Box Checker
Mina

Joiner-Inner
Helena

Knowledge Sharer
Janko

Audience Builder
Gong-Yoo

From Abbey Ripstra and Neil Patel-Quinn (Wikimania 2018)

Reboot and the Wikimedia Foundation / CC-BY-SA 4.0
Technical

New editors... have trouble discovering and easily using editing tools.

From Abbey Ripstra and Neil Patel-Quinn (Wikimania 2018)
Conceptual

New editors... struggle with Wikipedia’s policies.

From Abbey Ripstra and Neil Patel-Quinn (Wikimania 2018)
Cultural

New editors... are confused about how Wikipedia works, and are separated from its community.

From Abbey Ripstra and Neil Patel-Quinn (Wikimania 2018)
Recommendations

- Human-to-human help
- In-context help
- Task recommendations
Growth team research
Two projects

- Welcome survey: why are newcomers creating their accounts?
- EditorJourney: what do newcomers do on their first day?
Welcome survey

Goals
Understand the intentions and interests of newcomers.
Find out the potential for personalizing the newcomer’s first day on the wiki.

Approach
Shown immediately after account creation.
Optional and easy to skip.
A/B testing
Welcome survey

High response rates

Response rates are high, with about two thirds of newcomers completing the optional survey.

We also see no decrease in activation.

This makes us optimistic about the potential for personalization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔ Submitted</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø Skipped</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Abandoned</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome survey

Why did you create your account today?

Creating **new articles** is popular, but many users create their accounts **just to read**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a new article</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add information to an article</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read Wikipedia</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fix a typo or error in an article</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome survey

Are you interested in being contacted to get help with editing?

Very high numbers of newcomers say “yes”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are considering starting a program for more experienced editors to help newer users with editing. Are you interested in being contacted to get help with editing?

- Yes, I'm interested
EditorJourney

Most newcomers don’t edit on their first day. What do they do?

Goals

● Understand where newcomers are going so that we can meet them there.
● Understand which workflows lead to success and failure.

Approach

● Log which pages are visited by newcomers during their first 24 hours.
● Do not record any article names.
● Delete after 90 days.
## EditorJourney

What percent of newcomers do each of these things on their first day?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View the Main page</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open an editor</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully save an edit</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View a Help or Policy page</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View an Article Talk page</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View their own User or User Talk page</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View another’s User or User Talk page</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gap showing newcomers who fail to complete an edit.

Influenced decision to build newcomer homepage.
Growth team features
Two projects

- **Help panel**: offer in-context and human-to-human help.
- **Newcomer homepage**: a place for newcomers to get oriented.
Help panel

- Available **when editing**, or in Help/Wikipedia/User namespaces.
- Contains search, links, and the ability to ask a question.
Help panel

Questions are posted on existing help desks.

Newcomers receive their responses when pinged.

When they read their responses, they are likely to make more edits.
Help panel discovery

- 13 - 29% of newcomers who see the help panel open it up.
- 43 - 59% of those take some kind of action.

Help panel usage

Czech Wikipedia asks questions most frequently and Korean Wikipedia asks least frequently.

Users:
- take no action
- click on an help link
- search
- submit a question

Two newcomers* with two different help experiences

* based on real journeys, with names and some details changed for privacy reasons.
Example User A

Platform: Desktop  Email: Unconfirmed  Helped: Yes

Account created.

1 hour

Publishes a draft in sandbox

10 min

Publishes as an article

Asks how to add infobox and photo

30 min

User returns and asks where their article went

1 week

Article is moved to a new title

3 days

Responder says they've gone ahead and cleaned it up.

2 min

Answered with new link

1 min

User edits page
Example User B

Platform: **Mobile**  
Email: **None**  
Helped: **No**

- Account created.
- 5 min
- “How to add a photo?”
- 15 min
- Detailed answer on help desk

User never views reply and never edits again.
Help panel

Learnings
● Shows a desire for in-context and human-to-human help.
● Big challenge to deliver messages to newcomers.
● Retention experiments currently being analyzed.

Next steps
● Improve the question and search flow.
● Help newcomers find the responses.
● Integrate with newcomer homepage and task recommendations.
● Consider live chat.
Newcomer homepage

- Newcomers are looking for a clear place to get started.
- A central homepage can be a platform to show them many options and suggestions.
- Newcomers access this by clicking their username both on mobile and desktop context.
Hello, MMiller (WMF)!

✓ Start here

- Account created
- Email added
- Learn to edit
- Create your user page

MMiller (WMF)
11 edits
You've had an account for 1 year and 21 weeks

Preferences
Tutorial
Create user page

Your impact

People are viewing the articles you edited!
Views since you edited (last 50 days):

- Diana Rosová
  You've made 11 edits (see all)

Your mentor

Khamul1
13,816 edits • Active yesterday
This experienced user knows you're new and can help you with editing.

Ask your mentor a question

Your recent questions
- This is a test question from WMF. (archived)
  Posted 4 weeks ago

View your mentor's other conversations
Newcomer homepage findings

- 61% of visitors to the homepage **click on something**.
- 15% of visitors **return to the homepage** across multiple days (approximate).
- Each module gets clicks, but the **“create user page” module is most popular**.
- 166 questions to mentors have been asked, but only 12 help desk questions.

Users click on all modules, with “create your user page” being most popular.

Newcomer homepage summary

Learnings
- Newcomers are engaging with this central place.
- The call-to-action to edit the user page is most popular.
- Mentorship is more appealing than “help desk”.

Next steps
- “Newcomer tasks” project
- Activity feed
- Recognition
- Structured user profile
Newcomer tasks

- Appear on the homepage as a central point (habitual place) for **task discovery**
- Encourage newcomers to **participate regularly**
- Engage newcomers by providing suggestions **relevant to their interests**
- Nurture newcomers with tasks that **gradually build editing skills**
Newcomer tasks

Wikipedia is built collaboratively by people like you. You don't need to be an expert, but it helps to start with some easy edits.

We've gathered some ways you can help in your areas of interest.

Show me suggested edits

Task suggestions

- Easy tasks
  - Recommended for your initial steps as an editor.
  - Copyedit
    - Small corrections help content to read clearly.
  - Categorize
    - Add categories to help others find.

- Medium difficulty
  - For once you have completed some easy edits.
  - Add references
    - Find reliable sources to verify our content.
  - Add images
    - Add images from Commons to articles.

- Hard tasks
  - For once you are familiar with writing on Wikipedia.
  - Expand stubs
    - Add to articles that have been started.
  - New article
    - Missing topics needing a page.
Community Perspective
Ambassador program

We try to have a paid ambassador in each target wiki

- Goal: **have important tasks done** based on a schedule
- The amount of work is not always compatible with volunteer time

**Important support tasks are done by Ambassadors:**

- Advise on designs
- Translations
- Communicate with community
- Find mentors and train them
- Provide links to on-wiki help pages
Being mindful of newcomers

- Newcomers quickly develop an opinion of editing Wikipedia.
- The way they are treated by experienced editors can make a big difference.
- One story of a common newcomer challenge: quick deletion of a new article.
Step 1: newcomer begins article

Xibei San Ma (stát)

Xibei San Ma byl stát v první polovině 20. století po pádu Dynastie Čching

Tato verze článku byla později upravena. Kromě běžné editace mohlo být důvodem úprav také to, že tato verze obsahuje faktické nepřesnosti, vandalismus nebo materiál, který nevyhovuje licencím GFDL a Creative Commons.

Ochrana osobních údajů O Wikipedia Vyloučení odpovědnosti Vývojáři Prohlášení o cookies Mobilní verze
Step 2: your article may be deleted


Pro vkladatele šablony: vyhledejte v historii článku autora tohoto textu a na jeho diskusní stránku vložte šablonu

```{{subst:Subpahýl autor|Xibei San Ma (stát)}}```
This happens quickly.
Potential for edit conflicts

Edit conflict: User:Martin Urbanec/sandbox

Someone else has changed this page since you started editing it. The upper text area contains the page text as it currently exists. Your changes are shown in the lower text area. You will have to merge your changes into the existing text. Only the text in the upper text area will be saved when you press "Publish changes".

let's test here

Summary:

- [ ] This is a minor edit
- [x] Watch this page

By saving changes, you agree to the Terms of Use, and you irrevocably agree to release your contribution under the CC BY-SA 3.0 License and the GFDL. You agree that a hyperlink or URL is sufficient attribution under the Creative Commons license.

[Publish changes] [Show preview] [Show changes] [Cancel]
Being mindful of newcomers

- You can help your wiki’s culture become more nurturing.

- Recommendations:
  - When you see a new bad article, don’t edit it within minutes after creation. Wait a few hours, to let newcomers finish their work.
  - If you’re not sure newcomer knows how to fix the problem you highlighted, contact them and help them.

- [Best practices for working with newcomers](#)
Get your wiki involved?

Keep yourself informed!

- Subscribe to our monthly newsletter
- Get involved on [[mw:Growth/Communities]]

Get the features on your wiki

- Every wiki is welcomed, with a focus on mid-sized wikis
- Reach a community consensus first
- Know more about it on [[mw:Growth/Communities]]
Discussion
References

- Best practices for working with newcomers
- Growth team page
- New Editor Experiences research
- Welcome survey findings
- EditorJourney findings