How not to reinvent the wheel: learning from others in the Wikimedia movement

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WIKIMEDIA
FOUNDATION

We are all learning things all the time.

How can we capture experiential knowledge?

Understanding what you learn

There are two key elements to experiential knowledge:

1. **Process**

2. **Assumptions**

Public Domain, NACA

Describing your process

Think of the steps you take to run a programmatic activity or event.

- What do you achieve in each step?
- Why is it important?

Example[3]:
To run an edit-a-thon, you need to:
1. Define a clear set of goals.
2. Determine logistics:
    a. Size
    b. Internet access
    c. Computers
    d. Refreshments
    e. Access
3. Recruit active Wikipedia Editors and research experts
4. Prepare reference materials
5. Determine how to create user accounts
6. Provide a way for people to find out about the event and sign up to attend
7. Have appropriate forms for data collection afterwards

Stating your assumptions

When you assume something, you believe without proof that something is true or that something will happen.

Reflecting back on your assumptions, after the activity took place, helps you to see what assumptions were correct and which ones were wrong, and adjust your activity as a consequence.

Example [4]:

We understand that extracurricular editing is competing for students' time with other priorities. For this reason, our target student group audience includes those who we consider "high achieving" in their field as well as those with the potential interest in Wikipedia editing.

We believe students involved in honor societies and other extracurricular student clubs are meeting to discuss topics they are passionate about. We posited that passion should lead to high-quality contributions to content gaps in their fields, and may lead to students continuing to edit Wikipedia after the term ends.

Sharing experience: One learning pattern at a time

User: Spiritia | Vassia Atanassova | Wikimedians of Bulgaria User Group

When is your experience worth sharing?

- When you are the first / only one to do something (e.g. you invented / coded / performed … it)
- When you have done something many times and under various conditions, and know the difference
- When you have performed better than the others, and know the reasons why ☺
- When you have failed epically, but understood the reasons why ☺

What we learn from?

OUR FAILURE → OUR SUCCESS

THEIR FAILURE → THEIR SUCCESS

How to share experience in learning patterns?

- Try walking again in newbie's shoes. Learn from it.
- Don't take for granted that others know what is obvious to you.
- Specify who is the target user of your learning pattern. And why.
- Find the right balance between being *Unique* and being *Similar*.
- Find the right balance between too *Abstract* and too *Concrete*.
- Divide your experience in larger or smaller, but "chewable" bites.
- Give examples, things to consider, ideas for adapting the LP.
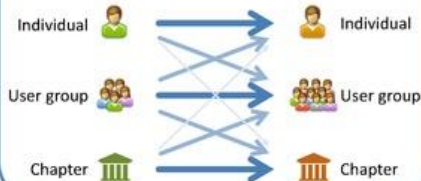
What makes you unique and outstanding?

A novel idea

A new approach to implementing an existing idea

Exclusive access to resources or settings

Specific profile of the people involved

Something else?

What makes you similar to others?

- Size / dynamics of wiki community
- Problems with content / users (copyvio, machine translation, tests)
- Engagement with GLAM / Education
- Engagement with media and audiences
- Cultural settings (e.g. attitudes to volunteering)
- Legal status (chapter / informal user group / none)

Whom you share experience with?

Individual → Individual

User group → User group

Chapter → Chapter

How can experience, shared in a learning pattern, be adapted in order to help others?

Implement in another wiki project
Mind the project-specific rules (e.g. no fair use in some versions of Wikipedia, or in Wikisource). Mind the local wiki community's size and internal dynamics.

Increase the scale of the project
For example: 20 ➤ 60 people. Can be very tempting, but may open a lot of new, unexpected issues. Worth considering: venue capacity, wifi bandwidth, time for processing, queues, parking.

Implement in another language
This may require preliminary preparation for translation and localization of project pages and interface messages. Again, mind the local wiki community's size and internal dynamics.

Modify the goal or the scope
Not always possible ☺ Experience from a GLAM project with an Archaeological Museum may not be directly transferrable to a project with a Museum of Modern Arts (due to copyrights).

Change the time or duration
For example, some countries organize the Wiki Loves Earth contest in different months. A wiki education project can be rescheduled for the summer, not in the school year, etc.

Modify only the budget
Not always possible ☺ Experience gathered from a funded project may not always be directly utilised in a project without a budget. True the other way round, too.

How to share experience

- Try walking again in newbie's shoes. Learn from it.

- Don't take for granted that others know what is obvious to you.

- Specify who is the target user.

- Find the right balance:
  - Unique vs. similar
  - Abstract vs. concrete

- Divide your experience in digestible bites

- Give examples!

Why share your experience?
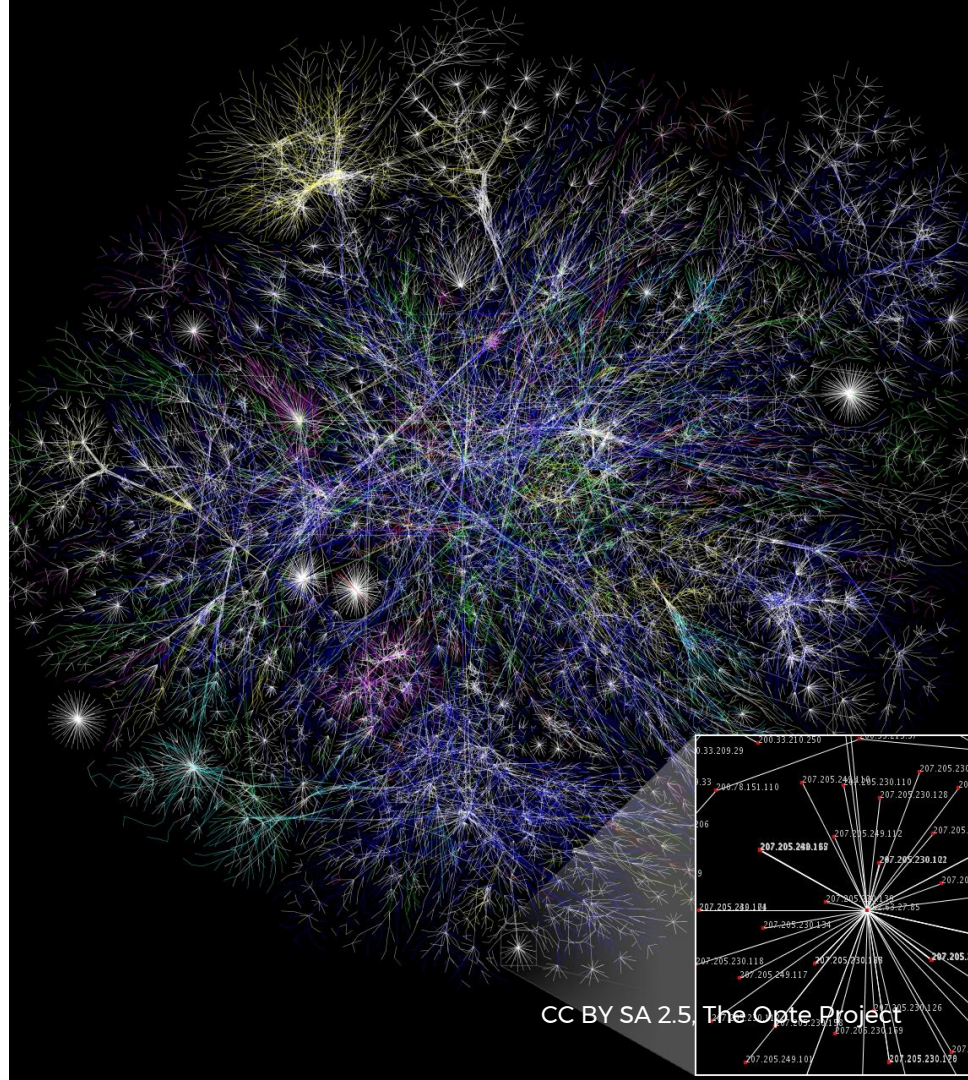
Some things make you unique

- A novel idea

- A new approach to implementing an existing idea

- Exclusive access to resources or settings

- Specific profile of the people involved

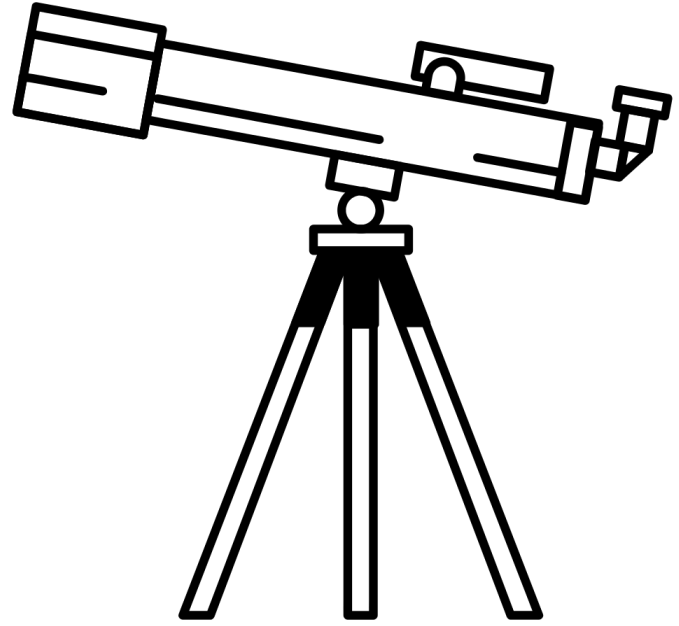- Something else?

Some things make you similar to others

- Size / dynamic of the wiki community

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- Engagement with media and audiences

- Cultural settings (e.g., attitudes towards volunteering)

- Legal status (chapter / user group / none)

A network of knowledge

Within a specific location, there can be certain education, public policy, GLAM, community building needs that are relevant to that city / country. Making the context clear allows others to resonate with certain characteristics, and adapt your experience.

Contribute what you know; find what you are looking for.

Wikimedia Resource Center

Find what you're looking for.

The **Wikimedia Resource Center** is a new portal designed to be a single point of entry for Wikimedians all over the world to access specific Wikimedia resources, including documented best practices, program support, toolkits, and financial resources. See disclaimer.

Not sure where to go? Try our **walkthrough**.

| Search all resources | Search | Search full text |

For Program Coordinators

Resources for people organizing initiatives, including training and outreach programs.

For Contributors

Resources for those who contribute content to our projects.

For Developers

Resources for those who contribute code to our projects, writing bots, Lua modules, and contributions to MediaWiki itself.

For Affiliate Organizers

Resources for those with governance roles in their affiliates, including chapter board members.

| View All Resources | Documentation | Translation | Give Feedback |

Have any questions?

Ask a question

Recent questions

For an editathon I would like to make a list of articles in a special category that are stubs (so less than 2500 bytes or thereabouts). I see that there is a page_len field set in the page table so I was wondering if I could query this somehow through the api? Question from Jane023 16:19, 25 January 2017 (UTC)

View discussion

Can one get a professional certification in Wikimedia use for education? Pharos (talk) 19:08, 20 June 2017 (UTC)

View discussion

Is there a system in place to semi-automate the renewal process for a WMF Rapid Grant? Checkingfax (talk) 17:18, 2 July 2017 (UTC)

View discussion

Dear,

I am working on a separate wiki but this wiki does not allow me to use annotated images. I tried to export and import the template:annotated_images_4, but this doesn't work. How can I transfer the image annotations to another wiki? Mactwyver (talk) 18:54, 12 July 2017 (UTC)

Challenges

- Should we have standard templates for documentation? What sections should exist?

- Classify guides and documents by level of experience?

- Rate most useful documentation?

Thank you!

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References

[1] Definition of Experiential Knowledge: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experiential_knowledge

[2] Science behind the bubble: https://www.kidsdiscover.com/teacherresources/bubbles-for-kids/

[3] How to run and edit-a-thon: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:How_to_run_an_edit-a-thon

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https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wiki_Education_Foundation/Outreach_Pilot_final_report

[5] Sharing Experience: One learning pattern at a time - Wikimania 2016 poster:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sharing_experience-One_learning_pattern_at_a_time_-_poster_-_Learning_Days_-_Wikimania_2016.pdf