

Wikipedia in Namibia, Namibia on Wikipedia

Namibia Scientific Society

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Chapter Outline

- 1 Wikipedia Overview
 - Size and influence
 - Common misconceptions
- 2 Namibia on Wikipedia
 - Articles
 - Article Quality
- 3 Wikipedia in Namibia
 - Wikipedians
 - Available resources



The 21st century encyclopedia



WIKIPEDIA

- Started 2001, open source, content licensed under CC-BY-SA
- 36 million articles, 301 languages
- Written by about 90,000 volunteers
- 2005: accuracy comparable to *Encyclopædia Britannica*
- 16 billion page views, largest edition: English, 5.9 million articles
- the Internet's largest and most popular general reference work
- A new kind of knowledge repository
- 21st century's **outline**, **bibliography**, and **definition** of knowledge

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1 Never cite Wikipedia in a scientific context!

Well, never cite any encyclopædia. Information levels:

- 1 First level: pictures, observations, interviews, measurements, press releases ⇒ **data**
- 2 Second level: Academic and popular articles, news, bulletins ⇒ **interpretations**
- 3 Third level: Text books, almanachs, encyclopædias ⇒ **collections**

2 Something is incorrect on Wikipedia!

Well, Wikipedia's organisation necessitates mistakes. Obscure topics ⇒ mistakes and omissions

3 A scheme for leftists and liberals to explain the world their way!

Well, everyone can contribute



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Current status

- Wikiproject Namibia: \approx 1,500 pages about Namibia
 - including articles like Rock dassie, SADC, Bantu
 - but also quite specific entries: Turnhalle Conference, Lake Otjikoto, B1 Butcher, Hannes Smith, Affirmative Repositioning
 - all cities, towns, villages, constituencies, major roads, National Parks
 - most parties and politicians, deputy minister and above
 - many plants and animals
- Red links: articles that should exist but don't. **For example:**
 - Geographical features like Omatako Mountains, Cuvelai Basin, Huab River, Otavi Triangle
 - Large businesses and their leaders like John Meinert Printing and John Meinert, NamibRe, NamDeb
 - Specific Namibian topics like German colonial architecture, Willing buyer, willing seller, Pass Laws, Old Bay Road
- Everything notable should exist. Notable = multiple, independent sources write about it

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Article quality

- Featured – Good – B – C – Start – Stub – Unassessed
- **Featured** for Namibia:
 - ① Giraffe
- **Good** for Namibia:
 - ① Common Eland, Sitatunga, Wildebeest, Serval
 - ② Namib Desert Horse
 - ③ Twyfelfontein
 - ④ Angolan Civil War
- All the rest has serious issues!
- A lot of *What*, unclearly structured, and very little *Why*
 - ① Legare Stadium
 - ② Telecommunications in Namibia
 - ③ German South West Africa



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Language dominance

- available in English, German, Afrikaans, Chinese, Portuguese
 - ... the native tongues of former and current colonial masters
 - Three editors actively writing about Namibia—two Germans, one Afrikaner
 - ⇒ 'Namibian narrative' again told from an alien perspective
- [Setswana Wikipedia](#): 603 articles
- Other Namibian indigenous languages are in Incubator at best
 - Otjiherero: 80 articles
 - Oshindonga: 54 articles
 - Khoekhoegowab: 1 article
 - Silozi, Rukwangali, Ju|'Hoansi, Oshikwanyama, Taa, Thimbukushu, ... zero articles
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Common Stumbling Blocks

- 1 **Knowledge–That:** Few people know how Wikipedia is made
- 2 The **editing interface:** Pages have a source code that is translated by the browser
 - For instance, `===History===` will create a headline, `
` a line break, `[[Namibia]]` a link withing Wikipedia
 - There is a “Visual Editor” that doesn’t work
 - **Some page’s code** can be really scary
- 3 **Hostile atmosphere:**
 - Old hands feel they have done all the important work
 - New users are often vandals or paid editors
 - Difficult to distinguish incompetence from mere beginners’ mistakes
- 4 **1000 rules:**
 - Established to induce order amongst almost 100m contributors
 - Impossible to adhere to all, impossible to remember all
- 5 Little **mobile support:** Imagine typing `<ref>{{Cite journal|title=Namibia|...}}` on a smart phone



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Namibian Stumbling Blocks

- 1 **License and copyright** misunderstood
 - CC-BY-SA: Creative Commons, acknowledge the author, redistribute under similar license (**copyleft**)
 - Cannot accommodate copyrighted material, fights plagiarism and close paraphrasing
 - Pictures, graphics, maps: from an open license, or your own work
- 2 Bad **legal environment** for pictures
 - Namibian law: Anything man-made is creative, anything creative is art, no art may be reproduced.
 - Unless *you can prove* the creator is dead for 70 years
 - You may take—but not publish—a picture of your own house!
 - Wikipedia's picture database (**Wikimedia Commons**) situated in the US, very careful not to get sued
- 3 **Small pool of people** with spare time, money, and energy
 - “Saving the world” is not very Namibian
 - Working without immediate, tangible reward is not Namibian
 - Wikipedia is the hobby of a tiny minority, worldwide



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If you want to start?

- Start **reading!** Ardent readers (automatically) become newbie writers
- Don't worry about the rules too much, but read your talk page
- **The Missing Manual**: step-by-step introduction to the editing interface and some important rules
- **Email me**: Editing workshop, remote support, individual help (pgallert@nust.na)
- There is a network, there are funds!
- **Knowledge wants to be free**



End of Presentation

“Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That’s what we’re doing.”

—Jimbo Wales

Any questions?

- These slides are available on [Wikimedia Commons](#) under CC-BY-SA 4.0

