

Wikipedia @ 20: Insights from Wikipedia's first two decades

<http://wikipedia20.pubpub.org>

Andrew Lih (moderating)

Joseph Reagle (editor)

Jackie Koerner (editor)

Gita Manaktala (MIT Press editor)

Amy Carleton (contributor)

Dariusz Jemielniak (contributor, WMF Board of Trustees)

William Beutler (contributor)

Ian Ramjohn (contributor)

Wikipedia @ 20

HOME SUBMIT YOUR ESSAY

Following the call for insights from Wikipedia's two decades, draft essays were made available for public feedback. **Public commenting is now closed and revisions are under external review.**

Updates, status, timeline, and discussion happen on [Meta's project page](#).

Revised and selected entries will be published by the MIT Press in a printed collection, also under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International license.

As Wikipedia's twentieth year anniversary approaches, many of the site's early peers have fallen by the wayside; those that survived have been overrun with ads and misinformation. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia founded on radical collaboration and reliable sourcing, persists. What was once a scrappy experiment has become the world's most popular reference work. Recently, Wikipedia was even credited by its peers—unknowingly—to counteract their problems with fake news.

Yet, the online encyclopedia was not always looked to as the grownup of the web. Within its first ten years, some labeled the project a fad bound to fail, others claimed it as a harbinger of the Web's future. Wikipedia did not fail, nor has the open collaboration it exemplifies become the template for most online platforms.

Wikipedia's legacy is an opportunity to reflect on this project and online communities more generally. That is, what insights are available from Wikipedia's twenty years of history? What does this history tell us of expectations fulfilled or disappointed, opportunities seized or missed, myths confirmed or busted, lessons learned, or the probable future?

Introduction



Introduction: Connections

by Joseph Reagle and David Bomati

Published Aug 22, 2019



Links and connections have been a powerful technical and social feature of encyclopedias, especially Wikipedia.

Hindsight



The many (reported) deaths of Wikipedia

by Joseph Reagle

Wikipedia's death has been predicted many times in its twenty years. Reagle groups these four prognostications into four periods. Though his history shows making predictions is foolhardy, Reagle predicts Wikipedia has many years of life ahead of it.



Wikipedia and the End of Open Collaboration?

by Benjamin Miller, Ari and Aaron Shaw

That which enabled Wikipedia to grow and become an invaluable free and open information resource have changed—both within Wikipedia itself and in the wider world. Miller and Shaw ask if there is room for optimism about the future of Wikipedia or



An Encyclopedia with Breaking News

by Brian Kogon

Wikipedia's unexpected ability to generate high-quality articles about current events is a critical part of its success story. Kogon offers lessons taken from this for addressing the design polluting other online platforms.



Paid With Interest: COI Editing and its Discontents

by Joseph Reagle

Conflict of interest (COI) is one of Wikipedia's most controversial but least analyzed issues. What events have shaped its history? Who are the players in this fraught ecosystem? What could be more fitting than learning from Boulder, someone who has a COI with this very



Wikipedia and Libraries

by Heather Ayles

Published Jun 10, 2019



Ayles argues that Wikipedia is pushing the boundaries of all that is possible to incorporate into the public domain. Knowledge accessible to all requires Wikipedia's, libraries', academic's, and donors to work together in



From Anarchy to Wikilife, Charting Bits to Good Cop: Press Coverage of Wikipedia's First Two Decades

by Anne Beaulieu and Stephen Harrison

In the almost 20 years that have passed since it was launched, coverage of Wikipedia has undergone a radical shift, initially cast as the epitome of intellectual laziness in the digital



From Utopia to Practice and Back

by Noelle Becker

Wikipedia has been a useful utopia for how people should cooperate productively free of market relations and hierarchies. Becker warns the limits and disappointments with that utopia, and argues that Wikipedia remains a critical anchor for working



The Limits of Volunteerism and the Gatekeepers of Team Encarta

by Robert Reynolds

As the largest and most successful online volunteer project, Wikipedia is rightly celebrated as a triumph of open-sourcing and volunteerism. However, Robert Reynolds discusses the downsides of collaboration and



Trusting Everybody to Work Together

by Tom Ichniowski

In an increasingly fractious world, Ichniowski argues Wikipedia's approach to collaboration and trust-building point to a brighter future.



Connections

by Heather Ayles

Published Jun 10, 2019



Ayles argues that Wikipedia is pushing the boundaries of all that is possible to incorporate into the public domain. Knowledge accessible to all requires Wikipedia's, libraries', academic's, and donors to work together in



Three links: Be bold, assume good faith, and there are no firm rules

by Amy Carleton, Rebecca Thompson-Brown, and Cecilia A. Roseman

Published Jun 26, 2019



Carleton, Thomdike-Branze, and Muscatello reflect on how these Wikipedia principles