Wikipedias in the languages of Russia: Growing multilingualism online

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meta:Wikipedias in the languages of Russia

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Presenter’s point of view may differ from WMF, WMRU or other Wikimedia affiliates.
"Of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken today ... less than 5% ... can still ascend to the digital realm. ... key result of this study: No wikipedia, no ascent."  

**Digital Language Death**

- 32 of 51 official languages have wikis
- 26 are smaller than **ttwiki**
- Few small wikis have more than 2 very active contributors
- No contributors to my **home wiki** seemed interested to engage in community development

**Objective:** To make sure that all languages of Russia overcome the **digital divide** and start using digital realm possibilities to **strengthen own vitality** – by engaging more of their speakers in **Wikimedia projects**

**Wiki-hint:** if you don’t know the way, start looking for it ...
There are lies, damned lies, and statistics."

Table sorted by last column
Speakers per Active User

Source: WLR July 2017 Readership report

Concept presented @ Wiki Sabantuy 2015
If larger wikis are better venues to find or share information, why do we need smaller ones?

- Identity: ethnic, national or linguistic
- Innovation tolerance: Wiki skills & projects incubator!
- WM Vision & Mission

Generations of humans have encoded their knowledge about various phenomena into human languages. Thus keeping languages alive is no less important than preserving knowledge of separate facts.

“Social diminishing of the non-dominant languages are a fact of life.”
Key takeaways

• Concentrate on what you can control
• Make existing treasures easy to find
• Improve attractiveness of your small wiki identity
• Everything has a lifecycle
• If identity is a rock, knowledge is water

Small WPs’ sources of traffic:
* Other WPs: 70-100%
* Search engines: <30%
* Direct: <10%
* Social networks: <3%
Source: www.similarweb.com

Promoting on-wiki contests, especially interwiki ones, (ex. Wikipedia Asian Month, WikiUral, WLM & CEE Spring) are a good way to challenge your community’s established identity and help its culture to evolve

When you don’t know what to do, ask for help: we are part of a larger community than we usually think.

WE THANK YOU AND ALL THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS GROWING OUR WIKIVERSE!
WHY BOTHER?

Countries, ethnic groups, nations, religions, predominant ideologies, and all other temporary beliefs and tools come and go...

Indifference to the fate of any existing human language or cultural knowledge encoded therein can't be possibly reconciled with faith in Creator, valuing sharing or believing WMF vision.

Imagine a world in which every human is a Wikimedian. That’s my commitment!
Aspirations

• Wikipedia is first and foremost an effort to create and distribute a free encyclopedia of the highest possible quality to every single person on the planet *in their own language*. — Jimmy Wales @ WP:Purpose

• The Foundation will make and keep *useful information* from its projects available on the Internet free of charge, *in perpetuity*. (Mission)

• Imagine a world in which *every single human being* can freely share in *the sum of all knowledge*. That's our *commitment*. (Vision)

*Imagine a world in which every human is a Wikimedian. That’s my commitment!*
Reality check: Languages & Speakers

- World language: English 1.5B = 372M Native + 611M L2 + 600M as foreign language
- 6+6 UN languages
- 15 Google Assistant languages
- 49 lingua franca
- 103 Google Translate languages
- 202 Official national languages
- 292+10 Wikipedias language versions
- 700 of nationally or regionally recognized significant minority languages in Indonesia alone
- 7097 languages in Ethnologue: Languages of the World

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Reality Check: Internet Presence

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There is a lot of work to be done: it is estimated that in order to cover all human knowledge, an encyclopaedia today should have over 100 million articles."

Wikidata: the new Rosetta Stone

Content languages for websites as of 12 March 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Internet users</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>French</td>
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<td>Japanese</td>
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<tr>
<td>11–36</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>950,318,284</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.16 Billion</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>
Background

• “Based on the results of our research we can now confidently state that all humans, even aborigines of the yet unnamed islands, have the knowledge of everything about the world, its structure, interactions within, as well as contents of awe-inspiring phenomena in the field of physics, mathematics, etc., because they were able to create own language. ... By creating own language they have proved own greatness. ... our planes, atomic bombs, computers – all these achievement turn out to be nothing in comparison with the greatness of any human language, as it already contains everything from the evolving world.” — Gaynulla F. Shaykhiev

• Шайхиев Г.Ф. "Татарский язык за один день, или рассказ инопланетянина" Казань: 2000 ISBN 5-85264-026-3 рр.93-94 Глава II. Язык – это мировоззрение ("Tatar in a day, or an alien's tale" / Chapter II. Language is a worldview).
## List of Wikipedias by Active Users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wiki</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Edits</th>
<th>Admins</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Active users</th>
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<td>396,528</td>
<td>1,728</td>
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<td>1,658</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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Wikipedias in the languages of Russia

Wikipedias in the languages of Russia

Want a bright future for your nation and its culture? Take it into your own hands — start contributing into Wikipedia in respective tongue and teaching others!

Languages: English • башҡортса • буряад • Чӑвашла • опyk марий • эрзянь • русский • саха тыла • татарча/tatarça • удмурт • українська

This page is dedicated to the project promoting and supporting Wikipedias in the regional/local official or indigenous languages of the Russian Federation (or WLR Outreach).

For a community to stay vibrant, its culture must evolve to integrate all realities and challenges of the current times. This can only happen if all those concepts are reflected in its language. By promoting documenting knowledge in various languages, Wikipedia is supporting diverse language communities, overall vibrancy of our culturally diverse human society, as well as safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.
If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.

— Nelson Mandela

“The paradox related to preservation of language and culture is that they can only stay active by welcoming changes. Only dead languages and cultures can be fully preserved against change.”

— Annika Pasanen, Janne Saarikivi

Project objective

To make sure that all languages of Russia overcome the digital divide and start using digital realm possibilities to strengthen own vitality — by engaging more of their speakers in Wikimedia projects

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Wikimedia Indigenous Languages
A project to support smaller, less empowered, language communities to have access to their at-risk knowledge

Map of the countries with at least one participant

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Why cultural diversity matters

• **Cultural diversity** has benefits on both societal and a personal level. *Diversity of cultural identities help people to be creative.*

• When there's no soft infrastructure necessary to develop and preserve one's **plurilingualism**, the individual will lose own sovereignty regarding the cultural code that is defining his or her worldview, not just linguistic skills or the benefits of active **multilingualism**.

• Internalizing a number of strong diverse cultural identities also helps individuals to keep sane under the constant fire of **POV**-pushing cultural propaganda and manipulations around **identity politics** (a.k.a. mass media news cycle).

• Diversity of **intangible cultural heritage**: easier to appreciate and keep than disregard & then have to reinvent the wheel later (which can be late or too costly).

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Whom should we thank

- Wikimedia stakeholders
- Wikimedia Foundation
- Wikimedia Russia
- Language or region specific Wikimedia User Groups from the Russian Federation
- Affiliates from other countries: Azerbaijani Wikimedians User Group, Wikimedia Finland, Wikimedia Kazakhstan, Wikimedia Ukraine
- Wikimedia Languages of Russia Community
- free electron Wikimedians from around the world (supporters of Wikimedia Indigenous Languages & Small Wiki Monitoring Team)
- partners around Russia: baWP, lezWP, ruWP, ttWP, others?

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To be achieved

People only spend their time on what they see as valuable, so WP in every language must be attractive

• Topics of interest
  Children, Teenagers, University students & young adults, Adults & Seniors

• Quality of encyclopedia
  – Ease of navigation & discovery, help pages
  – Quality of language
    Vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, encyclopedic style

• Discovery portal
  – Dynamic Main Page, rich in information
  – Community Portal about what's planned & what's going on
  – SiteNotice & Central Notice about specific opportunities

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How will we get there

• Volunteer-driven WPs will only flourish when the project community finds contributing exciting, investment of time worthwhile.
  – News about Wikimedia movement, Online & Offline mentoring, knowledge-sharing & skill development events in regional lingua francas
  – Wikipedias in respective languages can and must be seen as the most modern, diverse & attractive sites for younger speakers & **semi-speakers** of the language.

• Cultural identity, linked with respective language & its speakers, must be attractive for **netizens**.
  – Conscious efforts in promoting **sociocultural evolution** seem to be the only reasonable way forward.
  – If the Wikipedia in the language of a **stateless nation** is not attractive for younger speakers thereof & these do not participate in its development, the **heritage language** is no more an important part in their **identity** & thus this specific **group identity** is likely to disappear.

"The paradox related to preservation of language and culture is that they can only stay active by welcoming changes. Only dead languages and cultures can be fully preserved against change." — **Annika Pasanen, Janne Saarikivi**

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Where are we now

• Mass media read / heard / watched in the Russia’s regions with local regional languages is periodically speaking about respective Wikipedias (in Tatar since 2004)
• Wikimedia Conference Russia sessions on the issues of Wikimedia communities writing in the regional languages of Russia (since 2009)
• Annual Wikimedia Russia Wiki-Award for contributors in the Languages of Russia (since 2014)
• Wiki-seminars in the regions with local languages (since 2015)
• Multilingual Wikimedia Russia wiki-page (1+7 since 2015)
• Tracking onwiki visitor trends and active editors' statistics (since 2016)
• Multilingual Russian Wikinews (1+8, since 2016)
• over 100 members of the Russian-speaking FB Languages of Russia group (since June 2017)
• CentralNotice banners & WMRU-landing pages in the languages of Russia (since September 2017)

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Lessons learned

- State of the wikis monitoring dashboards & statistical reports
- New user support groups
- Standardizing technical tasks across language versions
- Wikimedia news & best-practices guidelines in the regional lingua francas
- Cooperation with and across national chapters
- Inclusion into annual Wikimedia chapter and Wikimedia Foundation progress reports
- Wikimedia projects' role is evolving – promote reinventing their use
- Generational shifts are real – onboarding new stakeholders in all countries is a must

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