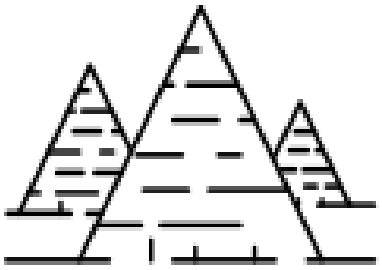
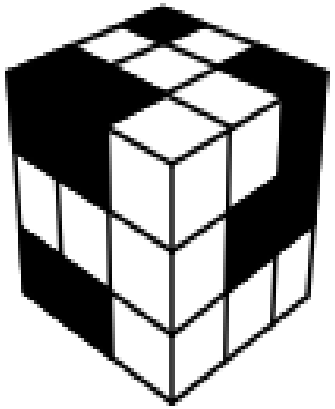
The first fifteen years of Wikipedia

OSCAL 2016

Tirana, Albania

Kiril Simeonovski





“Imagine a world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge. That's our commitment.”
—vision of the Wikimedia Foundation

Origins of the concept

The Library of Alexandria was in charge of collecting all the world's knowledge on one place.

Libraries:

- collect sources of information
- provide access to knowledge

Library of Alexandria

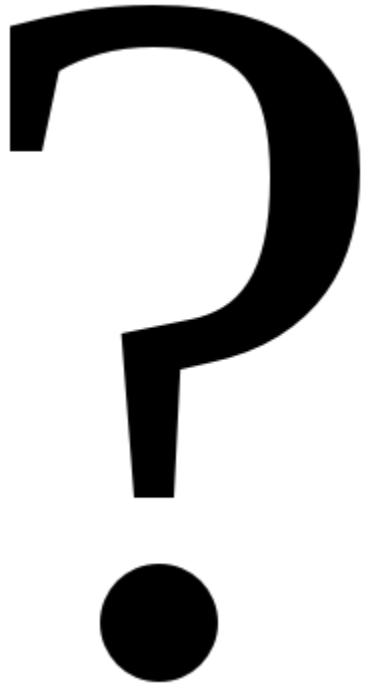
<u>knowledge as a club good</u>

The more knowledge collected, the greater a library becomes.

↓

Two problems:

1. hard time searching information
2. difficult to handle multiple sources



↓

extraction of knowledge
summary of information

} birth of encyclopedias

Please help me!
There are millions of them...

Evolution of encyclopedias

encyclopédistes

single authors → multiple contributors

digitisation

printed encyclopedias → digital encyclopedias

content liberation

copyrighted content → open content

Economic effects

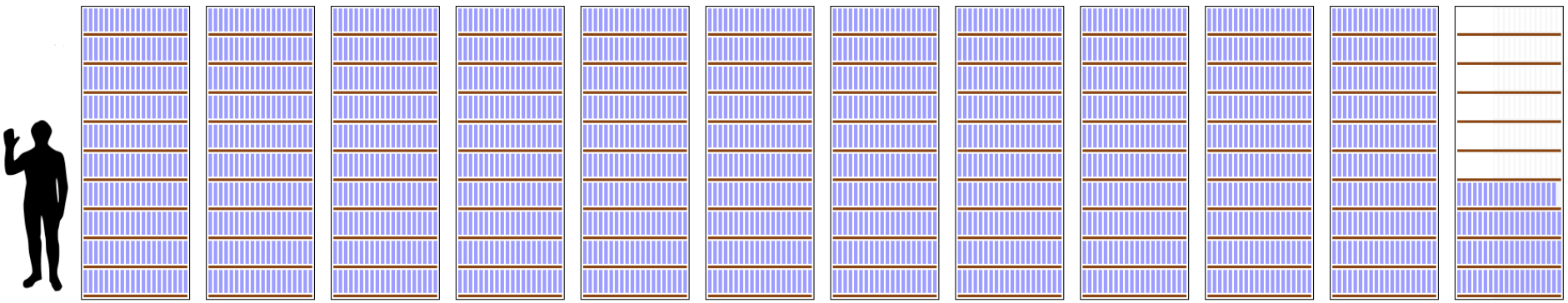
Many contributors increase efficiency and decrease time.

Digitisation lowers cost (MC = 0) and searching time.

Content liberation provides open access.

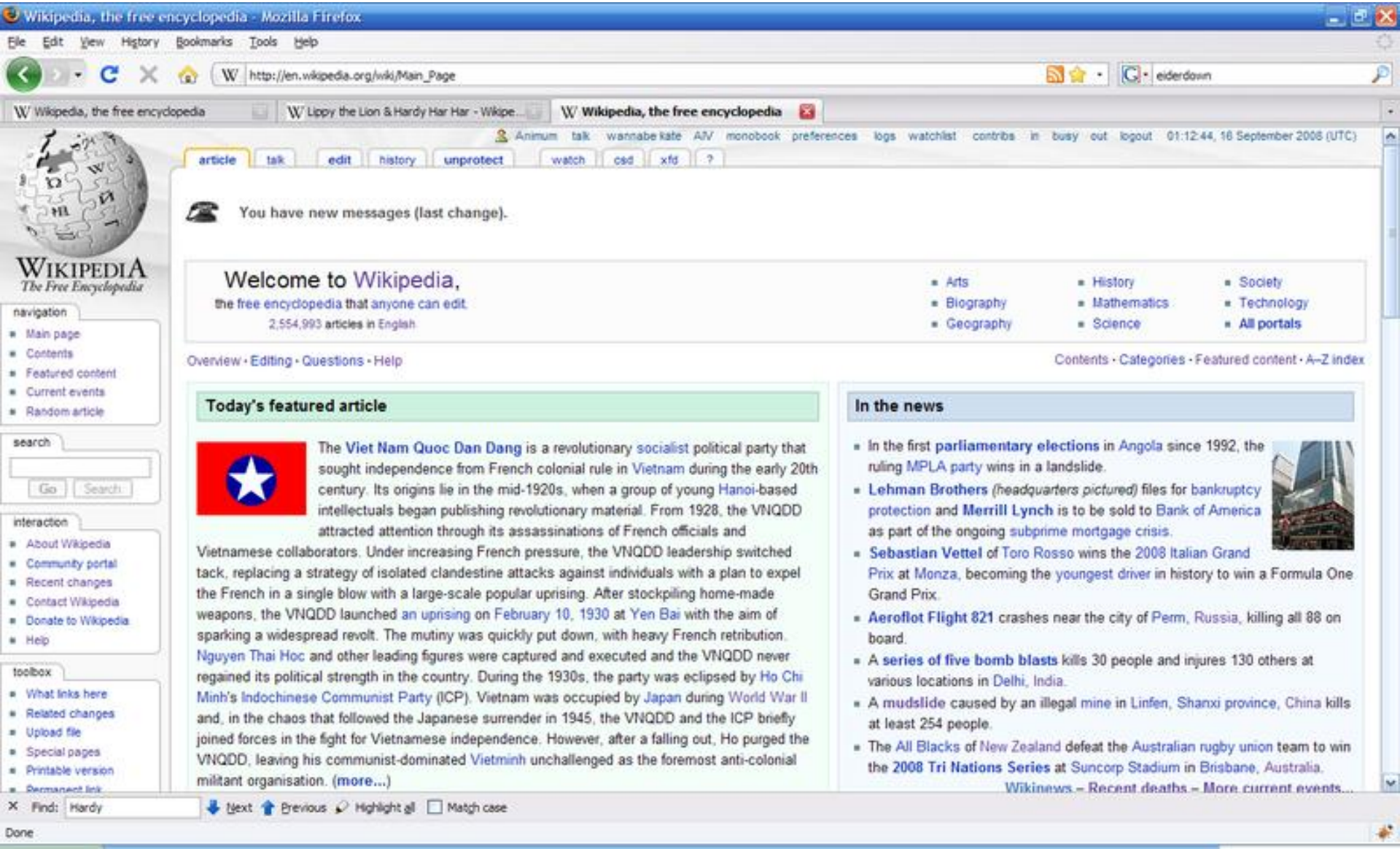
club good transforms into public good

non-excludability



Up-to-date size of the English Wikipedia (2279 volumes in 12 stacks)

What has changed with Wikipedia?



“This is not a dispute about whether planning is to be done or not. It is a dispute as to whether planning is to be done centrally, by one authority for the whole economic system, or is to be divided among many individuals.”
—Friedrich von Hayek

Friedrich von Hayek (1899-1992)

Governance

Hayek's "The Use of Knowledge in Society" is central to the thinking about governing Wikipedia.

Centrally planned economy could never match the efficiency of the open market because what is known by a single agent is only a small fraction of the sum total of knowledge held by all members of society.

Information is decentralised – that knowledge is unevenly dispersed among different members of society – and that as a result, decisions are best made by those with local knowledge rather than by a central authority.

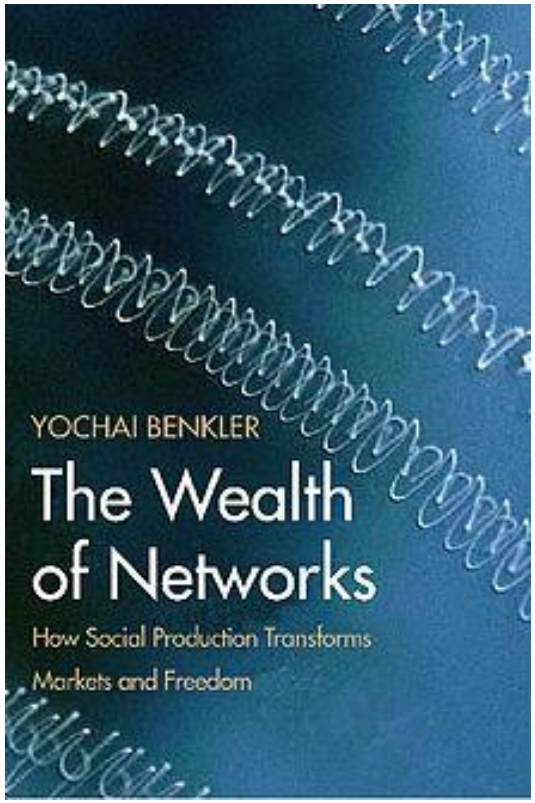
Production

Development of a new method of production:

- commons-based peer production (Benkler, 2002)

... any coordinated, (chiefly) internet-based effort whereby volunteers contribute project components, and there exists some process to combine them to produce a unified intellectual work... (Krowne, 2005)

<u>user-generated content</u>



Application

Encyclopedias are insufficient in collecting the sum of all knowledge.

Knowledge:

- appears in different forms (multimedia)
- can take different formats (reference works)

Wikimedia projects

Technology

Critical issues:

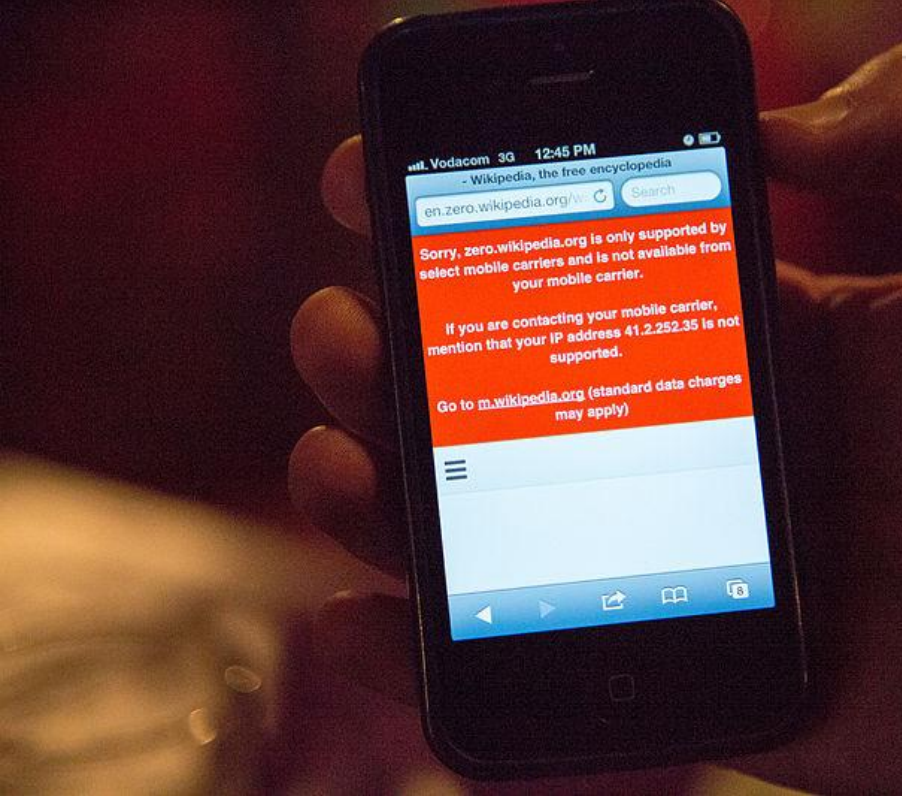
- global digital divide (Lu, 2001) becomes an issue in the global economy
- technological barriers of accessing free knowledge still exist
- some people cannot enjoy the benefits of open knowledge

Development of technologies to mitigate effects:

- Wikipedia Zero
- QRpedia

} mobile-based projects

- Spoken Wikipedia



MK **Обичен елен**

SQ **Dreri i kuq**

EN **Red deer**

Cervus elaphus

Повеќе за ова животно на Википедија:

Më shumë rreth kësaj kafshe në Wikipedia:

More about this animal on Wikipedia:

македонски

shqip

your language

Овозможено од уредниците на Википедија на македонски, албански и англиски јазик и организацијата „Споделено знаење“

ВикиПроект „Зоо Скопје“

Wikipedia Zero is a project by the Wikimedia Foundation to provide Wikipedia free of charge on mobile phones, particularly in developing markets.[1][2] The program

Free Wikipedia access by Ncell

WIKIPEDIA AMBASSADOR

Development of open educational resources:

- Wikipedia as a teaching tool

Wikipedia Education Program:

- educators and students contribute to Wikipeida and the other Wikimedia projects in an academic setting

Wikipedia Education Program

creating value added

copying from ... → contributing to ...

The immensity of knowledge remains untouched within the cultural institutions.

GLAM = **G**alleries + **L**ibraries + **A**rchives + **M**useums

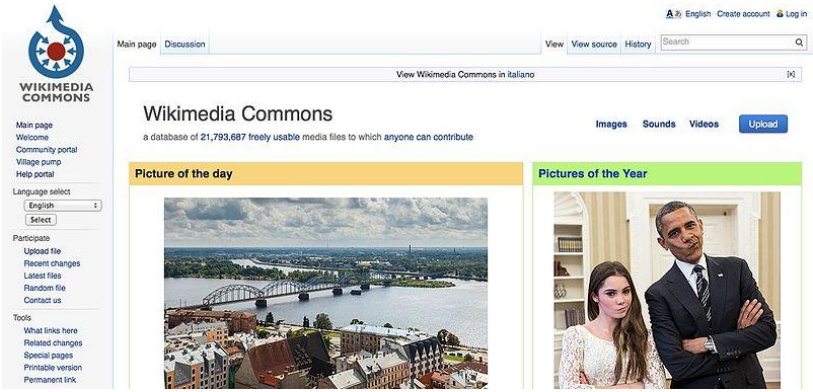
Transfering knowledge through cultural partnerships:

- conservation through digitisation
- open access through content liberation

Logical reasoning

Before 2004: If you had wished to illustrate something, you would have risked searching for images with uncertain licence.

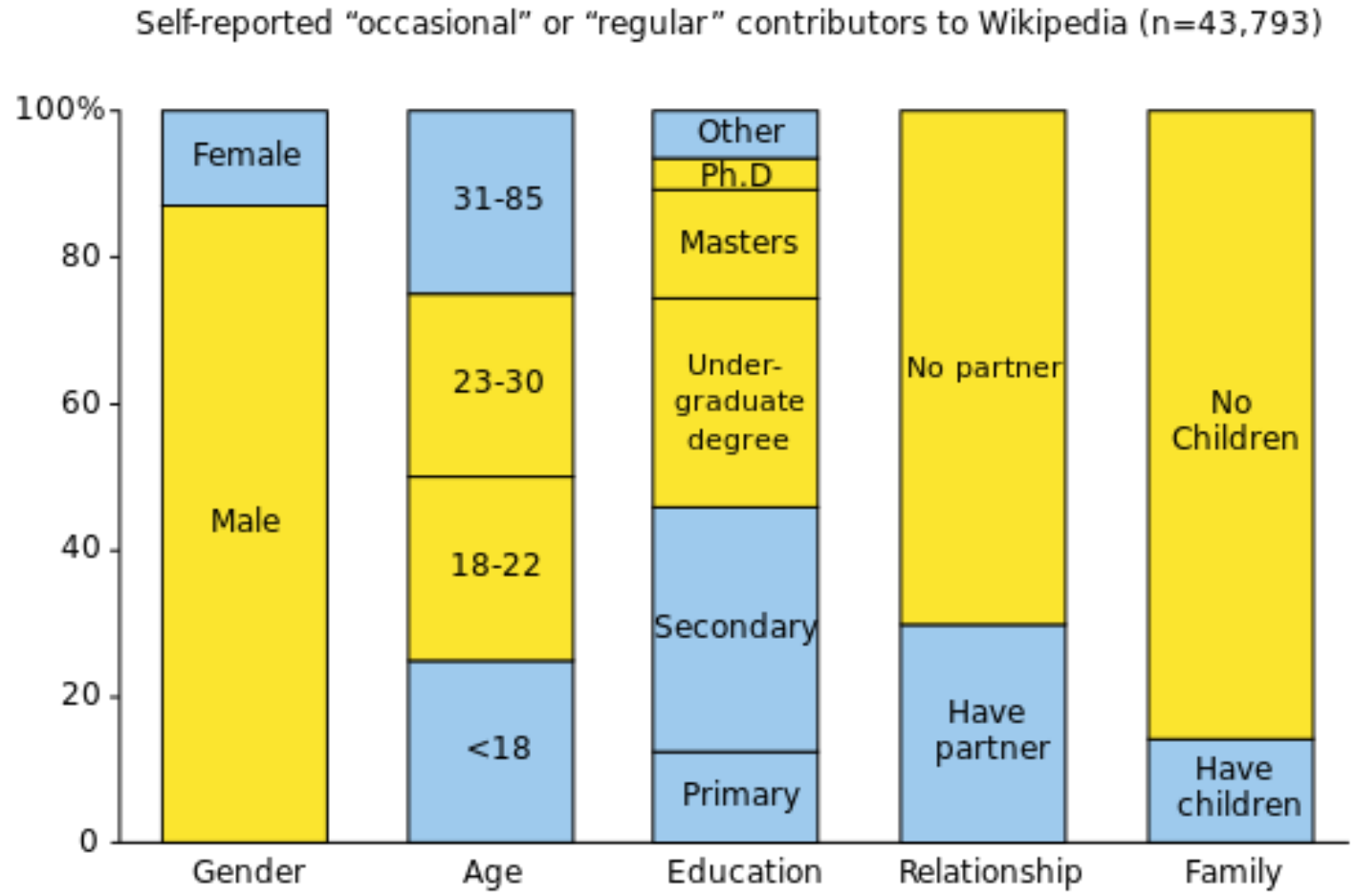
After 2004: If you wish to illustrate something, you search for free images on Wikimedia Commons.



Major challenges

Several issues are challenging:

- diversity of contributors
- openness for editing
- content quality



Note: Data for age category also includes respondents who were not contributors but who did read Wikipedia. Average age for contributors is 26.8 (vs 23.3 for readers). "Regular" contributors include authors, editors and administrators. "Occasional" contributors include readers who occasionally contribute as authors or editors.

Source: "Wikipedia Survey - First Results", UNU-MERIT, April 2009

Gender gap on Wikipedia

MIND THE GAP

Openness for editing

early history → **recent history**

absolute openness → restricted openness

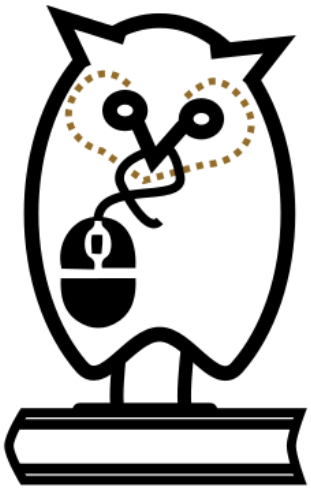
Absolute openness, on the negative side, invites vandalism and edit warring.

Quality control measures

Problem(s)	**Solution(s)**
vandalism	pending pages protection, stable version system, protecting pages
edit warring	

Content quality

Content quality depends on the quality of sources.



<u>Projects to improve content quality</u>

The Wikipedia Library

- helps editors access reliable sources to improve Wikipedia

WikiProject Medicine

- aims to improve health information on Wikipedia