

Reflections on Eight Years at ArbCom: Policy, Structure, and Reform

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WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT TODAY

- I. Wait, what is ArbCom again? (And why should I care?)**
- II. What is going well?**
- III. What could be improved?**
- IV. Audience questions, hopefully copious!**
- V. (No ideation exercise today, alas!)**

WHAT IS ARBCOM?

**Wait, what exactly *is* the
Arbitration Committee?**

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- “The Arbitration Committee is the panel of editors responsible for conducting the Wikipedia arbitration process. It has the authority to impose binding solutions to disputes between editors, primarily for serious conduct disputes the community has been unable to resolve.” (WP:AC)
- 15 of us, elected by you for two-year terms (say hi, a few of us are here at WCNA!)

WHAT IS ARBCOM?

Bit of an evolution

- **Netoholic 2 - Decided** on 5 May 2005. **Netoholic** is placed under the mentorship of **Raul654**, **Kim Bruning** and **Grunt**, with a suspended ban from editing the Wikipedia: and Template: namespaces for twelve months to be enacted should Netoholic decide the mentorship is not working.

April [edit]

- Ten cases
- **John Gohde - Decided** on 30 April 2005. John Gohde is banned for one year. Other remedies apply should he return after this time.
- **WHEELER - Closed** on 25 April 2005. WHEELER is asked to revise his comment style and ensure that his editing is properly sourced and not originally researched.
- **RJII - Closed** on 23 April 2005 without decision. The original dispute appeared to have long been resolved (an article "**definitions of capitalism**" was created and linked from the opening paragraph of **capitalism**) and healthy amounts of interaction were occurring between the disputants (see e.g. recent edit history on **capitalism** and recent discussions at its **talk page**.)
- **Rex071404 3 - Decided** on 23 April 2005. As **Rex has banned himself voluntarily for six months**, official sanction is given to this ban and he shall remain blocked for those six months.
- **172 2 - Decided** on 22 April 2005. 172 is requested to clarify this issue by stating whether he wishes to continue as an admin of Wikipedia
- **Irate - Decided** on 17 April 2005. **User:Irate** is banned for three months. **Decided** on 25 July 2005: **User:Irate** is on one year's personal attack parole.
- **GRider - Decided** on 10 April 2005. **User:GRider** is prohibited from editing any **deletion-related page** for a period of one year.
- **Baku lbne, et al. - Decided** on 10 April 2005. All sockpuppet accounts of LIGerassimova/Osmanoglou/etc. are to be blocked indefinitely and **User:Rovoam** is subject to a revert limitation and a personal attack parole.
- **RK 2 - Decided** on 7 April 2005. The previous article ban is revoked and replaced with a revert limitation and personal attack parole for one year.
- **Everyking 2 - Decided** on 5 April 2005. **User:Everyking** is prohibited from editing articles relating to **Ashlee Simpson** for one year, and may apply to have this sanction lifted in two months.
- **lasson - Decided** on 4th April 2005. **User:lasson** was banned for one year for having multiple sockpuppet accounts and for vandalism.

March [edit]

- Nine cases
- **Dr Zen - Decided** on 27 March 2005. Dr Zen is indefinitely prohibited from removing images from **Ciitoris**.
- **Anthony DiPiero 2 - Decided** on 26 March 2005. Anthony is subject to a one revert limitation, prohibited from creating deleted content that fails to pass a vote for undeletion, subject to *ad hoc* blocks for disruption, and banned from editing the Wikipedia namespace.
- **Noah Peters - Closed without action taken** on 20 March 2005. No party to the dispute added evidence after the case was opened.

2005
(102 cases)

May [edit]

- **Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Case/World War II and the history of Jews in Poland#Final decision** **closed 20 May 2023** (AN notice)

- The Arbitration Committee formally requests that the Wikimedia Foundation develop and promulgate a **white paper** on the best practices for researchers and authors when writing about Wikipedians. The Committee requests that the white paper convey to researchers the principles of our movement and give specific recommendation for researchers on how to study and write about Wikipedians and their personal information in a way that respects our principles. Upon completion, we request that the white paper be distributed through the Foundation's research networks including email newsletters, social media accounts, and web publications such as the *Diff* **blog**.

This request will be sent by the Arbitration Committee to Maggie Dennis, Vice President of Community Resilience & Sustainability with the understanding that the task may be delegated as appropriate.

- **Remedy 5 of Antisemitism in Poland** is superseded by the following restriction:

All articles and edits in the topic area of Polish history during World War II (1933-1945) and the history of Jews in Poland are subject to a "reliable source consensus-required" contentious topic restriction. When a source that is not an article in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, an academically focused book by a reputable publisher, and/or an article published by a reputable institution is removed from an article, no editor may reinstate the source without first obtaining consensus on the talk page of the article in question or consensus about the reliability of the source in a discussion at the **Reliable Sources Noticeboard**. Administrators may enforce this restriction with page protections, topic bans, or blocks; enforcement decisions should consider not merely the severity of the violation but the general disciplinary record of the editor in violation.

- **François Robere** is topic banned from the areas of World War II in Poland and the History of Jews in Poland, broadly construed. This ban may be appealed twelve months after the enactment of this remedy, and every twelve months thereafter.
- **My very best wishes**
 - is topic banned from the areas of World War II in Poland and the History of Jews in Poland, broadly construed. This ban may be appealed twelve months after the enactment of this remedy, and every twelve months thereafter.
 - Based on their disruptive attempts to defend Piotrus and Volunteer Marek, My very best wishes is subject to a 1-way interaction ban with Piotrus and a 1-way interaction ban with Volunteer Marek, subject to the usual exceptions. This ban may be appealed twelve months after the enactment of this remedy, and every twelve months thereafter.
- **Volunteer Marek**
 - is topic banned from the areas of World War II in Poland and the History of Jews in Poland, broadly construed. This ban may be appealed twelve months after the enactment of this remedy, and every twelve months thereafter.
 - is limited to 1 revert per page and may not revert a second time without a consensus for the revert, except for edits in his userspace or obvious vandalism. This restriction may be appealed twelve months after the enactment of this remedy, and every twelve months thereafter.
- **François Robere** and **Volunteer Marek** are **prohibited from interacting with, or commenting on,** posts and comments made by each other, subject to the normal exceptions. This restriction may be appealed twelve months after the enactment of this remedy, and every twelve months thereafter.
- The Arbitration Committee assumes and makes indefinite the **temporary interaction ban** between **Levichik** and **Volunteer Marek**. This restriction may be appealed twelve months after the enactment of this remedy, and every twelve months thereafter.
- **Piotrus** is reminded that while off-wiki communication is allowed in most circumstances, he has previously used **off-wiki communication disruptively**. He is reminded to be cautious about how and when to use off-wiki contact in the future, and to avoid future conflict, he should prioritize on-wiki communication.
- The Arbitration Committee affirms its January 2022 motion allowing editors to file for Arbitration enforcement at ARCA or Arbitration enforcement noticeboards. In recognition of the overlap of editor interest and activity between this topic area and Eastern Europe, the committee extends this provision to that topic area. It does so by adding the following text in **Wikipedia:Requests for arbitration/Eastern Europe**:

As an alternative to **Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Enforcement**, editors may make enforcement requests directly to the Arbitration Committee at **Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Clarification and Amendment**.

- The Arbitration Committee separately rescinds the part of the January 2022 motion allowing transfer of a case from Arbitration Enforcement to ARCA, in recognition of the now-standard provision in **Wikipedia:Contentious topics § Referrals from Arbitration Enforcement** noticeboard to the full Committee. It does so by striking the following text in its entirety:

Important as a backstop!

2023
(5 cases YTD)

...sensus of admin... committee may... a case to examine the issue.

...n the Eastern Eu... should consider sanctions and the

...se. ... Administrators placing blocks

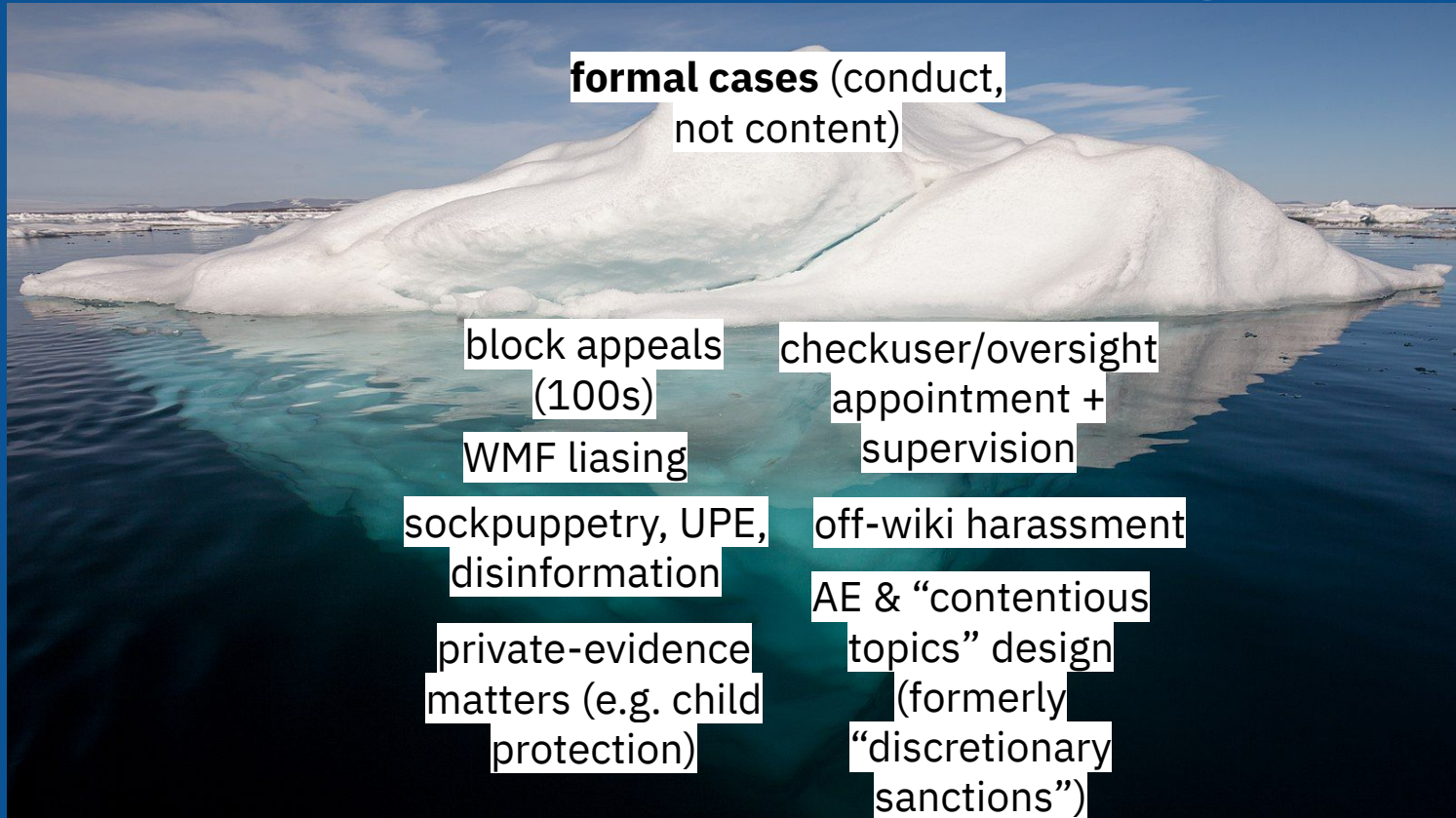
...B cas... ration of blocks. Any blk > 3

...should take into account an editor's overall conduct

...months or longer should be reported for automatic review either (1) at ARCA or (2) to an arbitrator or clerk who will open a review at ARCA. The committee will consider presented evidence and statements before deciding by motion what, if any, actions are necessary, up to and including a site

WHAT IS ARBCOM?

Now, ArbCom's an iceberg.



</facts>
<opinion>

What is going well?

WHAT IS GOING WELL?

1) ArbCom gets dedicated people who care

- Every year I've met such incredible people through ArbCom!
- Some of our best volunteers who sign up to spend 5-15+ hours a week, for years on end, trying their very best at a difficult job.

2) Quality of our full case decisions

- One of our big strong points!
- Measured, deliberative, careful — more than other Wikipedia processes, like AN/I, allow.
- Case structure and timing allows for more measured and careful participation by parties and consideration by arbitrators.

3) WMF relationships

- The biggest surprise for me on the Committee!
- Monthly calls with Trust and Safety, as well as other relevant offices as needed.
- Grown to be very impressed by the drive, care, and dedication that our counterparts bring to their roles.

What could be improved?

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

1) Administrative capacity: case and email management*

- Ugh.
- Currently no internal case management system.
- Almost entirely conducted by email, leading to many more emails than ideal
- Clerks can't assist with the bulk of the iceberg.
- With more administrative/clerical capacity, we could plausibly do more for the community!

*This is possibly an idiosyncratic concern of mine

2) Documentation for parties/participants

- Pretty confusing!
- Arbitration is by nature a stressful and unusual process with which most Wikipedians are unfamiliar.
- Complicated procedures are not explained well. Probably leads to a lot of stress and confusion!

3) Documentation for contentious topics and arbitration enforcement*

- Contentious topics and arbitration enforcement templates and processes are the most common ArbCom touchpoint for most Wikipedians.
- And they're still confusing and a bit scary!
- Some progress with CT2022, but I think there's much work left to do.

*If designing better templates and documentation for CTOP/AE interests you, *definitely* get in touch to explore either an ArbCom clerkship or more informal collaboration! In December 2022, ArbCom made it easier to improve them.

What I hope you take away from this talk:

1. **ArbCom does a *lot* of good work for Wikipedia in many different areas**, more than most realize.
2. **Get involved even if you don't fit the stereotypical “dispute resolution” persona**, if you think you are otherwise a good fit! ArbCom always needs new perspectives — maybe you'll be the one to tackle these issues.
 - Especially if you have one or more of the following traits: interested in operations (appeals processing, process improvements); interested in policy and system design; good sense of the pulse of the community; good at building relationships; technical skills; or have ideas for improvements!
 - Elections open soon, but also consider an ArbCom clerkship or just helping out! (Reach out!)
3. **Everything on Wikipedia has almost infinite fractal depth, and these system design questions are important across them all.**

Questions? :-)

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