The Case for Sister Projects

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Mapping USA = WikiConference North America
November 2022

Good morning or afternoon everyone! Glad you could make it to this unique joint conference! My name is Minh Nguyen and I'll be making a case for why sister projects have been crucial to the Wikimedia movement and could be just as important to OpenStreetMap as the project matures.
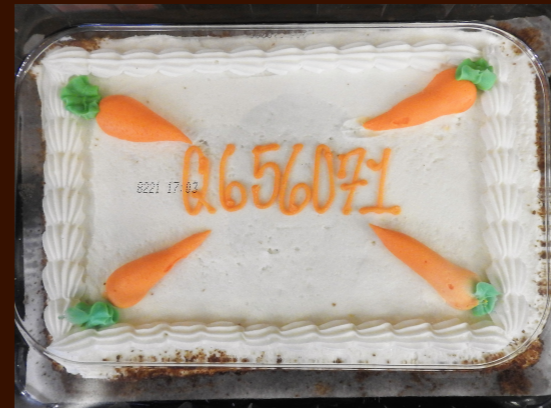
I'm originally a Wikimedian who got addicted to Wikipedia, and then got addicted to each of its sister projects, and then got addicted to OpenStreetMap. These projects all have a lot in common, though I have to say, the OpenStreetMap community doesn't seem as quite as interested in logo design contests as the Wikimedians.

We do have a lot in common though, like delicious cakes with amazing designs.

Wikipedia

wikipedia.org

Like me, about half of you are addicted to editing Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

Wikipedia is not paper

No size limit!
No trees harmed!
Sum of all human knowledge!
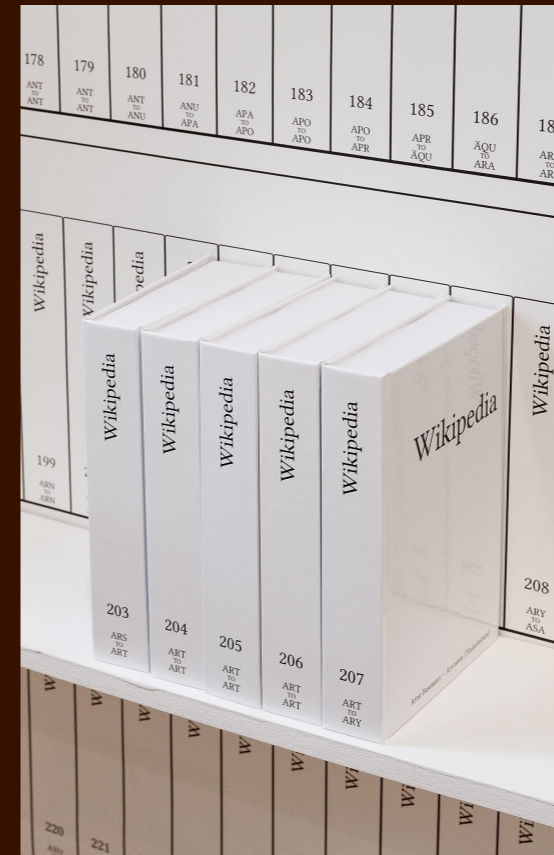
These days, Wikipedia is synonymous with encyclopedias, but at one point we had to remind people that Wikipedia isn't a traditional paper encyclopedia. We don't have to worry about how many trees we're cutting down to write about long-forgotten pop songs and random parks in Kansas. We're building the sum of *all* human knowledge!

#	Name		#	Name		#	Name		#	Name		#	Name		#	Name		#	Name		#	Name
051	Dugtrio		202	Wobbuffet		302	Sableye		437	Bronzong		544	Whirlipede		700	Sylveon		772	Type: Null ‡		860	Morgrem
052	Meowth		203	Girafarig		303	Mawile		438	Bonsly *		545	Scolipede		701	Hawlucha		773	Silvally ‡		861	Grimmsnarl
053	Persian		204	Pineco		304	Aron		439	Mime Jr. *		546	Cottonee		702	Dedenne		774	Minior		862	Obstagoon
054	Psyduck		205	Forretress		305	Lairon		440	Happiny *		547	Whimsicott		703	Carbink		775	Komala		863	Perrserker
055	Golduck		206	Dunsparce		306	Aggron		441	Chatot		548	Petilil		704	Goomy		776	Turtonator		864	Cursola
056	Mankey		207	Gligar		307	Meditite		442	Spiritomb		549	Lilligant		705	Sliggoo		777	Togedemaru		865	Sirfetch'd
057	Primeape		208	Steelix		308	Medicham		443	Gible		550	Basculin		706	Goodra		778	Mimikyu		866	Mr. Rime
058	Growlithe		209	Snubbull		309	Electrike		444	Gabite		551	Sandile		707	Klefki		779	Bruxish		867	Runerigus
059	Arcanine		210	Granbull		310	Manectric		445	Garchomp		552	Krokorok		708	Phantump		780	Drampa		868	Milcery
060	Poliwag		211	Qwilfish		311	Plusle		446	Munchlax *		553	Krookodile		709	Trevenant		781	Dhelmise		869	Alcremie
061	Poliwhirl		212	Scizor		312	Minun		447	Riolu *		554	Darumaka		710	Pumpkaboo		782	Jangmo-o		870	Falinks
062	Poliwrath		213	Shuckle		313	Volbeat		448	Lucario		555	Darmanitan		711	Gourgeist		783	Hakamo-o		871	Pincurchin
063	Abra		214	Heracross		314	Illumise		449	Hippopotas		556	Maractus		712	Bergmite		784	Kommo-o		872	Snom
064	Kadabra		215	Sneasel		315	Roselia		450	Hippowdon		557	Dwebble		713	Avalugg		785	Tapu Koko ‡		873	Frosmoth
065	Alakazam		216	Teddiursa		316	Gulpin		451	Skorupi		558	Crustle		714	Noibat		786	Tapu Lele ‡		874	Stonjourner
066	Machop		217	Ursaring		317	Swalot		452	Drapion		559	Scraggy		715	Noivern		787	Tapu Bulu ‡		875	Eiscue
067	Machoke		218	Slugma		318	Carvanha		453	Croagunk		560	Scrafty		716	Xerneas ‡		788	Tapu Fini ‡		876	Indeedee
068	Machamp		219	Magcargo		319	Sharpedo		454	Toxicroak		561	Sigilyph		717	Yveltal ‡		789	Cosmog ‡		877	Morpeko
069	Bellsprout		220	Swinub		320	Wailmer		455	Carnivine		562	Yamask		718	Zygarde ‡		790	Cosmoem ‡		878	Cufant
070	Weepinbell		221	Piloswine		321	Wailord		456	Finneon		563	Cofagrigus		719	Diancie ►		791	Solgaleo ‡		879	Copperajah
071	Victreebel		222	Corsola		322	Numel		457	Lumineon		564	Tirtouga ~		720	Hoopa ►		792	Lunala ‡		880	Dracozolt ~
072	Tentacool		223	Remoraid		323	Camerupt		458	Mantyke *		565	Carracosta ~		721	Volcanion ►		793	Nihilego #		881	Arctozolt ~
073	Tentacruel		224	Octillery		324	Torkoal		459	Snover		566	Archen ~					794	Buzzwole #		882	Dracovish ~
074	Geodude		225	Delibird		325	Spoink		460	Abomasnow		567	Archeops ~					795	Pheromosa #		883	Arctovish ~
075	Graveler		226	Mantine		326	Grumpig		461	Weavile		568	Trubbish					796	Xurkitree #		884	Duraludon
076	Golem		227	Skarmory		327	Spinda		462	Magnezone		569	Garbodor					797	Celesteela #		885	Dreepy
077	Ponyta		228	Houndour		328	Trapinch		463	Lickilicky		570	Zorua					798	Kartana #		886	Drakloak
078	Rapidash		229	Houndoom		329	Vibrava		464	Rhyperior		571	Zoroark					799	Guzzlord #		887	Dragapult
079	Slowpoke		230	Kingdra		330	Flygon		465	Tangrowth		572	Minccino					800	Necrozma ‡		888	Zacian ‡
080	Slowbro		231	Phanpy		331	Cacnea		466	Electivire		573	Cinccino					801	Magearna ►[kt]		889	Zamazenta ‡
081	Magnemite		232	Donphan		332	Cacturne		467	Magmortar		574	Gothita					802	Marshadow ►		890	Eternatus ‡
082	Magneton		233	Porygon2		333	Swablu		468	Togekiss		575	Gothorita					803	Poipole #		891	Kubfu
083	Farfetch'd		234	Stantler		334	Altaria		469	Yanmega		576	Gothitelle					804	Naganadel #		892	Urshifu ‡
084	Doduo		235	Smeargle		335	Zangoose		470	Leafeon		577	Solosis					805	Stakataka #		893	Zarude ►
085	Dodrio		236	Tyrogue *		336	Seviper		471	Glaceon		578	Duosion					806	Blacephalon #		894	Regieleki ‡
086	Seel		237	Hitmontop		337	Lunatone		472	Gliscor		579	Reuniclus					807	Zeraora ►		895	Regidrago ‡
087	Dewgong		238	Smoochum *		338	Solrock		473	Mamoswine		580	Ducklett					808	Meltan ►		896	Glastrier ‡
088	Grimer		239	Elekid *		339	Barboach		474	Porygon-Z		581	Swanna					809	Melmetal ►		897	Spectrier ‡
089	Muk		240	Magby *		340	Whiscash		475	Gallade		582	Vanillite								898	Calyrex ‡
090	Shellder		241	Miltank		341	Corphish		476	Probopass		583	Vanillish								899	Wyrdeer
091	Cloyster		242	Blissey		342	Crawdaunt		477	Dusknoir		584	Vanilluxe								900	Kleavor
092	Gastly		243	Raikou ‡		343	Baltoy		478	Froslass		585	Deerling								901	Ursaluna
093	Haunter		244	Entei ‡		344	Claydol		479	Rotom		586	Sawsbuck								902	Basculegion
094	Gengar		245	Suicune ‡		345	Lileep ~		480	Uxie ~		587	Emolga								903	Sneasler
095	Onix		246	Larvitar		346	Cradily ~		481	Mesprit ‡		588	Karrablast								904	Overqwil
096	Drowzee		247	Pupitar		347	Anorith ~		482	Azelf ‡		589	Escavalier								905	Enamorus ‡
097	Hypno		248	Tyranitar		348	Armaldo ~		483	Dialga ‡		590	Foongus									
098	Krabby		249	Lugia ‡		349	Feebas		484	Palkia ‡		591	Amoonguss									
099	Kingler		250	Ho-oh ‡		350	Milotic		485	Heatran ‡		592	Frillish									
100	Voltorb		251	Celebi ►[k]		351	Castform		486	Regigigas ‡		593	Jellicent									
101	Electrode					352	Kecleon		487	Giratina ‡		594	Alomomola									
102	Exeggcute					353	Shuppet		488	Cresselia ‡		595	Joltik									

No additional Pokémon (as of 6 November 2022)[update]

This is the thinking that led to articles about every Pokémon that ever evolved.

Wikipedia is also not

Inevitably, there was a backlash as the community encountered so many things that just don't belong in a respectable encyclopedia.

Damian Yerrick, public domain
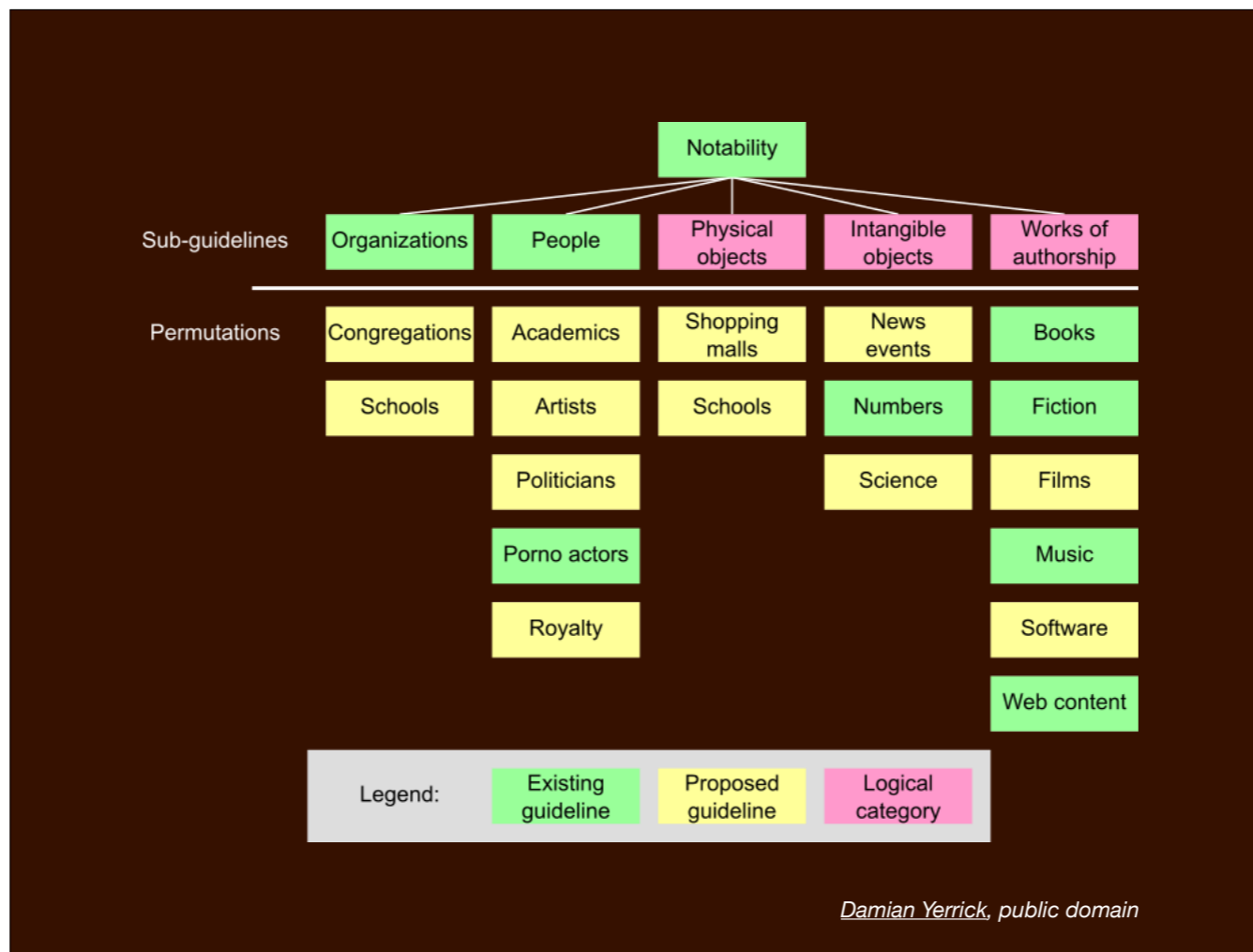
We developed intricate guidelines on what's notable enough to get an article. By now, there's probably a university that offers classes in navigating Wikipedia's notability guidelines.

There has always been a tension between inclusionism and deletionism. Wikipedia editors have to pick a side constantly. Keep or delete? Keep or delete?

Wiktionary

wiktionary.org

These endless debates directly led to some of the first sister projects based on Wikipedia's technology and culture, like Wiktionary, which is today an important resource for linguists.

Yak shaving

This article is being considered for deletion in accordance with Wikipedia's **deletion policy.**

Please share your thoughts on the matter at **this article's entry** on the Articles for Deletion page.

You are welcome to edit this article, but please do not blank this article or remove this notice while the discussion is in progress. For more information, particularly on merging...

Maintenance Use Only: ((su...

How to list a page for deletion (log ...

This article is being considered for deletion for the 2nd time in accordance with Wikipedia's **deletion policy.**

Please share your thoughts on the matter at **this article's entry** on the Articles for Deletion page.

You are welcome to edit this article, but please do not blank this article or remove this notice while the discussion is in progress. For more information, particularly on merging...

This article is being considered for deletion in accordance with Wikipedia's deletion policy.

Please share your thoughts on the matter at this article's **deletion discussion page.**

Feel free to improve the article, but do not remove this notice before the discussion is closed and do not blank the page. For more information, read the guide to deletion.

Find sources: "Yak shaving" – news · newspapers · books · scholar · JSTOR

Wikipedia does not currently have an article on "yak shaving", but our sister project Wiktionary does:

Read the Wiktionary entry on "yak shaving"

You can also:

- Search for *Yak shaving* in Wikipedia to check for alternative titles or spellings.
- Start the *Yak shaving* article, using the Article Wizard if you wish, or add a request for it; but please remember that Wikipedia is not a dictionary.

How did the inclusion debates lead to these projects? Consider the Wikipedia article on yak shaving. This article got nominated for deletion three times because some Wikipedians felt it was just a dictionary entry, and ultimately it was deleted.

Instead, Wiktionary now has an entry on yak shaving with not only the definition but also the etymology, synonyms, translations, and this wonderful illustration.
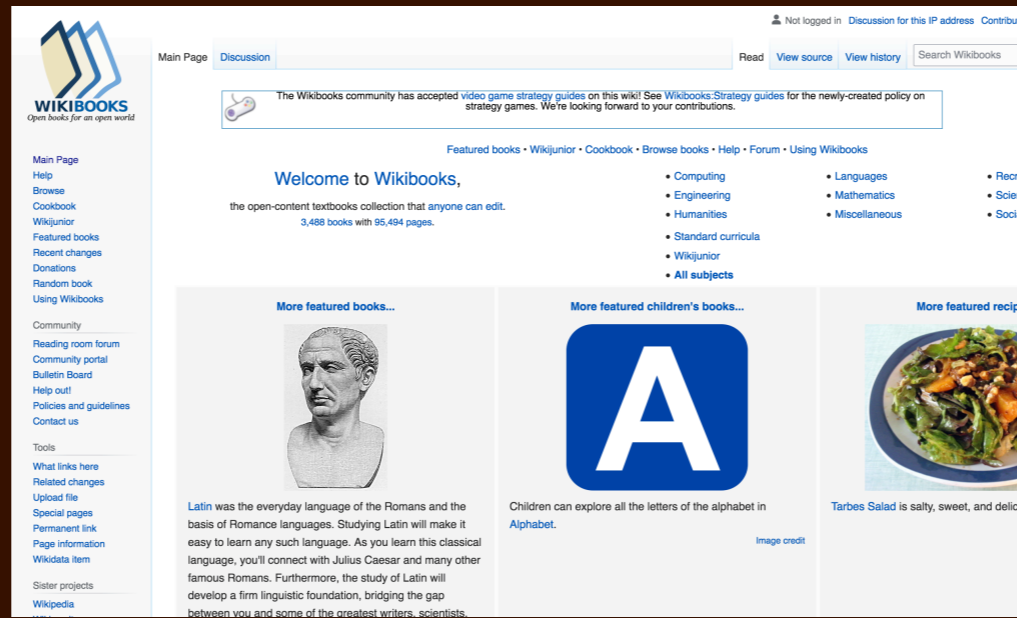
Wikibooks

wikibooks.org

Wikibooks had a similar start. Today, Wikibooks maintains a large collection of textbooks, children's books, and cookbooks. But before this site started, people used to write articles on Wikipedia that were structured like textbooks.

Organic chemistry textbook

"Wikipedia isn't for textbooks, such as the one you've created at <u>Organic textbook</u>. We are an encyclopedia, not a textbook."

–Talk page message to Karl Wick

Karl Wick wrote the beginnings of a textbook on organic chemistry, but another editor quickly admonished them for misunderstanding the site's purpose. So he sent an e-mail to Wikipedia's founders about starting Wikibooks, and the rest is history.

OpenStreetMap

openstreetmap.org

I often describe OpenStreetMap the way that Wikimedians describe Wikipedia's sister projects: it's like Wikipedia but for maps. Yes, OSM has the random parks in Kansas, individual trees in some cases, and if you've ever played Pokémon Go on your phone, you were using OSM data.

Micromapping

Every blade of grass!

Since OSM isn't a paper map, it can afford to micromap intensive detail about everything without worrying about running out of space. In 2011, Harry Wood predicted that someday we may end up mapping individual blades of grass.

Image © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC BY-SA
Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, ODbL

That was hard to believe at the time. Just a few years earlier, OSM's coverage of North America looked like this: a barren wasteland, or a blank canvas, depending on your perspective. It was a Wild West where we could experiment with new approaches to filling in the map.

So we imported a seemingly comprehensive database of roads from the U.S. Census Bureau and it was awesome. It was this basic data that encouraged folks like me to even consider contributing to the map.

But we quickly discovered that quantity does not equal quality. This is a very tame example of what the Census Bureau's TIGER dataset contained. The roads just don't line up at all.

Import guidelines

> ⚠️ Imports and automated edits should only be carried out by those with experience and understanding of the way the OpenStreetMap community creates maps, and only with careful **planning** and **consultation** with the local community.
> See Import/Guidelines and Automated Edits code of conduct for more information. Imports/automated edits which do not follow these guidelines might be reverted!

Based on this and many other imports that people carried out in those days, the OSM community developed a stringent process for approving further imports. A lot of proposed imports never took place. It took a lot of energy.

Sound familiar? It's just one way in which the inclusion/deletion debate plays out in OSM.
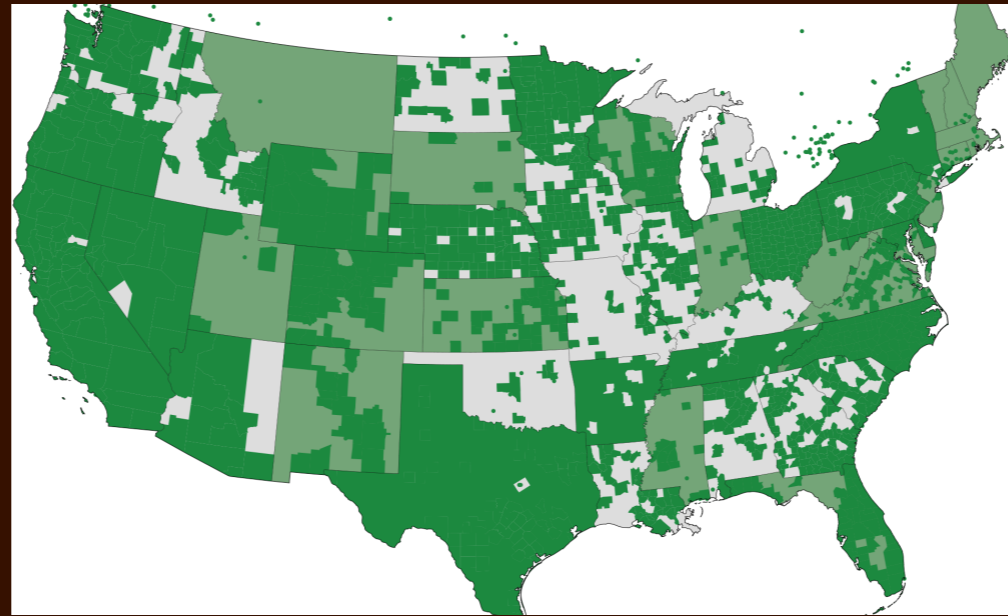
OpenAddresses

openaddresses.io

A parallel project, OpenAddresses, began with a goal of aggregating public address databases that could be used in conjunction with OSM data, but not integrated with OSM. Today it boasts over 578 million addresses worldwide.

OpenAddresses

> "The import process for OSM is tedious, long, and a negative experience that I didn't want to go through with every municipality in the country."
>
> *–Ian Dees*

These addresses would not have been available to the broader ecosystem of software had the project's founders tried to work within OSM's increasingly rigid system.

Aside from automated imports, another point of contention over the years has been historical railroads, including abandoned railroads. Some mappers go through great lengths to discover and map the traces of old railroads that they find in the field. And it's great – we love it when people document the real world so rigorously.

But in a quest for completeness, this also means mapping some things that no longer exist – a big no-no for the project in general.
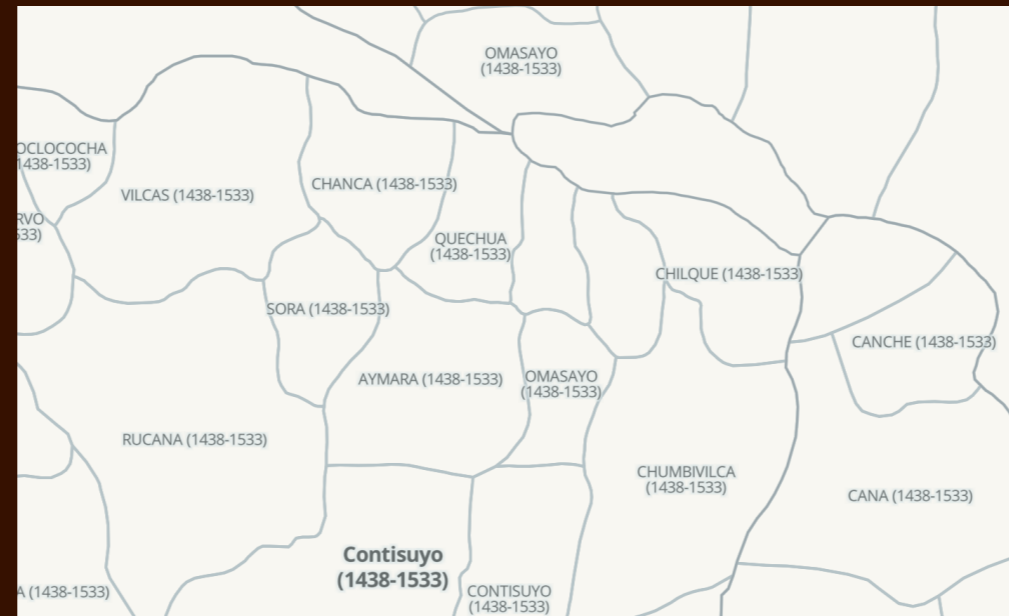
OpenHistoricalMap

openhistoricalmap.org

Enter OpenHistoricalMap. OHM is the OpenStreetMap of history, a map of the world as it was in years past. For example, what you see here is the internal boundaries of the Inca empire.

OpenHistoricalMap

"OpenStreetMap's debates about including or deleting historical data were going on forever, so the obvious way forward was to create OpenHistoricalMap."

–Richard Welty

OHM's founders had essentially the same motivation as OpenAddresses' founders. Debates about whether to include former railroads and other history kept going in circles, escalating into heated debates. A new project could escape this cycle.
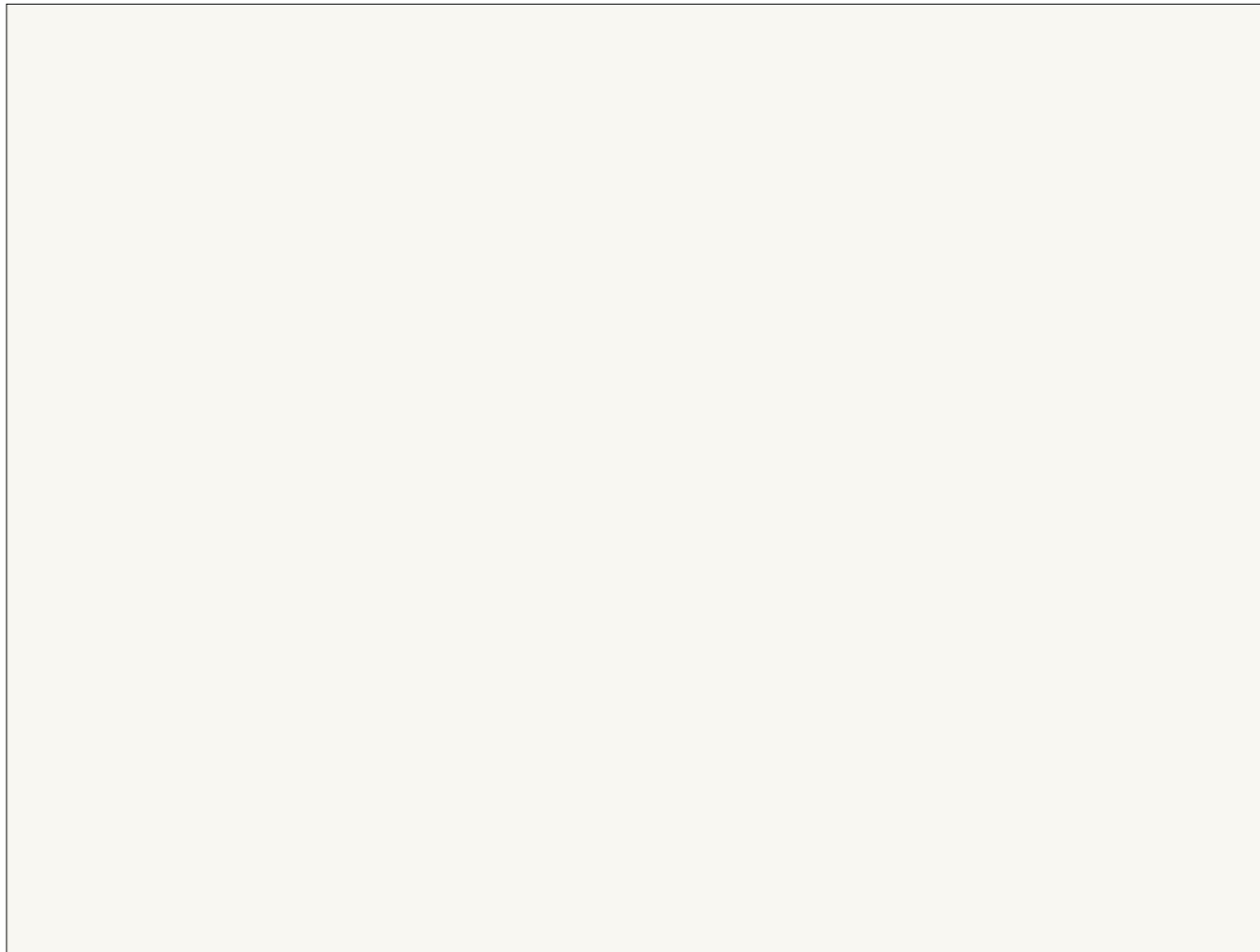
Except it meant starting from scratch, all over again.

Starting over

Starting over is really hard. You all know the feeling of having spent lots of time writing something, only for a computer crash to leave you with a blank page. How could we get people interested in building something so much more ambitious than OSM?
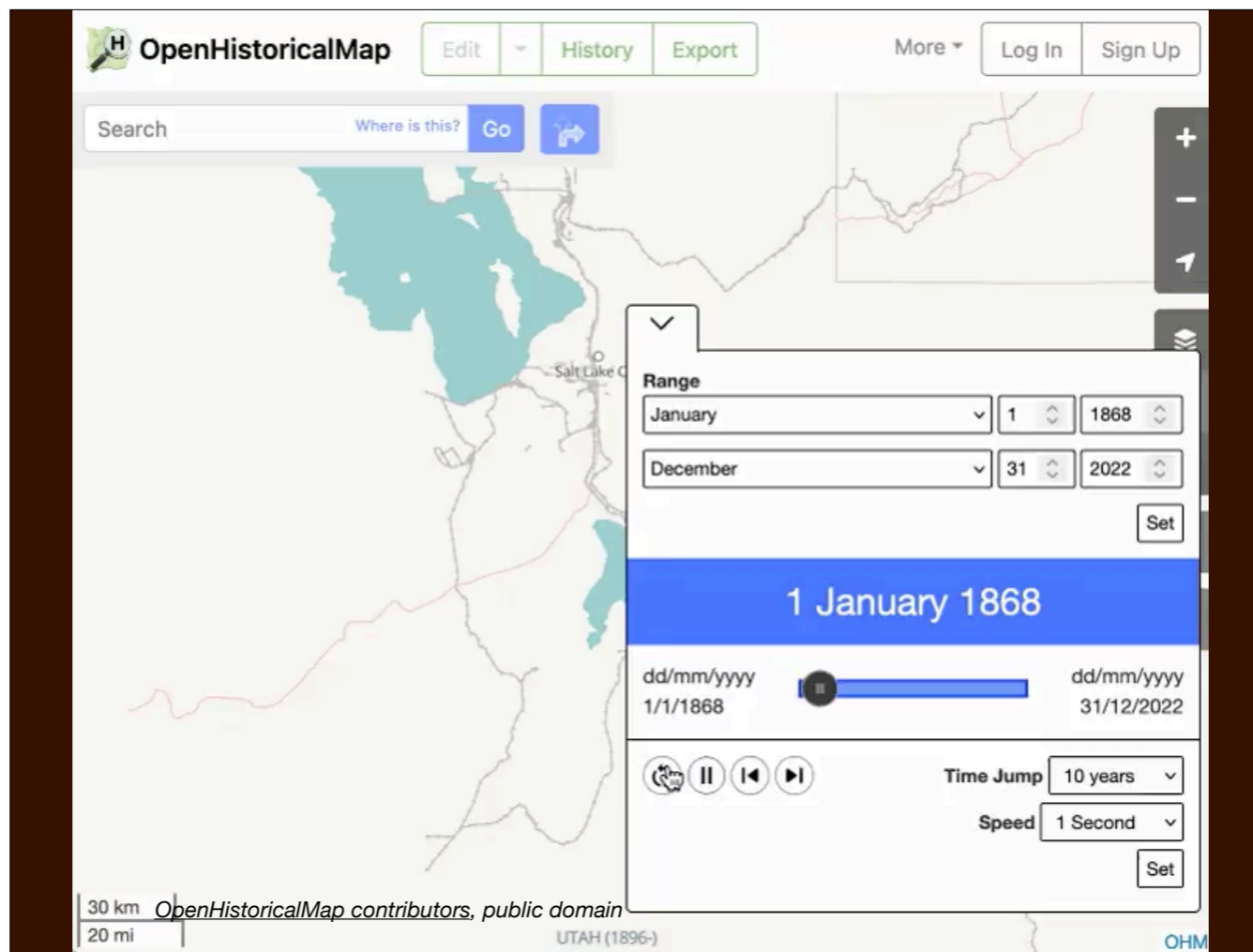
The answer is to focus on the stories that people want to tell the most and work out from there. Here, a university cartography class uploaded comprehensive Utah railroad history to OHM.
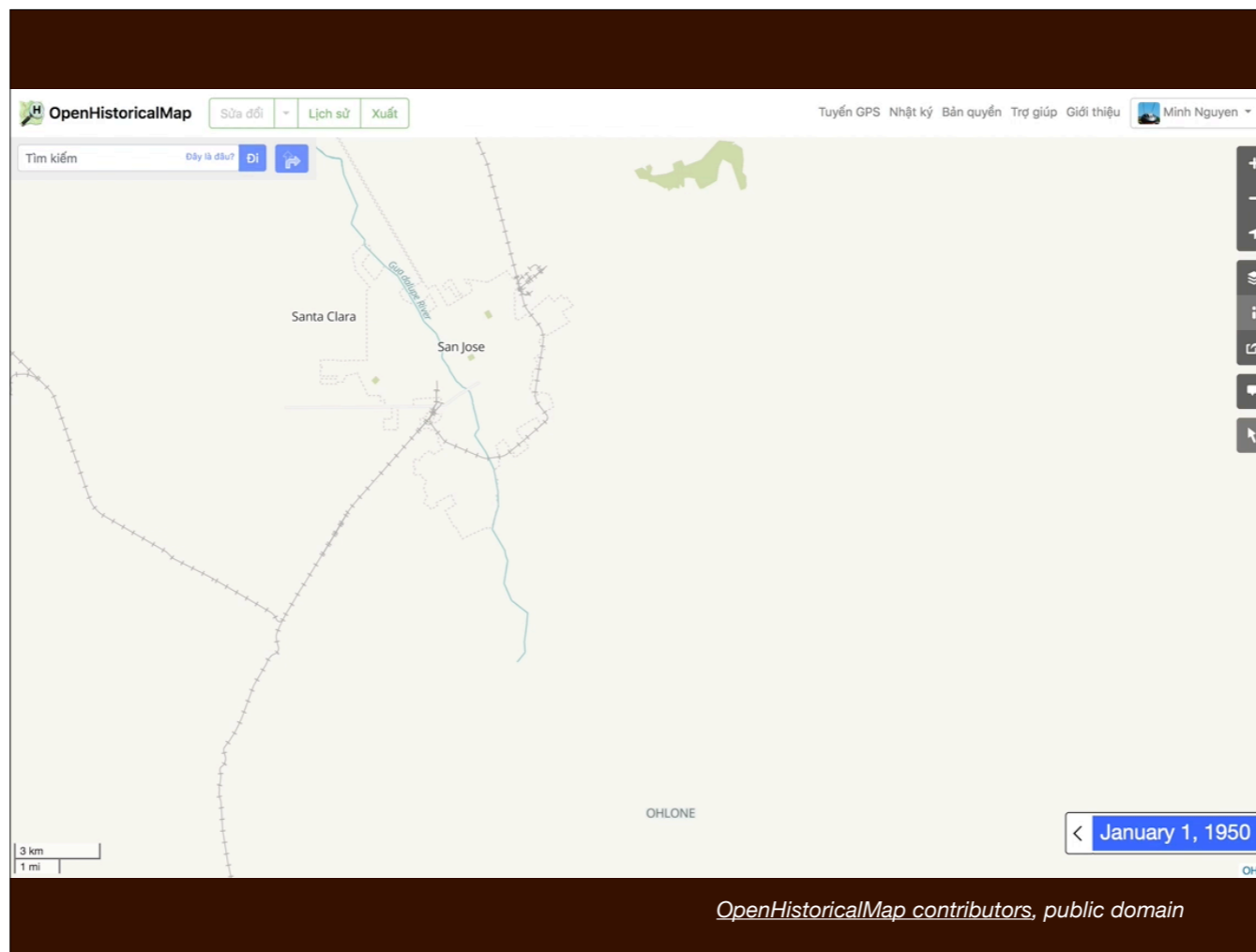
Here, OHM shows San José's intricate, constantly shifting boundaries. Prominent features like roads, rivers, and boundaries help users to orient themselves and establish a framework for mappers to build out from.

Transswiki

Seamless transfers

1. w:Contempt of Parliament → Transwiki:Contempt of Parli
2. w:Contempt of Congress → Transwiki:Contempt of Cong
3. w:Planned obsolescence → Transwiki:Planned obsolesce
4. w:Floating tone → Transwiki:Floating tone — **Internoob** (D
5. w:Debuccalization → Transwiki:Debuccalization — **Intern**
6. w:101 (term) → Transwiki:101 (term) -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 16:
7. w:154CM → Transwiki:154CM -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 16:52, 21
8. w:Above my paygrade → Transwiki:Above my paygrade -
9. w:Bit nibbler → Transwiki:Bit nibbler -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 16:
10. w:Cadet (genealogy) → Transwiki:Cadet (genealogy) -- *H*
11. w:Checkbox compliance → Transwiki:Checkbox complia
12. w:Coquille (engineering) → Transwiki:Coquille (engineerin
13. w:Dej Buh Stesi → Transwiki:Dej Buh Stesi -- *Hersfold***B**
14. w:Devrani → Transwiki:Devrani -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 17:09, 2
15. w:Dojocho → Transwiki:Dojocho -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 17:10,
16. w:Dutty → Transwiki:Dutty -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 17:12, 21 Jur
17. w:Entaxonic → Transwiki:Entaxonic -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 17:1
18. w:Falsism → Transwiki:Falsism -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 17:16, 2
19. w:Favor (activity) → Transwiki:Favor (activity) -- *Hersfold***B**
20. w:FTBFS → Transwiki:FTBFS -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 17:22, 21
21. w:Greaser (derogatory) → Transwiki:Greaser (derogatory)
    June 2011 (UTC) [reply]
22. w:Dynamic Weather → Transwiki:Dynamic Weather -- *Her*
23. w:Guard ship → Transwiki:Guard ship -- *Hersfold***BOT**(t) 2

But before we can get to this future, we need to address the biggest pain points of working between OSM and OHM today. For several reasons, not all of them technical, it's too hard to take something in OSM into OHM. Wikimedia has solved this problem multiple times. In Wiktionary's early years, the transwiki process made it easy to ask a bot to transfer a Wikipedia article to Wiktionary, taking care of tedious steps like preserving revision history. Today, Wikipedia users frequently transfer appropriately licensed images to Commons with just a few clicks.

Hoarding history

Changing tags instead of deleting – temporary workaround, almost unnecessary

contact:instagram	bohemianmoonartt
disused:bulk_purchase	yes
disused:contact:facebook	thesourcezero
disused:contact:instagram	thesourcezero
disused:opening_hours	Su-We 12:00-16:00; Th 12:00-18:00; Fr-Sa 10:00-18:00
disused:opening_hours:url	https://thesourcezero.com/
disused:phone	+1 408-210-2490
disused:reusable_packaging:accept	yes
disused:shop	clothes;chemist
disused:website	https://thesourcezero.com/

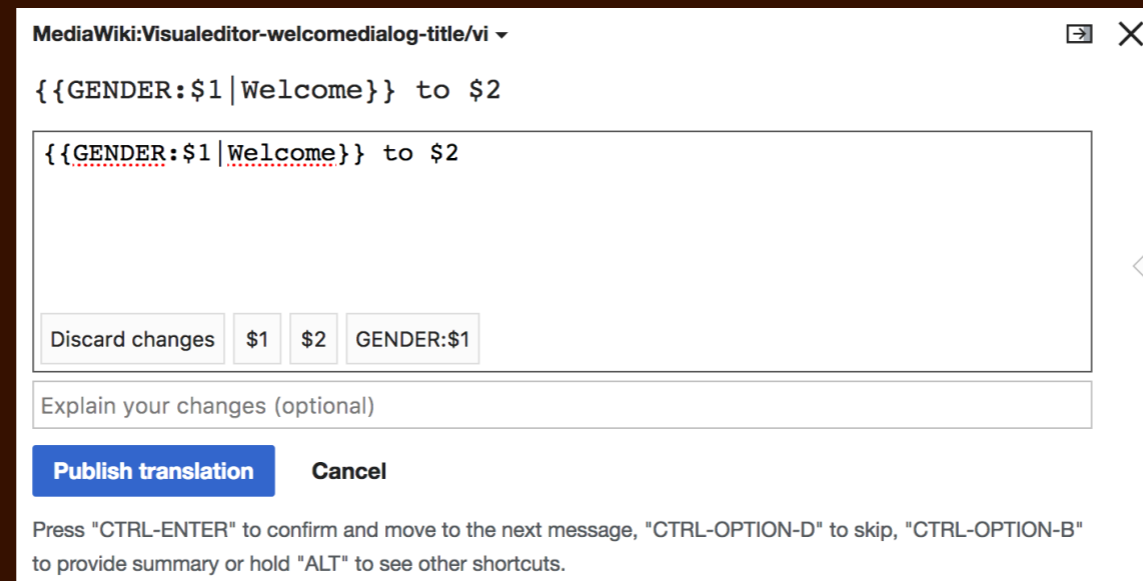*Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, ODbL*

We need a similar workflow for OHM because many of us have been hoarding history in OSM. Before I got into OHM mapping, I often tried to preserve historical data in OSM. If a shop closed, I would change its tags to say what it used to be rather than deleting it outright. But now these qualified tags are cluttering up OSM and have no use there. Many mappers find themselves in this situation but don't have a convenient way to transfer their own work to a new site.
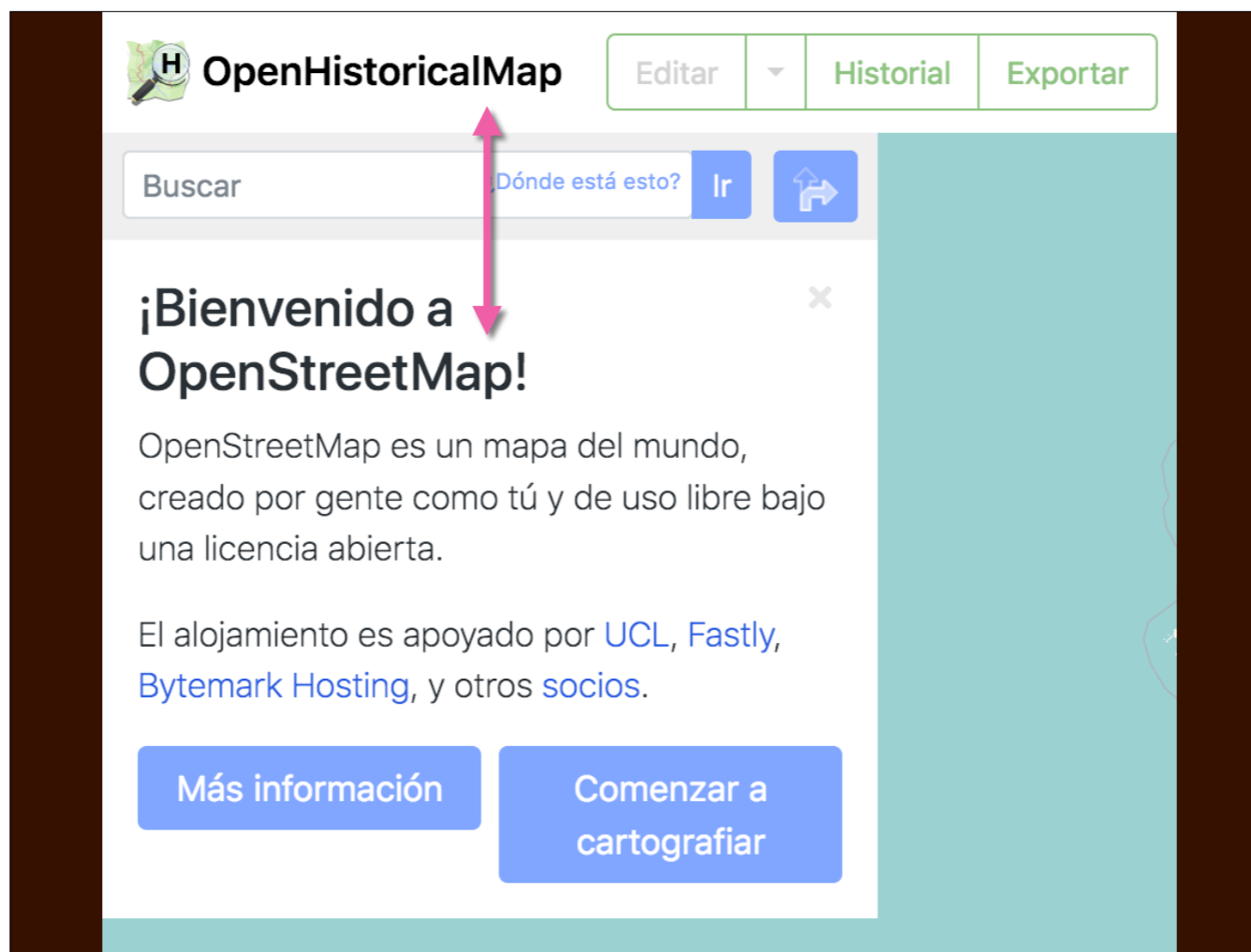
On a technical level, OSM can support OHM by generalizing its core software. OHM runs on forks of each of OSM's software components. These components were never designed for a site other than OSM, no matter how similar to OSM. Until recently, OHM greeted Spanish speakers with "Bienvenido a OpenStreetMap" instead of "Bienvenido a OpenHistoricalMap."

By contrast, MediaWiki developers have gone through great lengths to use generic terminology and insert the site name into dynamic placeholders.

Institutional support

- Shared discussion spaces

- Joint conferences and mapathons

- Formal affiliations (local chapters)

Beyond technical support, what sister projects really need is institutional support. This can take many forms. For example, OSM can open up its usual discussion spaces so that mappers can talk about sister projects on an even playing field. The projects can coordinate through joint conferences, like the one you're attending, and mapathons where mappers can share ideas. Most importantly, there needs to be some kind of formal affiliation, such as through local chapters, so that contributors can trust that the project is serious and will be long-lived.

Everybody wins

- Expands the free culture community

- Turns troublemakers into productive contributors

- Increases relevance in the classroom

- Improves core software to be more versatile

- Transcends old rivalries

If we get this right, then everybody wins. Sister projects expand free culture, creating new forms of content and attracting contributors who never would've been interested in the original project. They can offer an outlet for problematic users to focus on their actual interests instead of bending the rules and generating conflict. New forms of open data can increase our relevance in offline settings like government and academia. As I mentioned, sister projects force the software to accommodate new communities in small and large ways. And if we allow ourselves to be creative, then we can transcend old rivalries. Google Maps may be the one to beat, but they certainly aren't thinking about historical data like we are.
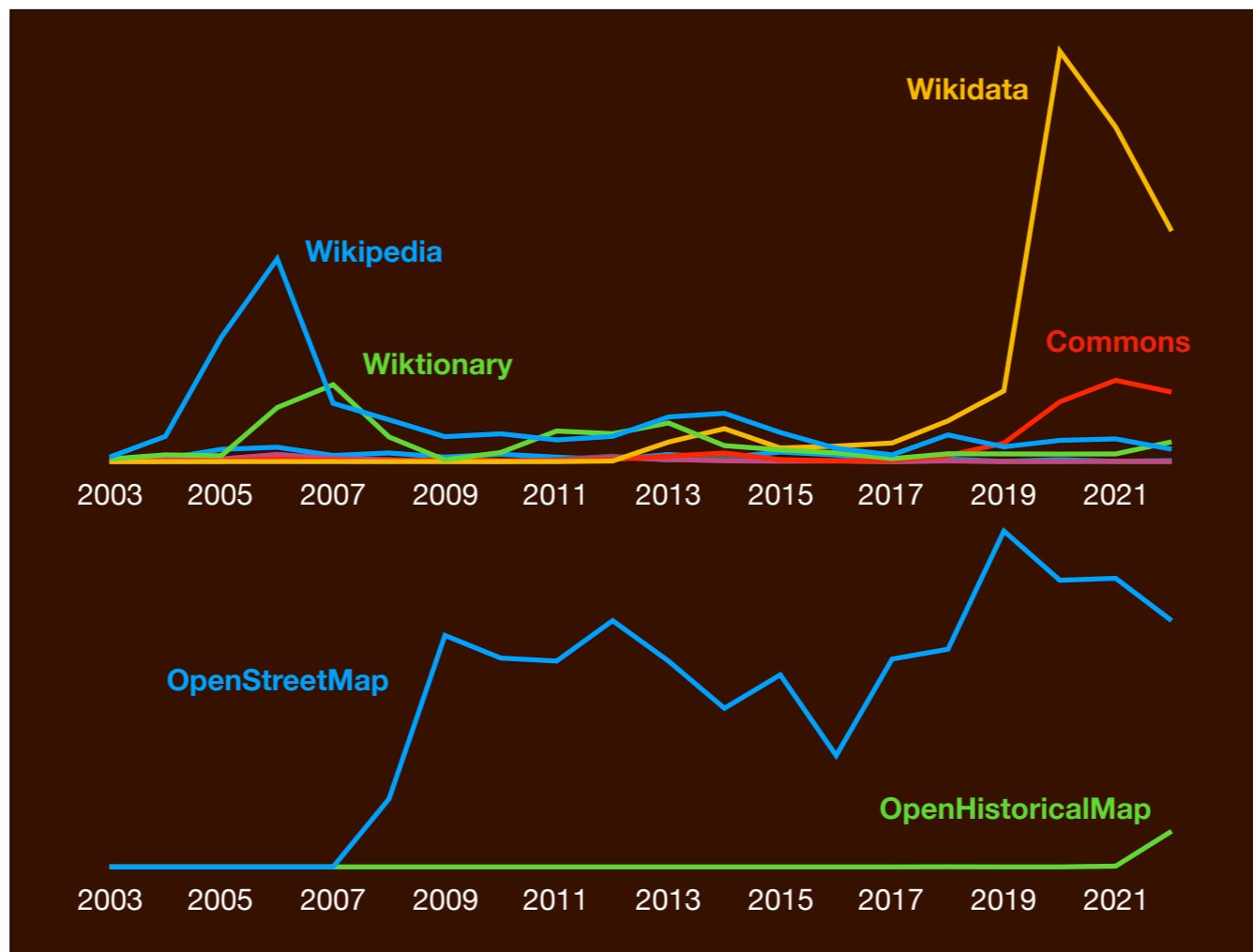
Finally, in the course of putting together this presentation, I had to do a bit of yak shaving myself. I put together this graph of my contributions to various Wikimedia projects and OSM over the years. You can see how OSM really took over my free time once I discovered it. But then look at what happened a few years ago: as it became possible to integrate Wikidata with OSM, OSM gave me so many more reasons to contribute to Wikidata. These projects have reinforced each other in my personal experience. I hope this will be your experience too.
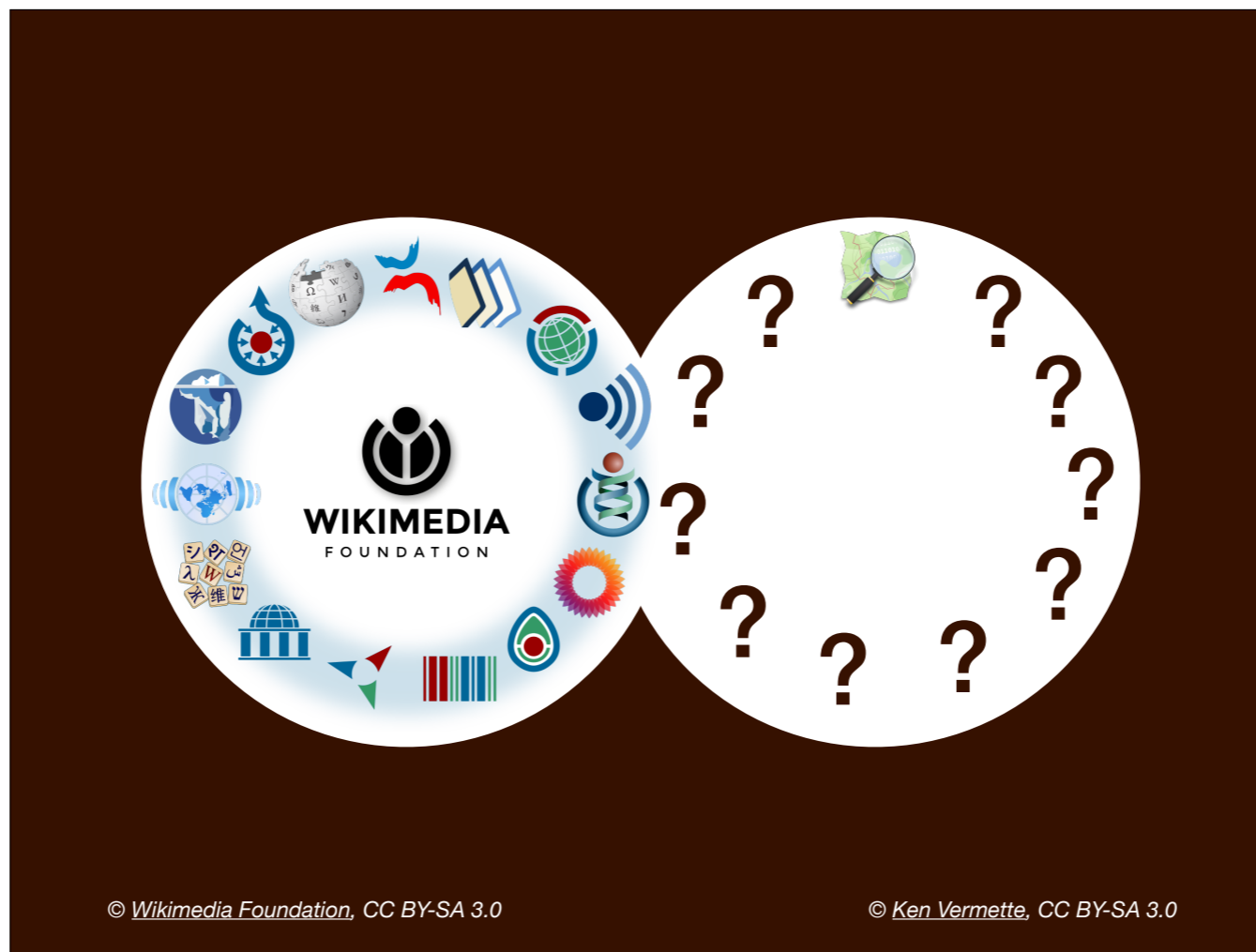
Let's grow this family of projects, and let's design some awesome logos.

Thank you!

- [[User:Mxn]] on Wikipedia

- Q69873076 on Wikidata

- Minh Nguyen on OSM/OHM

- @1ec5 on GitHub

- minh@openstreetmap.us

Thank you so much for attending this conference! If you have any questions about what you've seen here, here's how to contact me. Stick around today to hear more from a great lineup of speakers. Thanks again!