Beyond the meat grinder
building better new editor experiences through research and dialogue
The meat grinder, explained
94% of new editors don’t come back.
The singularity is not near

Work starts on the visual editor

Teahouse launched

Our research starts

First Growth team (E3) formed

"The singularity is not near"

French Wikipedia Help and Welcome project starts

Teahouse launched

First Growth team disbanded

Growth Team II: The Foundation Strikes Back

Our research starts
The context of our research
Goal
Retain more new editors in midsize Wikipedias
Why?
To find out, we learned about new editors from new editors.
We met Lenka in her local public library where she spends a lot of time.
Their motivations and behaviors.
Their engagement with Wikipedia
How the project’s technology and community shaped their experience as contributors
Eleven findings
# Prioritizing findings

Prioritizing findings and the mechanisms that support them are not intuitive or discoverable, making it difficult for new editors to learn and progress.

New editors' greatest challenges are not technical but conceptual. They struggle to learn Wikipedia's policies and how to shape content "the Wikipedia way".

Successful editors tend to build their 'contribution skills' through iterative, progressive learning in safe spaces where the stakes are lower.

New editors go outside Wikipedia for help because they prefer targeted, and sometimes personal, support.

Wikipedia's prominence is both its greatest strength and greatest weakness for attracting new editors.

The complexity and separation of how Wikipedia is made, and the context behind it, makes it difficult to convert new editors to experienced editors.

The way in which feedback is framed is critical to whether it encourages new editors to continue the Wikipedia journey or disempowers and discourages them from further contributions.

People edit Wikipedia for diverse reasons, most of which serve purposes beyond editing Wikipedia.

People must be confident in their content knowledge to edit Wikipedia.

Inspiring, trusted, and well-connected intermediaries are a critical asset in recruiting and supporting new editors.

Many editors see the Korean and Czech Wikipedia as limited, and seamlessly supplement their information with more robust, equivalent content in their own language.
New editors have diverse motivations

Finding 1
**Basic info**

**Name:** Jae-Hee

**Languages spoken:** English, Japanese (fluent), Korean (fluent), English (spoken)

**Education:**
- 27 years old
- Seoul, South Korea
- University of Seoul
- Bachelor of Computer Science

**Technology used:**
- MacBook Pro
- iPad
- iPhone 6S

**Writing comfort level:**
- Low
- High

**Technology comfort level:**
- Low
- High

**Editing journey**
- Translation and editing
- Research and writing
- Collaboration
- Outreach and feedback

**Goals**
- To share her experiences and knowledge on Wikipedia, especially on environmental topics.
- To collaborate with other editors on Wikipedia.

**Challenges**
- Understanding the policies and guidelines of Wikipedia.
-克服编辑时遇到的技术难题。

**Perceptions of Wikipedia**
- Wikipedia provides a platform to share knowledge and contribute to the world.

**Background**

Jae-Hee is a computer science student at the University of Seoul. She is fluent in English, Japanese, and Korean. She is a member of the women's group in her school and enjoys writing and-tech-related activities. She is interested in environmental issues and contributes to the Wikipedia community by editing articles related to the environment.

**Tech habits**

She uses social media platforms, particularly Twitter, to share her writing and experiences, and to follow other environmental groups.

**Narrative**

Jae-Hee edited a few articles on environmental topics, such as the impact of technology on the environment. She found the process to be rewarding, as it allowed her to learn new things and contribute to the community.

**Experience Goals**
- To share her experiences and knowledge on Wikipedia, especially on environmental topics.
- To collaborate with other editors on Wikipedia.

**End Goals**
- To raise awareness on environmental issues.
- To collaborate with other environmentalists.

**Narrative**

Jae-Hee is a member of a women's group in her school and enjoys writing and-tech-related activities. She is interested in environmental issues and contributes to the Wikipedia community by editing articles related to the environment.

**Tech habits**

She uses social media platforms, particularly Twitter, to share her writing and experiences, and to follow other environmental groups.

**Perceptions of Wikipedia**

Jae-Hee finds Wikipedia a valuable resource for sharing knowledge and contributing to the world. She is happy with the way it works and enjoys the feedback she receives from other editors.

**Editing journey**

Jae-Hee started editing Wikipedia articles on environmental topics, such as the impact of technology on the environment. She found the process to be rewarding, as it allowed her to learn new things and contribute to the community.

**Experience Goals**
- To share her experiences and knowledge on Wikipedia, especially on environmental topics.
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**Narrative**

Jae-Hee is a member of a women's group in her school and enjoys writing and-tech-related activities. She is interested in environmental issues and contributes to the Wikipedia community by editing articles related to the environment.

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She uses social media platforms, particularly Twitter, to share her writing and experiences, and to follow other environmental groups.

**Perceptions of Wikipedia**

Jae-Hee finds Wikipedia a valuable resource for sharing knowledge and contributing to the world. She is happy with the way it works and enjoys the feedback she receives from other editors.
Knowledge Sharer
Yanko

AGE: 17 years old
LOCATION: Olomouc, Czech Republic
OCCUPATION: Student

EDUCATION: High School
LANGUAGES: Czech (fluent), German (conversational), Slovak (basic), English (basic)

Technology comfort level
Low
High

Writing comfort level
Low
High

**ATTITUDE**

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**CHOOSE**

Notices the edit button while reading. Clicks it, realizes anyone can edit, explores interface, but doesn’t try to edit.

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**TRY**

Years later, sees outdated information in an article on a German town and wants to fix it because he has visited there.

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**INTERACT**

Anonymously edits with visual editor and finds the process easy.

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Registers and makes edits of increasing difficulty on science and history topics he knows well.

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A section of an article he edited is tagged as not sourced properly, but he doesn’t know what that means.

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From the tag, discovers the talk page, where another editor directs him to the citation policy. Learns how to correct his edit from the policy.

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Continues to edit. Someone modifies a table he created, and he’s happy that they improved it.

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Becomes more involved in the editing community, participating in discussions and correcting other editors’ contributions.
New editors... are confused about how Wikipedia works and separated from its community.

Finding 5
New editors... struggle with Wikipedia’s policies.

Finding 8
Goal
Retain more new editors in midsize Wikipedias

Strategic focuses

Conceptual understanding of Wikipedia
findings #5 and #8
New editors... benefit from progressive learning.

Finding 7
New editors... have trouble discovering and easily using editing tools.

Finding 9
Goal
Retain more new editors in midsize Wikipedias

Strategic focuses
Conceptual understanding of Wikipedia findings #5 and #8
Progressive pathways to editing findings #7 and #9
What we recommend
Many ideas
Goal
Retain more new editors in midsize Wikipedias

Strategic focuses

Conceptual understanding of Wikipedia
findings #5 and #8

Progressive pathways to editing
findings #7 and #9

Tactics

Human to human help and mentorship

In-context help

Task recommendations
What you can do
Help us build better help
Read and share the report
Try methods like these
Listen and learn!
Questions?
Appendix
Wikipedia’s prominence is both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness for attracting new editors.
Inspiring, trusted, and well connected intermediaries are a critical asset in recruiting and supporting new editors.
Many editors see Korean/Czech Wikipedia as limited, and seamlessly supplement its information with other sources.
People must be confident in their content knowledge to edit Wikipedia.
New editors go outside Wikipedia for help because they prefer targeted and sometimes personal, support.

Finding 10
New editors... are strongly affected by the tone of the feedback they receive.

Finding 11