

Brief background

- Working at the Commonwealth of Learning, an international agency for development of open education
- Have been watching development of Wikipedia since inception. We do lots of collaboration, especially software development, together with Wikipedia
- Collaborated on the wiki-to-print project with Wikipedia, aiming at getting free knowledge in printable format to the developing world

Vision for next 5-10 years

- Overall project is making good progress right now
- Increasing voice of developing world is a strategic objective for the foundation. It's not an easy challenge. Problem right now: Wikipedia is largely the industrial world's voice. Need to improve cost of connectivity, basic skills required, to connect the developing world.
- Should improve quality standard so that it can be used for formal education in the developing world
- Another real strategic challenge for the foundation: the life after wikis? Wikimedia should be prepared to keep up with the shifting technologies

Role and priorities of the Wikimedia Foundation

- Focus on strategic priorities, not operations
 - Operations: e.g. processes for developing policies on how communities function
 - Real strategic issues: what Wikipedia want to be when it grows up
- The structure of the Wikimedia strategic planning process sounds right: continuous self-selection to action – community does what they should do, some initiatives get filtered out, the task forces will wrestle with the most important strategic issues. Foundation's role in this process may be to decide whether the issues raised are strategic or not. E.g. Do they cause a big impact? They should also help task force create tools to evaluate impact & feasibility.
- Operational discussions are also important. But they should happen somewhere else. What we want from the larger community discussion are the strategic priorities. Beauty of the process is it doesn't have to be 100% right
- Outside the strategic planning processes, the Foundation should engage in the roles of both raising money, ensuring the projects are up and running AND extending reach of audience
 - It's not an either/or scenario. Raising money, there is a relationship between what the community does and how to raise money. Right now a large portion of funds comes from the community with small donations. It's a bit dangerous to move from that model. To be fair to the foundation, where it is today is an order of magnitude further ahead than it was 2 years ago. It's a growth

Challenges & risks on governance

- Separation between governance & operations. Current Board of Trustees is very dedicated & skilled. However, it's difficult to get the right expertise for this kind of big project. That's also a potential risk for the project. What's the boundary between governance, community & democracy?
- One solution may be: have a community council with 25 people, certain percent elected with expertise in community issues. Have an independent legal entity, an NPO to take care of strategy, fundraising related issues
- Wayne's "pet hobby": the issue of how do we plan for innovation? It's difficult to innovate in large community/organizations. How to create space for innovation, acknowledge failures?

Voice of developing world

- It is critical for Wikimedia to be part of the developing world
- Wikipedia aims at providing free knowledge in whatever format. Right now it tends to be exclusive
- Bigger challenge is neo-colonialism. Current content is largely developed by the developed world. It is a one way channel of exporting information into the developing world
 - E.g. Wiki-to-print, using mobile tech, can be done anyway, and it's just question of money. It's necessary as part of operations. However from strategic planning point of view, priority should be on having voice from all parts of world, especially not missing those from the developing world
 - Even though right now contributors from developing world are mostly elite, and there is a huge problem on connectivity. However we should view this as a demand & supply question. If there is significant demand on digital content in the developing world, it can potentially push policy makers on improving connectivity
 - Wiki education project to run free training all over the world?
- Wikimedia project is about community developing. Big operational priority of the foundation should be advocacy: explaining where the projects want to go and let developing world take ownership of knowledge
 - Currently there is huge ignorance about the Wikimedia projects and how these projects work. The fact that it's on top list of Google search results doesn't mean people know it's a project with specific goals – it's actually developed by people like myself who care to distribute knowledge. More public outreach efforts are needed to tell people these are the strengths of the projects, and here's how they can help

Quality vs. perception

- Quality is a process. The quality dimension is always going to be a challenge of the perception.
- Level of peer review required in Wikipedia environment is even greater than typical academic article. We know it works. It's a matter of perception.

- Quality issue is somehow also a barrier to participation. Wikipedia has matured as a community. But for newcomers, it's a daunting community and has all kinds of barriers. You need to be a reasonably experienced member to know all the processes which serve quality
- To prioritize, it makes more sense to improve perception of quality than actual quality itself. The peer review, citations processes are virtually identical to academics processes, except there's no requirement of qualifications of contributors in the Wikipedia world.
- Emancipation of education took off after WWII. Formal education is essentially training people in the knowledge generation process.

Manifestation of systemic bias of Wikipedia

- Most significant problem is ownership of knowledge, especially indigenous knowledge. Need to make contributions to society and developing content that can make a difference in people's life, relevant to life, utilitarian. Need to recognize that culture, knowledge and processes across culture are very different
 - E.g. What people find visually appealing is different across world/culture; farmers in Southeast Asia are most interested in agriculture knowledge, etc

Future of technology

- Core problem is that we don't know what will be radical technological changes that may change the way things are done
- Technology doesn't get interesting until it is old. Wikipedia is a great example: Wiki was not originally developed for mass collaboration/encyclopedia.
- Tech team at foundation has a good idea of how to best handle the current tech issues
- Wikipedia's strength is not knowledge producer, it's the community. The community will work against the discourse if it happens. Traditional forecasting methods for planning are not particularly helpful if fundamental changes in technology are imminent. Scenario planning would be a better methodology for this challenge.

Freedom

- People participating in the community are not traditionally part of open community, but they will defend freedom
- Majority of editors are contributing through non-free software. This could be a sign of a gradual maturation of free culture – free everything, not just free source. But this can also be a risk, because people don't know what this freedom actually is. This is the core set of beliefs to the movement: Freedom – deciding to do or not to do something. This is the nucleus of the engine we need to continue to protect. But also need to recognize that there might be fundamental changes to technology