

Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia

Ma Hongbao

Department of Medicine, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, USA. hongbao@msu.edu

Abstract: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. It is a stage for all the people in the World to show their opinions/ideas and read other's opinions/ideas freely. Not like most of other publications that claim copyrights and keep readers from free using, Wikipedia claims that "the Wikipedia content can be copied, modified, and redistributed *so long as* the new version grants the same freedoms to others and acknowledges the authors of the Wikipedia article used (a direct link back to the article satisfies our author credit requirement)". [Nature and Science. 2006;4(2):79-91].

Keywords: copyrights; encyclopedia; knowledge; Wikipedia

1. Introduction

By this article, I am introducing the Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (Wikipedia Foundation, Inc., Wikimedia, 2006). It is a stage for all the people in the World to show their opinions/ideas and read other's opinions/ideas freely. Not like most of other publications that claim copyrights and keep readers from free using, Wikipedia claims that "the Wikipedia content can be copied, modified, and redistributed *so long as* the new version grants the same freedoms to others and acknowledges the authors of the Wikipedia article used (a direct link back to the article satisfies our


author credit requirement)". Is this very benefit to the our human society? Yes, it is! It is good stage for people to show their opinions/works and to get knowledge, and to exchange information.

2. General Information

The following is the general information described by the Wikipedia's official website (Wikipedia Foundation, Inc., Wikimedia, 2006).

2.1 Wikipedia

Wikipedia is the free encyclopedia.

 As a result of recent [vandalism](#), or to stop banned editors from editing, **editing of this page by new or unregistered users is [currently disabled](#)**. Changes can be discussed on the [talk page](#), or you may [request unprotection](#).



Website name	Wikipedia
Commercial?	No
Type of site	Online encyclopedia
Registration	Optional
Owner	Wikimedia Foundation
Created by	Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger

Wikipedia (IPA: [ˌwɪkiˈpiːdi.ə] or [ˌwiki-]) is an [international Web-based free-content encyclopedia](#). It exists as a [wiki](#), a type of [website](#) that allows visitors to edit its content; the word *Wikipedia* itself is a [portmanteau](#) of *wiki* and *encyclopedia*. Wikipedia is written collaboratively by [volunteers](#), allowing most articles to be changed by anyone with access to a computer, [web browser](#) and [Internet](#) connection.

The project began on [January 15, 2001](#) as a complement to the expert-written (and now defunct) [Nupedia](#), and is now operated by the [non-profit Wikimedia Foundation](#). Wikipedia has more than 3,800,000 articles in many languages, including more than 1,100,000 in the [English-language version](#). Since its inception, Wikipedia has steadily risen in popularity^[1] and has spawned several sister projects.

Wikipedia's most notable style policy is that editors are required to uphold a "neutral point of view", under which notable perspectives are summarized without an attempt to determine an [objective](#) truth.

Wikipedia's co-founder, [Jimmy Wales](#), has called Wikipedia "an effort to create and distribute a

multilingual free encyclopedia of the highest possible quality to every single person on the planet in their own language."^[2] However, there has been controversy over Wikipedia's reliability and accuracy, with the site receiving criticism for its susceptibility to vandalism, uneven quality and inconsistency, [systemic bias](#), and preference of [consensus](#) or [popularity](#) over [credentials](#). Nevertheless, its free distribution, constant updates, diverse and detailed coverage, and numerous multilingual versions have made it one of the most-used reference resources available on the Internet.

There are over 200 language editions of Wikipedia, around 130 of which are active. Fourteen editions have more than 50,000 articles each: [English](#) (the original), [German](#), [French](#), [Polish](#), [Japanese](#), [Dutch](#), [Italian](#), [Swedish](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#), [Russian](#), [Chinese](#), [Norwegian](#) and [Finnish](#). Its German-language edition has been distributed on [DVD-ROM](#), and there are also proposals for an English DVD or paper edition. Many of its other editions are [mirrored](#) or have been [forked](#) by other websites.

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2.2 Characteristics



Wikipedia logo.

2.3 The Wikipedia logo.

Wikipedia's slogan is "the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit," regardless of qualifications. It is developed using a type of [software](#) called a "[wiki](#)", a term originally used for the [WikiWikiWeb](#) and derived from the [Hawaiian](#) *wiki wiki*, which means "quick". Jimmy Wales intends for Wikipedia to ultimately achieve a "[Britannica](#) or better" level of quality and be published in print.

Although several other [encyclopedia projects](#) exist or have existed on the [Internet](#), none have achieved Wikipedia's size or popularity. Traditional multilingual editorial policies and article ownership are sometimes used, such as the expert-written [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#), the now-defunct [Nupedia](#), and the more casual [h2g2](#) and [Everything2](#). Projects such as Wikipedia, [Susning.nu](#), [Enciclopedia Libre](#) and [WikiZnatic](#) are other wikis in which articles are developed by numerous authors, and there is no formal process of review. Wikipedia has become the largest such encyclopedic wiki by article and word count. Unlike many encyclopedias, it has licensed its content under the [GNU Free Documentation License](#).

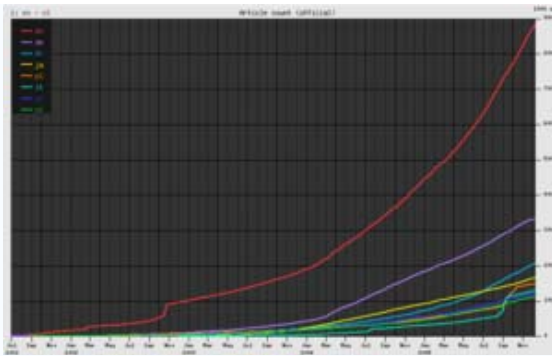
Wikipedia has a set of policies identifying types of information appropriate for inclusion. These policies are often cited in disputes over whether particular content should be added, revised, transferred to a sister project, or removed.

2.4 Free content

The [GNU Free Documentation License](#) (GFDL), the license through which Wikipedia's articles are made available, is one of many "[copyleft](#)" [copyright](#) licenses that permit the redistribution, creation of [derivative works](#), and commercial use of content, provided that its authors are attributed and this content remains available under the GFDL. When an author contributes original material to the project, the copyright over it is retained by them, but they agree to make the work available under the GFDL. Material on Wikipedia may thus be distributed multilingually to, or incorporated from, resources which also use this license.

Wikipedia's content has been mirrored and forked by hundreds of resources from database dumps. Although all text is available under the GFDL, a significant percentage of Wikipedia's images and sounds are not free. Items such as [corporate logos](#), song samples, or copyrighted news photos are used with a claim of [fair use](#).^[3] Wikipedia content has also been used in academic studies, books, conferences, and court cases, albeit much more rarely. For example, the [Parliament of Canada](#) website refers to Wikipedia's article on [same-sex marriage](#) in the "further reading" list of [Civil Marriage Act](#).^[4] Some Wikipedia users, or *Wikipedians*, maintain (noncomprehensive) lists of such uses.^[5]

2.5 Language editions



Wikipedia's article count has grown quickly in several of the major language editions.

Wikipedia encompasses 132 "active" language editions (ones with 100+ articles) as of April 2006.^[6] Its five largest editions are, in descending order, [English](#), [German](#), [French](#), [Polish](#) and [Japanese](#). In total, Wikipedia contains 229 language editions of varying states, with a combined 3.5 million articles.^[7]

Language editions operate independently of one another. Editions are not bound to the content of other language editions or direct translations of each other, nor are articles on the same subject required to be translations of each other. Automated translation of articles is explicitly disallowed, though multi-lingual editors of sufficient fluency are encouraged to translate articles by hand. The various language editions *are* held to global policies such as "neutral point of view", though they may diverge on subtler points of policy and practice. Articles and images are shared between Wikipedia editions, the former through "[InterWiki](#)" links and pages to request translations, and the latter through the [Wikimedia Commons](#) repository. Translated articles represent only a small portion of articles in any edition.^[8]

The following is a list of the large editions, sorted by number of articles as of [March 1, 2006](#). (The article

count, however, is a limited metric for comparing the editions. For instance, in some Wikipedia versions nearly half of the articles are short articles created



An example of Wikipedia's range in language editions: Wikipedia in [Hebrew](#). [1]

1. [English](#) (1,068,250)
2. [German](#) (363,360)
3. [French](#) (248,399)
4. [Polish](#) (217,656)
5. [Japanese](#) (187,379)
6. [Dutch](#) (150,461)
7. [Italian](#) (141,234)
8. [Swedish](#) (141,010)
9. [Portuguese](#) (118,697)
10. [Spanish](#) (101,024)
11. [Russian](#) (61,264)
12. [Chinese](#) (58,469)
13. [Norwegian Bokmål](#) (52,392)
14. [Finnish](#) (51,250)
15. [Esperanto](#) (40,968)

2.6 Editing



Editors keep track of changes to articles by checking the difference between two revisions of a page, displayed here in red.

Almost all visitors may edit Wikipedia's content, and registered users can create new articles and have

their changes instantly displayed. Wikipedia is built on the expectation that collaboration among users will improve articles over time, in much the same way that [open-source software](#) develops. Some of Wikipedia's editors have explained its editing process as a "[socially Darwinian evolutionary process](#)",^[1] but this description is not accepted by most Wikipedians.

Although many users take advantage of Wikipedia's [openness](#) to add nonsense to the encyclopedia, most deliberately disruptive edits and comments are quickly found and deleted by other editors. This real-time, collaborative model allow editors to rapidly update existing topics as they develop and to introduce new ones as they arise. However, this collaboration also sometimes leads to "[edit wars](#)" and prolonged disputes when editors do not agree.^[10]



The "recent changes" page shows the newest edits to the English Wikipedia. This page is often watched by users who revert vandalism. There is also a live recent changes [IRC channel](#), [#en.wikipedia](#).

Articles are always subject to editing, unless the article is protected for a short time due to the aforementioned vandalism or revert wars; Wikipedia does not declare any of its articles to be "complete" or "finished". The authors of articles need not have any expertise or formal qualifications in the subjects which they edit, and users are warned that their contributions may be "edited mercilessly and redistributed at will" by anyone who wishes to do so. Its articles are not controlled by any particular user or editorial group; decisions on the content and editorial policies of Wikipedia are instead made largely through [consensus decision-making](#) and, occasionally, by vote. [Jimmy Wales](#) retains final judgement on Wikipedia policies and user guidelines.^[11]

Regular users often maintain a "watchlist" of articles of interest to them, so that they can easily keep tabs on all recent changes to those articles, including new updates, discussions, and vandalism. Most past edits to Wikipedia articles also remain viewable after

the fact, and are stored on "edit history" pages sorted chronologically, making it possible to see former versions of any page at any time. The only exceptions are the entire histories of articles which have been deleted, and many individual edits which contain [libelous](#) statements, copyright violations, and other content which could incur legal liability or be otherwise detrimental to Wikipedia; these edits may only be viewed by Wikipedia administrators.

2.7 History

Main article: [History of Wikipedia](#)

Wikipedia originally developed out of another encyclopedia project, Nupedia.

Wikipedia began as a complementary project for [Nupedia](#), a free online encyclopedia project whose articles were written by experts through a formal process. Nupedia was founded on [March 9, 2000](#) under the ownership of [Bomis, Inc](#), a Web portal company. Its principal figures were [Jimmy Wales](#), Bomis CEO, and [Larry Sanger](#), editor-in-chief for Nupedia and later Wikipedia. Nupedia was described by Sanger as differing from existing encyclopedias in being [open content](#), in not having size limitations, as it was on the [Internet](#), and in being free of bias, due to its public nature and potentially broad base of contributors.^[12] Nupedia had a seven-step review process by appointed subject-area experts, but later came to be viewed as too slow for producing a limited number of articles. Funded by Bomis, there were initial plans to recoup its investment by the use of advertisements.^[12] It was initially licensed under its own Nupedia Open Content License, switching to the GNU Free Documentation License prior to Wikipedia's founding at the urging of [Richard Stallman](#).

On [January 10, 2001](#), Larry Sanger proposed on the Nupedia mailing list to create a wiki alongside Nupedia. Under the subject "Let's make a wiki", he wrote:

No, this is not an indecent proposal. It's an idea to add a little feature to Nupedia. Jimmy Wales thinks that many people might find the idea objectionable, but I think not. (...) As to Nupedia's use of a wiki, this is the ULTIMATE "open" and simple format for developing content. We have occasionally bandied about ideas for simpler, more open projects

to either replace or supplement Nupedia. It seems to me wikis can be implemented practically instantly, need very little maintenance, and in general are very low-risk. They're also a potentially great source for content. So there's little downside, as far as I can see.^[13]

Wikipedia was formally launched on [January 15, 2001](#), as a single English-language edition at <http://www.wikipedia.com>, and announced by Sanger on the Nupedia mailing list.^[14] It had been, from January 10, a feature of Nupedia.com in which the public could write articles that could be incorporated into Nupedia after review. It was relaunched off-site after Nupedia's Advisory Board of subject experts disapproved of its production model.^[15] Wikipedia thereafter operated as a standalone project without control from Nupedia. Its policy of "neutral point-of-view" was codified in its initial months, though it is similar to Nupedia's earlier "nonbias" policy. There were otherwise few rules initially. Wikipedia gained early contributors from Nupedia, [Slashdot](#) postings, and [search engine](#) indexing. It grew to approximately 20,000 articles, and 18 language editions, by the end of its first year. It had 26 language editions by the end of 2002, 46 by the end of 2003, and 161 by the end of 2004.^[16] Nupedia and Wikipedia coexisted until the former's servers went down, permanently, in 2003, and its text was incorporated into Wikipedia.



Wikipedia's English edition on [March 30, 2001](#), two and a half months after its founding.

Wales and Sanger attribute the concept of using a wiki to [Ward Cunningham's](#) WikiWikiWeb or [Portland Pattern Repository](#). Wales mentioned that he heard the concept first from Jeremy Rosenfeld, an employee of Bomis who showed him the same wiki, in December

2000,^[17] but it was after Sanger heard of its existence in January 2001 from Ben Kovitz, a regular at the wiki,^[15] that he proposed the creation of a wiki for Nupedia to Wales and Wikipedia's history started. Under a similar concept of free content, though not wiki-based production, the [GNUpedia](#) project existed alongside Nupedia early in its history. It subsequently became inactive, and its creator, [free-software](#) figure [Richard Stallman](#), lent his support to Wikipedia.^[18]

Citing fears of commercial advertising and lack of control in a perceived English-centric Wikipedia, users of the [Spanish Wikipedia](#) forked from Wikipedia to create the [Enciclopedia Libre](#) in February 2002. Later that year, Wales announced that Wikipedia would not display [advertisements](#), and its website was moved to wikipedia.org. Various other projects have since forked from Wikipedia for editorial reasons, such as [Wikinfo](#), which abandoned "neutral point-of-view" in favor of multiple complementary articles written from a "sympathetic point-of-view".

The Wikimedia Foundation was created from Wikipedia and Nupedia on [June 20, 2003](#).^[19] Wikipedia and its sister projects thereafter operated under this [non-profit organization](#). Wikipedia's first sister project, "In Memoriam: September 11 Wiki", had been created in October 2002 to detail the [September 11, 2001 attacks](#); [Wiktionary](#), a dictionary project, was launched in December 2002; [Wikiquote](#), a collection of quotations, a week after Wikimedia launched; and [Wikibooks](#), a collection of collaboratively-written free books, the next month. Wikimedia has since started a number of other projects, detailed below.

Wikipedia has traditionally measured its status by article count. In its first two years, it grew at a few hundred or fewer new articles per day; by 2004, this had accelerated to a total of 1,000 to 3,000 per day (counting all editions). The English Wikipedia reached its 100,000-article milestone on [January 22, 2003](#)^[20]. Wikipedia reached its one millionth article, among the 105 language editions that existed at the time, on [September 20, 2004](#),^[21] while the English edition alone reached its 500,000th on [March 18, 2005](#).^[22] This figure had doubled less than a year later, with the millionth article in the English edition being created on [March 1, 2006](#)^[23]; meanwhile, the millionth user registration had been made just 2 days before.

The Wikimedia Foundation applied to the [United States Patent and Trademark Office](#) to [trademark Wikipedia®](#) on [September 17, 2004](#). The mark was granted registration status on [January 10, 2006](#). Trademark protection was accorded by [Japan](#) on [December 16, 2004](#) and in the [European Union](#) on [January 20, 2005](#). Technically a [service mark](#), the scope of the mark is for: "Provision of [information](#) in the field of general encyclopedic knowledge via the [Internet](#)".

There are currently plans to license the usage of the Wikipedia trademark for some products, such as books or DVDs.^[24] The [German Wikipedia](#) will be printed in its entirety by Directmedia, in 100 volumes of 800 pages each, beginning in October 2006, and publishing will finish in 2010.

2.8 Software and hardware



Wikipedia receives over 2000 page requests per second. More than 100 servers have been set up to handle the traffic.

Wikipedia is run by [MediaWiki free software](#) on a cluster of dedicated servers located in [Florida](#) and four other locations around the world. MediaWiki is Phase III of the program's software. Originally, Wikipedia ran on [UseModWiki](#) by [Clifford Adams](#) (Phase I). At first it required [CamelCase](#) for links; later it was also possible to use double brackets. Wikipedia began running on a [PHP wiki engine](#) with a [MySQL database](#) in January 2002. This software, Phase II, was written specifically for the Wikipedia project by [Magnus Manske](#). Several rounds of modifications were made to improve performance in response to increased demand. Ultimately, the software was rewritten again, this time by Lee Daniel Crocker. Instituted in July 2002, this Phase III software was called MediaWiki. It was licensed under the [GNU General Public License](#) and used by all Wikimedia projects.



Some Wikimedia servers.

Wikipedia was served from a single server until 2003, when the server setup was expanded into a distributed [multitier architecture](#). In January 2005, the project ran on 39 dedicated servers located in Florida. This configuration included a single master database server running [MySQL](#), multiple slave database servers, 21 web servers running the [Apache](#) software, and seven [Squid cache](#) servers. By September 2005, its server cluster had grown to around 100 servers in four locations around the world.

Page requests are processed by first passing to a front-end layer of [Squid caching](#) servers. Requests that cannot be served from the Squid cache are sent to two load-balancing servers running the [Perlbal](#) software, which then pass the request to one of the Apache web servers for page-rendering from the database. The web servers serve pages as requested, performing page rendering for all the Wikipedias. To increase speed further, rendered pages for anonymous users are cached in a filesystem until invalidated, allowing page rendering to be skipped entirely for most common page accesses. Wikimedia has begun building a global network of [caching servers](#) with the addition of three such servers in [France](#). A new Dutch cluster is also online now. In spite of all this, Wikipedia page load times remain quite variable. The ongoing status of Wikipedia's website is posted by users at a [status page](#) on [OpenFacts](#).

2.9 Funding

Wikipedia is funded through the [Wikimedia Foundation](#). Its 4th Quarter 2005 costs were \$321,000 with hardware making up almost 60% of the budget.^[25]

[Bomis](#), an online advertising company that hosts mostly adult-oriented web-rings, played a significant part in the early development of Wikipedia and the network itself.

2.10 Evaluations

Further information: [Criticism of Wikipedia](#)

Wikipedia has become increasingly controversial as it has gained prominence and popularity, with many critics alleging that Wikipedia's open nature makes it unauthoritative and unreliable, that it exhibits severe [systemic bias](#) and inconsistency, and that the [group dynamics](#) of its community are hindering its goals. Wikipedia has also been criticized for its use of dubious sources, its disregard for credentials, and its vulnerability to vandalism and special interest groups. Critics of Wikipedia include Wikipedia editors themselves, ex-editors, representatives of other encyclopedias, and even subjects of articles.

2.11 Reliability

Wikipedia has been both praised and criticized for being open to editing by anyone. Proponents contend that open editing improves quality over time, while critics allege that non-expert editing undermines quality.

Wikipedia has been criticized for a perceived lack of reliability, comprehensiveness, and authority. It is considered to have no or limited utility as a [reference work](#) among many [librarians](#), [academics](#), and the [editors](#) of more formally written encyclopedias. Many university lecturers discourage their students from using any encyclopedia as a reference in academic work, preferring primary sources instead.^[26] A website called Wikipedia Watch has been created to denounce Wikipedia as having "...a massive, unearned influence on what passes for reliable information."^[27]

Some argue that allowing anyone to edit makes Wikipedia an unreliable work. Wikipedia contains no formal [peer review](#) process for fact-checking, and the editors themselves may not be well-versed in the topics they write about. In a 2004 interview with *The Guardian*, librarian Philip Bradley said that he would not use Wikipedia and is "not aware of a single librarian who would. The main problem is the lack of authority. With printed publications, the publishers have to ensure that their data are reliable, as their livelihood depends on it. But with something like this, all that goes out the window" (Waldman, 2004). Similarly, *Encyclopædia Britannica's* executive editor, Ted Pappas, was quoted in *The Guardian* as saying: "The premise of Wikipedia is that continuous improvement will lead to perfection. That premise is completely unproven."^[28] On [October 24, 2005](#), *The Guardian* published an article "[Can you trust Wikipedia?](#)" where a group of experts critically reviewed entries for their fields. Discussing Wikipedia as an academic source, [Danah Boyd](#) said in 2005 that "[i]t will never be an encyclopedia, but it will contain extensive knowledge that is quite valuable for different purposes".^[29]

Academic circles have not been exclusively dismissive of Wikipedia as a reference. Wikipedia articles have been referenced in "enhanced perspectives" provided on-line in *Science*. The first of these perspectives to provide a hyperlink to Wikipedia was "A White Collar Protein Senses Blue Light" (Linden, 2002), and dozens of enhanced perspectives have provided such links since then. However, these links are offered as background sources for the reader, not as sources used by the writer, and the "enhanced perspectives" are not intended to serve as reference material themselves.

Some critics have suggested that Wikipedia cannot justifiably be called an "encyclopedia", a term which (it is claimed) implies a high degree of reliability and authority that Wikipedia, due to its open editorial

policies, may not be able to maintain. However, Wikipedia does meet all the criteria for the basic definition of the word *encyclopedia*.

In a 2004 piece called "The Faith-Based Encyclopedia," former *Britannica* editor [Robert McHenry](#) criticized the wiki approach, writing,

[h]owever closely a Wikipedia article may at some point in its life attain to reliability, it is forever open to the uninformed or semiliterate meddler... The user who visits Wikipedia to learn about some subject, to confirm some matter of fact, is rather in the position of a visitor to a public restroom. It may be obviously dirty, so that he knows to exercise great care, or it may seem fairly clean, so that he may be lulled into a false sense of security. What he certainly does not know is who has used the facilities before him.^[30]

In response to this criticism, proposals have been made to provide various forms of provenance for material in Wikipedia articles; see for example [Wikipedia:Provenance](#). The idea is to provide *source provenance* on each interval of text in an article and *temporal provenance* as to its vintage. In this way a reader can know "who has used the facilities before him" and how long the community has had to process the information in an article to provide calibration on the "sense of security". However, these proposals for provenance are quite controversial. Aaron Krowne wrote a rebuttal article in which he criticized McHenry's methods, and labeled them "FUD," the marketing technique of "fear, uncertainty, and doubt."^[31]

Former [Nupedia](#) editor-in-chief [Larry Sanger](#) criticized Wikipedia in late 2004 for having, according to Sanger, an "anti-elitist" philosophy of active contempt for expertise.^[32]

The English-language website also suffers from frequent timeouts, server errors and occasional [downtime](#) due to heavy user traffic. These problems have had a negative impact on Wikipedia's desired image as a fast and reliable source of information.

At the end of [2005](#), [controversy erupted](#) after journalist [John Seigenthaler Sr.](#) found that his biography had been written largely as a hoax about Seigenthaler. This led to the decision to restrict the ability to start articles to registered users.

2.12 Coverage



"Be Bold" has become an unofficial slogan of Wikipedia.

Wikipedia's editing process assumes that exposing an article to many users will result in accuracy. Referencing [Linus' law](#) of open-source development, Sanger stated earlier: "Given enough eyeballs, all errors are shallow."^[33] Technology figure [Joi Ito](#) wrote on Wikipedia's authority, "[a]lthough it depends a bit on the field, the question is whether something is more likely to be true coming from a source whose resume sounds authoritative or a source that has been viewed by hundreds of thousands of people (with the ability to comment) and has survived."^[34] Conversely, in an informal test of Wikipedia's ability to detect misinformation, its author remarked that its process "isn't really a fact-checking mechanism so much as a voting mechanism", and that material which did not appear "blatantly false" may be accepted as true.^[35]

Wikipedia has been accused of deficiencies in comprehensiveness because of its voluntary nature, and of reflecting the systemic biases of its contributors. *Encyclopædia Britannica* editor-in-chief Dale Hoiberg has argued that "people write of things they're interested in, and so many subjects don't get covered; and news events get covered in great detail. The entry on [Hurricane Frances](#) was five times the length of that on [Chinese art](#), and the entry on [Coronation Street](#) was twice as long as the article on [Tony Blair](#)."^[28] (As of December 2005, this is no longer the case.) Former Nupedia editor-in-chief Larry Sanger stated in 2004, "when it comes to relatively specialized topics (outside of the interests of most of the contributors), the project's credibility is very uneven."^[32]

Wikipedia has been praised for making it possible for articles to be updated or created in response to current events. For example, the then-new article on the [2004 Indian Ocean earthquake](#) on its English edition was cited often by the press shortly after the incident. Its editors have also argued that, as a website, Wikipedia is

able to include articles on a greater number of subjects than print encyclopedias may.^[36]

[Microsoft Encarta](#) has started to solicit comments from readers in attempt to improve the accuracy and timeliness of its encyclopedia. [Encarta Feedback](#) allows any user to propose revisions for review by their staff.^[37]

The German computing magazine *c't* performed a comparison of [Brockhaus Multimedial](#), [Microsoft Encarta](#), and Wikipedia in October 2004: Experts evaluated 66 articles in various fields. In overall score, Wikipedia was rated 3.6 out of 5 points ("B-"), *Brockhaus Premium* 3.3, and *Microsoft Encarta* 3.1.^[38] In an analysis of online encyclopedias, [Indiana University](#) professors Emigh and Herring wrote that "Wikipedia improves on traditional information sources, especially for the content areas in which it is strong, such as technology and current events."^[39] The [journal Nature](#) reported in 2005 that [science](#) articles in Wikipedia were comparable in accuracy to those in *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Wikipedia had an average of four mistakes per article; Britannica contained three. Of eight "serious errors" found — including misinterpretations of important concepts — four came from each source.^[40] On March 24, 2006, Britannica provided a rebuttal labeling the study "fatally flawed".^[41]

2.13 Community

The [Wikipedia community](#) consists of users who are proportionally few, but highly active. Emigh and Herring argue that "a few active users, when acting in concert with established norms within an open editing system, can achieve ultimate control over the content produced within the system, literally erasing diversity, controversy, and inconsistency, and homogenizing contributors' voices."^[42] Editors on [Wikinfo](#), a [fork](#) of Wikipedia, similarly argue that new or controversial editors to Wikipedia are often unjustly labeled "[trolls](#)" or "problem users" and blocked from editing.^[43] Its community has also been criticized for responding to complaints regarding an article's quality by advising the complainer to fix the article.^[44]

In a page on researching with Wikipedia, its authors argue that Wikipedia is valuable for being a social community. That is, authors can be asked to defend or clarify their work, and disputes are readily seen.^[45] Wikipedia editions also often contain [reference desks](#) in which the community answers questions.

2.14 Awards

Wikipedia won two major awards in May 2004^[46]. The first was a Golden Nica for Digital Communities, awarded by [Prix Ars Electronica](#); this came with a 10,000 [euro](#) grant and an invitation to present at the PAE Cyberarts Festival in [Austria](#) later that year. The

second was a Judges' [Webby award](#) for the "community" category. Wikipedia was also nominated for a "Best Practices" Webby. In September 2004, the [Japanese Wikipedia](#) was awarded a Web Creation Award from the Japan Advertisers Association. This award, normally given to individuals for great contributions to the Web in Japanese, was accepted by a long-standing contributor on behalf of the project. Wikipedia has received plaudits from sources including [BBC News](#), [Washington Post](#), [The Economist](#), [Newsweek](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [Science](#), [The Guardian](#), [Chicago Sun-Times](#), [The Times](#) (London), [Toronto Star](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [The Financial Times](#), [Time Magazine](#), [Irish Times](#), [Reader's Digest](#) and [The Daily Telegraph](#).

2.15 Authors

During December 2005, Wikipedia had about 27,000 users who made at least five edits that month; 17,000 of these active users worked on the English edition.^[47] A more active group of about 4,000 users made more than 100 edits per month, over half of these users having worked in the English edition. According to Wikimedia, one-quarter of Wikipedia's traffic comes from users without accounts, who are less likely to be editors.^[48]

Maintenance tasks are performed by a group of volunteer developers, stewards, bureaucrats, and administrators, which number in the hundreds. Administrators are the largest such group, privileged with the ability to prevent articles from being edited, delete articles, or block users from editing in accordance with community policy. Many users have been temporarily or permanently blocked from editing Wikipedia. Vandalism or the minor infraction of policies may result in a warning or temporary block, while long-term or permanent blocks for prolonged and serious infractions are given by [Jimmy Wales](#) or, on its English edition, an elected Arbitration Committee.

Former Nupedia editor-in-chief [Larry Sanger](#) has said that having the [GFDL](#) license as a "guarantee of freedom is a strong motivation to work on a free encyclopedia."^[49] In a study of Wikipedia as a community, economics professor [Andrea Ciffolilli](#) argued that the low [transaction costs](#) of participating in [wiki](#) software create a catalyst for collaborative development, and that a "creative construction" approach encourages participation.^[50] Wikipedia has been viewed as a social experiment in [anarchy](#), [democracy](#), or [communism](#). Its founder has replied that it is not intended as one, though that is a consequence.^[51] Critics of Wikipedia have also viewed it as an [oligarchy](#) which is controlled primarily by its [administrators](#), [stewards](#), and [bureaucrats](#), or simply by a small number of its contributors. [Daniel Brandt](#) of [Wikipedia Watch](#) has referred to [Jimbo Wales](#) as the "[dictator](#)" of Wikipedia; however, most [Wikipedia users](#)

either do not consider Wales to be a dictator, or consider him to be one who rarely gives non-negotiable orders.^[2]

2.16 In popular culture

Wikipedia is parodied at several websites, including [Encyclopedia Dramatica](#) and [Uncyclopedia](#). [Webster's Dictionary](#) has been parodied as **Webster's Wikipedia** on the [flash clip](#) *Masters of Doom: The Animated Series*.

The [May 7, 2005 FoxTrot comic strip](#) showed one character [appending](#) his older sister to unflattering Wikipedia articles. In a similar joke, the web comic [Penny Arcade](#) also [satirized](#) Wikipedia with a [comic strip](#) depicting [Skeleton](#) vandalizing the [He-Man](#) article.

The following the copyrights information from official website of Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. Wikipedia Copyrights, 2006).

3. Copyrights

3.1 Wikipedia: Copyrights (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

The license [Wikipedia](#) uses grants free access to our content in the same sense as [free software](#) is licensed freely. This principle is known as [copyleft](#). That is to say, Wikipedia content can be copied, modified, and redistributed *so long as* the new version grants the same freedoms to others and acknowledges the authors of the Wikipedia article used (a direct link back to the article satisfies our author credit requirement). Wikipedia articles therefore will remain free forever and can be used by anybody subject to certain restrictions, most of which serve to ensure that freedom.

To fulfill the above goals, the text contained in Wikipedia is licensed to the public under the [GNU Free Documentation License](#) (GFDL). The full text of this license is at [Wikipedia:Text of the GNU Free Documentation License](#).

Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2 or any later version published by the [Free Software Foundation](#); with no Invariant Sections, with no Front-Cover Texts, and with no Back-Cover Texts.

A copy of the license is included in the section entitled "[GNU Free Documentation License](#)".

Content on Wikipedia is covered by [disclaimers](#).

The English text of the GFDL is the only legally binding document; what follows is our interpretation of the GFDL: the rights and obligations of users and contributors.

IMPORTANT: If you want to use content from Wikipedia, first read the [Users' rights and obligations](#) section. You should then read the [GNU Free Documentation License](#).

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3.2 Users' rights and obligations

If you want to use Wikipedia materials in your own books/articles/web sites or other publications, you can do so, but you have to follow the GFDL. If you are simply duplicating the Wikipedia article, you must follow [section two](#) of the GFDL on *verbatim copying*, as discussed at [Wikipedia:Verbatim copying](#).

If you create a derivative version by changing or adding content, this entails the following:

- your materials in turn have to be licensed under GFDL,

- you must acknowledge the authorship of the article (section 4B), and

- you must provide access to the "transparent copy" of the material (section 4J). (The "transparent copy" of a Wikipedia article is any of a number of formats available from us, including the wiki text, the html web pages, xml feed, etc.)

You may be able to partially fulfill the latter two obligations by providing a conspicuous direct link back to the Wikipedia article hosted on this website. You also need to provide access to a transparent copy of the new text. However, please note that the Wikimedia Foundation makes no guarantee to retain authorship information and a transparent copy of articles. Therefore, you are encouraged to provide this authorship information and a transparent copy with your derived works.

3.3 Example notice

An example notice, for an article that uses the Wikipedia article [Metasyntactic variable](#) might read as follows:

```
This article is licensed under the <a href="http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html">GNU Free Documentation License</a>. It uses material from the <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metasyntactic_variable">Wikipedia article "Metasyntactic variable"</a>. ("Metasyntactic variable" and the Wikipedia URL must of course be substituted accordingly.)
```

Alternatively you can distribute your copy of "Metasyntactic variable" along with a copy of the GFDL (as explained in the text) and list at least five (or all if fewer than five) principal authors on the title page (or top of the document). The external [Page History Stats](#) tool can help you identify the principal authors.

3.4 Fair use materials and special requirements

All original Wikipedia text is distributed under the [GFDL](#). Occasionally, Wikipedia articles may include images, sounds, or text quotes used under the U.S. Copyright law "[fair use](#)" doctrine. It is preferred that these be obtained under the most free ([libre](#)) license (such as the GFDL or public domain) practical. In cases where no such images/sounds are currently available,

then fair use images are acceptable (until such time as free images become available).

In *Wikipedia*, such "fair use" material should be identified as from an external source (on the image description page, or history page, as appropriate). This also leads to possible restrictions on the use, outside of Wikipedia, of such "fair use" content retrieved from Wikipedia: this "fair use" content does not fall under the GFDL license as such, but under the "fair use" (or similar/different) regulations in the country where the media are retrieved.

Wikipedia does use some text under licenses that are compatible with the GFDL but may require additional terms that we do not require for original Wikipedia text (such as including Invariant Sections, Front-Cover Texts, or Back-Cover Texts). When wanting to contribute such texts that include Invariant Sections or Cover Texts to Wikipedia, see [Introducing invariant sections or cover texts in wikipedia](#) below.

3.5 Image guidelines

Images and photographs, like written works, are subject to [copyright](#). Someone owns them unless they have been explicitly placed in the [public domain](#). Images on the internet need to be licensed directly from the copyright holder or someone able to license on their behalf. In some cases, [fair use](#) guidelines may allow a photograph to be used.

3.6 Tagging

Image description pages can be tagged with a special tag to indicate the legal status of the images, as described at [Wikipedia:Image copyright tags](#). It is currently unclear what should happen in cases where the same image has been uploaded more than once with different respective copyright statements.

3.7 U.S. government photographs

Works produced by civilian and military employees of the [United States](#) federal government in the scope of their employment are public domain by statute. However, note that, despite popular misconception, the U.S. Federal Government can own copyrights that are assigned to it by others (for example, works created by contractors). Be careful, however: not all images on .mil and .gov websites are public domain. Among other reasons, the site may be using commercial [stock photography](#) owned by others. It may be useful to check the privacy and security notice of the website, but only with an email to the webmaster can you be confident that an image is in the public domain. It should also be noted that governments outside the U.S. often do claim copyright over works produced by their employees (for example, [Crown Copyright](#) in the [United Kingdom](#)). Also, most state and local governments in the United States do not place their work into the public domain

and do in fact own the copyright to their work. Please be careful to check ownership information before copying.

3.8 UK Crown Copyright

The UK [Office of Public Sector Information](#), formerly [HMSO](#), has told us:

[Crown copyright](#) protection in published material lasts for fifty years from the end of the year in which the material was first published. Therefore [for example] material published [fifty-one years ago], and any Crown copyright material published before that date, would now be out of copyright, and may be freely reproduced throughout the world. [1]

3.9 Celebrity photographs

This is based on the image guidelines at [IMDB](#), so it especially applies to celebrity photographs, but also can apply to other pictures. Legitimate photographs generally come from three different places **with permission**.

The studios, producers, magazine publisher, or media outlet that originally shot the photograph.

Agencies that represent the photographers who shot the photos or the photographer themselves (the latter especially for amateur photographs)

Submissions from the celebrity himself or herself or a legal representative of the celebrity.

Comments on copyright laws by country

3.10 Russia: copyright exemptions

According to the Russian copyright law of 1993 ([Федеральный закон от 9.07.1993 № 5351-1](#)), the following items are not subject to copyrights:

Official documents (laws, court decisions, other texts of legislative, administrative or judicial character);

State symbols and tokens (flags, coats of arms, [orders](#), banknotes and other state symbols and tokens);

Folk creative works;

Reports about events and facts, of informative character.

Russian copyrights generally expire in 70 years after the death of the author. Items by authors who died prior to 1953 are public domain, because the expiration term was 50 years before 2004, and this change of the term wasn't retroactive, according to [Law 72-FZ, 2004 \(in Russian\)](#), article 2, part 3).

If an item was not published during author's life, its copyright expire in 70 years after its first lawful publication (if the item wasn't moved into [PD](#) before). This gives maximum term for unpublished or posthumously published works of 140 (if the author died after 1953) or 120 years (if the author died before 1953, AND his work was published before 2003).

If an item was published anonymously or pseudonymously, and its author remains unknown, its

copyright expires in 70 years after its first lawful publication. If the author is discovered, usual rule applies.

PD status of a work in Russia can differ with that in the US, where Wikipedia servers are located.

3.11 Algeria

Article 9 of Algeria's [Ordonnance N°97-10 du 27 Chaoual 1417 correspondant au 6 mars 1997 relative aux droits d'auteur et aux droits voisins](#), states that: "Works of the State made licitly accessible to the public may be freely used for non-profit purposes, subject to respect for the integrity of the work and indication of its source. By "works of the State", in this article, are meant works produced and published by the various organs of the State, local communities, or public establishments of an administrative character." (original is in French.) In short, they are available for non-commercial use - which is deprecated on Wikipedia.

3.12 Iran

Although there has been no treaty between Iran and the United States regarding copyright protection, according to [Jimbo Wales](#), Wikipedia contributors should respect Iranian copyright law as best they can, the same as they do for other countries around the world. [\[2\]](#)

3.13 Contributors' rights and obligations

If you contribute material to Wikipedia, you thereby license it to the public under the GFDL (with no invariant sections, front-cover texts, or back-cover texts). In order to contribute, you therefore must be in a position to grant this license, which means that either

you own the copyright to the material, for instance because you produced it yourself, or

you acquired the material from a source that allows the licensing under GFDL, for instance because the material is in the [public domain](#) or is itself published under GFDL.

In the first case, you retain copyright to your materials. You can later republish and relicense them in any way you like. However, you can never retract the GFDL license for the versions you placed here: that material will remain under GFDL forever.

In the second case, if you incorporate external GFDL materials, as a requirement of the GFDL, you need to acknowledge the authorship and provide a link back to the network location of the original copy.

Introducing invariant sections or cover texts in wikipedia

Under Wikipedia's current copyright conditions, and with the current facilities of the MediaWiki software, it is not possible to place external GFDL materials that contain invariant sections or cover texts in Wikipedia, unless all of the following applies,

You are the copyright holder of these external GFDL materials (or: you have the explicit, i.e. written, permission of the copyright holder to do what follows);

The length and nature of these invariant sections and cover texts does not exceed what can be placed in an [edit summary](#);

You are satisfied that these invariant sections and cover texts are not listed elsewhere than in the "page history" of the page where these external materials are placed;

You are satisfied that further copies of Wikipedia content are distributed under the standard GFDL application of "with no Invariant Sections, with no Front-Cover Texts, and with no Back-Cover Texts" (in other words, for the copies derived from wikipedia, you agree that these parts of the text contributed by you will no longer be considered as "invariant sections" or "cover texts" in the GFDL sense);

The original invariant sections and/or cover texts are contained in the edit summary of the edit with which you introduce the thus GFDLed materials in wikipedia (so, that if "permanent deletion" would be applied to that edit, both the thus GFDLed material and its invariant sections and cover texts are jointly deleted).

Seen the stringent conditions above, it is very desirable to replace GFDL texts with invariant sections (or with cover texts) by original content without invariant sections (or cover texts) whenever possible.

Using copyrighted work from others

If you use part of a copyrighted work under "[fair use](#)", or if you obtain special permission to use a copyrighted work from the copyright holder under the terms of our license, you must make a note of that fact (along with names and dates). It is our goal to be able to freely redistribute as much of Wikipedia's material as possible, so original images and sound files licensed under the GFDL or in the [public domain](#) are greatly preferred to copyrighted media files used under fair use. See [Wikipedia:Boilerplate request for permission](#) for a form letter asking a copyright holder to grant us a license to use their work under terms of the GFDL.

Never use materials that infringe the copyrights of others. This could create legal liabilities and seriously hurt the project. If in doubt, write it yourself.

Note that copyright law governs the *creative expression* of ideas, not the ideas or information themselves. Therefore, it is legal to read an encyclopedia article or other work, reformulate the concepts in your own words, and submit it to Wikipedia. However, it would still be unethical (but not illegal) to do so without citing the original as a reference. See [plagiarism](#) and [fair use](#) for discussions of how much reformulation is necessary in a general context.

3.14 Linking to copyrighted works

Linking to copyrighted works is usually not a problem, as long as you have made a reasonable effort to determine that the page in question is not violating *someone else's* copyright. If it is, please do *not* link to the page. Whether such a link is contributory infringement is currently being debated in the courts, but in any case, linking to a site that illegally distributes someone else's work sheds a bad light on us. If the site in question is making fair use of the material, linking is OK.

3.15 If you find a copyright infringement

It is not the job of rank-and-file Wikipedians to police content for possible copyright infringement, but if you suspect one, you should at the very least bring up the issue on that page's talk page. Others can then examine the situation and take action if needed. The most helpful piece of information you can provide is a URL or other reference to what you believe may be the source of the text.

Some cases will be false alarms. For example, if the contributor was in fact the author of the text that is published elsewhere under different terms, that does not affect their right to post it here under the GFDL. Also, sometimes you will find text elsewhere on the Web that was copied from Wikipedia. In both of these cases, it is a good idea to make a note in the talk page to discourage such false alarms in the future.

If some of the content of a page really is an infringement, then the infringing content should be removed, and a note to that effect should be made on the talk page, along with the original source. If the author's permission is obtained later, the text can be restored.

If *all* of the content of a page is a suspected copyright infringement, then the page should be listed on [Wikipedia:Copyright problems](#) and the content of the page replaced by the standard notice which you can find there. If, after a week, the page still appears to be a copyright infringement, then it may be deleted following the procedures on the votes page.

In extreme cases of contributors continuing to post copyrighted material after appropriate warnings, such users may be blocked from editing to protect the project.

If you are the owner of Wikipedia-hosted content being used without your permission

If you are the owner of content that is being used on Wikipedia without your permission, then you may request the page be immediately removed from Wikipedia; see [Request for immediate removal of copyright violation](#). You can also contact our [Designated agent](#) to have it permanently removed, but it may take up to a week for the page to be deleted that way (you may also blank the page but the text will still be in the page history). Either way, we will, of course, need some evidence to support your claim of ownership.

See also

[Wikipedia:Copyright FAQ](#)

The [Wikipedia:Contributing FAQ](#) for questions on copyright.

Wikipedia's [designated agent](#) under [OCILLA](#)

[Wikipedia:Sites that use Wikipedia as a source](#)

[Wikipedia:Standard GFDL violation letter](#)

[Wikipedia:Possible copyright infringements](#)

[Wikipedia:Spotting possible copyright violations](#)

[Wikipedia:Fair use](#)

[Wikipedia:Image copyright tags](#)

Further discussion...

[Wikipedia:Copyright issues](#)

[m:Wikipedia and copyright issues](#)

[m:Avoid Copyright Paranoia](#)

[m:Permission grant extent](#)

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["http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Copyrights"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Copyrights)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Copyrights>

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