Journalism and the online information community

- William Beutler
- Aleksey Bilogur
- Ed Erhart
- Robert Fernandez
- Andreas Kolbe

WikiConference USA 2015

Media coverage of Alexa top ten websites
New York Times, January – September 2015

Website	Number of stories
Google	1052
Facebook	3423
YouTube	773
Baidu	30
Yahoo	198
Amazon	635
Wikipedia	50
Qq	4
Twitter	4344
Google India	2

- Amazon's Bruising, Thrilling Workplace: [National Desk]
  Kantor, Jodi; Streitfeld, David. **New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)** [New York, N.Y] 16 Aug 2015: A.1.
- For Twitter, Future Means Here and Now: [Business/Financial Desk]
  Manjoo, Farhad. **New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)** [New York, N.Y] 12 June 2015: A.1.
- Google Mixes a New Name and Big Ideas: [Business/Financial Desk]
  Dougherty, Conor. **New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)** [New York, N.Y] 11 Aug 2015: A.1.

New York Times stories about Wikipedia, 2015

- Can Wikipedia Survive?: [Op-Ed]

  Lih, Andrew. **New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)** [New York, N.Y] 21 June 2015: SR.4.

- Stop Spying on Wikipedia Users: [Op-Ed]

  Wales, Jimmy; Tretikov, Lila. **New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)** [New York, N.Y] 10 Mar 2015: A.21.

- A P.R. Firm Alters Wikipedia Pages of Its Star Clients: [Business/Financial Desk]

  Cieply, Michael. **New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)** [New York, N.Y] 23 June 2015: B.3.

- At a Historically Black University, Filling in Wikipedia's Gaps in Color: [National Desk]

  Smith, Jada F. **New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)** [New York, N.Y] 20 Feb 2015: A.18.

- Print Wikipedia: Mission Accomplished: [Brief]

  Schuessler, Jennifer. **New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)** [New York, N.Y] 14 July 2015: C.3.

- Wikipedia Moves to Bookshelves: [The Arts/Cultural Desk]

  Schuessler, Jennifer. **New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast)** [New York, N.Y] 17 June 2015:

Observations about media coverage

- Coverage is not specialized, in-depth, or systematic, it's reactive to events and controversies.

- Little knowledge or interest in the inner workings of Wikipedia, Wikimedia projects, or the Wikimedia Foundation.

- Awareness and coverage of other Wikimedia projects that are not Wikipedias is almost nonexistent.

- Much of the coverage is quirky human interest stories or about minor instances of vandalism with little context.

Community journalism

- Substitute for the lack of general media coverage
- Employs institutional knowledge lacking in the media
- Can raise awareness of important issues
- Produces coverage for an internal audience

Approaches to community journalism

- Official Wikimedia Foundation blog
- Wikimedia Project newsletters
  - WikiProjects on English Wikipedia: Military History (*The Bugle*), Video Games
  - Other projects: GLAM, Wikidata, The Wikipedia Library
  - **Non-English Wikipedias:** *RAW* **(.fr),** *Kurier* (.de)

- *Wikipediocracy*
- Blogs
  - *The Wikipedian*
  - *Wiki Strategies*
- Social media
  - Twitter
  - Facebook

The Signpost

- Founded on January 10, 2005 by Michael Snow. "Journalism is a field in which I did not have any particular experience prior to doing so."

- Highlights of *Signpost* history: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/2015-01-21/Anniversary

- Quasi-official status: Built-in audience, communication with WMF, but beholden to encyclopedia rules (BLP, NPOV, OUTING, etc.)

The Signpost

- 2015: Editorial board of 4-5 members, including two co-EICs.

- Sections requiring weekly oversight: News and Notes, In the Media, Op-ed/Editorial, Featured Content

- Self-contained sections: Traffic, WikiProject Report, Recent Research

Disadvantages of community journalism

- Lack of training or expertise in journalism means some stories can't or won't be covered effectively.

- Time and money limits volunteer availability, effectiveness, and consistency.

Media coverage: pet peeves

- Writing about Wikipedia as though it were a conventionally curated source
- Little understanding that Wikipedia articles change over time and vary vastly in quality and origin
  - Exception: sports journalism!
- Cheap shots ("politician removes criticism from Wikipedia biography") rather than in-depth investigative reporting
- Merely repeating Wikimedia Foundation press releases

Media coverage as a feedback loop

- 2013 Wiki-PR story in The Daily Dot, widely picked up elsewhere
- Wikimedia Foundation changed its Terms of Use half a year later
- People had known about the case internally for the best part of a year
- Action only followed after it became a media story
- Wikipedia should not fear open, informed discussion of its problems but welcome, even initiate it
  - Well done WMF for the Orangemoody blog post

More investigative stories are needed

- The battle to destroy Wikipedia's biggest sockpuppet army (The Daily Dot)

- Revenge, ego and the corruption of Wikipedia (Salon)

- How a raccoon became an aardvark (New Yorker)

- Manipulating Wikipedia to promote a bogus business school (Newsweek)

- The story behind Jar'Edo Wens, the longest-running hoax in Wikipedia history (Washington Post)

Wikipedia and journalism

- Wikipedia relies on the media for much of its sourcing
  - Yet Wikipedians often find that media reports on Wikipedia are inaccurate
  - How reliable are newspapers as encyclopedic sources?
- Journalists consult Wikipedia and repeat what they read there
  - Pranks and hoaxes
  - Citogenesis
- Wikipedia literacy
  - Wikipedians need to understand journalism's weaknesses
  - Journalists need to understand Wikipedia's weaknesses

Quotes

- What people outside do not appreciate is that a newspaper is like a soufflé, prepared in a hurry for immediate consumption. This of course is why whenever you read a newspaper account of some event of which you have personal knowledge it is nearly always inadequate or inaccurate. Journalists are as aware as anyone of this defect; it is simply that if the information is to reach as many readers as possible, something less than perfection has often to be accepted. —David E. H. Jones, in *New Scientist*, Vol. 26
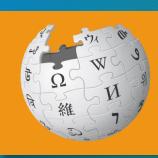
Quotes

- Wikipedia is like an old and eccentric uncle. He can be a lot of fun—over the years he's seen a lot, and he can tell a great story. He's also no dummy; he's accumulated a lot of information and has some strong opinions about what he's gathered. You can learn quite a bit from him. But take everything he says with a grain of salt. A lot of the things he thinks he knows for sure aren't quite right, or are taken out of context. And when it comes down to it, sometimes he believes things that are a little bit, well, nuts. If it ever matters to you whether something he said is real or fictional, it's crucial to check it out with a more reliable source. —Charles Seife, *Virtual Unreality*, Appendix, "The top ten dicta of the internet skeptic", Dictum no. 1.

Wikipediocracy

- Established in 2012
- Very broad coalition of Wikipedia critics and reformers
- Early trustees included:
  - Larry Sanger (Wikipedia co-founder)
  - Greg Kohs (MyWikiBiz)
  - Dan Murphy (CS Monitor journalist)
  - Ed Buckner (scholar of medieval philosophy)
- Broad range of participants, from banned and retired users to active Wikipedia admins and functionaries

Wikipediocracy

- Forum
  - Public area
  - Members-only areas
  - Invitation-only areas (blog writing and research)
  - Staff areas
- Blog
  - Weekly to monthly
- Journalism program
  - Students to write Wikipedia stories with site members' help
  - Site members donated funds for prize money
  - Program never took off

Wikipediocracy

- What has worked well (in my opinion)
  - Forum discussions feed into blog
  - Team work to research issues
  - Blog posts sparking media coverage
  - Liaising with journalists
- What hasn't worked so well (in my opinion)
  - Level of discourse in forum hard to control
    - Sometimes tedious, sometimes viciously personalized
  - Coming up with regular topical blog posts is hard work
  - Journalism program never got off the ground
  - Attrition