

# Strengthening and unifying the visual identity of Wikimedia projects: a step towards maturity

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## Abstract

In January 2007, the Wikimedian community celebrated the sixth birthday of Wikipedia. Six years of constant evolution have now led to Wikipedia being one of the most visited websites in the world. Other projects developing free content and supported by the Wikimedia Foundation have been expanding rapidly too. The Foundation and its projects are now facing some communication issues due to the difference of scale between the human and financial resources of the Foundation and the success of its projects. In this paper, we identify critical issues in terms of visual identity and marketing. We evaluate the situation and propose several changes, including a redesign of the default website interface.

## Introduction

The first Wikipedia project was created in January 2001. In these days, the technical infrastructure was provided by Bomis, a dot-com company. In June 2003, Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia and owner of Bomis, created the Wikimedia Foundation [1] to provide a long-term administrative and technical structure dedicated to free content.

Since these days, both the projects and the Foundation have been evolving. New projects have been created. All have grown at different rates. Some have got more fame than the others. New financial, technical and communication challenges have risen.

In this paper, we will first identify some of these challenges and issues in terms of global visual identity. We will then analyse logos, website layouts, projects names, trademarks so as to provide some hindsight. Last, we will make proposals and suggest ways to bring coherence and consolidation to Wikimedia projects visual identity.

“Projects” will refer to Wikimedia official projects including all languages of this project ; for instance, Wikisource in all languages. “Local project” will refer to a language-specific project, for instance the German Wikisource. “Language family” will refer to all projects in a specific language, for instance all projects in Italian.

## 1 Context

### 1.1 Evolution of the interface

A short comparison of the appearance of the English-language Wikipedia has been performed thanks to the Internet archive “Wayback machine”<sup>1</sup> (FIG. 2 to FIG. 7). Beyond the change of logo, we see that the interface was very basic in the early ages of Wikipedia. Its design has been improved in 2004 and as of May 2007 it has been keeping the same appearance since this last change.

Many other layouts (or “skins”) have been written by numerous users of MediaWiki. Some of them are available on Wikimedia websites and can be set by each user through his user preferences. All users can also completely customize their own interface by editing their own CSS style. Though, the default design has not evolved for several years.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: [http://web.archive.org/web/\\*/http://en.wikipedia.org](http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://en.wikipedia.org). Wikipedia screenshots are released under the GFDL.

## HomePage

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You can [edit this page right now!](#) It's a free, community project



**Welcome to Wikipedia!** We're writing a complete encyclopedia from scratch, collaboratively. We started work in January 2001. We've got over 3,000 pages already. We want to make over 100,000. So, let's get to work! Write a little (or a lot) about what you know! Read our welcome message here: [Welcome, newcomers!](#)

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Techie links:

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- [\[Deutsch\]](#) (German)
- [\[Catalan\]](#)
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If you would like a Wikipedia version written in another language, please post a request on [International Wikipedia](#).

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[Edit text of this page](#) | [View other revisions](#)  
Last edited March 30, 2001 10:59 am ([diff](#))  
Search:

Figure 1: Main page of the English-language Wikipedia in March 2001.

 <b>WIKIPEDIA</b> The Free Encyclopedia	<a href="#">Main Page</a>   <a href="#">Recent changes</a>   Protected page   <a href="#">Older versions</a>   209.237.238.158
	<a href="#">Special pages</a>   <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/> <a href="#">Log in</a>   <a href="#">Help</a>
<a href="#">Printable version</a>	
Other languages: <a href="#">Dansk</a>   <a href="#">Deutsch</a>   <a href="#">Esperanto</a>   <a href="#">Español</a>   <a href="#">Français</a>   <a href="#">Nederlands</a>   <input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="Search"/>
<a href="#">Polski</a>   <a href="#">Português</a>   <a href="#">Svenska</a>	
<h2>Main Page</h2>	
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.	
<b>Welcome to Wikipedia</b> , a collaborative project to produce a free and complete <a href="#">encyclopedia</a> in <a href="#">every language</a> . We started in January 2001 and are already working on 93656 <a href="#">articles</a> in the English version, with more being added and improved all the time. Anyone, <i>including you</i> , can edit any article right now, without even having to log in. See the <a href="#">Wikipedia FAQ</a> for more background information about the project, and the <a href="#">help page</a> for information on how to use and contribute to Wikipedia.	
The content of Wikipedia is covered by the <a href="#">GNU Free Documentation License</a> , which means that it is free and will remain so forever. See <a href="#">wikipedia:Copyrights</a> for the details and <a href="#">open content</a> and <a href="#">free content</a> for background.	
<i>This day in history:</i> <a href="#">November 30</a> <i>Ongoing events:</i> <a href="#">Israeli-Palestinian conflict</a> - <a href="#">War on Terrorism</a> - <a href="#">terrorist incidents</a> - <a href="#">Oil spill off Spanish coast</a> <i>In the news:</i> <a href="#">Henry Kissinger</a> - <a href="#">Severino Antinori</a> - <a href="#">Dept. of Homeland Security</a> - <a href="#">Volkert van der Graaf</a> <i>Recent deaths:</i> <a href="#">Verne Winchell</a> - <a href="#">James Coburn</a> - <a href="#">Abba Eban</a> - <a href="#">Myra Hindley</a>	
<b>Philosophy, Mathematics, and Natural Science</b>	

Figure 2: Main page of the English-language Wikipedia in November 2002.

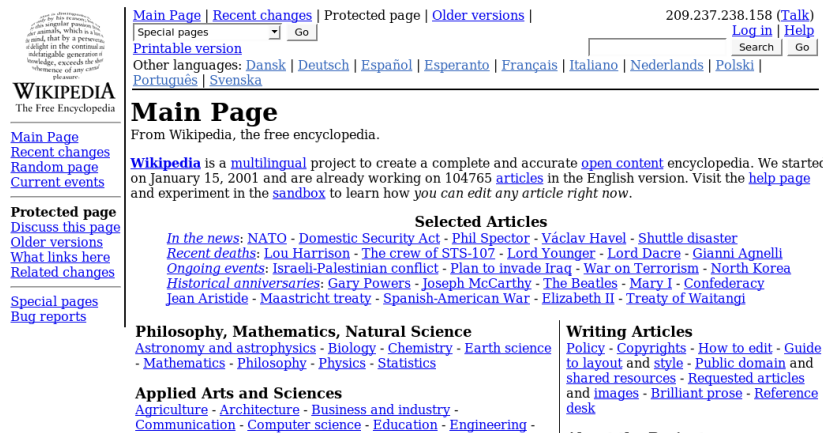


Figure 3: Main page of the English-language Wikipedia in February 2003.



Figure 4: Main page of the English-language Wikipedia in March 2004.



Figure 5: Main page of the English-language Wikipedia in January 2005.



Figure 6: Main page of the English-language Wikipedia in January 2006.

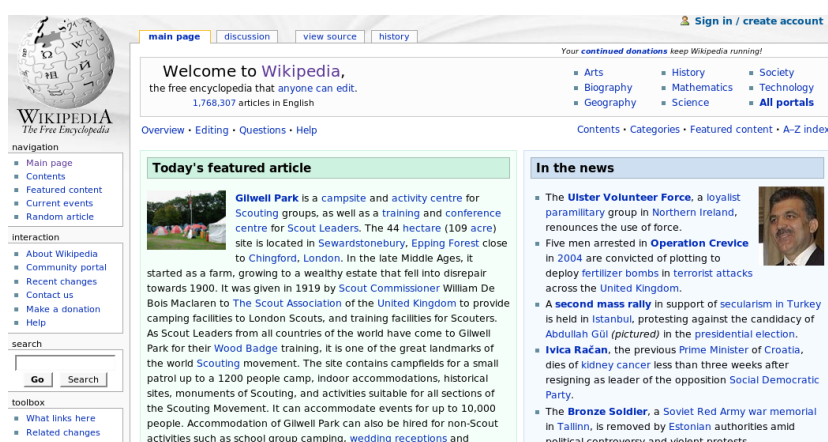


Figure 7: Main page of the English-language Wikipedia in May 2007.

## 1.2 Evolution of design within the projects

Attempts to establish common design standards between languages and projects have been rare. One notable exception is the disambiguation icon which was standardized among all Wikipedias in 2005 so that disambiguation pages are easily recognizable by its symbol even in foreign languages and writing systems. Another common symbol is the yellow star which marks featured articles in the interlanguage links which was adapted by several Wikipedia versions.

In general the projects develop their design independently. A comparison of the project main pages shows a wide variety of designs, making each Wikimedia project and language unique. For corporations where uniformity is the goal and professional designers develop a corporate identity, this would be a horror vision. In a free wiki environment, this diversity is both pragmatic and healthy. Pragmatic because it would cause an immense organizational effort to standardize design on project level and healthy because it allows for an evolution of designs.

Good ideas and layouts are copied, adapted and improved among the projects in a constant silent exchange. If one project opts for a redesign of its main page, people take the tour through other projects and pick up what they like most. The main page of the English Wikiversity for example cannot hide its origin from the Italian Wikipedia. This exchange is not limited to main page design. The Norwegian featured articles page is derived from the German (FIG. 8) which itself uses a modified icon set of one developed for the main page of the Hebrew Wikipedia. Portal layouts are copied and adapted through the Wikimedia world. Many more examples could be cited.

## 1.3 Promotional material

With Wikimedia projects growing and becoming more and more famous, promotional material has been created to help users advertise the projects. The most famous documents are the *leaflet*, an A4 double-side three-fold brochure presenting Wikipedia, and the *cheatsheet*, a third of A4 summing up the basic you-must-know in wiki syntax<sup>2</sup>. Both of them have been translated in a number of languages.

Other documents have been created for special events but their creation was depending on the good will and graphic skills of particular users. Local communities and local chapters have often asked for up-to-date good-quality documents to help advertise the projects, but there was not any dedicated structure to manage these requests. Local communities are often unaware of publishing requirements and; when asked for help by people who would like to create promotional material about their project, they are not able to give a clear, summarized, efficient content, maybe because they lack hindsight.

In the meanwhile, the Wikimedia Family went bigger and other projects than Wikipedia were created. Each new project had to choose a logo, a name, a motto, which have often been chosen independently from those of other projects. This has sometimes led to unwanted heterogeneity in terms of external image.

## 1.4 About the Marketing committee

The marketing committee<sup>3</sup> has been created in October 2006 as a subcommittee of the Communications Committee (ComCom) [2]. It is aimed at creating good-quality material to promote Wikimedia projects and insure that such material follows quality and visual identity guidelines. It also acts as an advisory committee to the board in terms of logos, visual identity and design.

# 2 Wikimedia names and brands

Names of Wikimedia projects are a recurring conversation topic between Wikimedians. Some find they lack originality, some they are too different, some they are anglo-centric. Actually, everyone may agree on one point: the way we manage our projects family needs to be changed.

## 2.1 Fame, names and brands

Recently, a member of the community proposed to take advantage of the fame of Wikipedia to completely rename all its “sister projects” to *Wikipedia* <content> [3]. For example, Wikimedia Commons, the free

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<sup>2</sup>Both of them can be found on the meta-wiki, respectively at [[m:Leaflet]] and [[m:Cheatsheet]]

<sup>3</sup>The marketing committee is based on meta: [[m:Marketing]].

< Nachschlagen < Auszeichnungen < Exzellente Artikel

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Die folgenden Artikel finden viele **Wikipedianer sehr lesenswert**. Es ist nur eine Auswahl, da wir unter den Tausenden von Einträgen in der Wikipedia nicht alle bemerkenswerten hier erwähnen können. Wenn du über einen besonders guten Artikel stolperst, trag ihn bei den [Kandidaten für exzellente Artikel](#) ein, um seinen Autoren ein *Gute Arbeit, danke!* zukommen zu lassen. Derzeit enthält die Liste **1.123 Artikel** ([Statistik](#)). Exzellente Illustrationen und Fotos besitzt die Wikipedia übrigens auch: [Exzellente Bilder](#). Auf der Hauptseite wird jeden Tag ein Artikel [vorgestellt](#), eine Übersicht über die früheren Artikel des Tages und die aktuellen Vorschläge findet sich [hier](#). Eine weitere Artikelauswahl findet sich unter den [lesenswerten Artikeln](#) sowie im Biologiebereich zusätzlich unter den [validierten Artikeln](#). Ein paar Hinweise, wie du einen guten oder gar exzellenten Artikel verfasst, gibt [diese Anleitung](#).

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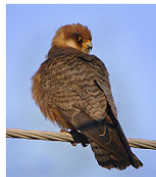
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### Neu bei den „Exzellenten“

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Der **Rotfußfalke** (*Falco vespertinus*) ist ein kleiner Vertreter der Eigenlichen Falken innerhalb der Familie der Falkenartigen (Falconidae). Bei den dunkel blaugrauen Männchen fällt die rostrote Befiederung der roten Beine besonders auf. Bei den Weibchen kontrastiert das dunkle Obergefieder mit dem orangebraunen Kopf und Untergefieder. Das geschlossene Verbreitungsgebiet der Art reicht von Ungarn ostwärts bis ins Baikargebiet. Seit den 60er Jahren gehen die Bestände des Rotfußfalcken fast im gesamten Verbreitungsgebiet der Art zurück.



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**Brown v. Board of Education** ist die Sammelbezeichnung für fünf von 1952 bis 1954 vor dem Obersten Gerichtshof der Vereinigten Staaten verhandelte Fälle zum Thema der Rassentrennung an öffentlichen Schulen. Die von betroffenen Eltern eingebrachten Sammelklagen gegen vier Bundesstaaten und den Regierungsbezirk vertreten die Position, dass separate Einrichtungen für Schüler getrennt nach Hautfarbe den Gleichheitsgrundsatz der Verfassung der Vereinigten Staaten verletzen. Der Oberste Gerichtshof schloss sich dieser Argumentation mit seinem Grundsatzurteil vom 17. Mai 1954 einstimmig an und hob damit die vorher fast einhundert Jahre geltende Rechtsprechung auf. Die Entscheidung markierte das Ende der rechtlich sanktionierten Rassentrennung an staatlichen Schulen in den Vereinigten Staaten.



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Unter **animal forensics** wird ein Zusammenschluss interdisziplinärer Methoden aus Kriminalbiologie, gerichtlicher Veterinärmedizin, Spurenkunde und Forensik verstanden. Obwohl dieser Fachbegriff auf internationaler Ebene bereits seit über einem Jahrzehnt existiert, steht bisher noch keine adäquate deutsche Bezeichnung zur Verfügung. Im engeren Sinn wird unter animal forensics die Untersuchung tierischen Spurenmaterials verstanden, das im Zusammenhang mit einem Verbrechen als Nachweis einer Verbindung zwischen Täter und Opfer dienen kann. Im weiteren Sinn bezeichnet animal forensics auch die Untersuchung von tierischem Spurenmateriale bei Delikten, in die Tiere direkt als „Tatbeteiligte“ involviert sind.



[Artikel lesen...](#)

Die **Brig-Visp-Zermatt-Bahn (BVZ)** – offizielle Eigenbezeichnung von 1991 bis 2002 BVZ Zermatt-Bahn – ist eine meterspurige Schmalspurbahn im Schweizer Kanton Wallis. Die 44 Kilometer lange Bahnstrecke ist Bestandteil der Route des nach St. Moritz verkehrenden Glacier-Express und verbindet den autofreien Urlaubsort Zermatt mit den Gemeinden Visp und Brig im Rhonetal. 1891 als Visp-Zermatt-Bahn (VZ) eröffnet, ging sie am 1. Januar 2003 zusammen mit der Furka-Oberalp-Bahn (FO) in der Matterhorn-Gotthard-Bahn (MGB) auf.



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### Geographie

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**Kontinente:** ☛ Antarktis

**Gewässer:** Amper · Bäke (Telte) · Donau · Elbe · Große Dhünnalsperre · Hochwasser in Würzburg · Hochwasserschutz in Dresden · Isar · Ludwigskanal · Main · Osterseen · Pegel Würzburg · Pfefferfließ · Walchensee · Weser · Wiener Neustädter Kanal



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**Inseln:** Osterinsel · Sytt

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**Stadtteile:** Albertstadt · Döbling · Gröben (Ludwigfelde) · Prenzlauer Berg · Rote Insel · Sendling · Stangenhagen

**Ländliche Gemeinden:** Bad Kleinkirchheim · Bahretal · Dimstein · Kals am Großglockner · Matrei in Osttirol · ☛ Schwiebingen · Virgen · Weiach · Zingst

**Straßen, Plätze und Gärten:** Alexanderplatz · Botanischer Garten Berlin · Forum Fridericianum · Frankfurter Judengasse · Hermannstraße (Berlin-Neukölln) · Neumarkt (Dresden) · Schönhauser Allee · Warschauer Straße

**Ortsteile:** Rethen (Vordorf)

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**Utmerkede artikler** er et prosjekt for å samle det ypperste Wikipedia har av artikler, som kan være gode kunnskapskilder, og inspirasjon for andre artikler. For forslag til nye utmerkede eller *anbefalte* artikler, se [Wikipedia:Kandidatsider](#).  
Antall utmerkede artikler per 27. juli 2007 er **105** av totalt 120 914, noe som betyr at det er én utmerket artikkel per 1 152. artikkel (utdypende statistikk).



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**Kunst:** [Las Meninas](#) · [Preraphaelittene](#) · [Nils Aas](#)  
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**Figure 8:** The featured articles page of the Norwegian Wikipedia was inspired by the German. The icon set was taken from Hebrew Wikipedia.

media repository, would have been renamed to *Wikipedia Commons*. We will come back later to this controversial proposal, but we can already note that it raised interesting debates and counter-proposals. For instance, the will to unite all projects under a common motto has showed up [4].

Two main observations can be drawn from the various answers this proposal has raised. First, there is a part of the Wikimedia community who feels that serious changes need to be done both on the Foundation side and on the wikis side. On the other hand, there is also a conservative wing who feels comfortable with current designs and ways to proceed<sup>4</sup>. Thus, proposed changes will require diplomacy and consulting of the community to have a chance to succeed.

## 2.2 Translation or not

Wikimedia projects are multilingual, but there is currently no rule about the translation of their *names*. Such translations break the global identity of a project.

**Examples** The French-language Wikibooks calls itself *Wikilivres*, the Italian-language Wikinews *Wikinotizie* and the Spanish-language Wiktionary *Wikcionario*. Even if a localised translated name may be used colloquially within local projects, all external-facing usage must use the official name. Moreover, that causes recurring debates about the expediency of translating the Wikimedia projects names within a language family: should the “other projects” box on an article from the French-language Wikipedia say “A textbook about X is available on Wikilivres” or rather “A textbook about X is available on Wikibooks”, or even “on the French-language Wikibooks”?

**Copyright** This unclear situation poses a copyright problem too. The English official names of projects are the only ones trademarked by the Wikimedia Foundation. What if someone registers the trademark *Wikinotizie*? Another example is <http://www.wikilivres.info>, a site that does not belong to Wikimedia Foundation websites. It is administratively and financially impossible to register trademarks of all localized names everywhere in the world.

**Answers and proposals** When this issue was raised on the internal mailing list [5], the feedback was that the official name of the project must imperatively be used from outside the local project. When talking about the local project from another wiki, even a project of its language family, the project must be called with its official name.

There has also been a suggestion of redefining some projects names that sound too anglo-centric (such as Wikibooks). The question is then how to find a more universal name about textbooks or quotations.

In our will to unify the projects of a language family, we propose below several solutions to improve this situation. By assigning a dedicated colour to each project, they will become more identifiable. Another proposal is the cross-project navigation bar, which would link them using the type of content rather than the name of the project.

A proposed solution is to create two MediaWiki messages used to display a localized alternative name and motto. Though, the logo would remain the same on all versions of a project, and the official name would always be displayed. An example for the Japanese-language Wikipedia is shown on FIG. 9.



**Figure 9:** Example of a localized header, though clearly identifying the project as a member of the Wikimedia family. The text below *Wikipedia* is the motto (*the free encyclopedia*) and the text on the right is the Japanese transcription of *Wikipedia*.

<sup>4</sup>It is somehow funny to realize how our real-life (political) habits and trends tend to interfere in wiki projects. That would make a good subject for a future Wikimania paper.



## 3 Logos and skins

### 3.1 Choosing good logos

**A community process** Logos of Wikimedia projects are chosen by community decisions; “community” often means “community of users from the project whose logo is being chosen”, as they feel more concerned than users from other projects. If they manage to finally choose a logo, they know the winning one will please the majority of their community. Though, a logo should not only please a community, it must also follow some visual identity rules.

**Criteria** First, a logo has to convey the good message. This is usually the case, as people tend to focus on this point and forget the other ones. Thus, we are not going to develop this part.

Then, a logo has to be of good graphic quality. Apart from the good-looking criterion, a logo has to scale well from tiny sizes (e.g. be simple enough to be used as a favicon or in some templates) to large sizes (for banners and large documents). A logo in vector graphics is obviously better since it allows resizing without any loss of quality.

Last but far from least, a logo has to *fit* in the global visual identity of the structure; this essential point is usually not taken into account.

**Unique in a family** A logo has both to match the global identity of the overseeing structure (here, the Wikimedia Foundation) and to be unique in the set of logos of this structure. The problem with new logos for Wikimedia projects is they are often too close, too similar to the main logo of the Foundation, both in terms of shapes and colours. When they are more original and free themselves from the pervasive Wikimedia colours, they inevitably fall on a classic imaginationless colour already used on several logos.

We need to be bold in choosing our logos and their colours. The community also needs to take advantage from the advice of graphics designers or people whose role is to help them designing a good logo with innovative colours. One of the missions of the Marketing committee is to act as a bridge between the community and the board in terms of graphics, design and logos. What we propose below is to identify each project with a dedicated distinctive colour that will appear in the main design of its interface.

**Examples** Two logos are currently being discussed: one for Wikibooks and one for Wikiversity. The final one for Wiktionary has just been chosen.

Current discussions about Wikibooks and Wikiversity new logos are very revealing about the actual difficulties encountered by our community<sup>5</sup>. Although first phases have been fulfilled quite fastly, both processes seem to be stuck in the last phase, consisting in choosing the final colours. As logos are mainly decided by people from the concerned project, everybody wants a blue<sup>6</sup> logo and does not care if this color is already used by another Wikimedia logo or if the logo does not fit in the family.

Wiktionary logo is an example of a successful logo choice process. It has led to an original logo using distinctive colors. One may argue it does not fully fit in the Wikimedia logo family, but this argument vanishes when compared to the beloved well-known extravagant Wikipedia globe.

**Proposals** Choosing logos is and must remain a community process. There are skilled editors and well-versed processes involved in logo bidding. Though, the Wikimedia Foundation should be involved from the beginning in the process, to avoid having to decline a logo chosen by the community because it is unsuitable for visual identity reasons. We propose to involve the Marketing committee in the different steps of processes in order to check that proposed logos follow visual guidelines and are acceptable.

### 3.2 Wikimedia and non-Wikimedia MediaWikis

All Wikimedia projects use the default layout of MediaWiki, called *Monobook*. MediaWiki is also used by many websites that need a wiki engine, as it is actively developed and it has proven to be both reliable and able to manage huge projects such as Wikipedia.

<sup>5</sup>See [[m:Wikibooks/Logo]] and [[m:Wikiversity/Logo]]

<sup>6</sup>Blue is taken as an example here, of course not *everybody* wants a blue logo. But participants can be very stubborn when they discuss “their” logo.

Though, the large majority (TAB. 1) of these websites using MediaWiki has kept the default layout of MediaWiki, the same that is used by Wikimedia wikis. The three fourth of tested wikis have only changed the top-left corner logo and kept the default backgrounds, colors and menus. If we add the wikis that have slightly changed the site appearance, we reach 85% of websites running MediaWiki with a similar or identical design as the one of Wikimedia projects.

**Table 1:** Statistics about the layout of non-Wikimedia MediaWiki websites (based on the 100 largest non-Wikimedia wikis listed on [http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_largest\\_wikis](http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_wikis).)

only the logo is different	74
similar to very similar design	12
different to very different design	14

This similarity is a serious issue for two main reasons. First, it is very easy to have a website looking like Wikipedia or another Wikimedia project. These wikis may use advertising, propose non-free content, or be terribly biased. All one has to do is *not* changing the default parameters. Second, the multiplication of MediaWiki websites implies Wikimedia projects are getting swallowed up in the mass of them. We need to achieve a clear transformation of Wikimedia wikis appearance in order to make them distinguishable, unique and to show these websites are members of the Wikimedia family.

## 4 Towards a new design of Wikimedia projects appearance

### 4.1 The time of maturity

**Maturity for the foundation** The Wikimedia Foundation has initiated a series of deep reforms in its administrative structure [6]. A process of professionalization has been engaged and several positions have been created to consolidate its structure [7]. Deep reforms about its decision-making processes are also on their way to insure the future and good works of the foundation [8].

**Maturity for the content** Most developed Wikimedia projects are leaving their expansion phase and reaching a sort of maturation plate. Important thoughts are also conducted about stabilizing content and developing stable versions [9]; developers are working hard on the technical part and the global community is thinking about the community processes to engage. Stable versions are a serious step towards reliability<sup>7</sup>.

Selection of the content for the Wikipedia 1.0 project<sup>8</sup> has also made a big step forward with the release of the 0.5 CD version containing around 2000 articles from the English-language Wikipedia [10].

**Maturity, reliability and credibility** The maturation phase of both the foundation and some of the projects comes along with a will of credibility and reliability. Reliability on the facts found in the articles, credibility of the projects. Reliability and sustainability of the foundation, credibility towards external partners.

**Showing we evolve** We have shown in the first part that the design of Wikipedia (and other Wikimedia projects) was very basic at the beginning and was improved in 2004. Yet, the foundation is evolving and so are the projects. This evolution must come along with a serious change of the design of the Wikimedia websites. We have already explained why the default MediaWiki layout cannot be kept on Wikimedia wikis. Here we go a step further and advocate for a more professional, ergonomic and aesthetic design. The layout we propose is aimed at being a solution to several major issues we have discussed previously in this paper.

<sup>7</sup>For a more comprehensive and historical review of the reasons to have stable versions, one can read [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Why\\_stable\\_versions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Why_stable_versions).

<sup>8</sup>On the English-language Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WP:1>. Other local Wikipedia have engaged similar selection processes.

## 4.2 A more professional design

**A new default skin** We have been working on a new design that looks more professional and reflects the changes in the way the Wikimedia community considers itself and its projects. Some examples are given on FIG. 11.

Designing a new skin for Wikimedia presents several challenges. During the development of MediaWiki, new features were added constantly and had to be integrated in the skin. The list of special pages contains now more than 50 items. Disclaimers and policy links had to be added to the interface. With the growing number of projects the list of interlanguage links in the sidebar grew longer and longer, numbering more than 100 on some pages.

At the same time, as the popularity of Wikipedia grew its usage changed. Nowadays, most visitors to the site are readers, not editors – only 4.6% of all visits to Wikipedia are edits [11]. Readers and editors have different expectations and needs. The current Monobook skin overwhelms the reader with a number of links he will never need and makes it hard for him to find the links he does need like Cite and Print. The editors on the other hand are presented with navigation links they rarely use while the pages they most often visit are hidden. Many active editors have solved these problems by using their customized skin, exchanging beauty for functionality (see FIG. 10, the most used custom skin on the German Wikipedia).

These are the issues which have to be addressed. One possibility to accommodate readers and editors would be to provide a switch in the interface between a reading and editing mode, the first aiming to present a cleaned up interface with just the necessary tools for providing a pleasant reading experience and the second adapted to the needs of experienced editors, easily extendable with own functions and bookmarks.



Figure 10: A custom monobook skin containing a toolbox with frequently used navigation links.

**Guiding the community** Such a major change of appearance must be engaged with the approval and input of the global Wikimedia community. A contest could be organized by the committee to gather the best proposals from members of the community. Precise specifications would be given to insure quality and accessibility standards.

**One color per project** Wikimedia projects must be identifiable from the first look. They must both be different from non-Wikimedia wikis and have their own identity as a project. One of our proposals in order to strengthen Wikimedia projects visual identity is to attribute a dedicated color to each project. For instance,



Figure 11: Example of a new design implementing the *one color per project* proposal applied to the German-language Wikipedia and Wikisource.

Wikipedia would be light gray, Commons dark red, Wikisource dark purple, etc (see FIG. 12). Wikimedia projects would thus be clearly identifiable and distinguishable online but also on offline promotional material.

**Identification as Wikimedia projects** The Wikimedia Foundation should be more visible on our wikis. A link to the foundation website could be added in the navigation bar.

**The Foundation website** A foundation hosting one of the ten biggest websites in the world cannot take the liberty of keeping a poor-design outdated website, whatever its size and its number of employees. It is a simple matter of credibility. One may argue the Foundation website is not the real showcase of Wikimedia, that Wikimedia projects are, which is not completely false. Though, the Foundation deals with serious companies, organizations and media that expect higher standards of quality than those of the wiki-way. Some are afraid that a total redesign of the Foundation website may get people lost, as “it would not look like Wikipedia any more”. Modernizing Wikimedia projects interface should thus be the opportunity to remodel the Foundation website too.

### 4.3 Strengthening the bonds within families

**Wikipedia and “the others”** There is a clear distinction between the large, famous encyclopedia that anyone can edit and all its “small sister projects”. Wikipedia unwillingly shadows other Wikimedia projects instead of taking advantage of its fame to lead visitors to them. When members of the press team try to promote other projects than Wikipedia, journalists rarely care about them. Wikimedia Commons is getting some interest due to its status of free online media repository, but other projects fail in bringing attention to them.

It has been recently proposed [3] to merge all Wikimedia projects in a large *Wikipedia project* and to rename all projects to *Wikipedia <content>*<sup>9</sup>. This proposal has appeared to be a bad solution to a real problem, as it would artificially boost their notoriety. As a matter of fact, renaming Wikimedia projects when they start to get some attention is not only a bad marketing strategy, it also denies the specificity of each project whose community does not want to fall under the Wikipedia umbrella. But what other solutions are there?

**Existing templates** Some links exist between Wikimedia projects through the use of templates that direct to pages on other Wikimedia projects. These pages are about the same subject but contain other types of content (media, quotations, etc.). The problem with current templates is they come at the end of articles and they are hardly noticed, even by people who are looking for them. Moreover, they really give the impression that Wikipedia is the central project around which all projects are second-zone satellites.

**Cross-project navigation bar** What we propose is to take advantage of the change of design to add a cross-project navigation bar whose links would have the same role as current templates. This bar would work the same way interwiki links do. For example, an encyclopaedic article about William Shakespeare would direct to images in *William Shakespeare* gallery on Commons through a **media** button, study guides on Wikibooks through **textbooks**, quotations on Wikiquote through **quotations** etc. **dictionary**, **sources**, **news** and **learning** would direct to relevant content if it exists. If no resource of that kind is available, links would be gray. Of course, all these pages would link back to Wikipedia and between each other. This would really make easier to browse the free Wikimedia content in its globality.

## Conclusion

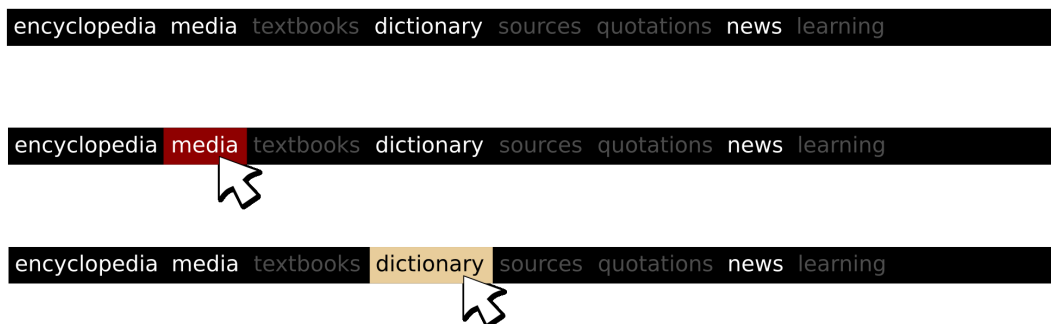
In this paper we have identified and analysed current issues in terms of visual identity, marketing and graphics and tried to provide solutions. Both the Foundation and its projects are reaching a turning point in their evolution and they need to go ahead.

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<sup>9</sup>Though the same user also proposed in his email a concept similar to the cross-project navigation bar we are presenting, the authors swear they got this brilliant idea first.



**Figure 12:** Examples of headers implementing the *one color per project* proposal.



**Figure 13:** Proposed implementation of the cross-project navigation bar. Gray-tint text indicates no resource is available.

This paper is aimed at raising awareness from the community about necessary evolutions and about people who are available to guide them. The marketing committee has been created to help local communities and chapters but it has not been much hooked since its creation.

We do hope that important visual changes can coincide with serious evolution of the foundation and local communities showing they have both become aware of their maturity and they are ready to make their next step towards stability.

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