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Dear Charities Commission

As an author, journalist, co-owner of the popular website Boing Boing, and campaigner and proponent of all things open and digital, I'd like to voice my support for Wikimedia UK's application to become a charitable organisation. There are many areas where the volunteers and their efforts can make a significant difference in terms of public benefit but for this note I'd like to simply concentrate on two examples.

Education:

Across the world a growing number of academics are realising that working with their students on Wikipedia articles can develop them in previously unforeseen ways. For instance, working with Wikipedia means that students are held accountable to a global audience for what they are doing, and thus, may feel more devoted to the assignment as a whole. They learn more about the crucial difference between fact-based and analytical writing styles. Plus, working collaboratively strengthens a sense of shared purpose, as well as stimulating their ability to think critically and evaluate sources. Being part of the creation of information helps students to understand that they not only consume but are under some form of obligation to 'give back' or create something for the benefit of all. Working in such an environment helps the educator too,

as students 'peer review,' and the teacher can see how knowledge gained is applied in a solid social & collaborative way, something that can be missing on occasions from a traditional classroom setting

Innovation:

Wikimedia UK recently ran a two month competition called The Wright Challenge, in which they asked volunteers around the world to write pages about exhibits in a small regional museum in Derby. Each exhibit had a Wikipedia QR Code, created by the newly minted Wikipedia QRPedia engine.

The QRPedia site was set up to recognise the preferred language phone settings of a smart phone user. That meant that any visitor to the Derby Museum that had a smart phone could point their phone at the corresponding QR Code on an exhibit and the QR Code would produce a Wikipedia page about the exhibit (or the nearest equivalent) in a pre-selected language. During the competition around 1200 Wikipedia pages were written by volunteers in a myriad of languages. This has helped to firmly place a small regional museum and the cultural & public heritage it holds firmly on the digital map. It offers a service to visitors of the museum (the public) and this pioneering project offers a low cost way in which to attract involvement of a museum's OWN volunteers in the community as well as experienced Wikipedian editors. The co-creation element is cheap (as the hardware & software of Wikipedia already exists) and can help interest in a museum to extend and grow online to a potential audience of hundreds of

millions. In conclusion., what better way is there to understand more about your own country's

cultural heritage than to write, read and discuss it with other like-minded people.

http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/GLAM/Case_studie

Sincerely,

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