



The 2011 Italian Wikipedia blackout



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Dear reader,

at this time, the Italian language Wikipedia may be no longer able to continue providing the service that over the years was useful to you, and that you expected to have right now. As things stand, the page you want still exists and is only hidden, but the risk is that soon we will be forced to actually delete it.

Over the past ten years, Wikipedia has become part of the daily habits of millions of web users looking for a neutral, free-content, and - above all - independent source of Knowledge. A new, huge multi-lingual encyclopedia, freely available to all, at any time, and free of charge.

Today, unfortunately, the very pillars on which Wikipedia has been built - neutrality, freedom, and verifiability of its contents - are likely to be heavily compromised by **paragraph 29** of a law proposal, also known as "**DDL intercettazioni**" (*Wiretapping Act*).

This proposal, which the Italian Parliament is currently debating, provides, among other things, a requirement to all websites to publish, within 48 hours of the request and without any comment, a correction of any content that *the applicant* deems detrimental to his/her image.

Unfortunately, the law does not require an evaluation of the claim by an impartial third judge - the opinion of the person allegedly injured is all that is required, in order to impose such correction to any website.

Hence, anyone who feels offended by any content published on a blog, an online newspaper and, most likely, even on Wikipedia can directly request the removal of such contents and its permanent replacement with a "corrected" version, aimed to contradict and disprove the allegedly harmful contents, **regardless of the truthfulness of the information deemed as offensive, and its sources.**

During all these years, the users of Wikipedia (and we want, once more, to point out that Wikipedia does not have an editorial staff) have always been available to review - and modify, if needed - any content deemed to be detrimental to anyone, without harm to the Project's neutrality and independence. In the *very rare* instances it was not possible to reach a mutually satisfactory solution, the entire page has been removed.

The [Bill - Rules on Wiretapping etc.](#), p. 24, letter a) states that:

«For the Internet sites, including newspapers and periodicals delivered by telematic way, the statements or corrections are published, with the same graphic characteristics, the same access methodology to the site and the same visibility of the news which they refer.»

Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Article 27.

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

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Much ado about what?

Paragraph 29 of the bill stated:

«For Internet websites, including newspapers and magazines distributed by electronic means, statements or corrections are published, within 48 hours from the request, with the same design characteristics, the same methodology of site access and visibility of the same news which they relate.»



Right to correction

This right already exists in
the Italian law,

but it is applied only to
newspapers...

...and the Berlusconi IV
Cabinet wanted to apply it
to **ALL** websites!



Which issues?

- 1) Technical problems
- 2) Practical problems
- 3) Neutrality problems



1) Technically problematic

...because the requested correction is deemed to be non-modifiable.

We would have been forced to block the whole article.



2) Practically problematic

Wikipedia has no editorial staff!

WHO would be responsible for:

- a) collecting the requests?
- b) checking the identity of the applicants?
- c) modifying and protecting the article *within 48 hours?*



3) Neutrality problems

Wikipedia is founded on
Neutral Point of View
and is freely modifiable.



Time-line of events

- June 2008: the “wiretapping bill” (“DDL intercettazioni”) is presented to the Parliament by Justice Minister
- June 2010: first statement from Wikimedia Italia about possible risks for Wikipedia.



Time-line of events

- September 2011: the Government re-starts the work on the bill
- early October 2011: discussion starts at the Italian Village Pump, WMF informally informed
- **October 4-6, 2011: 42 hours of blackout**



Wikimedia Foundation

Was informed, but did not
take part in the decision

Support to the motivations,
some doubts on the
strike



Wikimedia Italia

Was not involved in the decision (by mutual choice)...

...but clearly was called by the press

A LOT OF WORK!



Results

In two days:

- 20 million views to the statement
- 200,000+ fans for “Salviamo Wikipedia” facebook page
- Press: very large coverage in Italy, and coverage in more than 30 countries



Consequences on the law

- Contacted by a few politicians.
- Support by many (also from the governing parties)
- The act proposal is put off.



About the fundraising

Fear and awareness

(Wikipedia may not last):

- 180% increase in donors in 2011
- 68% increase (normalized on the basis of the global fund-raising growth)



What we did wrong

Timing: started at 8 PM (too late for evening news)

Feedback: (initial) lack of a comment page

Facebook: lack of an official page (and misuse of unofficial ones)



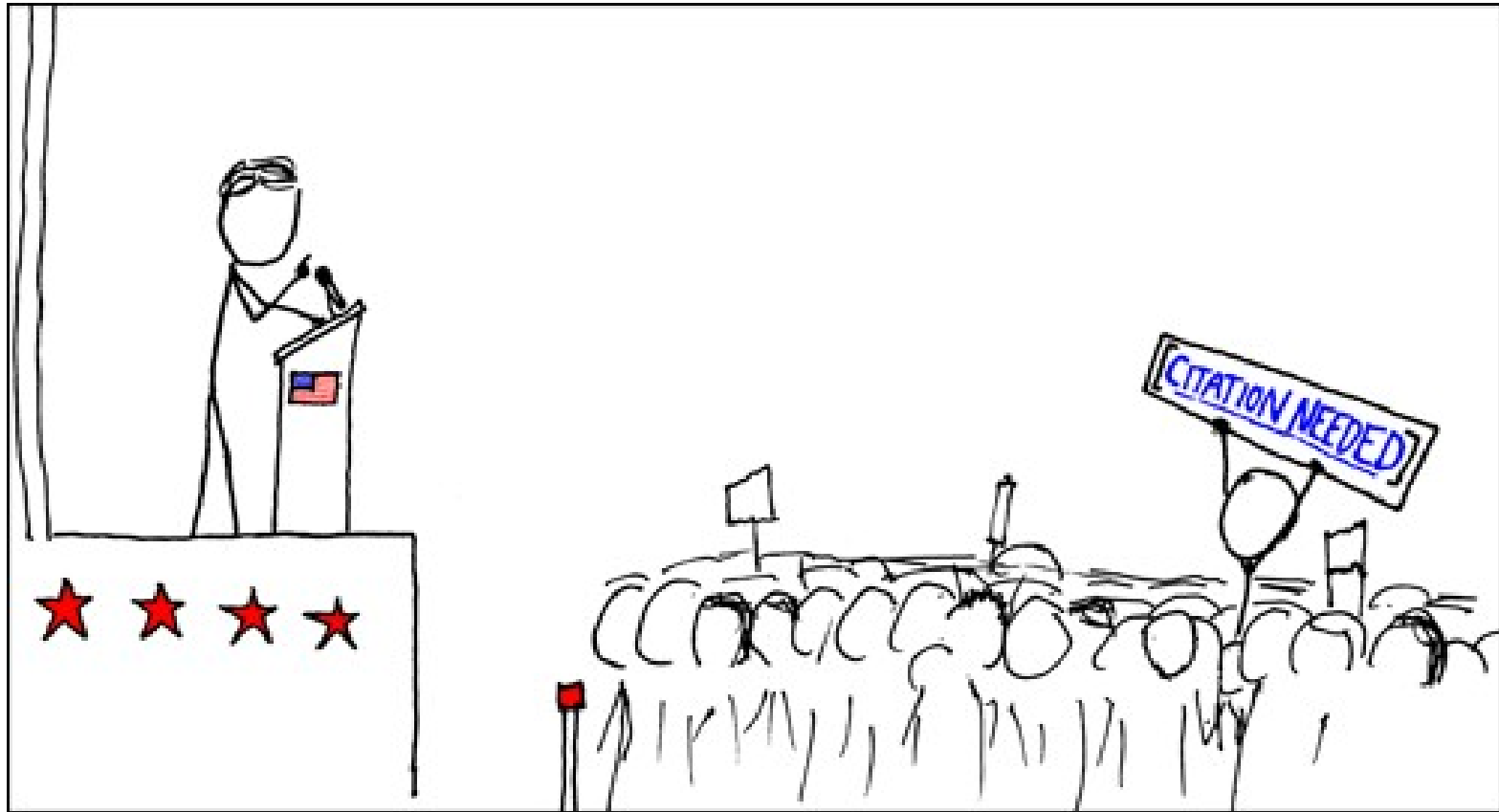
What else we did wrong: contacts

Next time? We will have to start from scratch again

We need a soft way to contact people

Maybe collecting contacts of interested people?

Thanks!



Questions?