

# The Wikimedia Foundation

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*Imagine a world in which every single person is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That's what we're doing.* Jimmy Wales

The Wikimedia Foundation hosts free-content projects on the internet, such as Wikipedia, the award-winning multi-lingual encyclopedia. Other online projects include Wikibooks, free, open-content textbooks; Wikinews, a free news source; Wikiquote, a free compendium of quotations; Wikisource, a free library; Wikispecies, an open, free directory of species; and Wiktionary, a free multilingual dictionary.

Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. was chartered to develop and maintain the necessary infrastructure for the growing online projects. The corporation, established in the state of Florida in the United States, owns the servers and other assets, and insures the organization's expenses are paid. Local chapters have been set up in Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Switzerland, and Serbia to support and promote the projects on a national level. The Wikimedia Foundation operates mostly with volunteer staff and relies entirely on public donations and grants to meet its mission of providing free knowledge to every person in the world.

## Free content

All of the articles in Wikimedia Foundation projects are free content, meaning it may be used for any purpose by anyone, including broadcasting or commercial uses.

Each contributor to the projects agrees to license their contributions under one or more free license, such as the GNU Free Documentation license or the Creative

Commons Attribution license. These licenses are designed to allow reuse of the content by others, as well as modification of the material. They do have some restrictions, particularly that any use of the material must also be licensed freely, and that the authors (or their designated agent such as Wikipedia) are credited. This idea of sharing one's copyrighted creations, and using a license to insure future derivations are likewise shared, is known as „copyleft“.

Using this free content model, articles are able to be modified rapidly and repeatedly by contributors to the projects, letting each author build on the material of earlier editors. Articles tend to grow, with large sections splitting off to be their own related articles, but sometimes articles are pruned back to more basic facts if enthusiastic contributors get too detailed in their prose. The ability modify, expand, or delete as necessary helps give Wikimedia Foundation projects their dynamic nature.

## Wikis

Invented by Ward Cunningham in 1995, wikis are websites where any user can edit the site, quickly and easily, using a web browser. The name is derived from the Hawaiian word “wiki”, meaning quick; Cunningham named the software after the „wiki wiki“ (quicker quick) buses at the Honolulu airport. Wikis use a simple formatting language anyone can learn in just a few minutes. The simple formatting and ease of editing via the web results in very rapidly developing websites.

The wiki software used by the Wikimedia projects is called MediaWiki. MediaWiki is developed by volunteers with the goal of creating an encyclopedia, and is an open-

