

The Wikimedia Foundation

*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 Docu-

mentation 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

The Wikimedia projects



Wikipedia

<http://www.wikipedia.org>

Wikipedia is founded on the belief that virtually everybody has some knowledge that they can share with others. It began as an English language project on January 15, 2001. It was soon joined by German and French language editions, and in a short time by many other languages.

The online encyclopedia is written entirely by volunteers: anyone can create or modify an article instantly, so that no article has a single author. Instead, hundreds and even thousands of people work together, sharing what they know to edit and improve the content. The result is a never-ending “work in progress”, always getting more thorough, and always getting better. Wikipedia’s editors come from a wide range of backgrounds, students, teachers, enthusiasts in many subjects, each of them contributing a little towards helping make this the most well-rounded collaborative educational effort ever seen.

Wikipedia believes that every single person has the right to learn, but also that every person has something that they can teach others. Contributors can create a personal account with a user name and a password, but this is not required. Some of Wikipedia’s best work comes from anonymous users, many of them just passing through, who notice a minor flaw that they can tidy up. Many of them become hooked, and end up as integral parts of the volunteer community. Wikipedia’s policy of maintaining a neutral point of view encourages people from diverse backgrounds to work together. Wikipedia is, according to alexa.com, one of the top 20 most popular sites on the Internet.

The Wikimedia projects



Wikimedia Commons

<http://commons.wikimedia.org>

Wikimedia Commons was launched to provide a central repository for video, images, music, and spoken texts, to be used by all Wikimedia sister projects. Commons now has hundreds-of-thousands of multimedia files. Wikimedia Commons received an honorary mention for Digital Community at the 2005 Prix Ars Electronica awards in May 2005. All files on Commons use free licenses, allowing them to be used for any purpose, even by non-Wikimedia projects.



Wikibooks

<http://www.wikibooks.org>

Wikibooks aims to build a collection of free e-book resources, including textbooks, language courses, manuals, and annotated public domain books. It aims to help both (self-)instruction of students, and teachers in high-schools and universities.



Wikiquote

<http://www.wikiquote.org>

Wikiquote is a repository of quotations taken from famous people, books, speeches, films or any intellectually interesting materials. Proverbs, mnemonics or slogans are also included in Wikiquote.



Wikisource

<http://www.wikisource.org>

Wikisource aims to build a collection of primary source texts. It serves Wikimedia's other projects as a useful archive of classics, laws, and other written material.



Wikinews

<http://www.wikinews.org>

Wikinews's mission is to report news on a wide variety of subjects, providing a free-content alternative to commercial news; Contributors from around the world collaborate on news articles. The articles in the currently over 10 language editions are either original reports or summaries of news from external sources. All articles are required to be written from a neutral point of view.

a multilingual free
encyclopedia

Wiktionary

[ˈwɪkʃənəri] n.,
a wiki-based Open
Content dictionary

Wɪlən ˈwɪʒ kərɪ

Wiktionary

<http://www.wiktionary.org>

Wiktionary is a project to create free content dictionaries and thesauri in every language.

Wikispecies

<http://species.wikimedia.org>

Wikispecies is a project to create a directory of all known species. Articles are named according to the standard genus-species name, and put into a hierarchy according to the Linnaean classification system.

The Wikimedia board and staff

The Wikimedia Foundation's policies are set by a five member Board of Trustees, according to the Wikimedia Foundation's charter. Day-to-day operations are handled by the Executive director. The Foundation employs software developers to write and maintain the MediaWiki code used on its projects, and system administrators to maintain the hardware infrastructure.

Jimbo Wales

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Jimmy “Jimbo“ Wales is the founder of Wikipedia and the chairman of the Foundation's Board of Trustees. Wales was born in Huntsville, Alabama, and is a graduate of Auburn University and the University of Alabama. He worked as Research Director



at Chicago Options Associates, a futures and options trading firm then located in Chicago.

In 1999, Wales had the concept of a freely distributable encyclopedia, and founded a project called Nupedia. It failed primarily due to being a top-down “cathedral” model, as opposed to Wikipedia, which is the ultimate “bazaar”. After more than two years of struggle with the Nupedia concept, Wikipedia was opened up to all and became an instant success. Wales lives in St. Petersburg, Florida, with his wife and daughter.

Florence Nibart-Devouard

Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees

Florence Nibart-Devouard is the Vice-Chair of the Wikimedia Foundation, re-elected by the Wikimedia community in July 2005. Florence was born in Versailles, France, and lived in several French cities, as well as Antwerp in Belgium and Tempe in Arizona. She is an engineer in Agronomy (ENSAIA) and also holds a DEA in Genetics and biotechnologies (INPL). She joined the Wikipedia adventure in February 2002 and is known under the pseudonym “Anthere”. Florence is 37, and lives in Clermont Ferrand with her husband Bertrand and her two children.



Angela Beesley

Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees

Angela Beesley is an elected member of the Board of Trustees of the Wikimedia Foundation. She has been an active editor of Wikipedia since early 2003. Angela co-founded the free wiki hosting site, Wikia.com, with Jimmy Wales in 2004. She works as Wikia's Vice President of Community Relations, supporting over 30,000 registered users and developing over 1500 wikis, all of which follow the free content and open editing model of Wikipedia. Prior to her involvement with Wikipedia, Angela was a researcher and test developer for the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales.



The Wikimedia board and staff

Michael Davis

Treasurer of the Board of Trustees

Michael Davis is the treasurer of the Foundation Board of Trustees. Formerly the CEO of Chicago Options Associates, a futures and options trading firm in Chicago, Michael is Chief Operating Officer of community-focused wiki hosting service Wikia, and lives in St. Petersburg, Florida. He is a graduate of Williams College and the University of Chicago.



Tim Shell

Secretary of the Board of Trustees

Tim Shell is the secretary of the Board of Trustees. Shell is an internet entrepreneur with an interest in self-organization, and decentralized order, as exemplified by Wikipedia. In 1996, Tim left his studies in computer science to go into business, joining up with Jimmy Wales to start Bomis. Shell currently resides in Las Vegas.



Brad Patrick

General Counsel, Interim Executive Director

Brad Patrick serves as general counsel to the Wikimedia Foundation, and on an interim basis as Executive Director. He previously practiced law with Fowler White Boggs Banker PA in Tampa, Florida, where he specialized in intellectual property litigation, computer law, technology and internet issues. Prior to joining Fowler White Boggs Banker, Brad practiced law in Seattle, Washington with Preg O'Donnell & Gillett, a civil litigation firm with a great view of Lake Union. He began his career in Redmond, Washington with the law firm of Magnuson Lowell, P.S. Brad graduated from Colgate University in Hamilton, New York and Boston College Law School in Newton, Massachusetts.



Brion Vibber

Chief Technical Officer

Brion Vibber is the lead developer and release manager of MediaWiki, the wiki software used on all the Wikimedia projects. He is 26 years old and lives in California, USA. He has been involved as a developer for about three years, and has probably poked his finger into every development task, including maintenance of servers, performance improvement, development of features, debugging, and user interface.

