

# Wikipedia *in Arabic* Education Program

ويكيبيديا في مناهج التعليم  
في العالم العربي



ويكيبيديا  
الموسوعة الحرة

Wikipedia is an encyclopedia full of educational content that is available free of charge, free of advertising, to anyone. The project started in 2001 and quickly became one of the top-ten destinations on the web.

## Wikipedia: Free Access to Knowledge

It is currently the largest, fastest-growing, and most popular general reference work on the Internet.

Wikipedia is built by a global volunteer community. The volunteer's work is based on the vision to provide free access to the sum of all human knowledge.

The project is operated by the non-profit charitable Wikimedia Foundation, created in 2003 by Jimmy Wales, the founder of Wikipedia.

*“Students contributing to Wikipedia is an exciting new education model that has been tremendously successful at increasing student engagement and learning in the United States. I’m excited to see how we can work with professors around the world to form a global community of educators using Wikipedia in the higher education classroom.”*

— Robert Cummings, University of Mississippi,  
author of *“Teaching Writing in the Age of Wikipedia”*

If you are interested in participating in our program, please contact **Frank Schulenburg**, who leads the Wikipedia Education Program, at [education@wikimedia.org](mailto:education@wikimedia.org). Frank will set up a meeting with you to discuss the next steps.



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# The Digital Divide — Current State of the Arabic Wikipedia

*There is broad agreement in many circles within the Arabic speaking world that the quantity and quality of Arabic content available on the Internet is not meeting the needs of the ~350 million Arabic speakers worldwide.*

Similarly, within the Wikimedia movement and among Wikipedia projects, Arabic Wikipedia has not taken its place as a large, high quality encyclopedia. While the project has made slow and steady progress, it has lagged behind other languages as it has not attracted a large contributor community. As of August 2011, Arabic Wikipedia comprised 147,000 articles, created and managed by 600 active editors.

The Wikimedia Foundation's strategic planning process in 2010 identified Arabic Wikipedia as a priority for special efforts to help catalyze the growth of the project. The Wikimedia Foundation is committed to investing in the Arabic region during its current five year strategic plan.

## ARABIC

350 million speakers  
600 active editors

147,000 articles

## PORTUGUESE

290 million speakers  
1,650 active editors

696,000 articles

as of August 2011

# Wikipedia *in Arabic* Education Program

The Wikimedia Foundation has been partnering with universities in the United States, India, and Canada to incorporate Wikipedia article editing into the classroom curriculum. This program has generated promising results in terms of high quality articles on important subjects and is scaling quickly. Our very preliminary discussions with advisers in the Arabic region indicate the program could be deployed successfully with modest modifications.

**The idea behind the Wikipedia Education Program is powerful and yet simple: students write Wikipedia articles instead of writing traditional term papers.** That way, students reach a massive global audience rather than just an audience of one (their professor) which gives them a greater sense of accomplishment since the writing will outlast the class. At the same time, students improve their research and writing skills and learn how to use wikis — a key competency in the 21st century.

By contributing to the Arabic Wikipedia, students will engage in documenting the richness of Arab culture and making key information available to readers across the Arabic speaking world. The Wikimedia Foundation supports professors and students by providing trained Wikipedia Ambassadors, who are available to help program participants as they navigate writing on Wikipedia for the first time.

# Benefits of participating in the program

## 1 Improving the quantity and quality of Arabic content available on the Internet

The students who participated in the Wikipedia Education Program in the fall semester 2010 and in the spring semester 2011 contributed more than 8.8 million characters of content to Wikipedia — that's the equivalent of 5,800 printed pages. And even better, the content students added was of high quality: Wikipedia articles students worked on improved an average of 140 percent. We are envisioning that a similar program undertaken at universities in the Arab world would have a significant impact on the quantity and quality of content available on the Arabic Wikipedia.

## 2 Better research and writing skills for students

We know that the use of Wikipedia as a teaching tool in university courses offers a number of opportunities for students. They will sharpen their research skills, learn how to work collaboratively among themselves, and interact with readers and writers around the world. These factors make it very attractive for educational institutions to explore using Wikipedia as a teaching tool.

## 3 Students who are more motivated and engaged

Universities and colleges participating in this program will foster an increase in student motivation and drive in the classroom. A recent study, undertaken by researchers from the United States, has shown that students assigned to edit Wikipedia report

greater engagement with such an assignment on many levels. They are excited about the global audience for their work and motivated by the possibility of creating a public knowledge resource that will be useful to others and that will last beyond their school term.<sup>[1]</sup>

## 4 Recognition and media coverage

In the United States, India, and Canada, various national, state, local, and campus press — including newspapers, radio, and magazines — have covered the Wikipedia Education Program. We expect the same to happen in the Arab world. That means that institutions could gain recognition through media coverage if they participate in the program.

## 5 Free educational materials

Printed materials (e.g. sample lesson plans, learning activities, Wikipedia editing guides), online, and video materials will support current educational activities, and will be available for reuse, with or without modification, in future classes. The Wikimedia Foundation will provide all these materials free of charge.

[1] Amy Roth / Rochelle Davis / Brian W. Carver: *Assigning Wikipedia Editing: Triangulation Toward Understanding University Student Engagement*. Submission to ijCSCL, September 2011.