Lessons from Citizendium

Wikimania 2009, Buenos Aires, 28 August 2009

HaeB
haebwiki@gmail.com
[[de:Benutzer:HaeB]], [[en:User:HaeB]]

Please don't take photos during this talk.

Citizendium Timeline

- September 2006: Citizendium announced. Sole founder: Larry Sanger, known as former editor-in-chief of Nupedia, chief organizer of Wikipedia (2001-2002), and later as Wikipedia critic

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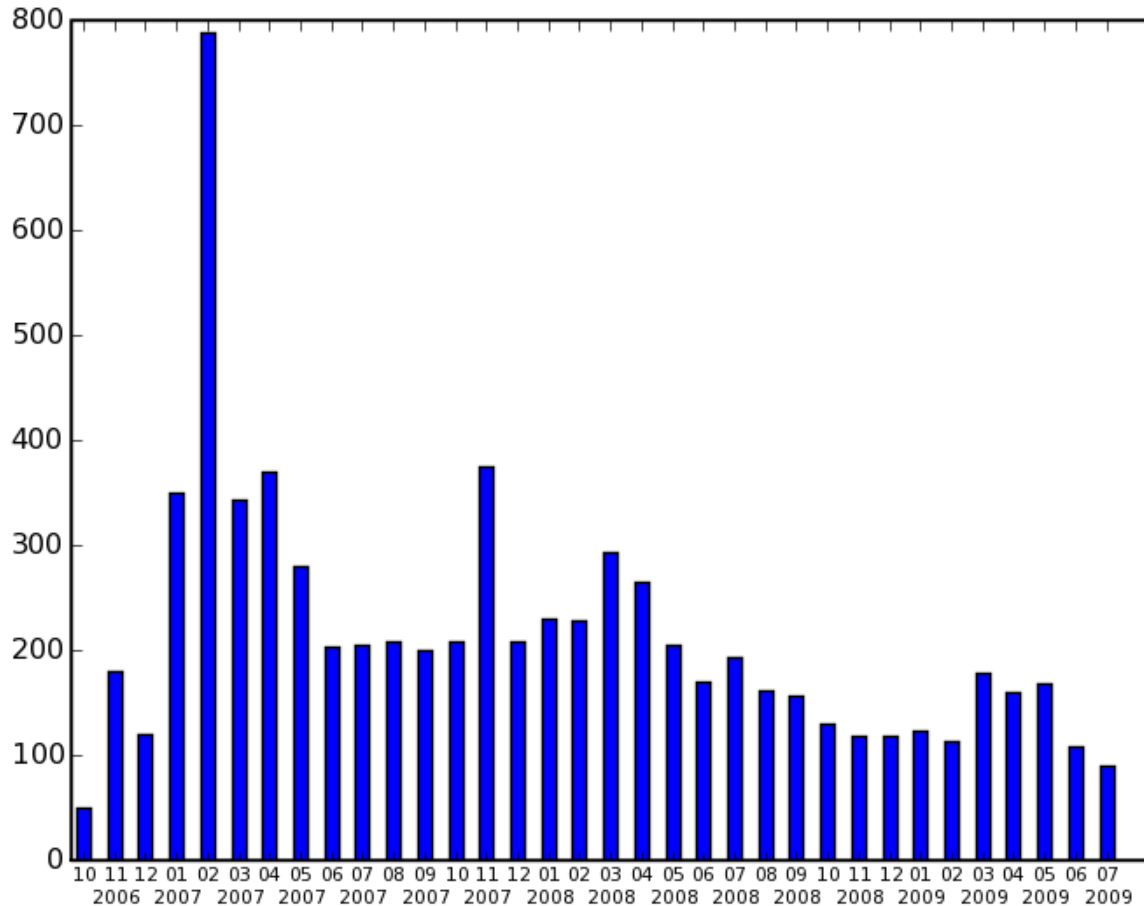
Citizendium and Wikipedia:
Similarities and differences

- Encyclopedia

- Free license

- Open (anyone can contribute)

- Created by amateurs

- MediaWiki-based collaboration

- Non-profit

- Strict real names policy

- Special role for experts: "editors" can issue content decisions, binding to non-editors

- Governance: Social contract, elements of a constitutional republic
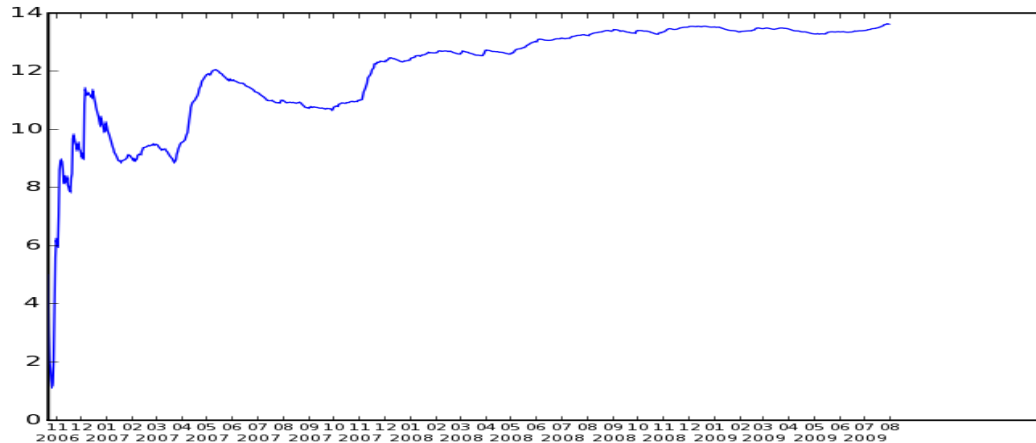
Wikipedian views of Citizendium

- Competitor for readers, contributions
- Ally, common goal of creating free encyclopedic content
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- **In this talk**: A long-time experiment testing several fundamental policy changes, in a framework which is still similar enough to that of Wikipedia to generate valuable evidence as to what their effect might be on WP
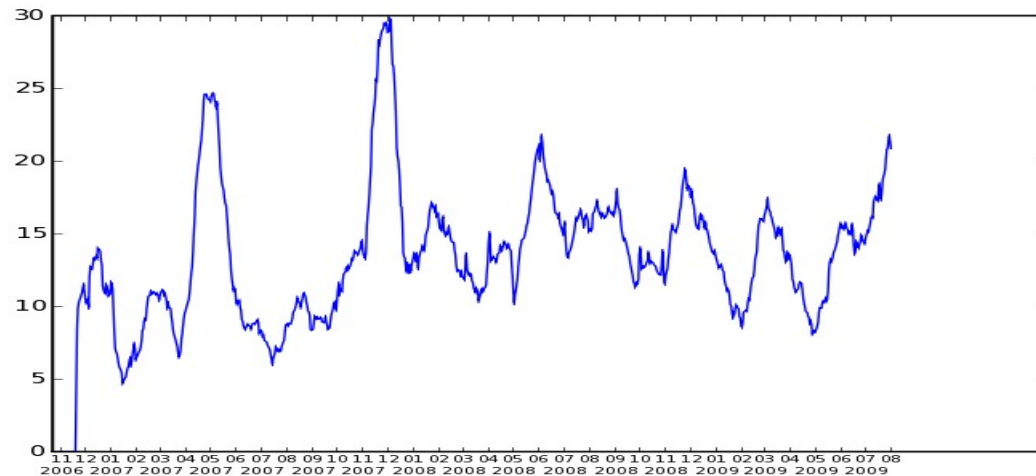
Active editors: Waiting to explode

Sanger (October 2007): "At some point, possibly very soon, the *Citizendium* will grow explosively-- say, quadruple the number of its active contributors, or even grow by an order of magnitude ...."

Number of users that made at least one edit in each month

Article creation rate: Still muddling

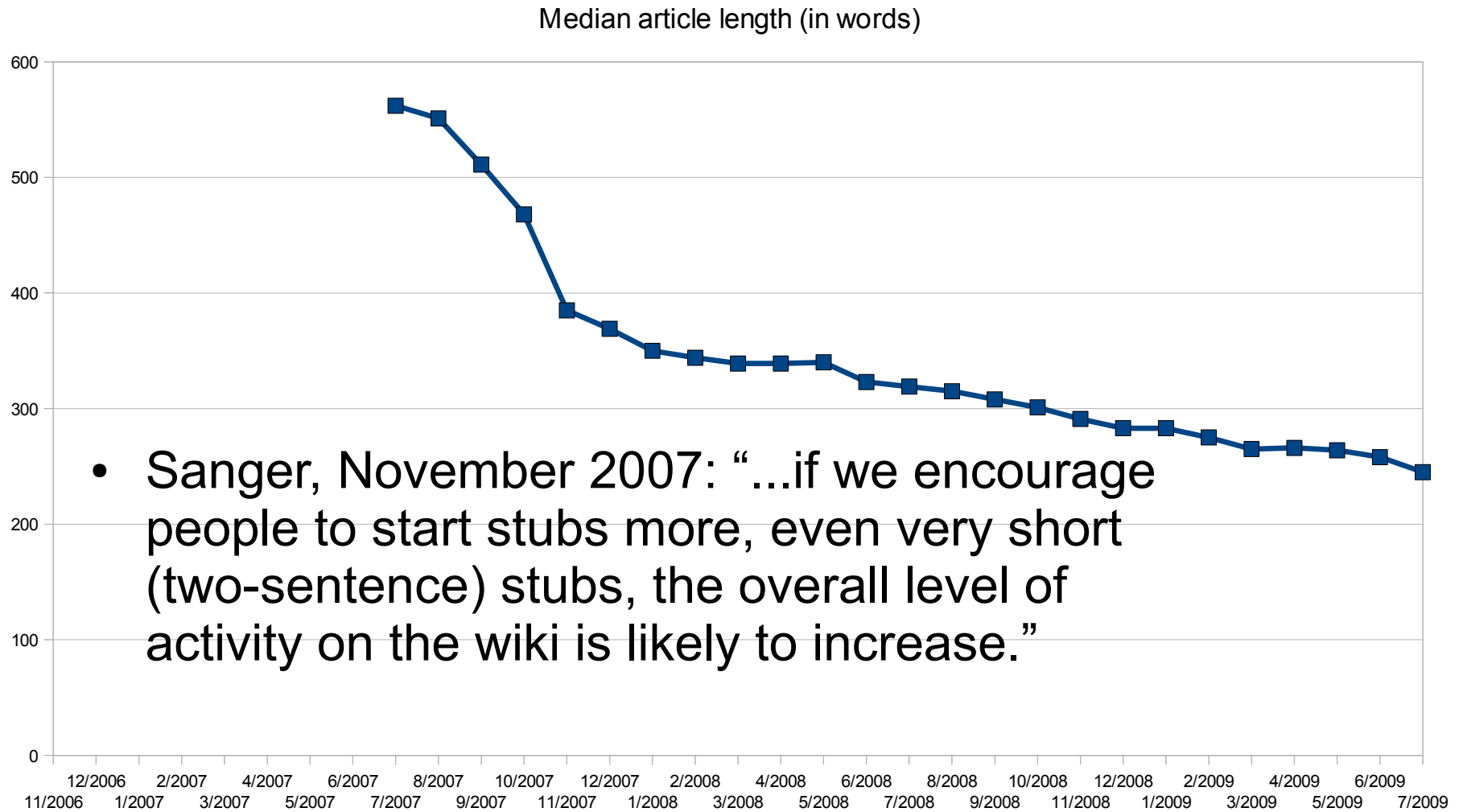Number of mainspace pages created per day on Citizendium, average since the beginning

Number of mainspace pages created per day on Citizendium, 30 day average

Sanger (October 2007): "It's still possible that the project will, from here until eternity, muddle on creating 14 articles per day. [...] I just don't think that these latter possibilities are at all likely."

Median article length: Spreading thin

Median article length (in words)

- Sanger, November 2007: "...if we encourage people to start stubs more, even very short (two-sentence) stubs, the overall level of activity on the wiki is likely to increase."

Skeptical observers

- Andrew Lih, "The Wikipedia Revolution" (referring to October 2008 numbers): "Sanger's project has had some hiccups, but it has gathered steady momentum. […] The challenge for Sanger is that growth is flat, with articles increasing only at a linear rate."

- The Independent, February 2009: "[Citizendium] has failed to take off and has fewer than 10,000 articles almost two years after launch."

- Financial Times Techblog, August 2009: "At best, Citizendium could be called a qualified success. … Sanger's creation is increasingly in danger of being consigned to footnote status in the entry for 'Online Encyclopedias'."

Wikiweise – a German precedent

- Free online encyclopedia project founded by a former administrator of the German Wikipedia in April 2005.

- Initially, most of the active contributors were former Wikipedians.

- Stricter quality and inclusion standards than German WP (but no formal roles for experts)

- Real names required (but no user contributions list because of privacy concerns)

Wikiweise – a German precedent

- Growth has slowed down:
  - ca. 20 edits/day around February-April 2006
  - ca. 8 edits/day around April-August 2009
  - 2100 articles in February 2006
  - 3500 articles in February 2007
  - 5200 articles in February 2008
  - 6300 articles in August 2009

Real names

- And other strict registration requirements (e.g. no freemail addresses)

- One constable says he has seen valuable potential contributors being deterred by the requirements, but feels still confident he could get his cat through the vetting process

- Privacy concerns. User biographies are excluded from search engines by robots.txt, but a lot of personal information can be revealed by user contributions (cf. my talk at Wikimania 2008)

Approved articles

- Highest quality level on Citizendium:

  - "Our growing number of editor-approved articles are **reliable** and of **world class quality**, rivaling the best printed encyclopedias."

- Approval can be decided by one uninvolved editor (subject expert), or unanimously by three editors

- No systematic procedure of fact checking, spell checking etc.

- 113 approved articles as of August 2009

Approved errors

(From reading around a while – by no means a systematic or exhaustive search:)

Article name	Error description	Time remainin
Accidental release source terms	Typo (extraneuous "[[")	> 306 days
Complex number	Factual error (multiplication instead of addition)	3 days
Complex number	Factual error (geometric interpretation of division)	813 days
Complex number	Factual error (potential function)	> 844 days
Crystal Palace	Factual error (position of Paxton's bust, corrected in draft)	> 903 days
Fertility (demography)	Typos (e.g. "flyctuated", "frquency")	> 688 days
Frederick Twort	Misleading wording in first sentence (corrected in draft)	> 888 days
Free statistical software	Wrong source cited (corrected in draft)	> 89 days
Henry's law	Mis-wording, changing the intended meaning to the opposite	215 days
Jane Addams	Typo (extraneous "in")	> 719 days
Johannes Diderik van der Waals	Factual error and dangling subclause in lede	7 days
Life	Typos ("mainain", "Hebert", …)	11 days
Life	Typos (in "For the possibility of extraterrestrial life...", see talk page)	> 629 days
Literature	Factual error ("twentieth century" instead of "nineteenth century")	35 days
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Nathanael Greene	Numerous typos (3x "it's" instead of "its", "more small" instead of "small"	63 days
Nathanael Greene	Duplicate word ("oversaw the the trial")	> 817 days
Randomized controlled trial	Typo (extraneous "and"), introduced in reapproval	> 56 days
Richard Hofstadter	Factual error (PhD year,copied from WP,later fixed there by anon edit	> 340 days
Rottweiler	Typo ("Meckar River" instead of "Neckar")	> 500 days
Vertebral subluxation	Typo ("coooperative" instead of "cooperative")	904 days

Crippling Linus' Law

- Linus' Law: "given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow"
- Needs: 1) eyeballs 2) communicating the bug 3) fixing the bug
- First error in the "Complex number" example was uncontroversial and unanimously judged as urgent. Still, a complicated process had to be followed:
  - Infrequent editor (notices error, corrects draft version) → Editor (notices correcting edit) → Approval Editor (notified on talk page) → Approval Nominator (notified per email) → Approval Editor (makes correction)
- There have been examples of well-meaning Wikipedians trying to point out errors in CZ articles, who find no other way than contacting CZ editors who happen to have a WP account via Wikipedia

Fringe experts?

- Several observers have voiced concern that the mainstream scientific view is under-represented on Citizendium in topics such as homeopathy, water memory, global warming and chiropractic.

- CZ's approved "Homeopathy" article largely written by a leading proponent of homeopathy (banned from Wikipedia), who applauded CZ for its more welcoming environment

- Earlier, similar example: "Scientology (doctrine)" and "Church of Scientology" written by a scientologist (Sanger intervened in this case)

Civility

- ".. a shame you will never wash off yourself. You will be dragged through the mud [...] and will be cited in the future as a man capable of uncomparable brazenness and disloyalty. Then you will healthily reconsider your terrified panic, and the cowardly advice by barbarians and stupid vandals which assisted you in the havoc that you wreaked." (Diderot complaining to the ~~administrator~~ publisher of the Encyclopédie about his deletions of objectionable material, 1764)

- "Wikipedia administrators [...] react like Nazis" (Larry Sanger, 2008)

- "The fact that you ask that question definitely shows that you are some kind of idiot! […] You're an idiot." (Larry Sanger in 2007, to a Citizendium user holding a doctorate in Philosophy, in a private conversation after a controversy over the article "Scientific method". Apologized shortly afterwards)

- "... Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!   Oh, that's rich! …" (Robert McHenry, former editor-in-chief of the Encyclopædia Britannica, in reaction to the news that "Sarah Palin Might Write a Book", Britannica blog, 2009)

Costs of enforcing civility

- These examples show: Civility principles are sometimes severely violated by even the best encyclopedists. Enforcing them strictly in these cases would have come at a great cost.

- Several Citizendium authors have been banned for voicing quality criticism in a harsh way, although the criticism might have been seen as legitimate in content, if not form.

Content exchange with Wikipedia

- CZ started as a complete WP content fork, but unmodified WP articles were purged in January 2007

- Still, many CZ articles were later imported from Wikipedia

- Licenses became compatible (again) by Wikipedia's license change to CC-BY-SA in 2009 → "WikiProject Citizendium Porting" started: Importing approved articles from CZ

  - Participants noted some quality problems, "automatic" importing discouraged

  - Some concern over correct attribution

- Recall the original idea of Wikipedia as a "scratchpad" for Nupedia

- IMHO a lot of potential in easier importing / cross-project comparing tools. Cf. trend in software development towards distributed revision control (e.g. GitHub), which allow easy forking and easy merging

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Abstract available at
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2

Citizendium (http://citizendium.org/) is, like Wikipedia, a free online encyclopedia.

See e.g Ken Fisher: "New Citizendium to correct Wikipedia's wrongs?". Ars Technica September 19, 2006, available at http://arstechnica.com/old/content/2006/09/7775.ars

See e.g. Stefanie Olsen: "Wikipedia co-founder plans 'expert' rival", CNet, 16 October 2006, available at http://news.cnet.com/Wikipedia-co-founder-plans-expert-rival/2100-1038_3-6126469.html

Larry Sanger and others: "An explanation of the Citizendium license". December 2007, available at http://www.citizendium.org/czlicense.html

Larry Sanger: "My recent absence". [Citizendium-editors] mailing list, 30 July 2009, available at https://lists.purdue.edu/pipermail/citizendium-editors/2009-July/000491.html

Larry Sanger: "Not 'jumping ship,' but stepping down–eventually– as planned", Citizendium blog, 25 August 2009, available at http://blog.citizendium.org/?p=541

Citizendium and Wikipedia: Similarities and differences

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- Strict real names policy
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See e.g.http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/CZ:We_aren%27t_Wikipedia

"amateurs" = unpaid volunteers instead of professional encyclopedia writers (subject experts are amateurs in that sense, too)

Shortly after CZ's announcement, Clay Shirky criticized Sanger's theoretical concept of expertise and predicted that Citizendium would fail because of it.

Clay Shirky: "Larry Sanger, Citizendium, and the Problem of Expertise", "Many 2 Many" blog, September 18, 2006, available at

http://many.corante.com/archives/2006/09/18/larry_sanger_citizendium_and_the_probl

("Deference, on Citizendium will be for people, not contributions, and will rely on external credentials, a priori certification, and institutional enforcement. Deference, on Wikipedia, is for contributions, not people, and relies on behavior on Wikipedia itself, post hoc examination, and peer-review. Sanger believes that Wikipedia goes too far in its disrespect of experts; what killed Nupedia and will kill Citizendium is that they won't go far enough.")

I believe that some facts which will be mentioned in this talk, especially CZ's lack of growth and the failure of its approval process to eliminate many errors, supports some of Shirky's statements.

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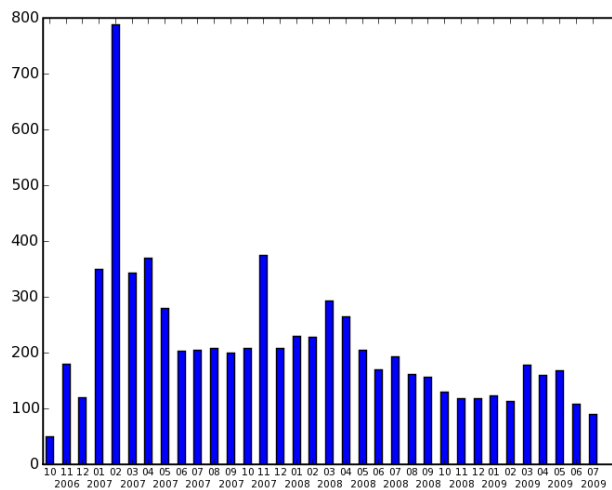
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Several very different attitudes towards CZ exist in the WP community, most Wikipedians are probably not fully aware of its existence.

CZ can be seen as a version of WP with several changes that Sanger had advocated for – e.g. in: Larry Sanger: "Why Wikipedia Must Jettison Its Anti-Elitism", Kuro5hin, 31 December 2004, available at http://www.kuro5hin.org/story/2004/12/30/142458/25

Almost three years after CZ's first announcement, enough time has passed to make assessments of its progress, its failures and successes (the latter are extensively covered on citizendium.org itself, especially on the Citizendium blog). Let's first have a look at its growth.
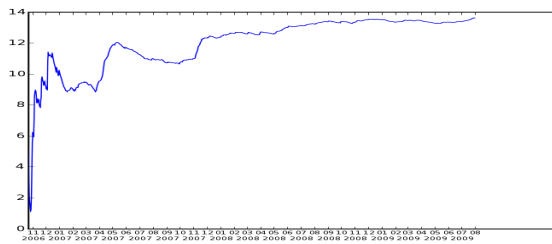
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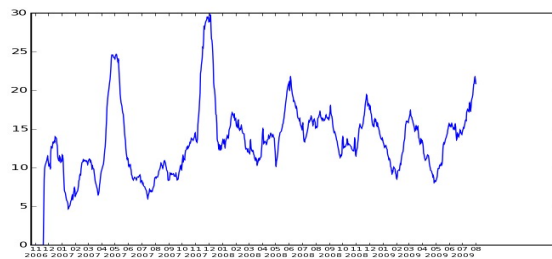
© Aleksander Stos, CC-BY 3.0
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5

http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Image:Editing_users.png
(August 2009)

Larry Sanger: "The Citizendium one year on: a strong start and an amazing future" (section "The coming explosion of growth"), 30 October 2007, available at http://www.citizendium.org/oneyearandthriving.html#explosion

Article creation rate: Still muddling

Sanger (October 2007): "It's still possible that the project will, from here until eternity, muddle on creating 14 articles per day. [...] I just don't think that these latter possibilities are at all likely."

© Aleksander Stos, CC-BY 3.0
Number of mainspace pages created per day on Citizendium, average since the beginning

© Aleksander Stos, CC-BY 3.0
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6

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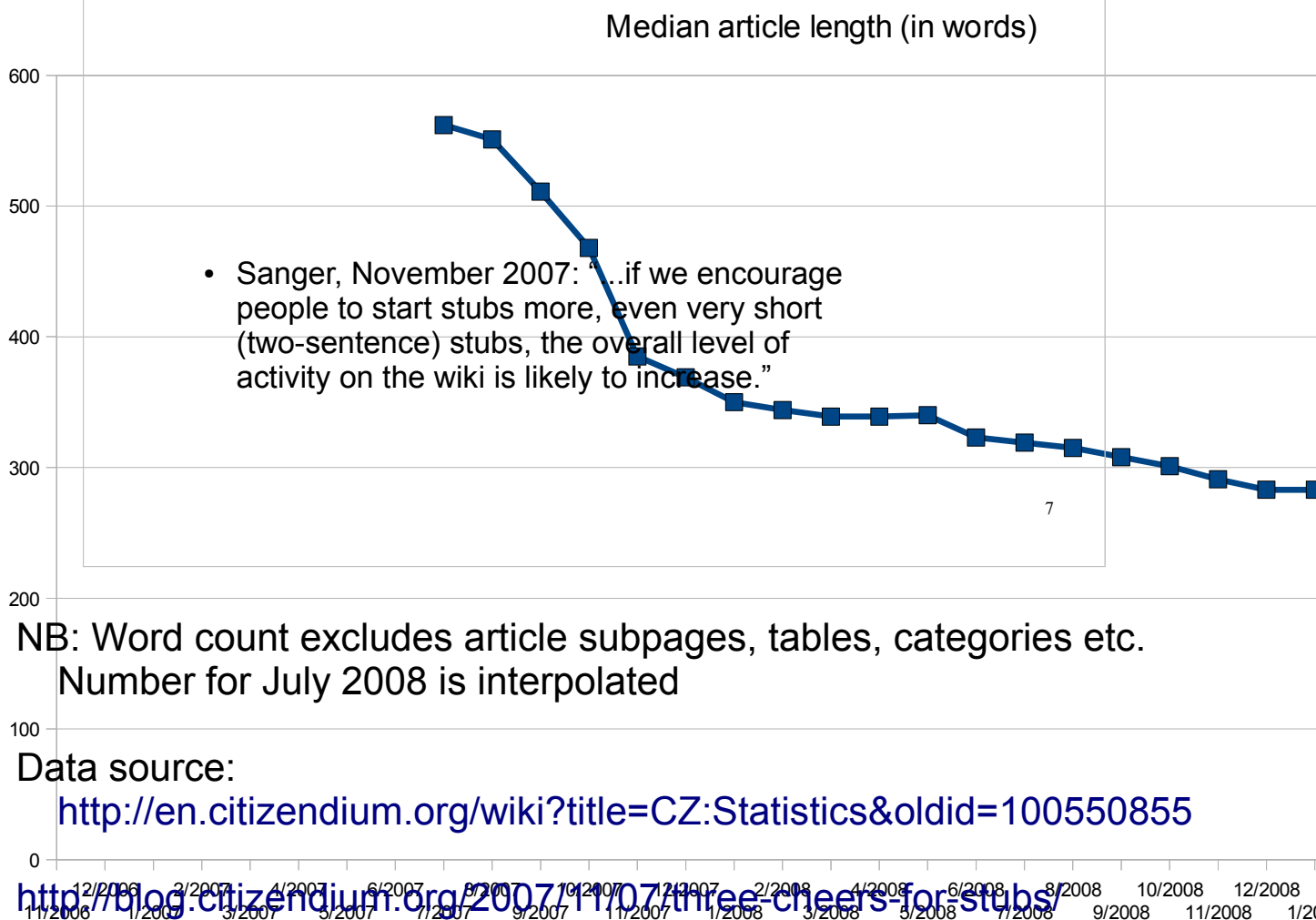(August 2009)

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From the same text: "Frankly, accelerating our growth rate by 50% would be, by the standards of thriving and proven Web 2.0 projects--like the Citizendium--on the slow side. I'd be willing to go out on a limb and say we'll do better. I think we'll at least double our article creation rate every year. So I think we'll probably have at least 100,000 [articles] by 2011, and one million by 2015."

As of August 2009, Citizendium had around 12,000 articles.

Median article length: Spreading thin

Median article length (in words)

- Sanger, November 2007: "...if we encourage people to start stubs more, even very short (two-sentence) stubs, the overall level of activity on the wiki is likely to increase."

7

NB: Word count excludes article subpages, tables, categories etc. Number for July 2008 is interpolated

Data source:
http://en.citizendium.org/wiki?title=CZ:Statistics&oldid=100550855

http://blog.citizendium.org/2007/11/07/three-cheers-for-stubs/

In contrast, the English Wikipedia (from 2001-2006, later data not available) and most other Wikipedias have had steadily rising mean article size:
http://stats.wikimedia.org/EN/TablesWikipediaEN.htm

Skeptical observers

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8

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=10558636&pnum=4
[NB: this article gets some other facts wrong, e.g. about the Wales birthday controversy]

http://blogs.ft.com/techblog/2009/08/citizendium-founder-ready-to-jump-ship/

More examples:

"We seem to be in an extended lull, with linear growth in articles and text, a dropoff in editing and, apparently, no particular growth in usage. That's more than a little ominous ...". From:
Walt Crawford, "Beyond Wikipedia", Cites & Insights 9, Number 5: April 2009, article available at http://citesandinsights.info/v9i5d.htm (also summarizes other CZ coverage)

"As an early committed contributor to Citizendium -- with over 3,500 edits on the site -- I have to say it is moribund. ... A good idea that just didn't draw enough support ...   Russell Potter | September 12, 2008 9:42 PM"
http://scienceblogs.com/stoat/2008/09/citizendium_is_still_doomed.php#comment-1103130

Wikiweise – a German precedent

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- Initially, most of the active contributors were former Wikipedians.

- Stricter quality and inclusion standards than German WP (but no formal roles for experts)

- Real names required (but no user contributions list because of privacy concerns)

http://www.wikiweise.de/

http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Enzyklop%C3%A4die/\

(Both in German)

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http://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.wikiweise.de/

- Homegrown, proprietary wiki software
- Homegrown free content license, addressed shortcomings of the GFDL
- Uses advertisements (Google AdSense)

Real names

- And other strict registration requirements (e.g. no freemail addresses)

- One constable says he has seen valuable potential contributors being deterred by the requirements, but feels still confident he could get his cat through the vetting process

- Privacy concerns. User biographies are excluded from search engines by robots.txt, but a lot of personal information can be revealed by user contributions (cf. my talk at Wikimania 2008)

Back to Citizendium: The first main difference to Wikipedia

Howard C. Berkowitz: "Re: Karma system moved from The Future of CZ". Citizendium Forums, August 03, 2009, 09:44:06 PM, available at
http://forum.citizendium.org/index.php/topic,2798.msg22476.html#msg22476

HaeB: "Checkuser and editing patterns – Balancing privacy and accountability on Wikimedia projects", Wikimania 2008, slides available at
http://wikimania2008.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CheckUser_and_Editing_Patterns.pdf

Lesson: A strict real names policy and verification process do prevent some valuable editors from participation

Approved articles

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- Approval can be decided by one uninvolved editor (subject expert), or unanimously by three editors
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12

Quote from
http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Welcome_to_Citizendium
(August 2009 – note: "editor-approved" has since been replaced by "expert-approved")

This where the expert status is especially important. (Subject expert editors can also make content decisions which normal participants have to obey.)

Approved errors

(From reading around a while – by no means a systematic or exhaustive search:)

Article name	Error description	Time remainin
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13

The 17 articles in this incomplete error list already amount to about 14% of Citizendium's approved articles (as of November 2009)

Updated list, with links, at
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:HaeB/Citizendium_approved_errors

Approved articles still carry a disclaimer ("we cannot guarantee that this article is wholly free of mistakes"). Its contrast to the central project goal of providing reliability with the approval process doesn't seem to have escaped the attention of CZ participants, see e.g. http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Talk:Crystal_Palace#Strange_disclaimer

Left out style issues in the list. (I personally found most approved articles to be well written. The sometimes slightly chatty and opinionated tone is a mostly matter of taste, only the fan style in the Led Zeppelin article does really seem out of line with an encyclopedia.)

Crippling Linus' Law

- Linus' Law: "given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow"
- Needs: 1) eyeballs 2) communicating the bug 3) fixing the bug
- First error in the "Complex number" example was uncontroversial and unanimously judged as urgent. Still, a complicated process had to be followed:
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Linus' Law was formulated in the context of open source software development in Eric S. Raymond's essay *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, (Chapter "Release Early, Release Often", available at http://www.catb.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar/cathedral-bazaar/ar01s04.html)

CZ still relies on such strengths of the "bazaar" model, cf. the remarks at http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/CZ:Myths_and_Facts
.
Details about the complicated correction process in the "complex number" example:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_talk:Wikipedia_Signpost/2007-07-30/Citizendium_analysis#Citizendium.27s_approv

Examples of well-meaning readers desperately trying to notify CZ of errors::
" ... It's a very odd claim, and a false citation. The thing that worries me the most about errors like this is that there doesn't seem to be an easy way to report errors to Citizendium. … Firsfron of Ronchester 19:26, 3 September 2007 (UTC)"
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_talk:Dematt/Archive_2#Citizendium_article_on_Extinction_.28geology.29
"... I'm so sorry to bother you with Citizendium stuff on your Wikipedia account, and I realize this could quickly become annoying. I know you are not the "Citizendium complaints department" and you are busy writing articles for more than one encyclopedia. Still, there's just no way for a non-editor to correct errors on Citizendium (no-one has contact information, or if they do, they've already left the project; the forum registration system doesn't work for dubious types like myself, etc)...   There's a major problem with Citizendium's article on Television … Firsfron of Ronchester 21:16, 7 September 2007 (UTC)")
"http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_talk:Dematt/Archive_2#Citizendium_.28again.29
Hi there, I've been reading the Citizendium version of our article and notice it is based on an old copy that contained several errors. Most seriously, it retains the incorrect definition of the sense and antisense strands that we fixed in February. If anybody with access to this page can correct this error that would be great. Tim Vickers 16:31, 16 August 2007 (UTC)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:DNA/Archive_13#Citizendium_version_of_this_article
"I tried raising this on the Citizendium forum but my post got deleted. Tim Vickers (talk) 18:28, 6 February 2008 (UTC)" (about the same errors in the DNA article)
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=User_talk:Stephen_Ewen&oldid=189615391#DNA_on_Citizendium
(Tim Vickers is a biochemist who is notable as an expert editor on Wikipedia)

Another well-meaning and knowledgeable reader resorted to contacting Sanger personally, because he couldn't find a way to contact an article's editors:
http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Talk:Crystal_Palace#Another_comment_from_a_reader

Lesson: Citizendium's closedness (i.e. the real names policy which prevents unauthenticated readers from participating) and "approval" bureaucracy may often prevent insertion of errors, but it can also slow down or prevent their correction

Fringe experts?

- Several observers have voiced concern that the mainstream scientific view is under-represented on Citizendium in topics such as homeopathy, water memory, global warming and chiropractic.

- CZ's approved "Homeopathy" article largely written by a leading proponent of homeopathy (banned from Wikipedia), who applauded CZ for its more welcoming environment

- Earlier, similar example: "Scientology (doctrine)" and "Church of Scientology" written by a scientologist (Sanger intervened in this case)   15

E.g. William M. Connolley: "Citizendium is still doomed", September 10, 2008 5:42 PM, available a t
http://scienceblogs.com/stoat/2008/09/citizendium_is_still_doomed.php
(Connolley, a climatologist and Wikipedian, criticizes CZ's "Global warming" article for giving too much weight to skeptic views)

" There's a long draft article on "memory of water" that ... I find deeply disturbing, and an approved article on homeopathy that, while including a few disclaimers, is slanted very much in favor of homeopathic claims. … [T]he "healing arts workgroup," dealing with "all articles that have a primary focus on topics that provide care to health problems," shows a partial list of articles—almost all "alternative" forms (chiropractic and massage therapy probably being the most mainstream. ... One would think that the healing arts would include and, indeed, be primarily based on health science. One would, apparently, be misinformed."
Walt Crawford, "Beyond Wikipedia", Cites & Insights 9, Number 5: April 2009, article available at
http://citesandinsights.info/v9i5d.htm (the "water memory" article was later modified in reaction to these comments)

"A couple of alt-medicine [CZ approved] articles were [proposed to be ported to WP], and I reviewed the corresponding Citizendium articles and found them rife with POV. It appears that the Citizendium philosophy is to describe chiropractic and homeopathy almost entirely from the point of view of chiropractors and homeopaths, and to relegate mainstream opinion into a relatively small criticism section. I therefore have marked those two Citizendium articles as being unreliable from a Wikipedia point of view, due to their POV … Eubulides (talk) 17:31, 28 June 2009 (UTC)"
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Homeopathy/Archive_39#Citizendium_porting

Dana Ullman (described by ABC News as "homeopathy's foremost spokesman" and indefinitely banned on Wikipedia from editing homeopathy related articles: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requests_for_arbitration/Homeopathy), wrote large parts of CZ's homeopathy article, and after its approval was quoted as praising CZ's real names and expert policies:
http://homeopathyresource.wordpress.com/2009/01/17/citizendium-providing-a-better-definition-and-article-on-homeopathy/

[Update October 2009: The homeopathy article has been modified, apparently taking mainstream medicine views somewhat more into account]

•Lesson: Citizendium might be a more welcoming environment (than Wikipedia) for proponents of minority viewpoints which are not accepted by mainstream science, especially if they fulfill the formal requirements for "expert" status in their field (many do)

Four quotes from eminent encyclopedists which would not seem to pass most policies against personal attacks and other incivilities

http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/%C3%80_M._Le_Breton,_Imprimeur_de_l%E2%80%99Encyclop%C3%A9die

http://blog.citizendium.org/2008/02/28/whos-more-command-and-control-wikipedia-or-cz/

http://entellektuel.freeblog.hu/archives/2007/03/13/Citizendium_and_a_dispute_with_Larry_Sanger/
(also available at
http://web.archive.org/web/20071027103014/http://entellektuel.freeblog.hu/archives/2007/03/13/Citizendium_and_a_dispute_with_Larry_Sanger/)

http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2009/08/sarah-palin-might-write-a-book/

(Admittedly, two of these four were directed at outsiders, not at collaborators. But they were still made in context of the project – citizendium.org, britannica.com – and one would assume that a concept like "professionalism" still applies in such cases.)

As a side note, the debate about the enforcement of civility guidelines in an online encyclopedia collaboration has parallels in recent debates about free speech in science See for example the current campaign "Keep Libel Laws out of Science" (by the "Sense About Science" science advocacy charity), addressing the particularly strict UK laws about defamatory statements:
http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/index.php/site/project/333/

These parallels manifest more specifically in the facts that the case which gave rise to that UK campaign centered around criticism of alternative medicine, and that CZ Constables intervened on the "Homeopathy" talk pages several times against homeopathy critics protesting what they saw as bias in the approved article, using harsh words. One Citizen was banned indefinitely for "unprofessionalism" after asking for the approval to be revoked:
http://en.citizendium.org/wiki?title=Talk:Homeopathy/Draft&diff=prev&oldid=100531685#Request_

Costs of enforcing civility

- These examples show: Civility principles are sometimes severely violated by even the best encyclopedists. Enforcing them strictly in these cases would have come at a great cost.

- Several Citizendium authors have been banned for voicing quality criticism in a harsh way, although the criticism might have been seen as legitimate in content, if not form.

As an example, the Philosophy doctor mentioned in the notes for the previous slide was indefinitely banned for "impugning credibility of members in good standing" after he posted comments starting "It is nonsense what you write... " and "It is absurd what you write ...", which were "deleted by The Constabulary on grounds of making complaints about fellow Citizens", citing CZ's Professionalism policy:

cf.
http://en.citizendium.org/wiki?title=Talk:Scientific_method/Draft&diff=100050730&oldid=100050712
http://en.citizendium.org/wiki?title=Talk:Scientific_method/Draft&diff=100050741&oldid=100050738

(I do not want to judge whether his or his opponent's version of the "Scientific method" article was of better quality, but one can't help noting that slightly aggressive phrases like these are not entirely absent from academic debates even among the most reputed scholars.)

His complaints to Sanger are almost a paraphrase of Shirky's 2006 criticism (see notes for previous slide and slide 3):
[2007.03.06. 18:59:21] Matthias Brendel: You care about people.
[2007.03.06. 18:59:33] Matthias Brendel: And not about content.
[2007.03.06. 18:59:52] Matthias Brendel: So you will have a good community producing bad content.

Lesson: Enforcing civility more strictly (and consistently) could come at a cost to content quality and participation of highly competent editors

Content exchange with Wikipedia

- CZ started as a complete WP content fork, but unmodified WP articles were purged in January 2007

- Still, many CZ articles were later imported from Wikipedia

- Licenses became compatible (again) by Wikipedia's license change to CC-BY-SA in 2009 → "WikiProject Citizendium Porting" started: Importing approved articles from CZ

    - Participants noted some quality problems, "automatic" importing discouraged

    - Some concern over correct attribution

- Recall the original idea of Wikipedia as a "scratchpad" for Nupedia

- IMHO a lot of potential in easier importing / cross-project comparing tools. Cf. trend in software development towards distributed revision control (e.g. GitHub), which allow easy forking and easy merging

18

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Citizendium_Porting

Addendum: After the talk I learned that the idea to apply the distributed revision control innovations which arose in software development in recent years to wikis and Wikipedia has been explored before, as evidenced by two threads on the Foundation-l mailing list:

"Possibility of a git-based fully distributed Wikipedia", February 2008, available at
http://www.gossamer-threads.com/lists/wiki/foundation/121420

"Wikipedia meets git", October 2009, available at
http://www.gossamer-threads.com/lists/wiki/foundation/181163

In November 2009, serious work on such a project ("Levitation") started, see http://levit.at/ion/