

# Wiki's new home in India

## The world's largest open encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, is setting up its second office, after San Francisco, in India

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Come January 15, and Wikipedia will be 10 years old. Also, within the next six months, Wikipedia Foundation will open its second office in the world, after San Francisco, at an as yet unannounced destination in India. So says Jimmy Wales aka Jimbo, the maverick who led the movement to create the world's largest 'open' encyclopaedia.

"Am really excited about that (anniversary)," says Wales. As of now, Wikipedia articles are available in 12 Indian languages. And although Internet users in India account for only seven percent of its population (as per Wikimedia Traffic Analysis Report 9/2009 - 7/2010), Indians contribute to 1.5 percent of world's monthly page views of Wikipedia, ranking at number 15 in the world, two stops

before China and many other countries where Internet penetration is much higher.

"We were looking for interesting opportunities where we could see major growth. We have communities in India which are very strong and yet we are not as big here as we are in some European countries. Also, I come to India very often and find a lot of passion for Wikipedia here that I can tap into," says Wales. Speaking at the Mumbai Meet-up, Wales said, "When answering questions, I often realise that people look for a tall building where hundreds run about, working on Wikipedia!"

Currently employing about

50 people, the organisation's Indian office will employ three to four people, says Wales. "Although Internet penetration is not deep in India, the per capita usage is very similar to other places around the world... it will be a small office here as we are looking at giving support to the community," he adds.

Wikipedia has a good offline base in south India, and while there is an active Bengali Wikipedia community online, there are no Wiki enthusiasts who have started an offline forum or meet-up group community. "There is no offline Wiki community in Kolkata, though the online Bengali community is active," says Kundan Amitabh, a Wikipedia user since 2004 and now a part of Angika, an Indian language incubator project for Wikipedia.

"Though Wikipedia is offered in 12 Indian languages, 81% of all edits made by Indian users are in English, something rarely seen in other countries, where people use and edit content in the local language. This disparity is also seen in page views from India in the English section of Wikipedia," says Kundan, who adds that while only 20% of people know English in India, others know local languages, which can be used effectively.

"But lack of awareness about software to translate or make use of these languages is a hurdle, which the new office may help with," says Kundan.

Currently, about 18-20 Indian languages are in Wikipedia's incubator, including Awadhi, Bhili, Dogri, Gurung, Rajasthani, Tamang, and Kutchi.

Simplifying usability remains the focus of Wikipedia. "Making the server easier to use so that we can have more diverse user sets, instead of just those who are very good at computers, is what I want both in India and around the world," says Wales.

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