WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Polski
1 490 000+ haseł

English
6 383 000+ articles

日本語
1 292 000+ 記事

Русский
1 756 000+ статей

Deutsch
2 617 000+ Artikel

Español
1 717 000+ artículos

Français
2 362 000+ articles

Italiano
1 718 000+ voci

中文
1 231 000+ 條目

Português
1 074 000+ artigos

Wikipedia after two decades. Did we succeed?

Paweł T. Jochym

*H. Niewodniczański Institute of Nuclear Physics
Polish Academy of Sciences*

Plan

- Idea
- History
- Today
  - Structure
  - Functioning
- Challenges
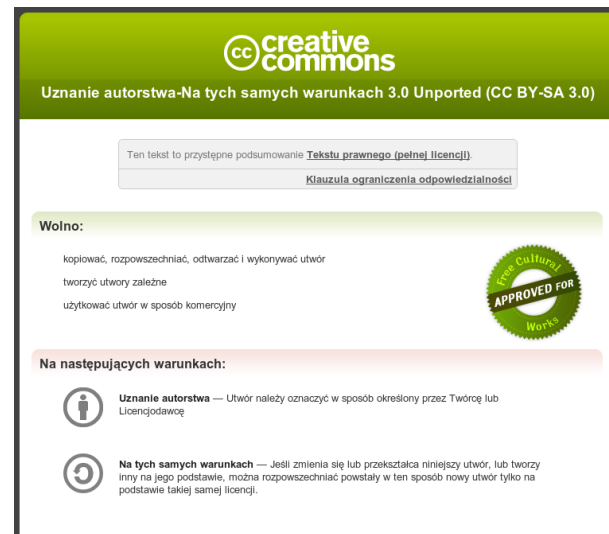- Opportunities
- Conclusions

The Wikipedia Monument (Polish: Pomnik Wikipedii), *located in Słubice, Poland, designed by Armenian sculptor Mihran Hakobyan honoring Wikipedia contributors.*

Idea of Wikipedia

- Wiki – technology allowing direct editing of web pages without additional tools.

- Wikipedia – encyclopedia created using wiki

  – Created by users

  – Multi-lingual

  – Internet-based

  – Free (Creative Commons)

- Ultimate goal:

    *Create summary of all human knowledge
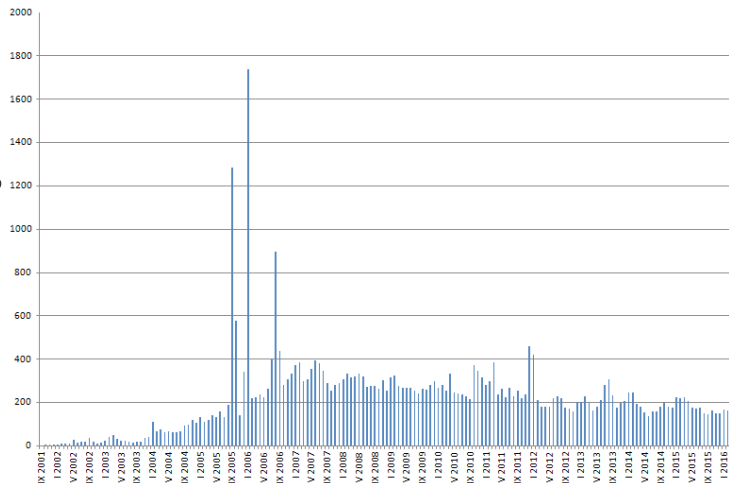   in all human languages.*

Some history

1999   **2000**   **2001**   **2003**   **2007**

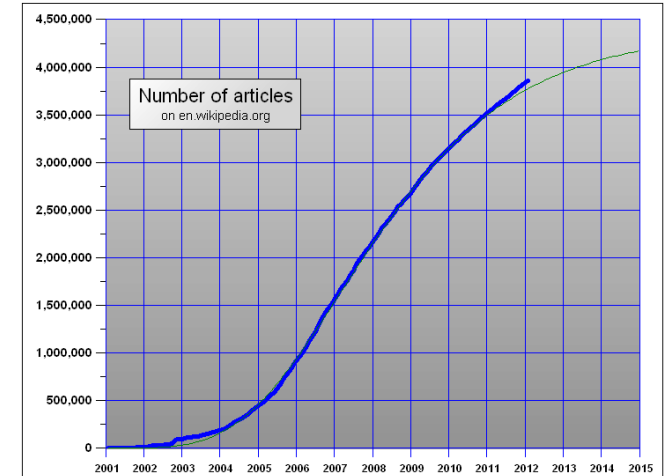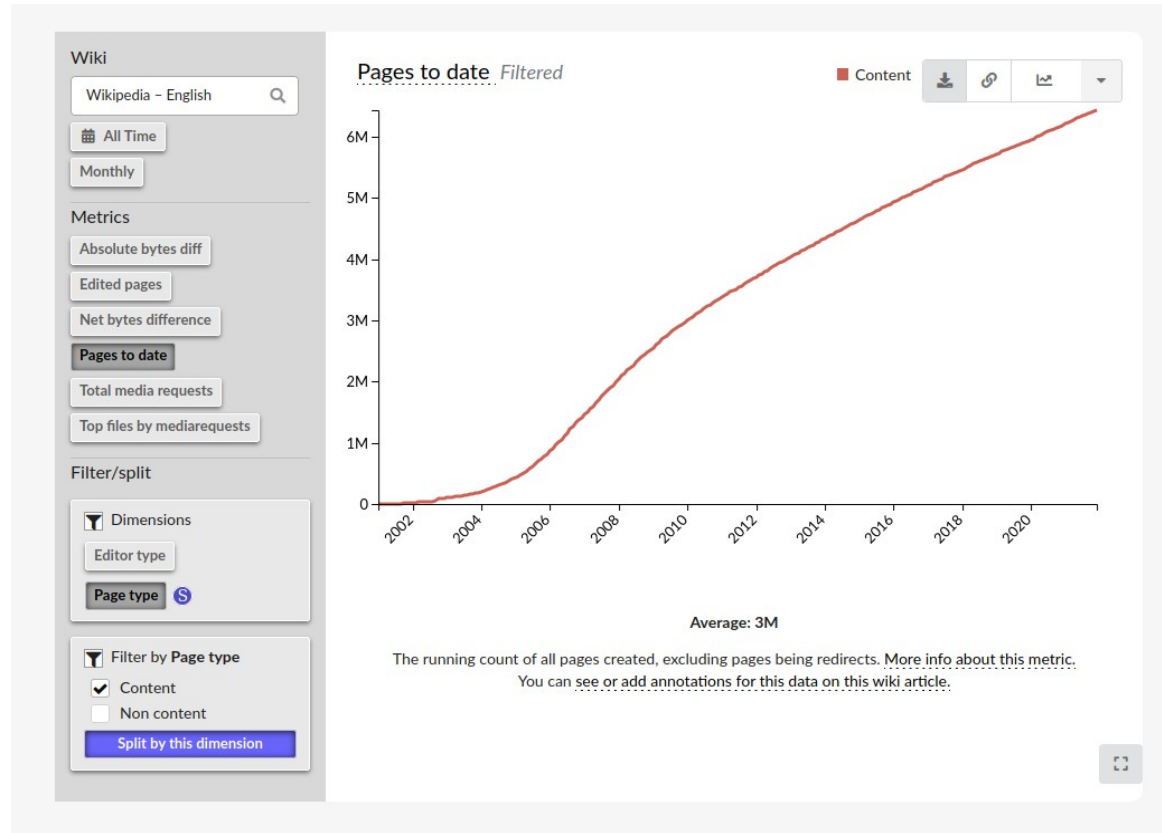GNUpedia (GNE)
Free Software Foundation
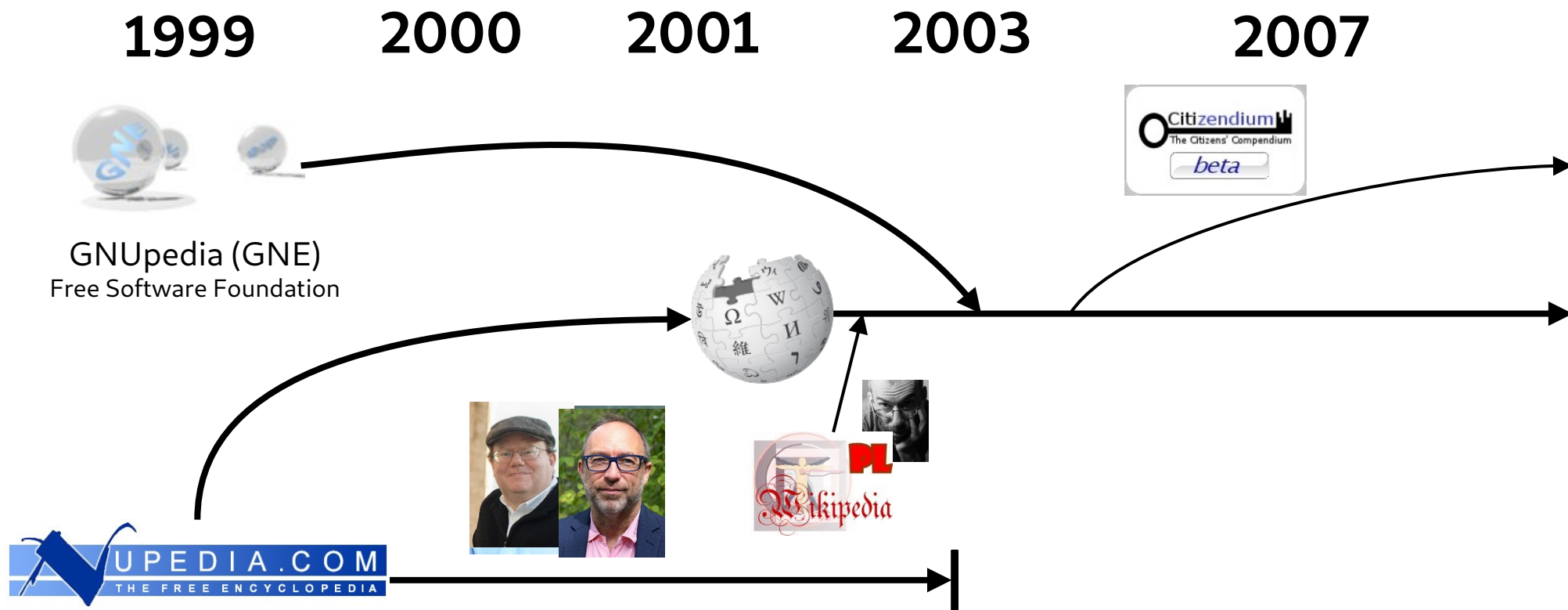
Polish chapter

- 26/09/2001: Started in our Institute under my desk

- 12/01/2002: Moved and merged with global project

- 22/05/2003: 10000 articles

- 31/12/2004: 50000 articles

- 24/09/2013: 1 000 000 articles

- 14/12/2021: 1 500 000 articles

- 11th by size globally

- 15k editors, 1.5k active

- 25M unique users/month, 300M page views/month

Growth of global and English Wikipedias

Today

How it is done.

- 13th most visited page in 2021

- Over 500 servers, multi-layered system

- Two locations (Virginia and Singapore)

- Free software

- Cheaply (USD, 2020)
  - Hosting: 2-3 mln
  - Salaries: 55 mln
  - Awards and grants: 20 mln
  - Total: 120 mln

Webrequest flow
Wikipedia, April 2020
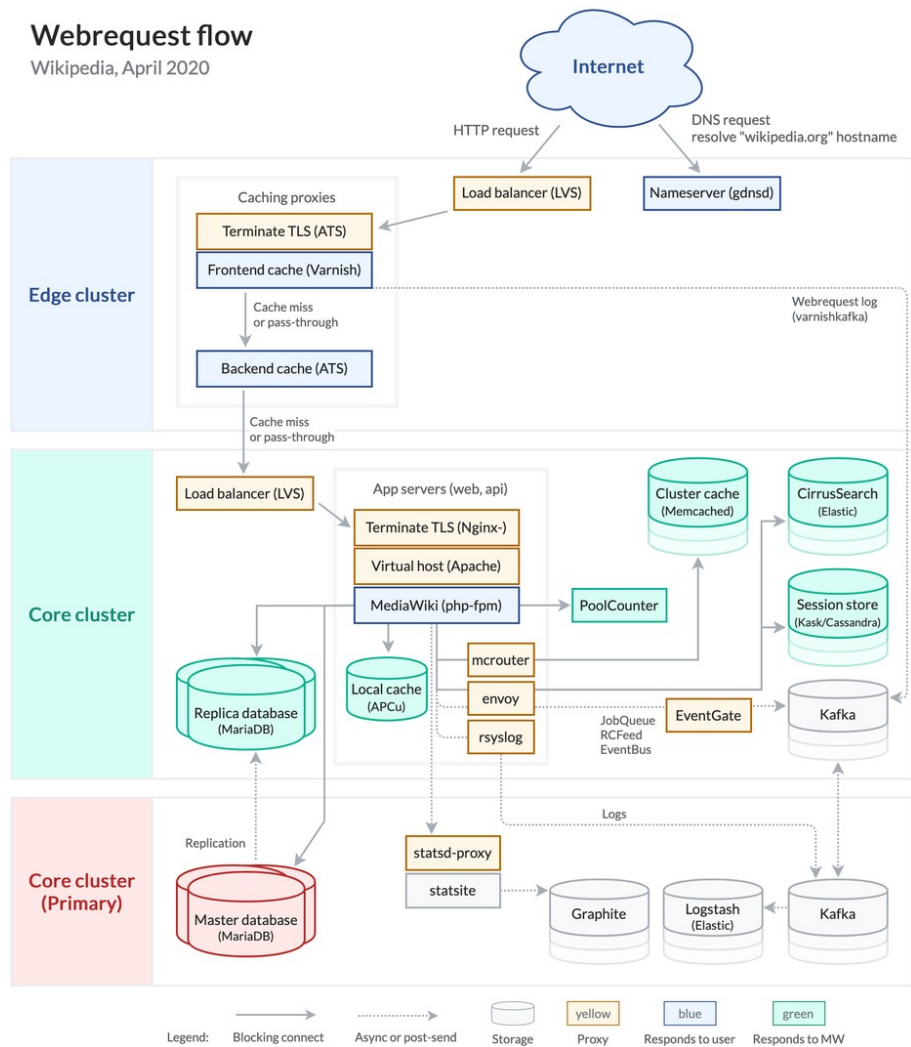
Wikipedia, Wikimedia, Users and Editors

- Wikipedia is the encyclopedia project.

- Wikimedia is the foundation running the project.

- There is only one multi-lingual Wikipedia with language chapters.

- National Wikimedia chapters are independent (e.g. Wikimedia Polska).

- Users and editors may be registered or anonymous.

- Very minimal data is required for registration.

- Editors gain rank and privileges with number of edits.

- Administrators are community selected high-ranking Editors.

- Wikimedia Foundation has no editorial control over Wikipedia.

Five Pillars of Wikipedia

- ## Wikipedia is an encyclopedia
  Wikipedia is not a soapbox, an advertising platform, vanity press, an experiment in anarchy or democracy, an indiscriminate collection of information, or a web directory. It is not a dictionary, a newspaper, or a collection of source documents, although some of its fellow Wikimedia projects are.

- ## Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view
  We strive for articles in an impartial tone that document and explain major points of view, giving due weight for their prominence. We avoid advocacy, and we characterize information and issues rather than debate them. All articles must strive for verifiable accuracy, citing reliable, authoritative sources. Personal interpretations or opinions do not belong on Wikipedia.

- ## Wikipedia is free content that anyone can use, edit, and distribute
  Since all editors freely license their work to the public, no editor owns an article and any contributions can and may be mercilessly edited and redistributed. Respect copyright laws.

- ## Wikipedia's editors should treat each other with respect and civility
  Respect your fellow Wikipedians, even when you disagree. Seek consensus, avoid edit wars, and never disrupt Wikipedia to illustrate a point. Act in good faith, and assume good faith on the part of others. Be open and welcoming to newcomers.

- ## Wikipedia has no firm rules
  Wikipedia has policies and guidelines, but they are not carved in stone; their content and interpretation can evolve over time. The principles and spirit matter more than literal wording, and sometimes improving Wikipedia requires making exceptions. Do not agonize over making mistakes: (almost) every past version of a page is saved, so mistakes can be easily corrected.

Impossible?

- Rules and procedures saved the project:
  - It takes 4-5 clicks to vandalise the page.
  - It takes only 1 click to fix it.
- Anonymous vandalisms are almost invisible to normal users.
- Authors of the page are alerted about changes.
- There are extensive tools for authors and editors.
- Determined attacks are still possible.
- Drift from Neutral Point of View (NPOV) is difficult to detect and prove.
- State or corporate sponsored bias in the articles probably exists.

Challenges

- Effective verification of sources.

- Biographies – the most authoritative source is the least objective.

- Burn-out of editors.

- Growth of orphaned articles.

- Protection from powerful bad actors.

- Slow freeze of the project.

- Missing knowledge in narrow fields.

- 'Nonsense creep'.

- NPOV protection in difficult-to-verify fields (History, Culture, Religion etc.).

What can you do for Wikipedia?

- Scientific community operates by different rules than Wikipedia.

    - Tailored for knowledge creation.

    - Authorship-centered culture.

    - Different social structure.

    - Publish or perish. There are no points for writing Wikipedia articles.

- Wikipedia needs expert knowledge of scientists.

- Preservation of knowledge is our social function as well.

- We get no profits from doing public lectures and outreach.

- Students will use Wikipedia if we like it or not.
Let us make sure it is an accurate source of knowledge.

Conclusions

- Wikipedia is a very valuable cultural resource.

- Collecting all human knowledge takes more than two decades.

- And more than 40 thousand people.

- It is more of the process than an achievable goal.

- The project will not survive without constant flow of new editors.

- Even small contributions substantially help:

    - Don't be anonymous if you can. Create account for your edits.

    - Start from tutorials. They are short. Don't be afraid of mistakes.

    - Find something interesting and exciting.

Welcome to Wikipedia,
the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit.
6,444,037 articles in English

Introduction to contributing to Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a free encyclopedia, written collaboratively by the people who use it. Since 2001, it has grown rapidly to become the world's largest reference website, with 6.4 million articles in English attracting billions of views every month. For a more detailed account of the project, see **About Wikipedia**.

How you can contribute

Don't be afraid to edit – *Anyone* can edit almost every page; just find something that can be improved and make it better! You can add content (using references to support your claims), upload free-to-use images, correct spelling and grammar mistakes, improve prose to make it more readable, or any number of other tasks. It's normal for new contributors to feel a little overwhelmed by all of our policies, but don't worry if you don't understand everything at first; it's fine to use common sense as you edit, and if you accidentally mess something up, another editor can always fix or improve it later. So go ahead, edit an article and help make Wikipedia the world's best information source!

January 2022   Institute of Nuclear Physics, PAS