

Workshop Four: Wikis

1 Introduction - What's a Wiki?

"MediaWiki is an open-source wiki engine originally developed for use on Wikipedia, and Wikipedia is still by far the best-known use of it. But MediaWiki is also in use on tens of thousands of wikis around the world – it's almost certainly the world's most popular wiki software" (Koren, 2012, p. 1).

2 Activity Wiki Characteristics

- Working in small groups, discuss the following characteristics of wikis, and find an example that illustrates how this happens in a wiki that you have used in the past.
- Note the main feature for each characteristic of the use of a wiki on a post-it-note.
- Use the whiteboard to note the main ideas and themes that groups have noted.

Jason Mittell defines the principles of wikis as

Freedom: wikis are open to a wide range of uses beyond creating an encyclopaedia, they can also be used for collaborative authoring, projects, organising documents or sharing information, for example. Wikis are non-hierarchical and are open to different contributors to create and post entries. Readers of wikis are free to navigate the pages via hyperlinks, key word searches, random pages, and so on, without a defined 'route' through the wiki (i.e. a contents page).

Transparency: wikis show and track what changes have been made to an entry and by who. As a community of users this is non-hierarchical and promotes non-hierarchical working based around the discussion components of the wiki that allow contributors to edit, re-edit and compare different versions of an entry while posting. Any contributor can make and edit an entry, without a 'hierarchy' enforcing an editorial policy. If there is a dispute then it is discussed in an open manner. Wikis trace and show the work that went into producing them.

Fluidity: Wikis are easy to display content that can be read on a wide range of browsers. Wikis can be edited and updated easily, while linked to different pages, sources of content or external media files. Pages in a wiki are always changing and being updated. Contributors then 'watch' a page to see if it is added to or amended by other contributors.

Emergence: Wikis are not organised centrally, and they are not planned. They rely instead on the posting of entries by participants who decide between themselves which entries should be made. The reader is free to navigate a wiki in a similar manner. The principles that shape the wiki are decided on by the users who form the community of interest based around the subjects and the topics covered. Disputes are managed through a process of resolution and compromise, which looks to other sources of information as a point of expression in an ongoing debate.

Collective Intelligence: Wikis allow for the tracking and discussion of ongoing projects. In this way wikis open up the possibility that we can manage a project by pooling the collective resources and knowledge of the different user's active in the project. So, rather than relying on a centralised management authority to validate the knowledge demonstrated in a wiki, the users and the readers of a wiki are able to discuss and add comments and suggestions for improvements, and to mark instances of information that is yet to be verified for later updates. In this way a wiki is said to be able to exceed the capabilities of the individual and produce a wider-ranging model of knowledge that draws on a cognitively diverse range of sources.

Relative Anonymity: A wiki does not promote the name of the contributor or the work that they have done, rather a wiki allows statements and discussions to take place that are promoted on a more even-footing, with lower expectations about status and cultural capital. Expertise is tied to participation in a wiki rather than social roles and qualifications" (Mittell, 2013) (see Mittell, 2013, p. 35-38).

3 Activity - How Did Wikis Start

- Watch the video and make notes about how wikis originated.

Tom Chatfield: Netymology - Wikipedia & Backronyms

<http://youtu.be/AEHmE5RPJ4k>

- 1994, when Ward Cunningham gave the name "WikiWikiWeb" to the knowledge base, which ran on his company's website...
- "Wiki" is the Hawaiian word for "Quick" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_wikis
- "The history of MediaWiki starts with Wikipedia, and the history of Wikipedia starts with wikis" (Koren, 2012, p. 1).
- "Wikipedia was initially conceived as a feeder project for the Wales-founded [Nupedia](#), an earlier project to produce a free online encyclopaedia"

"As of October 2014, Wikipedia includes over 33.5 million freely usable articles in 287 languages that have been written by over 49 million registered users and numerous anonymous contributors worldwide. According to Alexa Internet, Wikipedia is the world's sixth-most-popular website. Wikipedia's total worldwide monthly readership is approximately 495 million; according to comScore, Wikipedia receives over 85 million monthly unique visitors from the United States alone"

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Wikipedia

4 Activity - Key Principles

- Using the key characteristics of a wiki, as identified by Jason Mittell, discuss in a small group how you will plan to create an entry on the DMU Commons Wiki using these principles.
- Note on a post-it-note how these principles might be different from other forms of collaborative working.
- Can you identify any issues or challenges that you will need to be aware of as you develop your collaborative form of wiki entry?
- What stops people from trashing or messing with a wiki entry?
- Use the whiteboard to collate your ideas and look for any patterns that have been noted by the different groups.

4.1 Jason Mittell states that in developing entries for a wiki

- "Content needs to be presented with a neutral point of view, citing sources and avoiding original research" (Mittell, 2013, p. 38).
- This ensures that information is accessible to a wide range of people that avoids political, religious or technical bias.
- The entries might refer to other published sources that relate to the controversies discussed in a topic, but this is done on the basis of promoting verifiable 'objectivity'.
- By avoiding original research Wikipedia is able to sidestep the role of verifier of the information, and so relies on common sources of information that are otherwise already accepted as 'common knowledge'.
- If the subject being covered is contentious and subject to strident position-taking by different contributors, then the moderation process will be used to find a form of words to include both sides of a debate, or otherwise lock the entry so that it can't be openly edited by anyone" (Mittell, 2013).

4.2 What Difference Do Wikis Make?

- Collaborative organisation.
- Collective knowledge.
- Open & Transparent Processes.
- Most of the Wiki hosting platforms are free.
- Wikis are easy to create and do not require any tech wizardry to run and maintain them.
- They have very student-friendly interfaces.
- They can be accessed anywhere with an internet connection.
- Anyone can edit a wiki.
- Wikis are instantaneous so there is no need to wait for a publisher to create a new edition or update information.
- Geographical borders are deleted and students from all around the world can collaborate and work on the same document.
- The Wiki software keeps track of every edit made and it is a simple process to revert back to a previous version of an article.
- Wikis widen access to the power of web publishing to non-technical users.
- Wikis are flexible and do not have a predetermined structure meaning they can be used for a wide range of applications.

<http://www.educatorstechnology.com/2012/07/teachers-guide-on-use-of-wikis-in.html>

“The important part of wikis—what makes them different from any other type of website—is collaborative editing by the users” <http://computers.tutsplus.com/tutorials/what-are-wikis-and-why-should-you-use-them--cms-19540>

5 Activity - Different types of Wiki

- Look at the following example wikis and note the key attributes.
- What is different about the way that each of the wikis is presented?
- Is there a structural difference to the wiki?
- Do the content differences change the way the wiki is used?
- How are users encouraged to create and add content to the wiki?

“A wiki is an effective platform for encouraging active participation for fans to pool their experience and expertise, their knowledge and their creative talents in a way that promotes the culture of the wiki as it relates to the source material.

- Fans use wikis to document the cultural objects and to allow them to publish a broad range of topics that would not be permissible in-depth on open sites like Wikipedia.
- This gives rise to a ‘collaborative creativity’, or ‘fanon’ which allows fans to build non-canonical extension to a cultural subject that would not otherwise be allowed or permissible by an official wiki platform.
- Fan wikis can embed and promote original fan work, such as remix videos, fan-fiction or other forms of fan re-worked material.

There is less emphasis on verification and objectivity in a fan wiki as they can be used to support role playing games, collaboratively authored narratives, parallel character development and extended storytelling using alternative forms of social media outside of the official or commercial world envisaged by the authors or producers of a media text” (Mittell, 2013).

<http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/Wookieepedia>

<http://www.wowwiki.com/Portal:Main>

http://warhammer40k.wikia.com/wiki/Warhammer_40k_Wiki

<http://educationalwikis.wikispaces.com/Examples+of+educational+wikis>

http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Sites_using_MediaWiki/en

<http://www.wikispaces.com/examples>

Share your findings in a group discussion on Discourse: <https://talk.our.dmu.ac.uk>

6 Activity - Log in to DMU Commons Wiki

- <http://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk>
- Test user Log In.
- Students on different modules are going to help to develop the site.
- The internet is inherently broken and there is a limited range of plug-ins and the support for it is limited, so we have to be ingenious about the way that we use it.

6.1 Download

MediaWiki User Guide available to download as a PDF from:

http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/MediaWiki_User_Guide

http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Help:Starting_a_new_page

6.2 Create a User Page

- Find the instructions for creating a Page.
- Write a description about yourself that is objective, as if it is written by a third-party.
- Keep to about 75-100 words.
- Your Page should have your name as its title, i.e.: John Smith.

6.3 Link Page

- Search for TECH1002 Learners page.

https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/TECH1002_Learners

- Edit Page and add your name in alphabetical order list, i.e., John Smith.
- Highlight your name and 'link' to the page you created.
- Once all have posted, search for content by different participants and read their entries.

7 Brainstorm Ideas for Possible Future Wiki Content

- Course Wiki Entry?
- Media Equipment Entry?
- Media Examples Entry?
- Social Groups, Events & Links?
- Policies and Procedures?
- Fan Group?
- Tips, Tricks & Hacks?

8 Activity - Blogging

- Write a short blog about your experience today of learning about Wikis.
- What makes a wiki different from other types of website?
- Add a hypertext link to your post that points to your Wiki profile page.
- Take a snapshot of the Wikipage and save it as a JPG or PNG file, save 250 X 140.
- Add the snapshot image as a 'Featured Image' to your post.
- Set to DIY-DMU Category and post.

Check <http://diy.our.dmu.ac.uk/> to ensure that your name in the 'Contributors' section points to your blog, and that it is accessible.

9 References

Koren, Y. (2012). *Working with MediaWiki*: Wikiworks Press.

Mittell, J. (2013). Wikis and Participatory Fandom. In A. Delwiche & J. Henderson (Eds.), *The Participatory Cultures Handbook* (pp. 35-42). London: Routledge.

Murphie, A. and Potts, J. (2003) *Culture and Technology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.