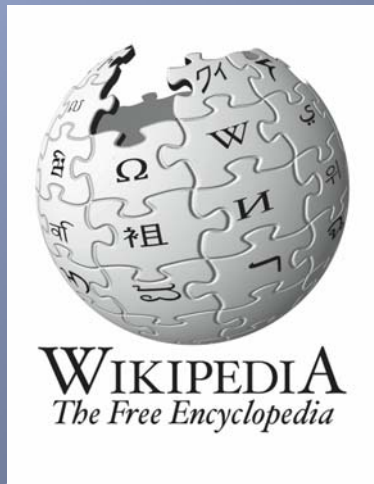


# Wikipedia and Platforms for Social Innovation



Jimmy Wales  
President, Wikimedia  
Foundation  
Wikipedia Founder

“The ideal encyclopedia should be radical. It should stop being safe.”

--1962, Charles van Doren,  
later a senior editor at  
Britannica



# Wikipedia's Radical Idea:

Imagine a world in which every single person is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge.

That's what we're doing.



WIKIPEDIA  
*The Free Encyclopedia*

# What is Wikipedia?

- Wikipedia is a freely licensed encyclopedia written by thousands of volunteers in many languages
- Free license allows others to freely copy, redistribute, and modify our work commercially or non-commercially
- Founded January 15, 2001

[wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)



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# How big is Wikipedia?

- English Wikipedia is largest and has over 130 million words
- English Wikipedia larger than Britannica and Microsoft Encarta combined
- In 15 months the publicly distributed compressed database dumps may reach 1 terabyte total size



# How big is Wikipedia Globally?

- English – 500,000+ articles
- German – 203,315 article
- Japanese – 101,907 articles
- French – 83,187 articles
- Nearly 1.5 million across 200 languages
- 19 with >10,000. 52 with >1000



# Indian languages

- Hindi 1,100+
- Bengali 297
- Gujarati 46
- Tamil 503
- Kannada 224
- Urdu 169
- Many others are inactive so far



# Hindi Wikipedia

- 1,100 articles is twice as many as 2 months ago
- 14 contributors in February
- Opportunity to be there at the beginning





# How popular is Wikipedia?

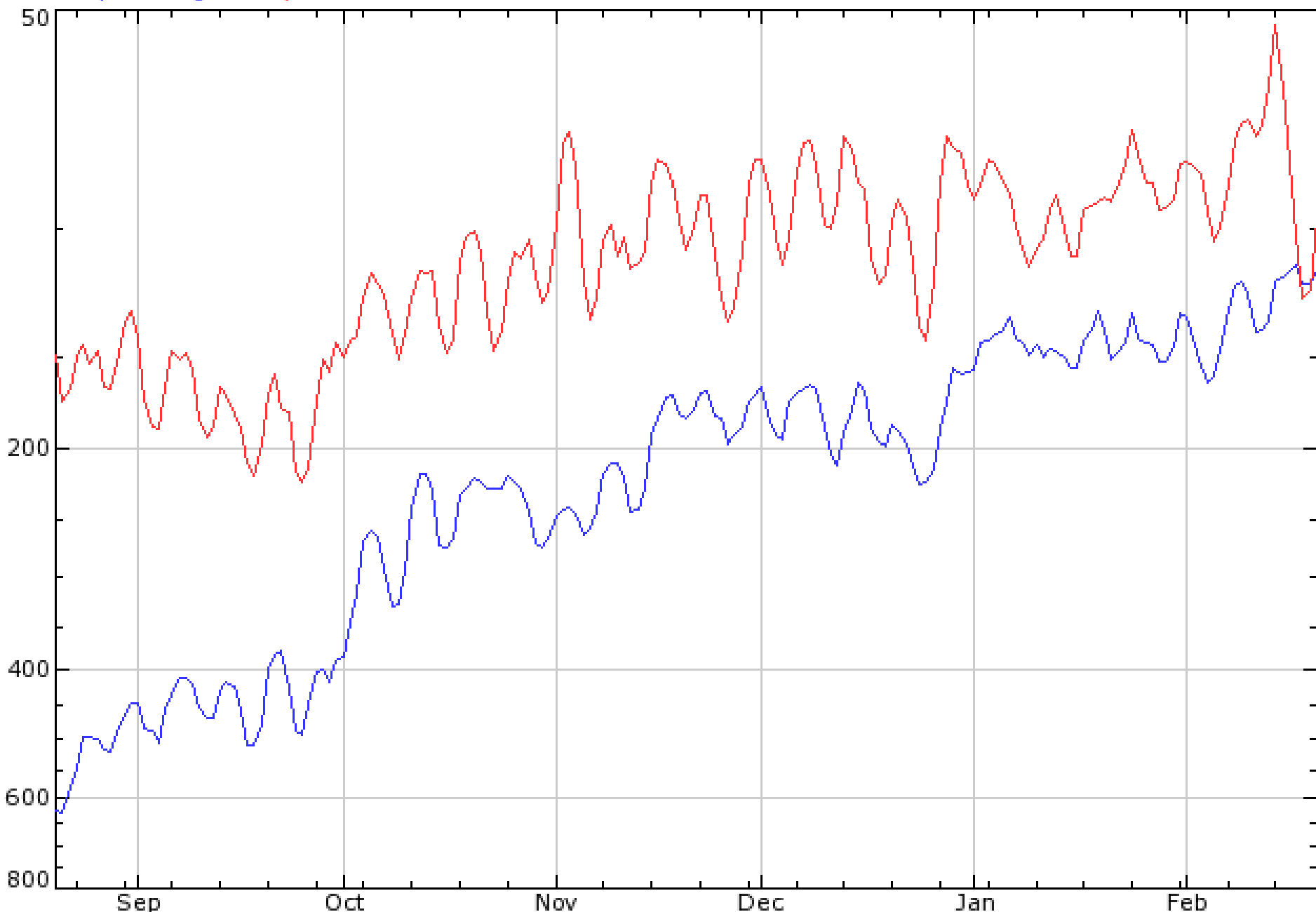
- According to Alexa.com, Wikipedia is more popular than the websites of:
- Expedia
- Paypal
- Excite
- Geocities
- New York Times
- ~400 Million pageviews monthly



# Daily Traffic Rank Trend

wikipedia.org

nytimes.com



# Design for Social Innovation

Wikipedia is not primarily a technical innovation, but rather a social innovation

All the essential tools that make Wikipedia work existed for 6 years before Wikipedia



# Elements of Design

- Freedom in the sense of GNU
- Neutrality as a bedrock principle
- Software which respects the users
- Flexible community governance



# Element One: Four Freedoms

The famous 4 freedoms of free software apply cleanly to reference works, fundamental information should be free

Wikipedia is the largest effort underway to make this dream a reality



# Free Software

- MediaWiki is GPL
- We use all free software on the website
- GNU/Linux
- Apache
- MySQL
- Php



# Free File Formats

- Wikipedia only allows content in unencumbered formats...
- Because formats which require people to use non-free software are bad
- Wikipedia increasingly contains sound files in Ogg Vorbis... we hope this will encourage the continued adoption of Ogg more broadly



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# Element 2: Neutral Point of View policy

- NPOV - Neutral Point of View
- Diverse political, religious, cultural backgrounds
- Kept together by our “NPOV” policy
- NPOV is a social concept of co-operation, avoids some philosophical issues.





# Element 3: Software Design

- MediaWiki is one of many wiki engines
- Collaborative software that allows users to add or edit content
- Primarily developed for Wikipedia from 2002 onwards
- Scalable and multilingual



# MediaWiki features

- Quality control features (versioning)
- Editing features (simple markup)
- Community features (talk pages, user pages, access levels)



# Page History

## Flat Earth

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

(Difference between revisions)

Revision as of 22:40, 12 Feb 2003

[Ed Poor](#) ([Talk](#) | [contribs](#))

okay, I'm done. Comments?

Revision as of 22:42, 12 Feb 2003

[Eloquence](#) ([Talk](#) | [contribs](#))

second para

### Line 1:

The "flat earth" theory is the idea that the earth is flat, as opposed to the view of modern science that the earth is spherical.

People from antiquity generally believed the world was flat, as that is how it looks even from a high mountain. Some ancient Greek philosophers began to discuss the idea of a spherical earth, notably Eratosthenes and Ptolemy.

During the period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the [[renaissance]] of science several centuries later, some Christian writers questioned and even opposed the earth's sphericity, although it is not clearly known how influential their views were. Before the Renaissance began, the flat earth theory had pretty much died out, yielding by the 900s or 1100s to the idea that the earth is a globe.

Some Christians in England and America tried to revive Flat Earth thinking in the 19th century, and a few diehards hold out to this day (see [[Flat Earth Society]]).

== Flat Earth theories of Antiquity ==

### Line 1:

The "flat earth" theory is the idea that the earth is flat, as opposed to the view of modern science that the earth is spherical.

People from early antiquity generally believed the world was flat, as that is how it looks even from a high mountain; by the time of [[Pliny the Elder]], however, its spherical shape was generally acknowledged. [[Ptolemy]] derived his maps from a curved globe and developed the system of [[latitude]] and [[longitude]].

During the period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the [[renaissance]] of science several centuries later, some Christian writers questioned and even opposed the earth's sphericity, although it is not clearly known how influential their views were. Even before the Renaissance began, the flat earth theory had almost died out, yielding by the 900s or 1100s to the idea that the earth is a globe.

Some Christians in England and America tried to revive Flat Earth thinking in the 19th century, and a few hold out to this day (see [[Flat Earth Society]]).

== Flat Earth theories of Antiquity ==

# Organisation by the Community

- The free-form nature of the wiki software lets the community determine how it wants to interact
  - Example: *Votes For Deletion*

## 2.27 Twisted Issues

[edit]

This is supposed to be an underground punk film from 1988, but it miserably fails the Google test<sup>[22]</sup>, suggesting that its fame is doubtful. [JFW](#) | [T@k](#) 15:53, 18 Nov 2004 (UTC)

- Delete please [JFW](#) | [T@k](#) 15:53, 18 Nov 2004 (UTC)
- **Delete**. Non-notable. [力伟](#) |  18:29, 18 Nov 2004 (UTC)
- ~~Tentative weak~~ **Keep**. If it's [this](#) "1989 Charles Pinion film Twisted Issues -- a 'psycho-punk splatter-comedy' which [Film Threat](#) Video Guide named to its list of 'Twenty Underground Films You Must See!' - its notability is at worst debatable. [Samaritan](#) 19:45, 18 Nov 2004 (UTC)
- Clean Up: It needs a lot of work, but it's possible. (N.b. we're going to be in rough shape if we try to replicate the Psychotronic book or Film Threat.) [Geogre](#) 20:43, 18 Nov 2004 (UTC)
- Keep, real movie -- <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0249209/combined> -- but cleanup. [RickK](#) 21:29, Nov 18, 2004 (UTC)
- **Keep** and cleanup. [DCEdwards1966](#) 03:49, Nov 20, 2004 (UTC)
- **Keep** it. [RaD Man](#) (*talk*) 19:31, 20 Nov 2004 (UTC)



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# Element 4: Wikipedia Governance

- A confusing but workable mix of
- Consensus
- Democracy
- Aristocracy
- Monarchy
- Wikipedians are flexible about social methodology: results over process



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# Community Challenges

- How can such a large community scale?
  - Through software features
  - Through policy (mediation, arbitration)
  - Through an atmosphere of love and respect



# Conclusion

- Wikipedia is one of the most exciting developments in human history
- Wikipedia is a major force for free software
- Wikipedia is competing directly with large commercial companies
- Other projects can learn from our social innovations

