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Wikipedia and Academia, Friends at Last? Integrating Wiki-Technology into the Classroom

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Wikipedia and Academia, Friends at Last?

Integrating Wiki Technology into the Classroom through the Public Policy Initiative

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Workshop overview

• About Wikipedia - editing activity
• What is the Public Policy Initiative?
• Seven student learning results
• Student motivations
• Challenges
• Lessons learned
• How you can use Wikipedia in a classroom
• Q&A
Did you know?

- Wikipedia is the fifth most visited website in the world.

- Wikipedia has 400 million unique visitors per month.
Fun facts

- Wikipedia is the largest collaborative project in history.
- A print version of the 2010 Wikipedia (without references and pictures) would consist of 1500 volumes of 1100 pages each.
Who writes Wikipedia?

- 80,000 active contributors - “Wikipedians”
- We do! http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_Southern_University
Public Policy Initiative

- Campus Ambassadors
- Online Ambassadors
Public Policy Initiative research methods

• Program evaluation
  • Professor interviews
  • Student surveys
  • Student focus group
  • Student interviews
Fall 2010: Student learning results

• Objectives:
  • Writing skills
  • Media literacy
  • Critical thinking
  • Collaboration
  • Community of practice

• Additional results:
  • Literature review skills
  • Technology fluency
What students learned: Writing skills

"Editing in Wikipedia is like a small pilot project by the students to increase their confidence in expository writing."

-Professor, December 2010
What students learned: Writing skills
What students learned: Media literacy

"Students use Wikipedia. It is very critical that we, meaning academia, get on board with this, because it is going to happen if we like it or not. We need to work with them to learn to use Wikipedia correctly and contribute to it to make it better."

-Professor, December 2010

"[Students] become better consumers of information."

-Professor, December 2010
What students learned: Critical thinking
What students learned: Collaboration

"If I had to pick one main advantage of a Wikipedia assignment, it would be the peer editing between Wikipedians that often doesn’t take place with traditional assignments. The feedback from other users and students in my class really helped me improve my articles."

-Student response to survey, December 2010
What students learned: Collaboration
What students learned: Collaboration
What students learned: Community of practice
What students learned: Literature review skills

"A lot of students had trouble with the research aspect. Students today are so used to relying on Google and internet sources... I will have to reacquaint them with the library. Some of them have probably never used the library."

-Professor, December 2010

"Particularly in terms of research it is valuable. I think it does increase the amount of research a student is forced to do."

-Professor, December 2010
What students learned: Literature review skills
What students learned: Technology fluency

"The only real barrier was learning how to write with the wiki markup text. It's not clear why you can’t just write like in Word. All the students managed to overcome it."

-Professor, December 2010
What students learned: Summation
Fall 2010:
Student motivations
Student motivation: It's fun!
Student motivation: It's different

"Hi Professor,

I just wanted to let you know my article will be on the Did You Know? section on November 1 at 8 pm. I feel a little silly being so excited."

-Student email to professor, October 31 2010
Student motivation: Monitoring

"A Wikipedia assignment provides greater motivation due to features such as ‘Did you know’ and the constant monitoring by Wikipedia administrators. It is sort of like having the Professor or TA there all the time, which most students do not get the luxury of."

-Student response to survey, December 2010
Student motivation: Useful assignment
Student motivation: Useful assignment
Student motivation: Useful assignment

"I’d rather spend 30 hours putting work into a project that will be available for public consumption upon its completion than putting 10 hours into a project which gets graded, returned, and then either thrown out or forsaken and forgotten. Turning in a paper and getting it back with a letter on it is far less rewarding than submitting an article onto one of the world’s most renowned knowledge bases for all to see."

-Student response to survey, January 2011
Student motivation: Keep editing after class
Student motivation: Share with parents
Student motivation: Big audience

"I think with Wikipedia, [students] enjoy having the results out there for posterity, for everyone to see. For the ones who got comments from the Wikipedia community, they were excited, which is different than a traditional academic paper. They know their work is going to be read by more than one person."

-Professor, December 2010

"The students are not just writing a paper that is given to me and no one will see it again. It could be viewed by the whole world and that raises the pressure on them. This adds another element that inspires them do a good job."

-Professor, December 2010
Fall 2010: Challenges
Challenges: Takes a lot of time

"I had a lot of help in this class. I had great TAs and a campus ambassador. I am not sure I could have done it without them."

-Professor, December 2010
Challenges: Takes a lot of time
Challenges: Hard to grade

"The issue I had was that I am still trying to figure out how to grade what they do [in Wikipedia]."

-Professor, December 2010

"There was no concrete way to evaluate student work."

-Professor, December 2010
Challenges: Hard to grade
Fall 2010:
Lessons Learned
Program evaluation: Lesson 1

• Students need an Online Ambassador designated to be their mentor
Program evaluation: Lesson 2

- Selection of article topic is key to positive experience
  - notability of topic area
  - sufficient number of primary sources
Program evaluation: Lesson 3

• Sufficient time must be allocated to the assignment - milestones throughout the term
Program evaluation: Lesson 4

• Best for literature review centered assignments
How to use Wikipedia in your classroom

• Bookshelf materials
• Other resources
• Come talk to us at our booth in the lobby!
Thank you!