Integrating Wikipedia Projects into Information Technology Courses: Results from a Pilot Study

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INTEGRATING WIKIPEDIA PROJECTS INTO IT COURSES: RESULTS FROM A PILOT STUDY

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University of South Carolina  
Integrated Information Technology
Introduction/Agenda

- Using Wikipedia as a teaching and learning tool
- The Wikipedia United States Education Program (wp:usep)
- Wikipedia projects in two IT courses at USC
- Experiences of faculty and students
- Findings and recommendations for future courses
Wikipedia Is...

- An online encyclopedia
- A knowledge community of anonymous readers all over the globe who edit and correct grammar, style, interpretations, and facts (Davidson, 2007)
- Losing volunteer contributors and needs to replenish contributors (Hornyak, 2011)
Using Wikipedia as a teaching and learning tool

How can Wikipedia support teaching and learning?
- Writing skills development
- Media literacy/Information fluency
- Knowledge construction
- Critical thinking/Research skills
- Technical proficiency
Possible Wikipedia Project Learning Objectives

- Study and practice research in the digital age (Davidson, 2007, Reilly, 2011)
- Learn the practice and participate in a community of lifelong learners (Davidson, 2007, Reilly, 2011)
- Communicate and collaborate to improve the quality of knowledge (Davidson, 2007)
- Explore learning in a digital, social world (Davidson, 2007)
- Explore how learners make arguments from evidence (Davidson, 2007)
- Explore how learners connect the dots between facts, theories, and interpretations (Davidson, 2007)
- Improve writing proficiency in digital environments (Reilly, 2011)
- Become critical users of Wikipedia and develop rhetorical and technological proficiency (Reilly, 2011)
The Wikipedia United States Education Program

- Core ideas
  - Professors use Wikipedia as a tool for helping to teach their class content and achieve course learning objectives
  - Professors incorporate Wikipedia-editing assignments into course
  - Courses are not about Wikipedia. Wikipedia assignments are tools for addressing learning objectives
  - Program support includes:
    - Wikipedia course pages and curriculum materials
    - Campus ambassadors and training for campus ambassadors
    - Online ambassadors
Wikipedia Course Support Materials

- wp:usep
- wp:fivepillars
- Telecommunications Management (Patten)
- Training Systems (Keane)
Wikipedia Project in Telecommunications Management I

- Telecommunications Topic Wikipedia Writing & Class Presentation

- Purpose of the project is two-fold:
  - To become an expert in a specific telecommunications topic area from this course by researching the topic and presenting the topic formally to your classmates.
  - As an expert in your topic area, you will write a report on your topic. Rather than write a report that only I read, you will learn to write a critical report and post it in Wikipedia.
Wikipedia Project in Telecommunications Management II

- Components of the project include:
  - Selecting your Topic
  - Researching your Topic
  - Presenting your Topic

- Wikipedia writing assignments (from Wikipedia Education Materials)
  - Wikipedia essentials, Editing basics
  - Exploring the topic area, Using sources
  - Choosing articles, Drafting starter articles
  - Did you know, Building articles
  - Getting and giving feedback, Responding to feedback
  - Class presentations
# Evaluate Reference Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q #</th>
<th>Quality Questions</th>
<th>Article #</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is this article a &quot;Good&quot; or &quot;Featured Article?&quot;</td>
<td>Yes or no?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td><strong>ELEMENTS OF A GOOD ARTICLE</strong>&lt;br&gt;Rate on a Scale 1-5 with 1 = no, not at all; 2 = a little bit; 3 = better; 4 = pretty good; 5 = yes, excellent.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Lead section is understandable and summaries key points</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The article structure is clear</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Aspects of the article are well-balanced</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Coverage is neutral without bias</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Includes important references to reliable sources</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td><strong>ELEMENTS OF A BAD ARTICLE</strong>&lt;br&gt;Note: the scale is reversed for these items. Rate on a Scale 1-5 with 1 = yes, very much; 2 = pretty much; 3 = some; 4 = a little bit; 5 = not at all.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Article has a &quot;warning banner&quot; at the top? Yes or no? What warning banner?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Article had language problems in the lead section</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Article contains un-sourced opinions and value statements</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Article refers to &quot;unnamed groups of people&quot;</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Some aspects of article are missing</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Some sections are overly long in proportion to their importance</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>The article has few references or lacks footnotes</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>SUMMARY on a scale of from 1-5 stars:</strong> Add total score per total column (rows 2-13) (Higher the better)</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Completeness</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Well written</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Rank order from 1 – 5 with #1 being the highest level of quality (highest score) through #5 being the lowest level of quality (lowest score).
Example student pages
- C-Light
- South Carolina Cloud
- Satellite Internet access
Project Outcomes: Why are we doing this?

- Research and articulate current issues and trends related to developing technology-based training, learning, and performance systems and e-learning
- Identify resources for staying current in training systems development and e-learning
- Demonstrate appropriate and ethical behavior and effective work habits
- Develop writing and research skills
Wikipedia Project in Training Systems II

- **Project tasks**
  - Select Your Topic (20 points)
  - Learn About Editing and Writing in Wikipedia (40 points)
  - Propose Your Project (10 points)
  - Edit Your Article (50 points)
  - Discussion and Reflection (30 points)
Wikipedia Project in Training Systems III

- Example student pages
  - Distance Education
  - ROI of Social Media
  - Game based learning
  - OpenCourseWare
Support for Wikipedia projects
- Informative, had to provide support for my content
- Liked being introduced to the other side of Wikipedia—”where the magic happens”
- Useful in teaching credibility of online resources, improved my writing and research skills

On becoming a member of the Wikipedia community
- Interesting becoming an official user of Wikipedia, which allowed me the same rights as any other “Wikipedian”
- As the semester progressed, I understood more and more about Wiki culture
- I was happy to see that my initial edit survived as long as it did
Student Reflections II

- Issues with Wikipedia projects
  - Had trouble with first selected article
  - Daunting to create an article when just starting out in Wikipedia and not sure what to do or how to do it
  - Apprehensive on how the whole process worked because this information could be read and used by others around the world
  - Did not like that my edits could be deleted or changed before my instructor had a chance to look at them
  - Did not like having to edit Wikipedia articles when most professors will not allow citing of Wikipedia as a source for a paper
  - Maneuvering through the edits was a harder task than I initially expected
Suggestions for project improvement

- Work in groups to create a page would be more meaningful
- Spend more time on finding content from other sources
- More focus and practice needed on editing a Wikipedia article
- More time needed on the project after initial edits are made
- Maybe instructor can pick their own article to edit and then show class edits, syntax for making edits, and any discussion on the discussion page about the edit
- Edit articles as a class first so process is clearer
Faculty Reflections

- Surprised by students’ resistance to working in Wikipedia
- More time needed in legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) before editing a Wikipedia article
- Front-end planning needed to integrate Wikipedia project into course
Recommendations for Next Steps

- Become a member of the Wikipedia community by editing an article
- Use Kurt Lewin’s Change Management model (Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze) to explore student perceptions of Wikipedia projects
- Explore identity of students as they become “Wikipedians”
Questions?

- Thank you!

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