

.WIKIPEDIA

THIS ISN'T AN ARTICLE ABOUT WIKIPEDIA'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY

This is a piece about what made these two decades truly worth celebrating. It talks about misinformation, fake news, those who try to find a solution and of those who, like Wikipedia, seem to have (partially) found it, but it is not for everyone.



By *Daniele Righi*

Content strategist & digital project manager, Lundquist

Wikipedia has turned 20. For two decades it has remained true to itself and its ambitions. In the era of infodemic, it succeeds where others fail or attempt to imitate it: providing a method to curb misinformation and fake news.

Wikipedia today

The free encyclopaedia has definitely come through its teenage years. It is at that age when you're very bold, very gifted, or both. Just to anthropomorphize it:

Wikipedia is bold because it persists in making something that in theory should be a total disaster, pure anarchy. More than 55 million articles, in more than 300 languages, actually get written and

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It turns out a lot of people don't get it. Wikipedia is like rock'n'roll; it's a cultural shift.

— *Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia*

updated by volunteers without any input selection. Anyone, even without registering, can do whatever they want. Even delete everything.



Image: wikimediafoundation.org

55+ million articles

300+ languages

94+ million registered users

10 billion average English pageviews per month
(Source: Wikipedia – March 2021)

3rd most consulted website in Switzerland after Google and YouTube

Wikipedia in Tourism

Did you know that improvements made to Wikipedia articles dedicated to geographical places can have an impact on tourism? Apparently, a correlation has been found between detailed articles about a place and the number of nights booked by visitors.

Source: [The Guardian](http://bit.ly/WikipediaTourism) - <http://bit.ly/WikipediaTourism>

Wikipedia is also very gifted. It has a talent for attracting a community of enthusiasts, thousands of people who write, check, verify on a daily basis and who have been able to build a system of rules to handle vandalism in a few minutes (such as deletions of text, insertion of falsehoods or insults).

Wikipedia has only one purpose: to co-ordinate and combine the efforts of passionate volunteers to build the largest source of free knowledge.

This is its strength. Every step goes in that direction.

On the free encyclopaedia there are also very sensitive topics around which different opinions revolve and around which denialists and conspiracy theories have gathered (for example the Holocaust or COVID-19). Yet, the community has managed to find a way. How can this be?

Because any information must be written from a neutral point of view and supported by authoritative third-party sources.

Where there is a divergence of viewpoints, all existing opinions must be reported. As a part of the Holocaust article, for instance, there is a section devoted to denialism.

COVID-19

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), also known as **the corona COVID**, is a **contagious disease** caused by **severe acute respiratory coronavirus 2** (SARS-CoV-2). The first known case was identified in China, in December 2019.^[7] The disease has since spread worldwide to an ongoing pandemic.^[8]

Symptoms of COVID-19 are variable, but often include fever,^[9] cough, headache,^[10] fatigue, breathing difficulties, and loss of smell and taste.^{[11][12][13]} Symptoms may begin one to fourteen days after exposure to the virus. At least a third of people who are infected do not develop noticeable symptoms.^[14] Of those people who develop noticeable symptoms enough to be classed as patients, most (81%) develop mild to moderate symptoms (up to mild pneumonia), while 14% develop severe symptoms (dyspnea, hypoxia, or more than 50% lung involvement on imaging), and 5% suffer critical symptoms

Wikipedia:Protection policy#semi-

actions · popups
45.1kB, 220 wikiLinks, 12 images, 2 categories,
1 day 8 hours old

Semi-protection

Semi-protected pages cannot be edited by unregistered users (IP addresses), as well as accounts that are not autoconfirmed (accounts that are at least four days old and have made at least ten edits to Wikipedia) or confirmed.

[more...](#)



Transmission and life-cycle of SARS-CoV-2 causing COVID-19.

Pronunciation /keˈrounəˌvʌrəs dɪˈziːz/ /kɒvɪdnaɪˈtiːn kɒvɪd-ˈɪʃ/

Specialty Infectious disease

In the Wikipedia article about Covid-19 you can see how, through additional layers of protection and warnings, the community defends itself from misinformation.

Against Misinformation

If you think about it, what is it that exposes you to the risk of misinformation or gives dignity to fake news? The lack of an overall vision of the elements necessary to fully understand a phenomenon.



Zero information is preferred to misleading or false information.

— Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia

Wikipedia provides an overview complete with verifiable information because it's supported by sources. It is not about aiming at the truth, but to have a working

method. If I want to contribute, I have to make sure there are valid sources and I have to write from a neutral point of view. The community will do the rest.

Facebook, for example, pays partner companies to verify content, or tries to educate the reader by pointing to alternative sources or asking questions. It is a reaction to pressure from advertisers who threaten to cut advertising budgets on the platform.

Twitter recently presented a pilot project (Birdwatch) that, at the time of going to press, allows a group of people to report inaccurate or misleading content in tweets, and add comments and sources to provide further details.

However, this system has some potential issues linked to the unpredictability of the criteria that are applied by the "birdwatchers" or to the type of solutions that can be devised to game the alert and feedback system.

From the data collected so far, what emerges is that the Birdwatch pilot group has flagged some content on the American elections useful and informative when in fact it was actually misleading.

In contrast to what might be seen on Twitter, Wikipedia manages to get around these problems to a large extent without direct control, benefiting from active and widespread involvement, without paying anyone and with results that exceed expectations.

If Wikipedia is getting close to a solution, why not replicate it?

The main reasons why Wikipedia is more effective against misinformation is two-fold: its purpose and its “business” model. Wikipedia, as we said, has the sole purpose of creating an encyclopaedia to spread free knowledge. This purpose has been the same for two decades. Thanks to its ease of use, anyone can contribute. It is a tool that does only one thing.

All of this would not be enough on its own without the business model of Wikimedia, the foundation that manages Wikipedia's infrastructure. The free encyclopaedia, in fact, is a non-profit project. The only source of funding is spontaneous donations that come from community members and outside donors.

Image: wikimediafoundation.org



Wikipedia and Wikimedia: a consonant that makes the difference

Wikipedia is just one of the projects of the Wikimedia Foundation, the non-profit foundation that takes care of the technological infrastructure needed to run not only the free encyclopaedia but also other Wiki-based initiatives such as (to mention only a few): Wikibooks, a collection of free e-books (textbooks, manuals, guides); Wikictionary, a multilingual dictionary; Wikiversity, which collects educational material in order to allow everyone to learn or relearn in the most independent way possible. It relies solely on spontaneous donations to survive and give us access to all these resources.

In case you would like to donate:

- <https://wikimediafoundation.org/>
> to donate to the foundation
- <https://donate.wikimedia.ch/it/index.html>
> to donate to the Swiss chapter of the foundation

No advertising, no influence, no editorial plan, no need to keep people on the site through likes, comments or related content. Wikipedia does not belong to anyone in particular, so it belongs to everyone, and everyone feels they have to protect a small part of it because they believe in the project.



Image: wikimediafoundation.org

In contrast, both Facebook and Twitter (even though the discussion doesn't end with these two platforms) invest in and divest from services based on what works and turns them into money because they retain users. While users are often aware of this - sometimes only partially - they do not feel that they are part of a whole. There are many ifs and buts that need to be addressed.

We know that it is not so simple to find a solution to combat misinformation. What we can say is that Wikipedia, with its project of spreading knowledge, knows how to defend itself. With weapons, however, that perhaps only Wikipedia can use.

The next 20 years and beyond

Wikipedia is the realization of a seemingly impossible dream: to allow everyone, truly everyone, to contribute without filters to the creation of shared and freely accessible knowledge. But looking ahead in the future what can we see? As is happens with everything from artificial intelligence (AI)

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There is nothing like a dream to create the future.

— Victor Hugo

to cooking recipes, the quality of the result (the output) is highly dependent on the input. The quality of Wikipedia, specifically, depends on the people who contribute to its success: namely, the community.

It is precisely here, among the members of the community of editors, that lie two potential obstacles to the otherwise linear and healthy growth of the free encyclopaedia: the first concerns their number, the second who they are. But we will talk about this in a future article.

In the meantime, if in some way this piece has piqued your interest, browsing and trying to contribute to Wikipedia is something very gratifying because it enriches and gives everyone the chance to make a difference. Try opening the article about the topic that interests you the most and read it. If something does not seem right, there is an entire community ready to listen, support you and thank you for your contribution.

Image: wikimediafoundation.org





Lundquist .wikipedia

Wikipedia is an extraordinary project. But it also has issues. Few users are really active compared to the vast number of registered users.

From our perspective at Lundquist, we can clearly see how the lack of active users affects above all the quality of the content on companies.

Very often, articles about companies contain outdated information or alerts that signal issues. This is why we have dedicated one of our research activities to monitoring the status of articles dedicated to companies on Wikipedia: [Lundquist.wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lundquist).

With more than 12 years of experience we are able to support companies in contributing to the content about themselves on the free encyclopaedia, thanks to a consolidated methodology.

For more information:

Daniele Righi

Head of .wikipedia

daniele.righi@lundquist.it



Image: [wikimediafoundation.org](https://www.wikimediafoundation.org/)