Expert participation on Wikipedia: Barriers and opportunities

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Motivation

“[Wikipedia] is not the bottom layer of authority, nor the top, but in fact the highest layer without formal vetting. In this unique role, it therefore serves as an ideal bridge between the validated and unvalidated Web.”

Casper Grathwohl (Wikipedia Comes of Age)

“What I wonder is why professors don’t curate [pages on] Wikipedia and add course materials and open access sections of textbooks, much of which they post online anyways.”

David Lipman (Amy Maxmen, Science networking gets serious)
From a FriendFeed thread to a survey

Turning anecdotes about expert participation into data
Wikipedia wants more contributions from academics
Wikipedia is surveying academics to find out why many seem reluctant to donate their expertise

Subject recruitment

Blog posts
Nature blogs, Wellcome Trust, OKFN

Social media
Twitter, Reddit, Slashdot

Banners on scholarly publishers
Springer, PLoS, BioMedCentral

Press
The Guardian, CBS News

Wiktionary

Mailing lists
Expert participation survey: Design

Demographics and expertise

Perception of Wikipedia participation among peers

Authorship
Social interaction
Quality of information
Wiki literacy
Expert contribution

Personal motivation to contribute

Attitude towards openness and open scientific collaboration
# Expert participation survey: Overview

**Total responses:** 2605

- **Complete:** 1618 (57.8%)
- **Contributors (C):** 935 (35.9%)
- **Non contributors (NC):** 641 (24.1%)

**Available for follow-up interviews:**

- **C:** 704 (43.5%)
- **NC:** 470 (66.7%)

**Respondents by field:**

- Humanities: 347
- Social Sciences: 386
- Natural Sciences: 618
- Formal Sciences: 363
- Applied Sciences: 600
- Other: 65
- No answer: 217

**Respondents by country:**

- US: 465
- UK: 353
- Germany: 149
- Canada: 60
- Australia: 45
Demographics: Areas of contribution

Areas of contribution

- Exp only: 721
- Non Exp only: 529
- Both: 259
Demographics: Gender

Respondents by gender

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Female (F)</th>
<th>Male (M)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributors</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non contributors</td>
<td>335</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>748</td>
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</tbody>
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80.0% Female (F) and 52.3% Male (M)
Demographics: Age and Professional status

Respondents by age

Respondents by professional status
Responses by user category

Mode

Standard deviation
Wikipedia is a reliable source for research purposes in my field
Wikipedia is a reliable source for educational purposes in my field.
Researchers are not allowed to write about their own research in WP.
Would you consider helping rate/review wiki articles in your field of expertise?

Yes  1120  69.22%
No   320   19.78%
No answer 178  11.00%
Contribution and support of Open Access

Percentage of OA publications

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<tr>
<td>1–50</td>
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<td>50–99</td>
<td>1.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>1.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0.94</td>
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Comments: word frequency

Contributors

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Non contributors

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<tr>
<td>articles</td>
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</table>
Comments: topic modeling

algorithmic identification of words characterizing emerging topics

Topic #7 experts editors expert level knowledge rules edits number high amateur problems amateurs opinions contributions times contributor expertise found explicitly

Topics significantly associated with not contributing

#9  **time and effort** involved in contributing to WP

#13 criticism of WP's **reliability**, how WP is used or cited by students

#23 **lack of recognition** for scholars who contribute to WP, fit with scholarly workflow.
Summary

Lack of areas of major disagreement between contributors and non contributors

Main **barriers** to expert contributions: effort and time allocation

**Opportunities:**

- Potential for review/quality assessment
- Potential for collaboration with OA community

*An open data/open access policy for Wikimedia*

**Saturday 9-10.30am**

**More on this survey**

Follow the data and results from the survey at: 

Get in touch: expert_barriers@nitens.org