
WIKI AND ITS DIFFERENT FACETS

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Abstract

The Wiki is a collaboratively developed Open access / closed access repositories of information in a specific field or in a general field of interest whether the case may be. Any user can create or edit any page on the site using a simple web browser, and all information processing is done on the server side. This article will provide an overview of wikis right from its definition and origin to its characteristic. Due attention is also given to describe how low cost wikis can be created and its probable application in LIS.

Keywords : Wiki; Quickweb; Wiki Farms; Wiki search engine; Wiki Hosting; Repositories

1. What is Wiki

A wiki <wee-kee> or <wick-ey> is a type of editable website that allows users to add, remove, or otherwise edit and change most of the contents very quickly and easily, sometimes without the need for registration. Originally it is called as 'Quickweb'.

Wiki is in Ward's original description "The simplest online database that could possibly work."

A single page in a wiki is referred to as a "wiki page", while the entire body of pages, which are usually highly interconnected via hyperlinks is "the wiki".

The term wiki can also refer to the collaborative software itself (wiki engine) that facilitates the operation of such a website, or to certain specific wiki sites, including the computer science site (and original wiki), WikiWikiWeb, and the online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia.

2. Origin of the word wiki

The first wiki, WikiWikiWeb (<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki>), is named after the "Wiki Wiki" line of "Chance RT-52 shuttle buses" in Honolulu International Airport, Hawaii by Ward Cunningham. Cunningham named WikiWikiWeb that way because he remembered a Honolulu International Airport counter employee telling him to take the so-called "Wiki Wiki" Chance RT-52 shuttle bus line that runs between the airport's terminals. (The Wiki Wiki Shuttle - a free shuttle one can take to specific locations in the Honolulu International Airport.) According to Cunningham, "I chose wiki-wiki as an alliterative substitute for 'quick' and thereby avoided naming this stuff quick-web." "Wiki Wiki" is a reduplication of "wiki", a Hawaiian-language word for fast. The word wiki is a shorter form of wiki wiki (weekie, weekie). The word is sometimes interpreted as the backronym for "What I know is", which describes the knowledge contribution, storage and exchange function.

3. Development of Wiki

Each and every body more or less is a scholar in his / her specific field of interest, and every one of this World has the capabilities to write or create an article on his topic. This is the main fact under the development of wikis.

According to Cunningham, ideas of wiki can be traced back to a HyperCard stack he wrote in the late 1980s. In the late 1990s, wikis were increasingly recognized as a promising way to develop private- and public-knowledge bases, and this potential inspired the founders of the Nupedia encyclopedia project (<http://nupedia.8media.org/>), Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, to use wiki technology as a basis for an electronic encyclopedia: Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>) was launched in January 2001; it originally was based upon UseMod software, but later switched to its own, open source codebase, now adopted by many other wikis.

In the early 2000s, wikis were increasingly adopted in the enterprise as collaborative software. Common uses included project communication, intranet and documentation, initially for technical users.

In December 2002, Socialtext (<http://www.socialtext.com/>) launched the first commercial open source wiki solution. Open source wikis such as MediaWiki, Kwiki and TWiki grew to over 1 million downloads on the Sourceforge repository by 2004. Today some companies use wikis as their only collaborative software and as a replacement for static intranets. There is arguably greater use of wikis behind firewalls than on the public Internet.

In 2005, the Los Angeles Times experimented with using a wiki in the editorial section of its web site. The Wikitorial project was soon shut down as vandals defaced it.

It is hope that the future wiki will offer the ability to present XML based information in a variety of forms dependent on the needs and stylistic preferences of users. Presently most wikis are developed and presented by programmers and follow a rigid procedural mentality. The future wiki also hopes to help in online peer review of Journal Articles because it has immense capacity to compare, the different edited version of a single article in a very effective way.

4. Characteristic of Wiki

Wikis are composed of web pages one can write on; enabling fast and easy collaboration and it is a group-editable website. Some of the most common characteristic of wikis are as follows.

- a) **Any web browser can edit:** Editing of existing pages or new pages can be create by using any web browser. There is no need for ftp or http to upload pages.
- b) **Written collaboratively:** A wiki enables documents to be written collectively in a very simple markup language by any one.
- c) **Instantaneous generation:** Many edits, however, can be made in real-time, and appear almost instantaneously online. Some recent wiki engines use a different method: they allow "WYSIWYG" editing.

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- d) **Text formatting:** Simple, powerful and easy to learn text formatting rules. Basically one can write text like they are writing an e-mail.
 - e) **Templates and skins:** A flexible templating system separates program logic and presentation. Skins overwrite template headers and footers; page content is unaffected.
 - f) **Auto link:** Wikis are a true hypertext medium, with non-linear navigational structures. Each page typically contains a large number of links to other pages. Hierarchical navigation pages also often exist in larger wikis. Web pages are linked automatically. And user does not need to learn HTML commands to link pages.
 - g) **File attachments:** One can Upload and download any file as an attachment to a page by using their browser. This is similar to file attachments in e-mail, but it happens on web pages.
 - h) **Structured content:** Wiki Forms to classify and categorize unstructured web pages and to create simple workflow systems.
 - i) **Unrestricted access:** Many wikis allow completely unrestricted access so that people from all over the world can contribute to the site without necessarily having to undergo a process of 'registration'. Sometimes session login is requested to acquire a "wiki-signature" cookie for auto signing edits. More private wiki servers require user authentication.
 - j) **Searching facility:** Most wikis offer at least a title search, and sometimes a Full text search with / without regular expressions. The scalability of the search depends on whether the wiki engine uses a database or not. Indexed database access is necessary for high-speed searches on large wikis.
 - k) **Revision control:** Wiki is combined with a system that records each change that occurs over time, so that at any time, a page can be reverted to any of its previous states. One can retrieve previous page revisions and differences thereof. One can also find out that changed what and when.
 - l) **Managing pages:** Individual pages can be renamed, moved and deleted through the browser.
 - m) **Managing users:** Provision of web based user registration and change of password.
 - n) **Statistics:** It automatically Create Statistics of Wiki webs. One can find out most popular pages and top contributors.
 - o) **Topic locking:** Users are warned if another person is editing a page. This is to prevent contention, e.g. simultaneous page editing.
 - p) **Latest article:** Wikis are generally designed with the philosophy of making it easy to correct mistakes, rather than making it difficult to make them. Thus while wikis are very open, they provide a means to verify the validity of recent additions to the body of pages.
 - q) **E-mail notification:** E-mail notification of changes in the pages of wiki is another great advantage.

5. Finding wiki in a specific subject

Domain names containing "wiki" are growing in popularity to support specific niches. And finding a wiki in specific niches is like finding an encyclopedia in that subject with an easy to search option and lots of online reference articles. Following are the ways that can be used in finding a wiki on a specific subject

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- a) Wiki-node network of a particular wiki:** A common way of finding a wiki on a subject is to follow the wiki-node network from wiki to wiki. A wikiNode are (is) page(s) on wikis describing related wikis. They are usually organized as neighbors and delegates. A neighbor wiki is simply a wiki that may discuss similar content or may otherwise be of interest. A delegate wiki is a wiki that agrees to have certain content delegated to that wiki. The wiki node is generally appear below the home page of almost all wikis.
- b) Sister project node:** Sometimes different wikis are also listed under the heading of "sister project" if it is run by same foundation or company. A common example can be found below the home page of each wiki that are hosted by "Wikimedia Foundation".
- c) List of largest wiki:** One can also find the relevant wiki by consulting the list of largest wikis which are available at
- i) List of largest wikis (http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_wikis): It provides a list of largest MediaWiki / wikis (Conservative count above 8100) with automatically retrievable RAW statistics and also a list of largest other wikis (Conservative count above 8100) which updated by manual method or by hand.
 - ii) WikiIndex (<http://wikiindex.com>): WikiIndex is a wiki of wiki, many public wikis are listed at this site.
- d) Wiki Farms:** One can also find out a relevant wiki by consulting the Wiki Farms. A wiki farm is a server or a collection of servers that provides wiki hosting, or a group of wikis hosted on such servers. Or a wiki farm is a website, which may itself be a wiki, that allows for free or paid, creation of wiki. A detailed List of wiki farms are available at
- i) Wiki Farms (<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?WikiFarms>): It categorized the wiki alphabetically on the basis of language (English and Non English) in which a particular wiki originate with a rating i.e. four star / three star etc. A list of Commercial WikiFarms is also available based on the amount they charge for hosting a wiki site. Subject approach is also considered i.e. Education, Philosophy etc.
 - ii) Wiki Farm (<http://wikiindex.com/WikiFarm>): It gives a alphabetical list of wikifarm.
 - iii) Wiki Matrix (<http://www.wikimatrix.org/>): It also gives an alphabetical list of wikiFarm for easy comparison.

6. Uses of Wiki in library and Information Science

As "Wiki" is a composition system; it's a discussion medium; it's a repository; it's a mail system; it's a tool for collaboration, it has a tremendous application in Library and Information Science. In this digital environment the librarian and information scientist can utilized the wiki as a means of packaging and repackaging of information, for electronic publishing, for reference purpose, to advice the user about the strategy to identify relevant electronic sources etc. Mainly it can be use in the following ways.

- a) To create a site for the Library and the Librarian as an alternative to website.
- b) To create customize pages for the users according to their subject requirement, and informing the user about the changes in that pages through E-mail notification. By this way it will provide an effective current awareness service and selective dissemination of information service.

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- c) To create online articles on various topics with appropriate references and to support automatic back-ups.
 - d) To save ideas, appointments, and files of the Librarian and Library science professional.
 - e) To make a site for the entire staff member tree, complete with bios, pictures, and stories.
 - f) To create projects discussion pages with coworkers.
 - g) To keep a to-do list for the librarian and/or others subordinate staff.

7. Developing a personalized wiki

Developing a wiki is very easy; and it's just like creating an E-Mail account in a particular Mail server. It can also be make private, password-protected. For those interested in creating their own wiki, there are many publicly available "wiki farms". The primary goal of the wiki farm site is to help people to find good places to host their new wiki idea by showing the detailed good/bad experiences with the servers.

Some Examples of free space provider as well as commercial wiki server includes:-

- a) **JotSpot (<http://www.jot.com/>):** JotSpot was founded in 2004 as the first company to provide an application wiki. It gives two weeks free hosting.
- b) **OddWiki (<http://communitywiki.org/odd/HomePage>):** Oddwiki is a mother wiki and a place where people get started, get convinced, get hooked, and get going in making personal wiki.
- c) **PeanutButterWiki (<http://pbwiki.com/>):** PBwiki is the world's largest consumer wiki farm It was launched in June 2005. Now it is hosting over 55,000 wikis (As on 30/08/06) and hundreds of thousands of pages of user-created content.
- d) **Wikia (<http://wikia.com/>):** Wikia are wiki communities creating free content with the MediaWiki software. These are hosted for free by Wikia, Inc., the company which runs the project. Wikia was founded by Angela Beesley and Jimmy Wales, originally under the name "Wikicities", in October 2004. Wikicities relaunched as "Wikia" in March 2006.
- e) **Wikispaces (<http://www.wikispaces.com/>):** Wikispaces is run by Tangient which is Dominick Bellizzi, James Byers and Adam Frey. they continually refining Wikispaces based on input from their communities and members.

Some more wiki server includes SeedWiki (<http://seedwiki.com/>), Socialtext (<http://www.socialtext.com/>) etc.

8. Conclusion

Day by day needs of user are shifting towards a different environment so it's the peak time to all information and library professionals to gear themselves to take wikis advantage as an end. Wiki sites are powerful tools for collaboration in closed work groups, but can also be used for the general public on the open Internet. The beauty of Wiki is in the freedom and simplicity it offers. The most prominently almost every wiki provides the "Recent Changes" page—a specific list of recent edits in numbers, or a list of all the edits made within a given timeframe.

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