WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Wiki

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A **wiki** (/ˈwɪki/ ⓘ *WI-kee*) is a form of online hypertext publication that is collaboratively edited and managed by its own audience directly through a web browser. A typical wiki contains multiple pages for the subjects or scope of the project, and could be either open to the public or limited to use within an organization for maintaining its internal knowledge base.
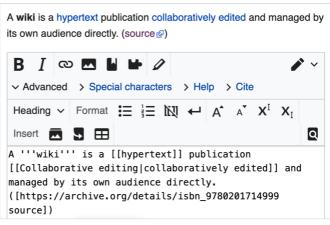
Wikis are enabled by wiki software, otherwise known as wiki engines. A wiki engine, being a form of a content management system, differs from other web-based systems such as blog software or static site generators, in that the content is created without any defined owner or leader, and wikis have little inherent structure, allowing structure to emerge according to the needs of the users.[1] Wiki engines usually allow content to be written using a simplified markup language and sometimes edited with the help of a rich-text editor.[2] There are dozens of different wiki engines in use, both standalone and part of other software, such as bug tracking systems. Some wiki engines are free and open-source, whereas others are proprietary. Some permit control over different functions (levels of access); for example, editing rights may permit changing, adding, or removing material. Others may permit access without enforcing access control. Further rules may be imposed to organize content.

There are hundreds of thousands of wikis in use, both public and private, including wikis functioning as knowledge management resources, note-taking tools, community websites, and intranets. Ward Cunningham, the developer of the first wiki software, WikiWikiWeb, originally described wiki as "the simplest online database that could possibly work".[3] "Wiki" (pronounced [wiki][note 1]) is a Hawaiian word meaning "quick".[4][5][6]

The online encyclopedia project Wikipedia is the most popular wiki-based website, and is one of the most widely viewed sites in the world, having been ranked in the top twenty since 2007.[7] Wikipedia is not a single wiki but rather a collection of hundreds of wikis, with each one pertaining to a specific language. The English-language Wikipedia has the largest collection of articles: as of January 2024, it has over six million articles.[8]

A **wiki** is a hypertext publication collaboratively edited and managed by its own audience directly. (source 🡕)

> A '''wiki''' is a [[hypertext]] publication [[Collaborative editing|collaboratively edited]] and managed by its own audience directly. ([https://archive.org/details/isbn_9780201714999 source])

Editing display showing MediaWiki markup language

Characteristics

In their 2001 book *The Wiki Way: Quick Collaboration on the Web*, Ward Cunningham and co-author Bo Leuf described the essence of the Wiki concept:[9][10]

- "A wiki invites all users—not just experts—to edit any page or to create new pages within the wiki web site, using only a standard 'plain-vanilla' Web browser without any extra add-ons."
- "Wiki promotes meaningful topic associations between different pages by making page link creation intuitively easy and showing whether an intended target page exists or not."

- "A wiki is *not* a carefully crafted site created by experts and professional writers and designed for casual visitors. Instead, it seeks to involve the typical visitor/user in an ongoing process of creation and collaboration that constantly changes the website landscape."

A wiki enables communities of editors and contributors to write documents collaboratively. All that people require to contribute is a computer, Internet access, a web browser, and a basic understanding of a simple markup language (e.g. MediaWiki markup language). A single page in a wiki website is referred to as a "wiki page", while the entire collection of pages, which are usually well-interconnected by hyperlinks, is "the wiki". A wiki is essentially a database for creating, browsing, and searching through information. A wiki allows non-linear, evolving, complex, and networked text, while also allowing for editor argument, debate, and interaction regarding the content and formatting.[11] A defining characteristic of wiki technology is the ease with which pages can be created and updated. Generally, there is no review by a moderator or gatekeeper before modifications are accepted and thus lead to changes on the website. Many wikis are open to alteration by the general public without requiring registration of user accounts. Many edits can be made in real-time and appear almost instantly online, but this feature facilitates abuse of the system. Private wiki servers require user authentication to edit pages, and sometimes even to read them. Maged N. Kamel Boulos, Cito Maramba, and Steve Wheeler write that the open wikis produce a process of Social Darwinism. "... because of the openness and rapidity that wiki pages can be edited, the pages undergo an evolutionary selection process, not unlike that which nature subjects to living organisms. 'Unfit' sentences and sections are ruthlessly culled, edited and replaced if they are not considered 'fit', which hopefully results in the evolution of a higher quality and more relevant page."[12]

Ward Cunningham

Editing

Source editing

Some wikis have an edit button or link directly on the page being viewed if the user has permission to edit the page. This can lead to a text-based editing page where participants can structure and format wiki pages with a simplified markup language, sometimes known as wikitext, wiki markup or wikicode (it can also lead to a WYSIWYG editing page; see the paragraph after the table below). For example, starting lines of text with asterisks could create a bulleted list. The style and syntax of wikitexts can vary greatly among wiki implementations, some of which also allow HTML tags.

Layout consistency

Wikis have favored plain-text editing, with fewer and simpler conventions than HTML for indicating style and structure. Although limiting access to HTML and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) of wikis limits user ability to alter the structure and formatting of wiki content, there are some benefits. Limited access to CSS promotes consistency in the look and feel, and having JavaScript disabled prevents a user from implementing code that may limit other users' access.

Basic syntax