

pedia works in practice but not in theory.” While it undoubtedly has its challenges and flaws, Wikipedia and its sister projects are a striking testament to the power of human collaboration.

Because of its extraordinary breadth and scope, it does feel a bit like a unicorn. Indeed, there is nothing else like Wikipedia. Still, much of what makes the projects successful—community, transparency, a strong mission, trust—are consistent with what it takes to be successfully **Made with Creative Commons** more generally. With Wikipedia, everything just happens at an unprecedented scale.

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The story of Wikipedia has been told many times. For our purposes, it is enough to know the experiment started in 2001 at a small scale, inspired by the crazy notion that perhaps a truly open, collaborative project could create something meaningful. At this point, Wikipedia is so ubiquitous and ingrained in our digital lives that the fact of its existence seems less remarkable. But outside of software, Wikipedia is perhaps the single most stunning example of successful community cocreation. Every day, seven thousand new articles are created on Wikipedia, and nearly fifteen thousand edits are made every hour.

The nature of the content the community creates is ideal for asynchronous cocreation. “An encyclopedia is something where incremental community improvement really works,” Luis Villa, former Chief Officer of Community Engagement, told us. The rules and processes that govern cocreation on Wikipedia and its sister projects are all community-driven and vary by language edition. There are entire books written on the intricacies of their systems, but generally speaking, there are very few exceptions to the rule that anyone can edit any article, even without an account on their system. The extensive peer-review process includes elaborate systems to resolve disputes, methods for managing particularly controver-

sial subject areas, talk pages explaining decisions, and much, much more.

The Wikimedia Foundation’s decision to leave governance of the projects to the community is very deliberate. “We look at the things that the community can do well, and we want to let them do those things,” Stephen told us. Instead, the foundation focuses its time and resources on what the community cannot do as effectively, like the software engineering that supports the technical infrastructure of the sites. In 2015-16, about half of the foundation’s budget went to direct support for the Wikimedia sites.

Some of that is directed at servers and general IT support, but the foundation also invests a significant amount on architecture designed to help the site function as effectively as possible. “There is a constantly evolving system to keep the balance in place to avoid Wikipedia becoming the world’s biggest graffiti wall,” Luis said. Depending on how you measure it, somewhere between 90 to 98 percent of edits to Wikipedia are positive. Some portion of that success is attributable to the tools Wikimedia has in place to try to incentivize good actors. “The secret to having any healthy community is bringing back the right people,” Luis said. “Vandals tend to get bored and go away. That is partially our model working, and partially just human nature.” Most of the time, people want to do the right thing.

Wikipedia not only relies on good behavior within its community and on its sites, but also by everyone else once the content leaves Wikipedia. All of the text of Wikipedia is available under an Attribution-ShareAlike license (CC BY-SA), which means it can be used for any purpose and modified so long as credit is given and anything new is shared back with the public under the same license. In theory, that means anyone can copy the content and start a new Wikipedia. But as Stephen explained, “Being open has only made Wikipedia bigger and stronger. The desire to protect is not always what is best for everyone.”

Of course, the primary reason no one has successfully co-opted Wikipedia is that copycat