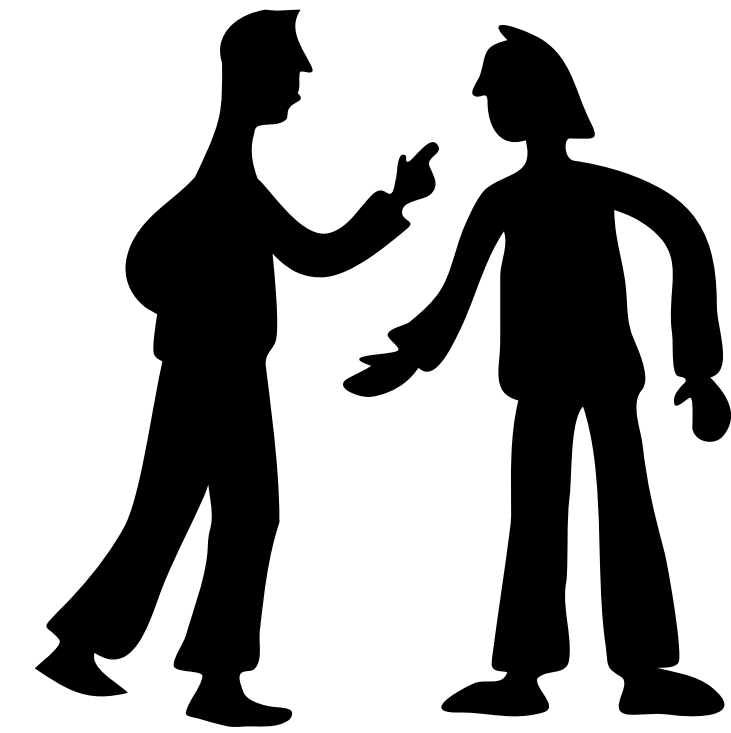# Edit Conflicts, Offline Contributions, and Tor: Oh My!

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Editing Conflicts

A new editor makes a contribution. It is immediately reverted and their work is apparently "lost".

A careful editor wants a space to refine and get feedback on a draft edit over a period of time, without worrying about unrelated edits causing conflicts.

A user encounters an edit conflict and gives up.

A computer crash just before publishing a long edit causes all work to be lost.

A minority editor wants a safe space to work without immediate harassment.

Offline Contributions

A Peruvian schoolchild finds no information in Wikipedia about their hometown, but can't contribute an article because they are using the wiki offline.

Tor!

A user in a repressive regime can only safely access Wikipedia by using Tor, but in a catch-22 they then lose the ability to make contributions.
(Read more: http://andreaforte.net/ForteCSCW17-Anonymity.pdf)

Oh my!

Linear Edit Model

In today's MediaWiki, edits are only made to the most recent revision of an article. Once a new revision is saved, any outstanding edits to the previous revision are not allowed to be saved. The author needs to manually apply their edits to the most recent revision before their work can be saved.
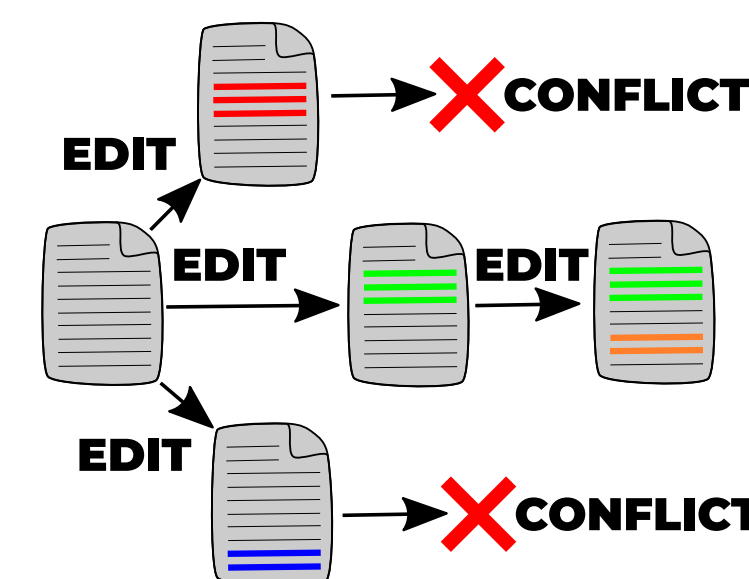
Although new tools attempt to make the revision of conflicts easier, they do not address the fundamental problem: edits can't be saved unless they apply to the most recent revision.

Fork-Merge Edit Model

With a fork-and-merge model, edits can always be saved, although only edits to the most recent revision are immediately merged and viewable.

New users whose content isn't immediately merged find it preserved on their fork for revision and re-submission, reducing their sense of rejection and loss.

Online edits can be auto-saved to a fork, and conflict resolution safely deferred to a later session. Offline users who are forced to work on an out-of-date copy and those using the draft namespace can use the same resolution tools when their contributions are brought to merge. (More: https://phabricator.wikimedia.org/T113004)
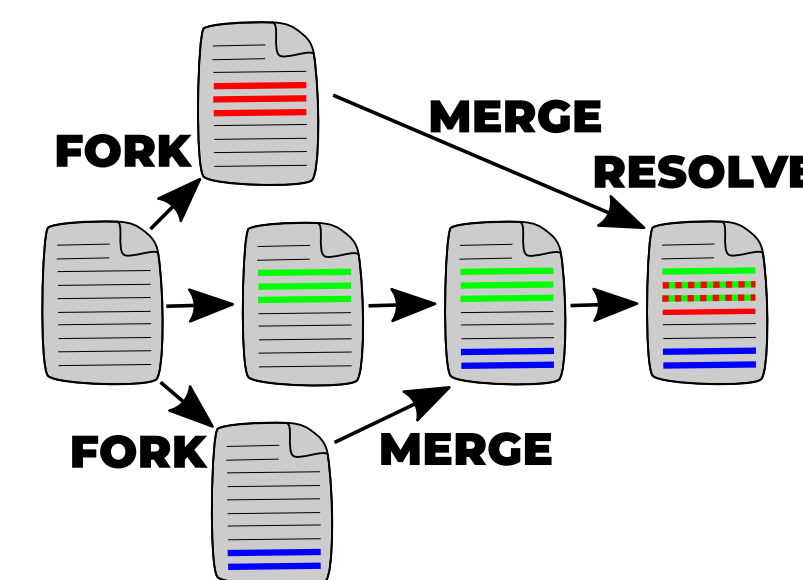

Collaborative Edit Queues

Although the vast majority of edits which can be applied without conflict or controversy would be merged immediately and automatically, forks could be created manually or (when conflicts arise) automatically. Merging forks (and resolving any conflicts) can be done as a separate process, at a later time, and by anyone at all—not solely the original author of the edit!

Resolution can be done collaboratively by the community.

Tools for merging conflicted edits can be built in a general fashion, not tightly tied to a particular edit tool. Forks are reachable from the main article, and volunteers can resolve/merge these forks.
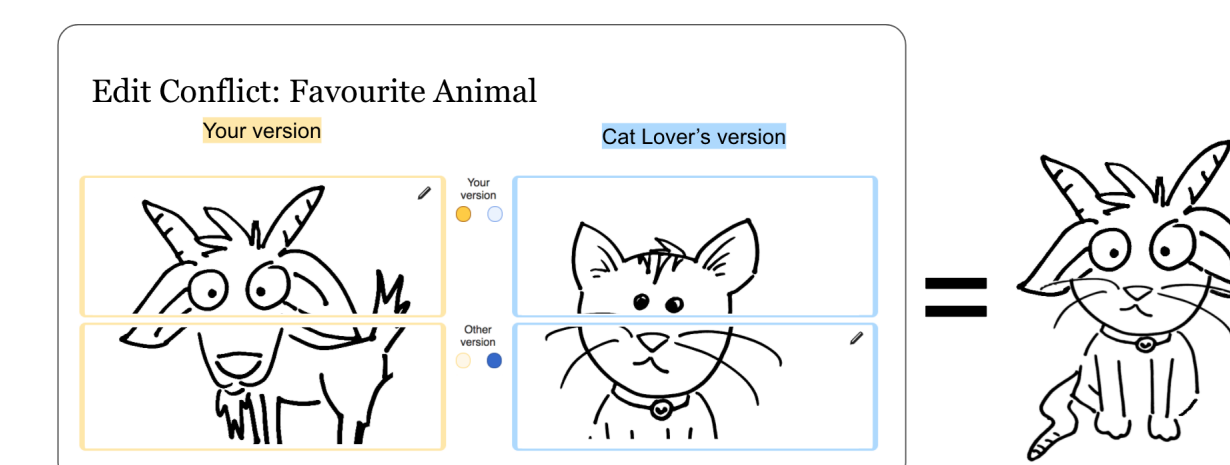
We have built a proof-of-concept for readers browsing via Tor, which lets them save their edits into a "Suggestion Queue" for later merge.

Collaborative queue for edits from Tor: https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Suggestor

Volunteer Communities

Queues for merging contributions can be organized by volunteers according to interest group, and communities built. Some examples:
- Unmerged edits by new editors
- Edits from Turkey/Syria/… via Tor
- Edits from offline schoolkids in Peru/Ethiopia/…
- Abandoned edit conflicts from articles on your watchlist
- Allies volunteering to be the public face of merges from harassed groups

We then can collect edits from more diverse and less-connected users and provide a friendlier first-edit experience to retain newcomers. Volunteer merge queues provide another means for those well-connected to aid those with difficulties in the spirit of *ubuntu*. By increasing participation we can bridge the knowledge gap.