

# Going Global [C1]

Wikipedia è un progetto globale che collega culture e lingue, preserva le lingue in pericolo e adatta i suoi contenuti per le nuove generazioni in tutto il mondo.

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As social media platforms become overtly affiliated with **pugnacious** politicians and **bilious** billionaires, Wikipedia **has stuck to** its principles of transparency, accessibility and humility. What began as an online encyclopaedia in 2001 grew into a global project in over 340 languages that has captured the minds and hearts of millions worldwide. To find out more about Wikipedia and its global reach, Speak Up contacted Mike Peel, a British astronomer and post-doctoral researcher, who has been involved in the organisation since 2005. **Issues** of language, sovereignty and the colonial past are all relevant in the evolution of Wikipedia as a democratic institution. However, evolution is inevitable, as Peel explains. Michael Peel: We have language editions, we don't have country editions. The example I know best is actually Portuguese, where about 80 per cent, I think, of editors are from Brazil and the other 20 per cent from **elsewhere**. So it can be interesting to see the dynamics kind of between Europe and between South America. People have to work together. English Wikipedia is not British, it's not US, it's not Australian, it's a mix, actually India is a big part of [the] community as well. It's one of the nice things about Wikipedia, everyone's brought together and everyone has the same goal of sharing information.

## NEW PRODUCTION

And, says Peel, while some pages are translations from the English Wikipedia or vice-versa, some pages are reproduced **from scratch**. Michael Peel: You do see a lot of translations going on, particularly from English Wikipedia to other languages; other times it can be completely new information. I used to live in Brazil and there's a lot of content about Brazil in the Portuguese language, so I would pick topics which are interesting, historical interests or tourism interests, and create new articles about them in the English

Wikipedia. But, I would normally start **from scratch** and find references that you can put in and build up the content again from there, but you can do [it] either way. If you look at older content on Wikipedia, it tends to be less well referenced, less up to date, so often it does help to be starting fresh and writing something new and then it can **live on**.

## KEEP COMMUNICATING

Many smaller languages are not represented in Wikipedia, and many in the world are actually **endangered**. As Peel explains, Wikipedia is not only attempting to combat this, but looking beyond language as a means to share knowledge. Michael Peel: We have an incubator where you can start a Wikipedia in a new language and try to get it big enough so it can become its own Wikipedia. We also have multilingual projects, so Wikidata, for example, it's structured data so that's not done in English or in any specific language, that's done multilingually. So if you edit Wikipedia to add **labels** for these in different languages, you can create info boxes automatically in those languages. And we have a project called Abstract Wikipedia that's aimed at creating encyclopaedias completely multilingually. It is a big challenge, particularly with the small languages which don't even have a presence on the internet. And the Big Tech companies don't necessarily think about the small languages, Wikipedia is one of the few that does.

## NEW GENERATIONS

It is important to get younger people involved in Wikipedia so that the project can keep growing, says Peel. To this end, new formats are needed that adapt to the way people behave. Michael Peel: We want to make sure it's a multi-generational project, we want Wikipedia to be around for a hundred years or more, so we need to get younger people involved and Wikipedia has actually been quite good for that over the years because I know a number of people that started editing ten years ago or more when they were thirteen or sixteen and just kept on going, because it's online, no one needs to know how old you are. But then everyone nowadays is on mobile phones, and editing on a phone is difficult. That's one of the things

we're trying to improve. So there's Wikidata games you can play, where it just presents you with kind of a bit of information straight from somewhere and says 'Is this true or false?' or 'Is this a match or not?' and you can use that on the mobile to put data into Wikidata.

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# Glossary

- **bilious** = irritabili
- **has stuck to** = rimanere fedele a
- **elsewhere** = altrove
- **endangered** = in pericolo di estinzione
- **labels** = etichette
- **pugnacious** = combattivo, aggressivo
- **Issues** = questioni
- **from scratch** = da zero
- **live on** = perdurare