

= Bomis =

Bomis (/ ˈbɒmɪs / to rhyme with " promise ") was a dot @-@ com company best known for supporting the creations of free @-@ content online @-@ encyclopedia projects Nupedia and Wikipedia . It was founded in 1996 by Jimmy Wales , Tim Shell and Michael Davis . Davis became acquainted with Wales after hiring him at Chicago Options Associates in 1994 , and Wales became friends with Shell through mailing lists discussing philosophy . The primary business of Bomis was the sale of advertising on the Bomis.com search portal .

The company initially tried a number of ideas for content , including being a directory of information about Chicago . The site subsequently focused on content geared to a male audience , including information on sporting activities , automobiles and women . Bomis became successful after focusing on X @-@ rated media . " Bomis Babes " was devoted to erotic images ; the " Bomis Babe Report " featured adult pictures . Bomis Premium , available for an additional fee , provided explicit material . " The Babe Engine " helped users find erotic content through a web search engine . The advertising director for Bomis noted that 99 percent of queries on the site were for nude women .

Bomis created Nupedia as a free online encyclopedia (with content submitted by experts) but it had a tedious , slow review process . Wikipedia was initially launched by Bomis to provide content for Nupedia , and was a for @-@ profit venture (a Bomis subsidiary) through the end of 2002 . As the costs of Wikipedia rose with its popularity , Bomis ' revenues declined as result of the dot @-@ com crash . Since Wikipedia was a drain on Bomis ' resources , Wales and philosophy graduate student Larry Sanger decided to fund the project as a charity ; Sanger was laid off from Bomis in 2002 . Nupedia content was merged into Wikipedia , and it ceased in 2003 .

The non @-@ profit Wikimedia Foundation began in 2003 with a Board of Trustees composed of Bomis ' three founders (Wales , Davis and Shell) and was first headquartered in St. Petersburg , Florida , Bomis ' location . Wales used about US \$ 100 @,@ 000 of revenue from Bomis to fund Wikipedia before the decision to shift the encyclopedia to non @-@ profit status . Wales stepped down from his role as CEO of Bomis in 2004 . Shell served as CEO of the company in 2005 , while on the Wikimedia Foundation board of trustees . Wales edited Wikipedia in 2005 to remove the characterizations of Bomis as providing softcore pornography , which attracted media attention ; Wales expressed regret for his actions . The Atlantic gave Bomis the nickname " Playboy of the Internet " , and the term caught on in other media outlets . Scholars have described Bomis as a provider of softcore pornography .

= = History = =

= = Background = = =

Jimmy Wales left a study track at Indiana University as a PhD candidate to work in finance before completing his doctoral dissertation . In 1994 Wales was hired by Michael Davis , CEO of finance company Chicago Options Associates , as a trader focusing on futures contracts and options . Wales was adept at determining future movements of foreign currencies and interest rates ; he was successful in Chicago , became independently wealthy , and was director of research at Chicago Options Associates from 1994 to 2000 . He became acquainted with Tim Shell from email lists discussing philosophy .

Wales wanted to participate in the online @-@ based entrepreneurial ventures which were increasingly popular and successful during the mid @-@ 1990s . His experience (from gaming in his youth) impressed on him the importance of networking . Wales was interested in computer science , experimenting with source code on the Internet and improving his skill at computer programming . In his spare time after work at Chicago Options Associates , Wales constructed his own web browser . While at the firm , he noted the successful 1995 initial public offering of Netscape Communications .

== Foundation ==

Wales co-founded Bomis in 1996, with business associates Tim Shell, and his then manager Michael Davis, as a for-profit corporation with joint ownership. Wales was its chief manager. In 1998 he moved from Chicago to San Diego to work for Bomis, and then to St. Petersburg, Florida (where the company subsequently relocated).

The staff at Bomis was originally about five employees. Its 2000 staff included programmer Toan Vo and system administrator Jason Richey; Wales employed his high school friend and best man in his second wedding, Terry Foote, as advertising director. In June 2000, Bomis was one of five network partners of Ask Jeeves. The majority of the revenue that came in to Bomis was generated through advertising. The most successful time for Bomis was during its venture as a member of the NBC web portal NBCi; this collapsed at the end of the dot-com bubble.

Although Bomis is not an acronym, the name stemmed from "Bitter Old Men in Suits" (as Wales and Shell called themselves in Chicago). The site began as a web portal, trying a number of ideas (including serving as an access point for information about Chicago). It later focused on male-oriented content, including information on sporting activities, automobiles and women.

== Hosted content ==

Working from the Open Directory Project, Bomis created and maintained hundreds of webrings on topics related to lad culture. In 1999 the company introduced the Bomis Browser, which helped users block online pop-up ads. Its webring on Star Wars was considered a useful resource for information on Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace. Additional webrings included sections helping users find information on Casablanca, Hunter S. Thompson, Farah Fawcett, Geri Haliwell of the Spice Girls and Snake Eyes. "Bomis: The Buffy the Vampire Slayer Ring", devoted to Buffy the Vampire Slayer, organized over 50 sites related to the program. Sheila Jeffreys noted in her *Beauty and Misogyny* that in 2004 Bomis maintained "The Lipstick Fetish Ring", which helped users with a particular attraction to women in makeup.

Bomis became successful after it focused on X-rated and erotic media. Advertising generated revenue which enabled the company to fund other websites, and the site published suggestive pictures of professional models. In addition to Bomis the company maintained nekkid.com and nekkid.info, which featured pictures of nude women. About ten percent of Bomis' revenue was derived from pornographic films and blogs.

The website included a segment devoted to erotic images, "Bomis Babes", and a feature enabled users to submit recommended links to other sites appealing to a male audience. Peer-to-peer services provided by the site helped users find other websites about female celebrities, including Anna Kournikova and Pamela Anderson. In the Bomis Babes section was the Bomis Babe Report, begun in 2000, with pictures of porn stars in a blog format. The Bomis Babe Report produced original erotic material, including reports on pornographic film actors and celebrities who had posed nude. It was referred to as The Babe Report for short.

Wales referred to the site's softcore pornography as "glamour photography", and Bomis became familiar to Internet users for its erotic images. During this period Wales was photographed steering a yacht with a peaked cap, posing as a sea captain with a female professional model on either side of him. In the photograph, the women were wearing panties and T-shirts advertising Bomis.

A subscription section, Bomis Premium, provided access to adult content and erotic material; A three-day trial was US \$2.95. While Bomis Babes provided nude images of females to subscribers, Bomis Premium featured lesbian sexual practices and female anatomy. Bomis created the Babe Engine, which helped users find erotic material online through a web search engine. According to Bomis advertising director Terry Foote, 99 percent of searches on the site related to nude women.

== Nupedia and Wikipedia ==

Bomis is best known for supporting the creation of free @-@ content online @-@ encyclopedia projects Nupedia and Wikipedia . Tim Shell and Michael David continued their partnership with Wales during the 2000 Nupedia venture . Larry Sanger met Jimmy Wales through an e @-@ mail communication group about philosophy and objectivism , and joined Bomis in May 1999 . Sanger was a graduate student working towards a PhD degree in philosophy , with research focused on epistemology ; he received his degree from Ohio State University , moving to San Diego to help Bomis with its encyclopedia venture . At the time Sanger joined Bomis the company had a total workforce of two employees with help from programmers .

Sanger and Wales began Nupedia with resources from Bomis ; at the beginning of 2000 , the company agreed to provide early financing for Nupedia from its profits . Nupedia went live in March , when Wales was CEO of Bomis ; Sanger was Nupedia 's editor @-@ in @-@ chief . Nupedia 's reading comprehension was intended for high @-@ school graduates , and Bomis set its goal : " To set a new standard for breadth , depth , timeliness and lack of bias , and in the fullness of time to become the most comprehensive encyclopedia in the history of humankind . "

Although Bomis began a search for experts to vet Nupedia articles , this proved tedious . In August 2000 Nupedia had more than 60 academics contributing to the peer @-@ review process on the site , most with doctor of philosophy or doctor of medicine degrees . Scholars wishing to contribute to Nupedia were required to submit their credentials via fax for verification . At that time , Bomis was attempting to obtain advertising revenue for Nupedia and the company was optimistic that it could fund the project with ad space on Nupedia.com.

Wikipedia began as a feature of Nupedia.com on January 15 , 2001 , later known as Wikipedia Day . It was originally intended only to generate draft articles for Nupedia , with finished articles moved to the latter . Wikipedia became a separate site days after the Nupedia advisory board opposed combining the two . In September 2001 , Wales was simultaneously CEO of Bomis and co @-@ founder of Wikipedia ; Sanger was chief organizer of Wikipedia and editor @-@ in @-@ chief of Nupedia .

Nupedia was encumbered by its peer @-@ review system , a seven @-@ step process of review and copyediting , and Wikipedia grew at a faster rate . In November 2000 , Nupedia had 115 potential articles awaiting its peer @-@ review process . By September 2001 , after a total investment of US \$ 250 @,@ 000 from Bomis , Nupedia produced 12 articles ; from 2000 through 2003 , Nupedia contributors produced a total of 24 finalized articles . Wikipedia had about 20 @,@ 000 articles and 18 language versions by the end of 2001 .

Bomis originally planned to make Wikipedia profitable , providing staffing and hardware for its initial structure ; Wikipedia would not have survived without this early support . Bomis provided web servers and bandwidth for the projects , owning key items such as domain names . Wales used checks from Bomis to maintain the Wikipedia servers in Tampa , Florida .

As the cost of Wikipedia rose with its popularity , Bomis ' revenues declined as a result of the dot @-@ com crash . In late 2000 Bomis had a staff of about 11 employees , but by early 2002 layoffs reduced the staff to its original size of about five . Sanger was laid off in February 2002 ; from January 15 , 2001 through March 1 , 2002 , he was the sole paid editor of Wikipedia . Sanger stepped down from his dual roles as chief organizer of Wikipedia and editor @-@ in @-@ chief of Nupedia on March 1 , 2002 , feeling unable to commit to these areas on a volunteer basis and a dearth of " the habit or tradition of respect for expertise " from high @-@ ranking Wikipedia members . He continued contributing to community discussions , optimistic about Wikipedia 's future success .

After Sanger 's departure , Wikipedia was managed by Wales and a burgeoning online community ; although he thought advertising a possibility , the Wikipedia community was opposed to business development and Internet marketing was difficult at the end of 2002 . Wikipedia remained a for @-@ profit venture (under the auspices of Bomis) through the end of 2002 . By then it had moved from a .com domain name to .org , and Wales said that the site would not accept advertising . Material from Nupedia was folded into Wikipedia , and by 2003 the former was discontinued .

= = = Wikimedia Foundation Board of Trustees = = =

By 2003 Wikipedia had grown to 100 @, @ 000 articles in its English @-@ language version , and it became difficult for Bomis to continue financially supporting the project . With Wikipedia a drain on the company 's resources , Wales and Sanger decided to fund the project on a non @-@ profit basis . Bomis laid off most of its employees to continue operating , since Wikipedia was not generating revenue . The company owned Wikipedia from its creation through 2003 , and Wales used about \$ 100 @, @ 000 of Bomis ' revenue to fund Wikipedia before the decision to shift the encyclopedia to non @-@ profit status .

In June 2003 Wikipedia was transferred to a nascent non @-@ profit organization , the Wikimedia Foundation , which was formed as a charitable institution to supervise Wikipedia and its associated wiki @-@ based sites . When the foundation was established , its staff began to solicit public funding and Bomis turned Wikipedia over to the non @-@ profit . All Bomis @-@ owned hardware used to run Wikipedia @-@ associated websites was donated to the Wikimedia Foundation , and Wales transferred Wikipedia @-@ related copyrights from Bomis to the foundation . It was first headquartered in St. Petersburg , Florida , where Bomis was located . The foundation shifted Wikipedia 's dependence away from Bomis , allowing it to purchase hardware for expansion .

The Wikimedia Foundation Board of Trustees was initially composed of Bomis ' three founders : Jimmy Wales and his two business partners , Michael Davis and Tim Shell . Shell and Davis were appointed to the board by Wales , but after Wikipedia community members complained that the board was composed of appointed individuals , the first elections were held in 2004 . Two community members , Florence Devouard and Angela Beesley , were elected to the Board of Trustees .

In August 2004 Wales was chief executive officer of Bomis , and on September 20 Wikipedia reached the million @-@ article mark on an expenditure of \$ 500 @, @ 000 (most directly from Wales) . In November 2004 he told the St. Petersburg Times he no longer controlled Bomis ' day @-@ to @-@ day operations , but retained ownership as a shareholder . In 2005 , Tim Shell was CEO of Bomis and one of the board members overseeing Wikipedia . Shell remained CEO of Bomis in 2006 , becoming vice @-@ president of the Wikimedia Foundation and continuing to serve on its board . Bomis co @-@ founder Michael Davis became treasurer of the Wikimedia Foundation that year . Wales told The Sydney Morning Herald in 2007 that although he retained partial ownership of Bomis , " It 's pretty much dead . " According to the Internet Archive , the Bomis website was last accessible with content in 2010 ; when accessed in 2013 by the archive , it had a welcome message for PetaBox .

= = Aftermath = =

In 2005 , Wales made 18 changes to his Wikipedia biography . He removed references to Bomis Babes as softcore pornography and erotica , and Larry Sanger as co @-@ founder of Wikipedia . Wales ' actions were publicized by author Rogers Cadenhead , attracting attention from US and UK media . In 2011 , Time listed Wales ' 2005 edits in its " Top 10 Wikipedia Moments " .

Wikipedia policy warned users not to edit their own biography pages , with its rules on autobiographical editing quoting Wales : " It is a social faux pas to write about yourself . " Larry Sanger said , " It does seem that Jimmy is attempting to rewrite history " , and began a discussion on the talk page of Wales ' biography about historical revisionism .

Wales called his actions fixing mistakes , but after Cadenhead publicized the edits to his biography he expressed regret for his actions . In The Times Wales said that individuals should not edit their own Wikipedia biographies , telling The New Yorker that the standard applied to himself as well . Wales warned that the activity should be discouraged because of the potential for bias : " I wish I hadn 't done it . It 's in poor taste . "

Bomis was called the " ' Playboy ' of the Internet " by The Atlantic , and the sobriquet was adopted by other media outlets . Wales considered the " ' Playboy ' of the Internet " nickname inappropriate , although he was asked in interviews if his time at Bomis made him a " porn king " . The 2010 documentary film about Wikipedia , Truth in Numbers ? , discussed this characterization of Wales by

journalists . Wales , interviewed in the film , called the characterization inaccurate and explained that his company responded to content demand from customers . In later interviews , he responded to " porn king " questions by telling journalists to look at a page on Yahoo ! about pornography related to dwarfism . According to a 2007 article in Reason , " If he was a porn king , he suggests , so is the head of the biggest Web portal in the world . "

On December 14 , 2012 , academic and writer Judith Reisman stated in a piece for WorldNetDaily that in her view Wales had received revenue from a website which dealt in pornography . Relatively soon after the article was published , Wales wrote to WorldNetDaily to object to this characterization : " This is absolutely and categorically [sic] false . I have never made any ' fortune ' , as a pornography trafficker or otherwise , and I have never been a ' pornography trafficker ' at all I demand an immediate edit to that story to remove the lie about me . " WorldNetDaily editor Joseph Farah personally replied to Wales to explain that Wikipedia 's coverage of the history of Bomis acknowledged at the time that : " Bomis ran a website called Bomis Premium at premium.bomis.com until 2005 , offering customers access to premium , X @-@ rated pornographic content . " Wales sent an email to Farah stating Wikipedia : " doesn 't say anything remotely like me making a ' fortune ' from ' pornography . " Wales inquired to Farah what he was going to do next about what Wales characterized as " libel " . Farah responded to Wales ' reply with a subsequent email asking : " Let me get this straight : You admit making money from pornography , but you feel defamed because you didn 't make enough for it to be considered a ' fortune ' ? " Wales then repeated his original request to Farah and again asserted the original article was " defamatory " , writing in an email : " This is a defamatory falsehood . I have never made any ' fortune ' as a ' pornography [sic] trafficker . ' Fix it . "

WorldNetDaily published a correction on December 17 , 2012 , in the form of a new full article by journalist Chelsea Schilling which presented an analysis of the history of Bomis . Schilling reported that WorldNetDaily had performed a search of archives of Bomis and found that the Bomis Premium feature had indeed advertised on its site that membership included access to naked pictures of models . Schilling 's article included historical screenshots of the appearance of the site when Bomis Premium was an active feature . She cited a Wired article , and noted the prior history from 2005 of Wales 's repeated attempts to remove references on Wikipedia to the term " pornography " in reference to Bomis . In its final determination , Schilling reported that WorldNetDaily had modified the original article from stating Wales " made his original fortune as a pornography trafficker " to : " originally made his living off a website that earned revenue from pornography traffickers " .

= = Analysis = =

The Chronicle of Philanthropy characterized Bomis as " an Internet marketing firm ... which also traded in erotic photographs for a while . " Jeff Howe wrote in his book , Crowdsourcing , about " one of Wales 's less altruistic ventures , a Web portal called Bomis.com that featured , among other items , soft @-@ core pornography . " In his book , The Future of the Internet ? And How to Stop It , legal scholar Jonathan Zittrain wrote that " Bomis helped people find ' erotic photography ' , and earned money through advertising as well as subscription fees for premium content . " The Guardian described the site as on " the fringes of the adult entertainment industry " , and The Edge called Bomis.com an " explicit @-@ content search engine " . Business 2 @. @ 0 Magazine described it as " a search portal ... which created and hosted Web rings around popular search terms ? including , not surprisingly , a lot of adult themes . "