Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Alternatives to Wikipedia

Our Friends · Thursday, May 28th, 2020

Whether you are interested in online slots or learning the election date of the US Presidential Primaries, if it goes under the category of trivia, most people's first place to look is Wikipedia. For anybody born after January 15, 2001, Wikipedia has been a standard in American society, for better or for worse.

There are many sister sites to Wikipedia (exact copies of Wikipedia), but are there any competitors to Wikipedia? Let's take a look at few contenders and try to determine what the differences are, if any, that make these sites worth a look.

Why Do People Want Something Different Than Wikipedia?

The main reason why people want something different than Wikipedia is due to the fact that a lot of people believe that Wikipedia is biased, leaning to the left. When you want to get facts:

• When did someone die?
• When was someone born?
• Who is the CEO of company XYZ?
• What are the episodes in Star Trek Season 1?

There is not much dispute in the answers, so the data you look up in Wikipedia is pretty trustworthy.
The problems come with politics, religion, conspiracy theories, and basically anything that anybody has a passion for. When emotions run high, common sense and neutrality go out the window.

There is also the whole discussion of how do you define something an educational, is the topic appropriate for children (including middle school and high school students), and the differences between images and clipart to teach some topics.

Not to mention the whole "what is a reliable source", "are we insulting anybody", "censorship", and even how Wikipedia editors are chosen?

Citizendium

Citizendium is an open wiki project dedicated to creating a free, comprehensive, repository of structured knowledge. One of the main differences between Citizendium and Wikipedia is that the

authors are required to use their real names, and the authors are expected to work professionally. The project was started in 2010.

Everipedia

Everipedia is "Everyone's Encyclopedia". "Everipedia offers a space for you to dive into anything you find interesting, connect with people who share your interests, and contribute your own perspective."

The about page does not provide a clear explanation of how this site differs from Wikipedia and/or how they plan to make sure that the mistakes of Wikipedia are not repeated in this site.

Encyclosphere

Encyclosphere is the newest evolution of Wikipedia's co-founder's, Larry Sanger's, attempt to make an alternative to Wikipedia. In this version, Sanger is trying to build a network of online encyclopedias with a variety of perspectives. The vision is something like a blogsphere.

Larry Sanger tries to describe his vision for Encyclosphere on his webpage. https://larrysanger.org/2019/10/introducing-the-encyclosphere/

The first half of the article is a rant about how Wikipedia is biased, that the authors are anonymous, so nobody can be held accountable, that no one group or one company should be controlling the information.

Larry Sanger lumps Wikipedia in with Facebook, Twitter, New York Times, as a group that is trying to control thought, ideas, and the viewing of information. The rant says what everybody already knows — that the current tech giants in Silicon Valley are censoring thought that they do not agree with including Wikipedia. But it still does not answer how this rendition of a Wikipedia-like site is going to be different than all of the other renditions of Wikipedia that Larry Sanger has tried to create over the last 10 years.

What is a blogsphere?

A blogsphere is made up of all blogs and their interconnections. But isn't that what the internet is? A collection of a blogs and websites that are interconnected with links to each other?

Yes, there is no central authority. Yes, there is no blogging authority. But blogs are opinions. Pure and simple. It is like have a newspaper that is only the editorial section. Yes, sometimes it is informative to read somebody's opinion on a topic, but those are not facts . Those are opinions.

Chocolate ice-cream is the best ice cream flavor is an opinion. Chocolate ice-cream is made from cocoa is a fact. A fact is a fact and an opinion is an opinion.

Mr. Sanger then talks about "What if blogs were controlled by Facebook, Wikipedia, or Twitter?" Actually, they are. Blogs that are by well-known blog authors whose views match Facebook's and Twitter's political views are placed more prominently in news feeds than other blogs. The same is true with Google.

Mr. Sanger seems to think that Wikipedia has a dominance, because of the technology of Wikipedia articles vs. the technology of blogs. I do not agree with Mr. Sanger on this point. There

is an interconnectedness in encyclopedia-like articles compared to blog articles. There is a lot more interconnection with encyclopedia articles than blog articles.

In this blog article, I am including a lot of proper nouns, but none of these proper nouns are being linked to inside the website that you are currently reading this article.

Ultimately, Larry Sanger is trying to create an alternative to Google and Wikipedia, so that the information is not centralized into one centrally controlled location. This is something that I have also thought about for a long time.

Maybe the problem is that Larry Sanger is still referring to it as an encyclopedia. I can talk about my vision compared to Larry Sanger's view, but that would be a whole article in itself.

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