KONINKLIJKE NEDERLANDSE AKADEMIE VAN WETENSCHAPPEN

Reading Wikipedia
On the occasion of the Erasmus Prize for the Wikipedia Community

Date: 23 November 2015, 10.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.
Venue: KNAW, Trippenhuis Building, Kloveniersburgwal 29, 1011 JV Amsterdam (route description)

Programme

9.30 a.m.   Registration

10.00 a.m.   Opening and welcome by José van Dijck, President of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Member of the Erasmus Prize Selection Committee and Professor in Social Media, University of Amsterdam

10.05 a.m.   Keynote address: *The uniqueness of Wikipedia as a platform* by José van Dijck

10.15 a.m.   **Session 1: *Wikipedia and the Quest for Universal Knowledge***

There are many reasons to consider Wikipedia to be the ultimate realization of earlier utopian ideas, from the Library of Alexandria under the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt, in charge of collecting 'all the world's knowledge', to Paul Otlet's *Mundaneum*, created in 1910, to gather together all the world's knowledge, or H.G. Wells's *World Brain* (1936), envisaged in his essays: a free, synthetic, authoritative, permanent *World Encyclopaedia,* electronically accessible for everybody, which would help mankind to make the best use of universal information resources, contributing to mutual understanding among the citizens of the world and thus serving universal peace.

In this session, Wikipedia will be addressed from various historical, philosophical and cultural perspectives. On the one hand, Wikipedia may be connected to traditional concepts of encyclopaedias, as formulated by Diderot, as well as other ideals of the Enlightenment, particularly with regard to free speech and the public sphere, and the productivity of public discussions for the progress of knowledge, freedom and humanity. Can Wikipedia fulfil these dreams and, more specifically, meet the encyclopaedic urge?

On the other hand, Wikipedia may be regarded from the perspective of a variety of communitarian theories, political as well as cultural. The basic ideas behind Wikipedia fit into traditional ideals of workers cooperatives or social equality as well as theories on collective intelligence, dating back to the late 18th century. In that sense Wikipedia undermines longstanding ideas on authoritative expertise. At the same time the very concept of 'collaborative knowledge' in relation to Wikipedia is questioned, both from a technical-analytical point of view as well as from a political and cultural perspective.

10.15 a.m.   Introduction of the theme and speakers by the Chair, Frank van Vree, University of Amsterdam

10.20 a.m.	*Encyclopaedias, hive minds and global brains. A cognitive evolutionary account of Wikipedia* Jos de Mul, Erasmus University Rotterdam
10.50 a.m.	*From Mundaneum to Wikipedia. Organizing Authority of Global Knowledge* Charles van den Heuvel, University of Amsterdam
11.10 a.m.	*Wikipedia and the Encyclopaedic Urge* Erinç Salor, University of Amsterdam
11.30 a.m.	*Collective Intelligence: Wikipedia and the Composition of the Crowd* Sabine Niederer, University of Amsterdam
11.50 a.m.	Discussion moderated by Frank van Vree
12.10 p.m.	Lunch
1.30 p.m.	Parallel Sessions
1.30 p.m.	**Session 2: *Wikipedia as a Memory Institution. The limits of the open model***

In many aspects Wikipedia and the associated Wikimedia commons fulfil roles that have been traditionally served by memory institutions such as libraries, archives and museums. Wikipedia has become a primary reference and information source and increasingly is also becoming an access point for media and digitized cultural heritage objects. Wikipedia provides a much richer, more comprehensive and more accessible source of information about topics that have traditionally been covered by specialized memory institutions. In a way, Wikipedia is becoming a memory institution itself, and offers us a glimpse of what memory institutions of the future may look like.

This development raises a set of interesting questions. Since its inception, Wikipedia and its sister projects maintain a principled policy that (almost) all of the content that is contributed to Wikipedia needs to be free, in the sense of re-usable by anyone without any restrictions. This policy is integral to the open character of Wikipedia, but at the same time substantially limits the scope of what kinds of source materials can be included in Wikipedia. Another question is the relationship between Wikipedia as a publicly maintained memory institution and more traditional public institutions such as public broadcasting services. Why is it that material that is produced by public broadcasters with public funding cannot be used by the public to illustrate and enrich Wikipedia articles? During the conference these two sets of questions will be discussed in two separate sessions.

1.30 p.m.	*Wikipedia's conception of free distribution versus inclusiveness*

This session will focus on Wikipedia's notion of freedom, which is derived from the free software community. This policy ensures that what is produced by the Wikimedia community can freely be re-used by anyone for any purpose, including for commercial purposes. Abiding by this policy, Wikipedia has to put stringent copyright requirements on source materials that are included in its body of work, thereby substantially limiting the range of materials that can be included. This raises the question if the principled commitment to freely re-usable source materials is something that is limiting Wikipedia's development. Earlier this year, in the context of an evaluation of the European Copyright by the European Parliament, this issue has fuelled the debate around the so-called freedom of panorama exceptions to copyright and the question of whether these should also cover commercial uses. In this session we will examine the background of Wikipedia's position on free re-usability and discuss its relevance in the context of Wikipedia's developing role as a

repository for cultural heritage.

Short introduction by the Chair, Paul Keller, Kennisland

Wikimedia's approach to including source materials (such as images and video's) in Wikimedia projects by Phoebe Ayers, Wikimedia Foundation Board of Trustees

Why is Wikimedia actively campaigning for extending freedom of panorama? Dimitar Dimitrov, Wikimedia

Why are authors societies in many European countries opposed to an extension of the freedom of panorama? by Christophe Depreter, SABAM

Reflections on the discussions about this issue that happened during the adoption of the EPs evaluation report of the infosoc directive before the summit by Julia Reda, MEP

Reflections by Andres Guadamuz, University of Sussex

Discussion moderated by Paul Keller

3.00 p.m.   Coffee and tea

3.30 p.m.   *Why is there almost no public broadcasting material on Wikipedia?*

The second part of the afternoon will focus on the relationship between public broadcasting organisations and Wikimedia. Where public broadcasters can be seen as the typical representation of a 20th century idea of a public media/communications space, Wikimedia represents a 21st century approach in this field. While both systems are inherently public ('by the public and for the public'), there is only little overlap between the two systems. Very few of the publicly funded productions of public broadcasting organisations are included as source material in Wikipedia. In this session we investigate why this is the case, and what can be done to see more publicly funded broadcasting material on the Wikipedia platform.

Short introduction by the Chair, Paul Keller, Kennisland

Making public broadcast productions available under free licenses so that they can be re-used by Wikimedia (and the public at large) by Victoria Anderica, Madrid City Government

Why public broadcast productions are not available under free licenses so that they can be re-used by Wikimedia by Heijo Ruijsenaars, European Broadcasting Union

Comments on the previous three presentations from the perspective of an academic who is currently involved in legal research on this question by Lucie Guibault, University of Amsterdam

Discussion moderated by Paul Keller

5.00 p.m.   Closure and drinks

1.30 p.m.   **Session 3: *The Research Affordances of Wikipedia***

In the main, Wikipedia is treated and evaluated as an encyclopaedia, be it through comparisons with *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, discussions of its neutral point of view

or questions of whether to reference it in academic and non-academic literature. It also describes itself as an encyclopaedia. But Wikipedia is also studied as collaborative authoring platform, participatory community, free-labour economy, a well-functioning bureaucracy as well as a tool for publicity management. All of these non-encyclopaedic notions of Wikipedia are not necessarily incompatible with its being called an encyclopaedia. But if one were to call Wikipedia not a reference work but a set of particularistic cultural references, its 'encyclopedianess' may be in question. That is, if one studies the same article across different Wikipedia language versions, and if these articles are distinctive from each other in word and image, is Wikipedia still to be described as encyclopaedic? Similarly, one could consider Wikipedia as a gauge of current controversial matters of concern, not only through its banners pointing out that an article is not neutral but also by virtue of page activity, edit wars and other indicators of dissensus. The panel discusses how to employ Wikipedia as a cultural reference work as well as controversy machine, pointing up the larger question of how to use Wikipedia for social research.

Short introduction by the Chair, Richard Rogers, University of Amsterdam

Contropedia, and the question of not analytically separating the medium and the message by Tommaso Venturini, SciencesPo MediaLab

Respondent: Fabian Flöck, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Reading European cross-cultural relations from Wikipedia by Fabian Flöck, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Respondent: Ellen Rutten, University of Amsterdam

Web wars: Wikipedia as locus for memory construction by Ellen Rutten, University of Amsterdam

Respondent: Tommaso Venturini, SciencesPo MediaLab

2.50 p.m.	Coffee and tea
3.30 p.m.	*Omnipedia: Overcoming structural barriers in peer production* by Brent Hecht, University of Minnesota

Respondent: Bernie Hogan, Oxford Internet Institute

Geographies of information and Wikipedia in Africa by Bernie Hogan, Oxford Internet Institute

Respondent: Brent Hecht, University of Minnesota

Discussion moderated by Richard Rogers

5.00 p.m.	Closure and drinks
6.00 p.m.	End of the Meeting

The conference 'Reading Wikipedia' is organised by:

Praemium Erasmianum Foundation
Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
University of Amsterdam
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