

Wikimedia Foundation
1 Montgomery Street
Suite 1600
San Francisco, CA 94104
USA

2019-09-25

Dear Wikimedia Foundation Board of Trustees,

We hereby submit an application for a new Wikimedia Sister Project:

Wikimedia Journals (as per Wikimedia Commons) or **Wikijournals** (as per Wikibooks)

We believe that this proposal has a distinct and complementary scope to the foundation's current projects. It will be a valuable part of the movement's strategic direction and goals to be the essential and trusted infrastructure of the free knowledge ecosystem, and especially for attracting new expert voices to the broader Wikimedia movement.

Wikimedia projects have long interacted with academic journals. Here, we propose that there is scope for a Wikimedia Journal hosting platform as a fully developed sister project. We have demonstrated the demand and feasibility of such a project by developing the WikiJournal User Group since 2013.

This project would greatly benefit from the specialised platform, new technical features, and increased exposure that a sister project status could provide.

We have broad support from the Wikimedia community, as well as from potential future contributors to the platform and from a range of external partners.

Please find attached a summary of the application. A link to the proposal on Meta-Wiki can be found at:

- meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WikiJournal
- meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WikiJournal/Technical_wishlist

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The WikiJournal User Group

Wikimedia Journals

APPLICATION TO FOUND A NEW SISTER PROJECT

Background

Public trust in Wikipedia is high, yet it has long struggled to gain reputation and engage academic/expert communities. Similarly, the quality of much of its content is superior to other encyclopedias, yet highly variable from page to page.

As well as the first stop for information, what if Wikimedia could also be the last stop in some cases - with content considered sufficiently trustworthy to be citable? The process of independent peer review by external experts is a foundation of robust quality-control for information. This is what we have started to achieve with the WikiJournal project.

After hundreds of years, academic publishing is finally undergoing a rapid transformation.

The Open Access (OA) movement is revolutionising reader access to peer-reviewed research, but the publishing cost is still out of reach for billions of people who cannot afford ‘article processing fees’, which can be thousands of dollars for one paper.

A Wikimedia journal platform would not charge for any stage of publication, relying on volunteers and donations to run the entire project. We have shown how the WikiJournals can draw expertise from academic and professional communities who otherwise rarely contribute to the Wikimedia movement.

What has been done so far?

Combining academic publishing and Wikipedia has been done in several formats over the last decade.

- **Dual publishing:** In 2008 *RNA Biology* began requiring authors to also write a short Wikipedia page to accompany any article on a new RNA gene family. In 2016, *Gene* started a similar format.
- **Journal first publishing:** In 2012, *PLOS Computational Biology* created a format where authors write an article that is published in the journal and then copied directly to Wikipedia. They were joined by *PLOS Genetics* in 2016, and *PLOS ONE* in 2019.
- **Wikipedia first publishing:** In 2014, *Open Medicine* put the first Wikipedia article through academic peer review and publication, requiring an article processing fee.
- **All of the above:** Since 2014, the WikiJournal User Group has run a set of journals that specialise in these formats, hosted within Wikiversity (more in the Proof of Principle section below).

These formats have been generally done piecemeal by different stakeholders. A unified location would both support existing projects, and encourage the further development of similar collaborations between Wikimedia projects and established academic journals (see the Support section below).

Proof of principle

The WikiJournal User Group has been running just such a format since 2014 (official UG recognition June 2016).

→ wikiversity.org/wiki/WikiJournal_User_Group

The initial journal was *WikiJournal of Medicine* (*WikiJMed*). This remains the flagship journal in the group, and has since been joined by *WikiJournal of Science* (*WikiJSci*) and *WikiJournal of Humanities* (*WikiJHum*). The community so far includes approx 300-350 members including authors, editors, peer reviewers and discussion participants. The majority of authors and reviewers are first-time Wikimedia participants, bringing new expertise into the community.

Since its inception in 2014, WikiJMed published 29 articles and amassed 83 citations to its articles. WikiJSci published 15 articles and received 2 citation since the journal began in 2018. WikiJHum published 3 articles since 2018.

Proposal

Alignment with Wikimedia principles

Fully free: A Wikimedia journal platform would support OA journals with no subscription costs to readers *and* no article processing charges for authors (platinum open access). This would include supporting existing journals and for potential new journals. It also removes a significant barrier by scholars and academics in Global South towards contributing and disseminating knowledge related to Global South to a worldwide audience.

Open community: The WikiJournal User Group has open elections. Additionally, the platform would also be a space where established journals could set up spaces, either for publishing works intended for integration into other Wikimedia projects, or simply running platinum open access journals. The platform would also have a community of editors able to assist and advise across journals.

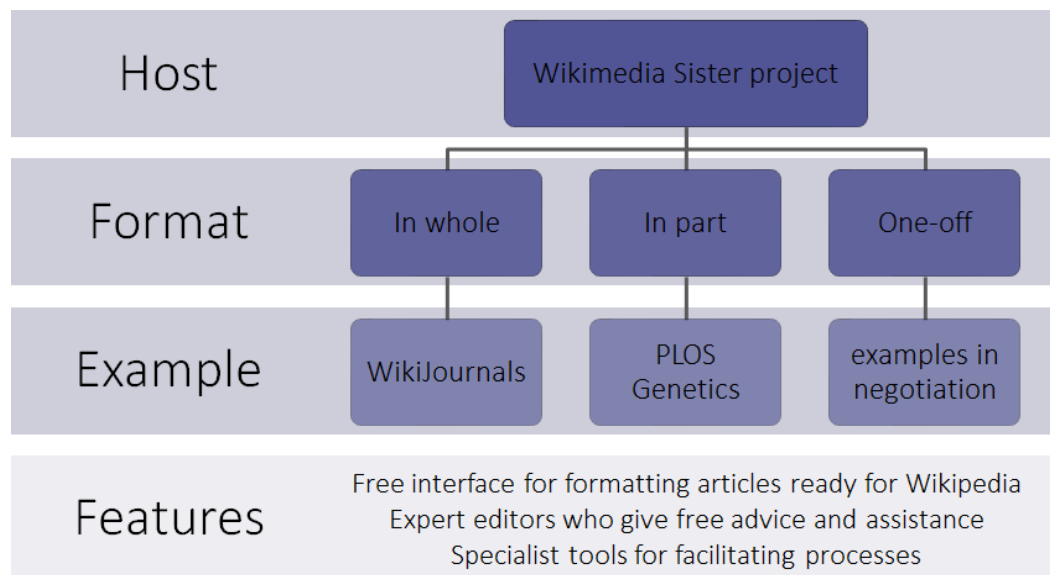
Quality knowledge: The one constant across all hosted journals is robust peer review by external experts. It also ensures accuracy, completeness, up-to-dateness and balance in the content and prevents fringe theories, pseudoscience or unsupported information. This also brings in knowledge from people who would not otherwise contribute or review contents for a Wikimedia project, addressing the existing systemic bias for groups that are underrepresented in publishing and Wikimedia projects.

Egalitarian: For contributors, anyone can post a preprint article and submit it to a participating journal on the platform; all authors are treated the same whether professor or student. For peer reviews, anyone can comment on an article (although there must be at least two external expert reviewers for an article to be considered for publication). Editors of the WikiJournal User Group are openly elected based on their professional experience, publishing experience, and open knowledge experience.

Transparency: Open and auditable processes are prioritised throughout the journals. Peer reviews are available to read and most reviewers also choose to reveal their identity. Articles are posted as preprints before publication and are viewable throughout the revision process. Journal processes, ethics statements and guidelines are collaboratively developed. Open discussion on strategy for the WikiJournal User Group is held on the main discussion pages.

Specifics

The platform would host academic journals. Some journals would be hosted in their entirety on the platform including existing journals (e.g. *WikiJMed*, *WikiJSci* & *WikiJHum*), potential future journals starting up or migrating to the platform. Some journals would be hosted in part (e.g. the ongoing topic pages format of *PLOS Comp Biol*, *PLOS Genetics* & *PLOS ONE*). Some journals may also be hosted for one-off articles or issues.



A Wikimedia Journals platform with unique site identity and branding would be useful even if it had only the same functionality as Wikiversity. However, there are several unique features that would be extremely valuable to both the current WikiJournal User Group, as well as potential future journals moving to the platform. These include:

- Automation of repetitive manual tasks (e.g. assigning DOIs and formatting PDFs for published articles)
- Specialised back-end extensions (e.g. automated email reminders to external peer reviewers, tracking of peer review process across articles)
- Bringing work performed off-wiki back on-wiki (e.g. peer review submission forms and tracking of anonymous peer reviewer identities)
- (Prioritised list: meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WikiJournal/Technical_wishlist)

Name and location

Depending on the foundation's preference, the following domain names:

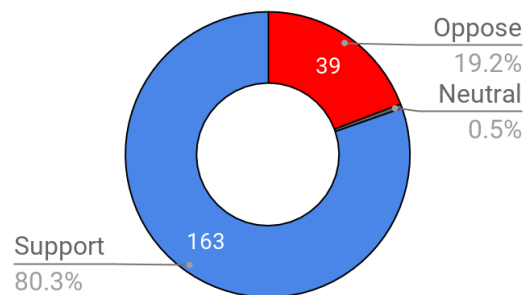
- wikijournal.org or wikijournals.org (similar to wikibooks.org)
- journals.wikimedia.org (per commons.wikimedia.org)
- J.wiki (per w.wiki)

The current journals hosted on wikiversity are called 'WikiJournal of X', however it is expected that other journals without 'WikiJournal' in their name will use the platform. The platform functionality is therefore more important than its name. The platform name is also completely compatible with replacement with "Wikipedia Journals" in the event that the "leading with Wikipedia" brand proposal progresses.

Support

Wikimedia community

We believe that we have broad support from the Wikimedia community at large as well as a critical mass of existing contributors. The community discussion on Meta-Wiki raised multiple points in favour and opposition of the proposal. In addition to discussion comments, there were 198 comments that included a support / oppose / neutral vote (chart to right). We believe the main opposing points in that discussion have been responded to.



Overall count of support vs oppose comments at meta:WikiJournal discussion (although, note it is not a simple numerical vote).
meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/WikiJournal#Discussion

Open access groups, scholarly societies and academic journals

Multiple academic journals have expressed an interest in copying one or more of the publication models (see background section above), but have previously been restricted by the technical hurdles. The previous and proposed work of the project has also

received positive feedback when presented at academic conferences. Supporting statements from academic publishers, scholarly societies, and OA organisations are attached to this letter.

Organisations noting support of the application (letters attached):

- PLOS (Public Library of Science)
- FOK (Free Our Knowledge)
- SCCAP (Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology)
- HGAPS (Helping Give Away Psychological Science)
- Science for All

→ tinyurl.com/WikiJournal-support-letters

Publishing is still a billion dollar global industry, largely funded by tax-payers and controlled by a small number of for-profit publishers. It is dominated by researchers from the Global North for topics on

relevant to Global North. There is therefore potential for a Wikimedia journals sister project to be a source of donations from organisations, universities, governments, research groups and individuals.

Further information

- Signpost article: wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/2019-06-30/In_focus
- Kurier article: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Kurier/Ausgabe_6_2019
- Wikimania presentation: drive.google.com/file/d/1ZQ3AsK1H_kAYuJQ8082xCuPgQyYmJDje/view
- WikiJSci editorial: doi.org/10.15347/wjs/2018.001

Wikimedia Foundation
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2019-11-01

RE: Wikimedia journals sister project

Dear Wikimedia Foundation Board of Trustees,

In addendum to our previous letter on 2019-09-25, an additional note of support for the proposal has been received from ORCID that we would like to forward to you. Please find this attached below.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The WikiJournal User Group