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From Consumers to Creators: Wikistoriograhy and the Consensus of Collaborative Learning in the Landscape of Web 2.0

Curran McQuade
Southeastern University - Lakeland

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FROM CONSUMERS TO CREATORS: WIKISTORIOGRAHY AND THE CONSENSUS OF
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN THE LANDSCAPE OF WEB 2.0

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CURRAN MCQUADE

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Abstract

This thesis reviews the significance of Wikipedia in an approach to internet historiography. Wikipedia incorporates Web 2.0 methods to create a new way to study and revise history through a consensus of multiple users and editors. The argument of the thesis is structured to address some of the qualms many academics have about Wikipedia, examine how historiography functions in an internet driven world, and finally how Wikipedia fits into the puzzle of internet historiography. It concludes that Wikipedia, the largest user-based information site in the world, must be at the forefront of discussion surrounding internet historiography.

Keywords: Wikipedia, historiography, internet, Web 2.0, collaborative learning

Chapter 1: Introduction

The age-old proverb of "the winners write the history books" is quite true. However, it only holds meaning to a world in which individuals read only history books, not the internet. Arguably until the mid-2000s with the emergence of the smartphone, historiography[1] largely consisted of the memorization of facts, dates, and statistics. The development of personalized technology has revolutionized the purpose of the study of history. Memorization of facts and information has become more obsolete as simply knowing how to use a search engine provides any statistical answer one might want. Instead, the art of studying history has transformed itself into the discernment and interpretation of contradicting historical views and sources. Now, instead of spending time and resources on cataloging and memorizing the number of casualties suffered by the French troops at the battle of Verdun, we can determine why Marx and Engels believed what they did about the industrial revolution. We can research how Daniel Boorstin came to his conclusions regarding the American Pilgrims and their colonization efforts. And we can examine the school of thought surrounding New Republican Ideologue historiography and the implications it holds for the conservative movement in Modern America.

Roy Rosenzweig, the founder and director of the Center for History and New Media, praised Wikipedia as a digital tool as it allows history to be "subject to continuous revision."[2] Rosenzweig notes that Wikipedia will continue to grow and cannot be ignored in the research and writing of history. Yet even Rosenzweig, whose article was published shortly before his death in 2006, could not foresee how rapidly Wikipedia would accelerate and integrate itself into

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[1] The process and methods by which we study history.

[2] Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History Be Open Source? *Wikipedia* and the Future of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 93, no. 1 (June 2006): 136.

the Web 2.0 historiography narrative. Since 2006, Wikipedia's number of articles in the English language has risen from under one million to over five million. In 2015, Wikipedia received ten billion page views from 495 million users per month. Internet artist Michael Mandiberg printed all of Wikipedia's articles in 2015 for an art project titled *Print Wikipedia*; the work consisted of 7,473 volumes, with each volume containing 700 pages (5,231,100 pages in total). It is currently the largest general-knowledge encyclopedia in history and is the seventh most visited website in the world.

However, there are few who take Wikipedia seriously. It is frequently critiqued as being unreliable, illegitimate, and frivolous. It has become a colloquial word that college professors and high school teachers use to highlight a source that cannot be cited in a paper. Instead of recognizing the power of having the largest collection of user-based information in history for free, the academic community has rejected the site as nothing more than a passing attraction. Citing Wikipedia in an academic work is seen as juvenile and strictly forbidden.

This thesis is a support of the legitimacy of Wikipedia. It argues not only that Wikipedia is an incredible academic tool and resource, but that it is also creating a new way to study history. First, the thesis will examine how Wikipedia operates, discussing its credibility, users, editing processes, message forums, the accuracy of its articles, and criticisms leveled against the site. Secondly, it will define historiography, explaining how the internet fits into the changing landscape of historiography. Finally, it will argue that Wikipedia is creating a new historiography through its unique editing process and consensus compositions.

Chapter 2: Why do people hate Wikipedia so much?

Wild-west internet or collaborative learning?

The current consensus of Wikipedia, scholarly or otherwise, is that it has become an undeniably enormous part of western culture. Currently ranking as the seventh most used website in the world, Wikipedia is in nearly constant use.[3] With such a large and consistent user base, Wikipedia has cemented itself as more than just a passing fad; instead it has evolved into a cultural phenomenon of the early twenty-first century. It is one of the first places that individuals turn for information, a staple of the millennial research tool.

One of the problems surrounding current information on Wikipedia is the lack of formal, critical writing for or against the site. Those who critique Wikipedia choose to do so from the platform of the front of a class or in a course syllabus. This is understandable and at least somewhat forgivable. Why would a professor who has dedicated her or his life to academia choose to spend valuable time on critiquing a website that is nothing more than a giant mess of misinformation, time that could be spent researching or writing on academic topics? To many, Wikipedia is simply a plagiarism graveyard where academia goes to die slowly, torn and shredded by masses of individuals with no respect, lingering in their parents' basement, using a computer only for the purpose of slandering the Wiki-page for Abraham Lincoln with unverified opinions.

A thorough understanding of Wikipedia takes into consideration the full scope of Wikipedia's power and the original intent of the site. Wikipedia is not a wild-west corner of the internet, littered with stray bullets of lies and misinformation; neither does Wikipedia claim to be

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[3] Alexa: An Amazon Company, "Top Sites in the United States," Alexa, http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/ US (accessed February 4, 2016).

a perfect site. Instead, Wikipedia is a user-based site that employs collaborative learning

strategies to produce a powerful academic resource for all. Cathy Davidson, appointed in 2011 to

the National Council on the Humanities by President Obama, responds to the criticism that swirls

around Wikipedia, calling it the "single most impressive collaborative intellectual tool produced

at least since the *Oxford English Dictionary*."[4]

In 2006, Jorge Cauz, executive president of Encyclopedia Britannica, gave an analogy he

felt was accurate between his own encyclopedia and Wikipedia, saying, "Wikipedia is to

Britannica as American Idol is to the Juilliard School." In a heated back and forth discussion,

moderated by *The New Yorker*, Jimmy Wales, the founder of Wikipedia shot back, "Wikipedia is

to Britannica as rock and roll is to easy listening. It may not be as smooth, but it scares the

parents and is a lot smarter in the end."[5]

The exchange was part of a lengthy investigative report written by *The New Yorker* in

response to a 2005 study that showed for every four mistakes on Wikipedia, Encyclopedia

Britannica contained three mistakes, well within the margin of error conducted by the study. In

an attempt to save face, Cauz stated that Britannica has never claimed to be perfect, but instead

was supposed to be comprised of a careful peer-review system. Wikipedia, he assured *The New

Yorker*, would "decline into a hulking mediocre mass of uneven, unreliable, and, many times,

unreadable articles." Wales simply laughed this off and retorted that while he considered

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[4] Cathy Davidson, "We Can't Ignore the Influence of Digital Technologies," *The Chronicle Review 73*, no. 1 (2007): 18.

[5] Stacy Schiff, "Know it All: Can Wikipedia Conquer Expertise?," *The New Yorker*, July 31, 2006.

Britannica to be the largest competitor of Wikipedia, the former would be "crushed out of existence within five years."[6]

Now, nearly a decade later, Wales' statements hold true. Wikipedia has continued to explode into a resource used by nearly everyone. Ian Grant, managing director of Encyclopedia Britannica, tried to address the masses of individuals leaving his information base for Wikipedia in 2009, stating, "I think the comparison is a non-debate, because we offer something very different. Wikipedia is a fun site to use and has a lot of interesting entries on there, but their approach wouldn't work for Encyclopedia Britannica."[7] However, it was already becoming evident to Britannica that Wikipedia had won the competitive battle between the two encyclopedias. Britannica saw their book sales drop 96% in 2012, forcing them to digitize their records more than a dozen years after Wikipedia was fully functioning on the internet.[8] Support for Wikipedia has only continued to grow, particularly in fields of writing other than academia. Marcus Messner and Jeff South reported in their article "Legitimizing Wikipedia" that journalistic references to Wikipedia grew more positive in their portrayal of the site between 2001 and 2007, noting that newspapers have been open to using Wikipedia as a source in journalism.[9]

The accuracy of Wikipedia

Wikipedia's standing as an information base now remains unchallenged in that few question the size and frequency at which the site is visited. While few, if any, would attempt to

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Graham Charlton, "Q&A: Ian Grant of Encyclopedia Britannica," *Econsultancy*, February 10, 2009.

[8] Nova Safo, "Encyclopedia Britannica Take Stock of a New Strategy," *Marketplace*, November 28, 2014.

[9] Marcus Messner, and Jeff South, "Legitimizing Wikipedia," *Journalism Practice* 5, no. 2 (April 2011): 145-160.

discredit the quantity of Wikipedia, there are few who credit the quality of Wikipedia. In researching this thesis, it was difficult to find many sources that commented on the accuracy of Wikipedia in great length or detail. The majority of qualitative, study based, peer-reviewed articles, positive or negative, tend to be in agreement that Wikipedia was not a source that ought to be cited or taken as particularly accurate.

However, the majority of existing literature consists of reviews of Wikipedia's content in a vacuum. In her assessment of Wikipedia's relationship with the judicial system, Brittany McIntosh describes how a man found guilty of sponsoring cockfights was set free after it was learned that a juror printed the Wikipedia article "Sponsor" and used it in deliberations to convict him. McIntosh's article explains that the judge overturned the court's ruling due to the fact that much of the information found on the Wiki page was not cited and possibly flawed.[10] Likewise, a study of Wikipedia conducted by Maria Mattus attempting to evaluate the legitimacy of the site examined three articles from the Swedish edition of Wikipedia. The consensus of the study is based entirely upon these three articles before using them to reflect upon the remainder of Wikipedia's vast corpus of literature.[11] While this methodology may be helpful in determining the history of certain articles and the editing process they underwent, it is a poor way to evaluate Wikipedia as an entity.

The issue of citing Wikipedia is an interesting one that certainly needs to be examined in greater detail. And yet, it is more helpful from the standpoint of framing the conversation rather

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[10] Brittany M. McIntosh, "Gamecoks Spur Trouble in Jury Deliberations: What the Fourth Circuit Really Thinks about Wikipedia as a Legal Resource in the *United States v. Lawson*," *South Carolina Law Review* 64, no. 4 (Summer, 2013): 1157-1165.

[11] Maria Mattus, "The Anyone-Can-Edit Syndrome," *NORDICOM Review* 35, (2014): 189-203.

than holding any actual merit within the conversation itself. With, perhaps, the exception of the board of Encyclopedia Britannica, there are few who discourage students from visiting Wikipedia. It would be out of character for a professor to forbid students from going on Wikipedia, or editing the site. Instead, much of the commentary on Wikipedia rests in a fear that a student will cite it in a paper. In correlation to this mindset, a study conducted by the University of Colorado and Penn State University found that scrutiny of Wikipedia was often based on whether the user was looking for "information" or "entertainment."[12]

When Wikipedia was in its early stages and still competing against Encyclopedia Britannica, founder Jimmy Wales said that Wikipedia shouldn't be used as a source in an academic paper, saying,

> No, I don't think people should cite it, and I don't think people should cite Britannica, either — the error rate there isn't very good. People shouldn't be citing encyclopedias in the first place. Wikipedia and other encyclopedias should be solid enough to give good, solid background information to inform your studies for a deeper level. And really, it's more reliable to read Wikipedia for background than to read random Web pages on the Internet.[13]

Wales has since changed his stance on citing Wikipedia, even including a "Cite this Page" link in the sidebar of every Wikipedia page. The link redirects to a text box which states, "most educators and professionals do not consider it appropriate to use tertiary sources such as encyclopedias as a sole source for any information."[14] However, beneath this is included a citation template for a number of writing format styles.

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[12] Carmen Stavrositu, and S. Shyam Sundar, "If Internet Credibility is So Iffy, Why the Heavy Use? The Relationship between Medium Use and Credibility," *Cyberpsychology & Behavior 11*, no. 1 (February 2008): 65-68.

[13] Burt Helm, "Wikipedia: A Work in Progress," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, December 13, 2005.

[14] Wikimedia, "Cite This Page," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:CiteThisPage&page =Wikipedia&id=703674000 (accessed March 20, 2016).

Should Wikipedia be cited in academic sources? No, but not because it is inaccurate or contains false information. While no source can ever be completely free of informational errors or escape author subjectivity and bias, the study comparing Britannica and Wikipedia shows that Wikipedia is among the most reliable sources of mass information. But, it must be noted that Wikipedia is an encyclopedia. Therefore, professors and educators should have the same adverse reaction to Encyclopedia Britannica as they do to Wikipedia. Both are general knowledge encyclopedias that do not fit the criterion of citation methods and practices.

It should be noted that encyclopedias, in this case Wikipedia and Encyclopedia Britannica, are not poor academic materials or resources. Both contain copious amounts of information, written by some of the world's leading politicians, scientists, physicists, environmentalists, and former United States Presidents. Thus, as all encyclopedias are written by multiple contributors with no specific mention to which author wrote which particular passage within an article, they do not meet the expected requirements for what is considered an appropriate citation source.

Even so, this is not the purpose of Wikipedia. For many professors and students, a large emphasis has been placed on the importance of collecting information from a wide array of peer-reviewed journals to enforce points with which they believe and agree. This is often an overly complicated process that includes many unnecessary steps. Writing academically for publication has become a circular and backlogged process. Articles can often take over a year to reach publication. To do so, the article usually needs to pass a highly critical system overseen by a few members whose subjective opinions determine if that article will be published. Much of the criticism surrounding Wikipedia is that it does not meet these citation standards. Wikipedia articles are published immediately and have no waiting or review period, barring a few

exceptions. Many academics, quite understandably, are not pleased by this process. Why should someone with no credentials be able to publish something that will possibly be read by millions of people, while individuals who have worked their entire lives for academia fall by the wayside, forgotten?

This is exactly the reason Wikipedia exists. This is what Jimmy Wales was referring to when he wrote that Wikipedia "scares the parents." It shifts the power of publication away from a select few and instead places it in the hands of an editing community. Jeff Maehre, Florida State University's reference librarian, writes that he defends Wikipedia not as a website but because of the "pedagogical values" that come along with using it as an academic tool. Education, after all, should not be rooted in the idea that one scholar's opinion outweighs the opinions of others simply because she or he has a degree. Both writings should be subject to scrutiny and critical thinking. Maehre writes that a censorship of Wikipedia in educational environments defeats the original intent of the educational system.[15]

Support for and criticism against Wikipedia

Studies have shown that, in the past decade, more and more educational institutions are open to the idea of incorporating Wikipedia into the classroom setting. For example, Tareq Daher and Bojan Lazarevic note that the higher the level of education obtained by an instructor, the more likely that instructor was to use collaborative web resources such as Wikipedia, Twitter, YouTube, or Google apps in the classroom.[16]

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[15] Jeff Maehre, "What It Means to Ban Wikipedia," *College Teaching* 57, no. 4 (Fall, 2009): 229-236.

[16] Tareq Daher, and Bojan Lazarevic, "Emerging Instructional Technologies: Exploring the Extent of Faculty Use of Web 2.0 Tools at a Midwestern Community College," *Techtrends: Linking Research & Practice to Improve Learning* 58, no. 6 (November 2014): 42-50.

Many scholars also point to the educational benefits of engaging with Wikipedia through editing articles and making use of the site's many discussion boards. A study conducted by Barcelona Media found that Wikipedia is currently the number one site where interaction between political parties takes place. While other sites such as Facebook or Twitter tend to keep discussion within a single political party, Wikipedia users who identified themselves as "Republican" or "Democrat" were equally likely to interact with members of either party on the discussion boards. Following in this fashion, it was also determined that politically affiliated users edited articles labeled "conservative" or "liberal" equally.[17]

And yet there are, of course, those who do not believe that Wikipedia is an effective collaborative information site. Brendan Luyt, head of the Division of Information Studies at Nanyang Technological University, writes that Wikipedia "is shaped by the dominant historiography of the country or region so that the potential of digital history writing is more or less circumscribed according to preexisting social visions." Luyt reviews Wikipedia pages relating to Singapore and Philippine history and compares the information found on them to what he believes are the country's historiographies. Luyt claims that all of Singapore holds to one historiography while the Philippines hold to multiple historiographies and that the Wikipedia articles reflect these approaches. His conclusion states that this proves Wikipedia is not inclusive of lesser heard voices, thus harming its supposed status as a collaborative learning site.[18]

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[17] Jessica J. Neff, David Laniado, Karolin E. Kappler, Yana Volkovich, Pablo Aragon, and Andreas Kaltenbrunner, "Jointly They Edit: Examining the Impact of Community Identification on Political Interaction in Wikipedia," *Plos ONE* 8, no. 4 (April 2013): 1-10.

[18] Brendan Luyt, "The Nature of Historical Representation on Wikipedia: Dominant or Alternative Historiography?," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology* 62, no. 6 (June 2011): 1058.

While Brendan Luyt's contributions to the scientific and internet community have been very valuable, his article on Wikipedia's historiography is somewhat premature and shortsighted. First, Luyt makes a massive assumption by claiming that both countries operate under the historiographies he assigns them. A country subscribing as a whole to a single historiography is unprecedented, and much empirical evidence points against this. Second, Luyt takes a hagiographical approach to these historiographies when they are held by people, but only takes offense to them once they become digitized on the internet and Wikipedia. It does not make sense to attack a website for producing a historiography that is praised when it is featured in writing not appearing on the internet. Third, Luyt has very few examples in his article and does not effectively prove his claims to be as sweepingly true as he would like them to seem. Fourth, the author is working out of Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, identifying him as potentially having a conflict of interest regarding this subject.

Leonard Swidler, one of the world's leading Catholic theologians, wrote a defense of Wikipedia in 2009, citing it as an excellent framework for interreligious dialogue. He writes that, just as is the case with interreligious dialogue, Wikipedia operates upon mutual respect, somewhat agreed upon definitions, and honest communication.[19] This mutual respect is what makes Wikipedia such an excellent classroom tool. Cullen Chandler, a professor from Lycoming College, gave an assignment to his students that asked them to create an article on a topic that did not already exist on Wikipedia. The students were then required to not only write the article,

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[19] Leonard Swidler, "Wikipedia—Cities—Interreligious dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 44, no. 4 (Fall, 2009): 292-293.

but to format it correctly, cite the information, edit each other's articles, and engage in the Wikipedia discussion boards about the pages they had created.[20]

Others have advocated for the use of Wikipedia in the classroom as a way to teach students how to critically think and process information. Darren Crovitz and W. Scott Smoot explain that a high school teacher instructed students to read Abraham Lincoln's Wikipedia page and attempt to find holes in what was written. Crovitz and Smoot state that no one is ever taught in school to take anything, not even peer-reviewed articles, at face value. Why then, they ask, should Wikipedia be any different?[21] Why should the most extensive collaborative work ever produced be deemed inappropriate for the classroom when it serves as an extensive platform for critical thinking and discussion?

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[20] Cullen J. Chandler, and Alison S. Gregory, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Wikipedia in the College Classroom," *History Teacher* 43, no. 2 (February 2010): 247-257.

[21] Darren Crovitz, and W. Scott Smoot, "Wikipedia: Friend, not Foe," *The English Journal* 98, no. 3 (January 2009): 91-97.

Chapter 3: What is historiography and how does it manifest itself on the internet?

"Historiography" is a term with a varied past, the meaning of the word shifting throughout its use. Originally it was used to refer to the actual process of writing down history, and functioned as a verb. It was historical writing. However, the definition of the word has changed, now lending itself to most closely mean,

> the study of the way history has been and is written – the history of historical writing... When you study 'historiography' you do not study the events of the past directly, but the changing interpretations of those events in the works of individual historians.[22]

As the study of history evolved, both writers and readers of historical works noticed a trend. While the facts of the past never change, the telling of history greatly differed between individuals. The past was immovable, but history changed regularly. It became clear that "history" and "the past" were two very different things. "The past" was often factually unknowable and not always able to be proven; "history" was an interpretation of past events, a narrative that was different depending on who strung the names, dates, and places together.

Napoleon Bonaparte is often quoted as having asked, "what is history but a fable agreed upon?"[23] In one way, Bonaparte is quite right in his assessment of what history truly is. It is often comprised of what the masses believe. It may even contain false information, born from poor research, subjective bias, or a lying historian. Yet in another sense, Bonaparte's assertion on history is very misguided; history can contain various objective truths. The point of this thesis is not to discuss the meaning of subjective truth versus objective truth, to claim that one exists and

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[22] Michael J. Salevouris, *The Methods and Skills of History: A Practical Guide* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 1988), 223.

[23] Paul Samuelson, "Sraffa's Other Leg," *The Economic Journal* 101, no. 406 (May 1991): 570-574.

the other does not, or to make a philosophical statement on the nature of either. Such works exist at length on the matter and do a much more thorough job examining the subject than can be presented in these pages. When I use the term "objective truths" I am referring to information that the majority of individuals would accept as having indeed happened as a part of the past. Carl Trueman explains that holocaust denial is an example of this, which he explains as, "an approach to the history of the Nazi genocide in Europe between 1933 and 1945 that dramatically downplays the number of people killed and rejects the notion that there was any organized and state-sanctioned campaign of mass murder."[24] While there are those who reject that such an event ever happened, the majority of humanity agrees that the holocaust, in one form or another, happened.

And yet, in perhaps an even larger sense, Bonaparte's statement is even further flawed. While the "objective truth" of the holocaust exists, there are various approaches that can be taken when examining the subject. German historians have a much different view of the holocaust than French historians; similarly, a historian who subscribes to the New Left ideology of the 1970s will view the causes and impacts of the holocaust in a much different light than a Consensus historian of the 1950s. And yet historians within strains of thought differ greatly as well. Thus, history is not really agreed upon at all. The most "objective truths" are assessed and combed through tirelessly and repeatedly, each angle of study producing new insights. Historiography is not at all the simple writing of history. It is the pedagogical study of historical thought, the means by which we study and evaluate history.

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[24] Carl Trueman, *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 29.

For our intents and purposes, we will only examine three major strains of historical thought and their general opinions on various historical figures and events; these will be the school of Revisionist historiography, the New Left historiography, and Consensus historiography.

Revisionist history

Among the most recently developed strains of historical thought, Revisionist historiography is perhaps one of the most controversial. Revisionist history derives its name from the process of reviewing and revising the historical record, reinterpreting what has often been widely accepted.

It must be noted that the Revisionist history discussed in these pages is a separate entity to the process of negationism, though they have often been called by the same name. Revisionist negationism is the denying of historical events, usually crimes of some sort. Holocaust denial, for example, is categorized as negationism. While negationism and true academic Revisionist history are very loosely related in the sense that they both challenge long standing ideas, the two processes are quite different from each other, the latter being a legitimate way to study history and the former earning the ire of many, most notably in Germany where studying history from a negationist standpoint has been outlawed entirely.

Revisionist history tends to focus on the themes of race, class, and gender. It aims to produce a culturally comprehensive view of history, taking into account the narratives of ethnic minorities, usually blacks and Native Americans, women, homosexuals, and those of lower economic status. A main theme of Revisionist history is a focus on oppression of people groups who have been omitted from the historical record. Praises of Revisionist history generally focus upon its inclusion of less fortunate individuals, taking into consideration the struggles of those

who have been forgotten. It is quite progressive and heavily criticizes many figures and groups from the past, particularly those within the United States.

Criticism of Revisionist history is often directed at many of the principles that its practitioners praise. The most common critique is that Revisionist history often includes historicisms within its thinking. A historicism is the practice of placing an undue amount of emphasis upon a person, ideology, or event that does not deserve such a focus. A possible example of this is the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln; one could say that from today's standards, Lincoln was a "racist." Lincoln did not advocate for the equality of the races and discouraged the idea that blacks should hold political office.

Austrian-school economic historian Thomas DiLorenzo has written two books on this subject, *The Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War* and *Lincoln Unmasked: What You're Not Supposed to Know About Dishonest Abe*. You do not need to read these books to know what DiLorenzo thinks of Lincoln. The titles explain DiLorenzo's approach to Lincoln. To DiLorenzo, Lincoln was not someone who respected the black race in any way and instead was a "masterful, rhetorically gifted, fence-straddling politician wanting to have it both ways—in favor of and opposed to racial equality at the same time—in an attempt to maximize his political support."[25] From a modern perspective, Lincoln does not meet the standard of a civil rights activist, primarily the claim that DiLorenzo makes in his evaluation of the former president. And yet, DiLorenzo's approach to Lincoln is one that commits a grave historicism. It gives unnecessary weight to a faction of Lincoln's life that should not be given much weight in producing a fully balanced view of him.

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[25] Thomas DiLorenzo, *The Real Lincoln: A New Look at Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda, and an Unnecessary War* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2002), 13.

First, Lincoln cannot be blamed for his lack of advocating for equality between the races as this was not a discussion that was generally held during the 1860s. Instead, the focus of the discussion between races was focused almost entirely between "free" and "not free." Equality, vastly different from autonomy, was not a concept frequently entertained as one of holding great value. Lincoln did not attempt to tip the racial scales to a point of equality; rather, he only sought to make a race free.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, it must be noted that an individual or people group in history cannot be blamed for not adhering to a principle that was virtually non-existent within its society. For example, if Lincoln is to be deemed a "racist" for his failure to advocate for racial equality, he could also be called a "sexist" for not drawing attention to women's suffrage before its existence, a "homophobe" for not marching with gay rights activists, or a "capitalist" for not doing more to ease the poverty rates among those at an economic disadvantage in the United States.

Even so, when praising Lincoln, one must be cautioned against using terms from the present that have no purpose in the past. A common debate among many aspiring political scholars is if Lincoln was "conservative" or "liberal" in his ideologies. Others have attempted to label him as a "progressive." All of these terms ought to be eliminated from the historian's vocabulary when discussing Lincoln as they have no bearing on the politics of his time. The meaning these words hold today are generally based upon modern policy factions, such as the issues of abortion, Keynesian economics, social welfare, immigration, healthcare, and the separation of church and state. Lincoln would have held no opinion on any of these subjects as they did not exist during his lifetime.

New Leftist historiography

Sometimes considered to be slightly less radical than Revisionist historiography, New Left Historiography often focuses upon many of the same themes that can be found within Revisionist historiography. Originating in the middle of the twentieth century, the New Leftist movement was closely affiliated with Marxist ideologies. Consequently, it has a much stronger focus upon class separation, class warfare, and economic disparity than upon race and gender.

The New Left, however, is not simply just an approach to studying history. It is a much larger movement, one that is largely political. The political formation of the New Left was focused on bringing about a new era into Western politics in the aftermath of World War II and the development of atomic warfare. Political causes were a primary focus of the New Left, leading to an attempt to create movement on issues such as abortion, sexual identity, drug use, and the place of gender in society.

In this particular scenario, the political goals preceded the practice of historiography. The political New Left had an undeniable impact upon the way in which New Left historians wrote and studied history. Inspired to create political change through their respective fields, history became not something to be researched; instead, it was transformed into a method through which political goals could be promoted. To many New Leftist historians, the past became an answer key in which the solution to all problems lay.

In this same way, New Leftist history was often extremely critical of the past, incorporating historicisms from the present to make judgments upon past figures and events. While Revisionist historiography was critical of the past to simply identify the mistakes it contained, New Leftists attempted to use the past to prove a point about the present. This can be seen in the New Leftist approach to the New Deal.

In his article titled "The Myth of the New Deal," former New Left ideologist Ronald Radosh claimed that the New Deal failed, not because it did not achieve its goals, but because it was not radical enough in its pursuits,

> One can never, as Karl Marx warned, evaluate an era by concentrating on the consciousness of an era's major protagonists. The New Deal was conservative. Its special form of conservatism was the development of reforms that modernized corporate capitalism and brought corporate law to reflect the system's changed nature. To many, these New Deal reforms seemingly proved that the system had changed its basic essentials. As we move into the era of a fully matured corporate capitalism, whose contradictions are just beginning to emerge, it has become easier to see what the New Deal accomplished. Only in an epoch where consciousness begins to soar beyond the capitalist marketplace can a critique of the major reform era that marketplace had to offer emerge.[26]

To Radosh, the New Deal failed the American people because it sought to find a medium between capitalism and a government moderated economy, choosing not to fight corporations head on. At the time of this publication in 1972, Radosh was a self proclaimed Marxist and a member of the Communist Party of the United States of America. Radosh has since abandoned the Leftist movement to become a social conservative.

Perhaps the historian at the forefront of the New Leftist movement is author Howard Zinn, a former political science professor at Boston University. Referring to himself sometimes as a democratic-socialist, the focus in Zinn's writings are primarily upon the oppression of the working class.[27] A heavily involved social activist, Zinn also wrote extensively on race relations in the United States.

It is not the point of the author to discuss whether Zinn's examinations are correct or incorrect. Instead, the intent is to show the deep influence of Zinn's personal activism revealing

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[26] Ronald Radosh, "The Myth of the New Deal," in *A New History of Leviathan*, eds. Ronald Radosh and Murray Rothbard (New York, NY: EP Dutton & Co., 1972), 187.

[27] Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2005).

itself within his historical research, raising the possibility that Zinn was not entirely objective in his examination of the past.

In his widely influential and popular work *A People's History of the United States*, Zinn limits the scope of history to primarily issues of class and race. For example, Zinn's opening chapter, "Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress," only examines the discovery of America through Columbus mistreating the Native Americans. In the closing of the chapter, Zinn makes a point emphasizing the importance of viewing Columbus in such a light.

> To emphasize the heroism of Columbus and his successors as navigators and discoverers, and to de-emphasize their genocide, is not a technical necessity but an ideological choice. It serves—unwittingly—to justify what was done. My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse, judge, condemn Columbus in absentia. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality. But the easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress (Hiroshima and Vietnam, to save Western civilization; Kronstadt and Hungary, to save socialism; nuclear proliferation, to save us all)—that is still with us. One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth. We have learned to give them exactly the same proportion of attention that teachers and writers often give them in the most respectable of classrooms and textbooks. This learned sense of moral proportion, coming from the apparent objectivity of the scholar, is accepted more easily than when it comes from politicians at press conferences. It is therefore more deadly.[28]

Zinn's gentle critique of Revisionist historiography lies in his refusal to condemn Columbus as an immoral figure as it serves no end; again, the primary intent of New Leftist history is to use the past to prove a point about the present. This is Zinn's purpose in mentioning socialism, the Vietnam war, and Hiroshima. All of these issues ought to be examined at length and discussed. In many ways, Zinn can be applauded in his zeal for justice and morality. Nevertheless, a great danger is created when history is used as a tool for present political and social gains. The second chapter of Zinn's book is a record of the founding of Colonial America, titled "Drawing the Color Line"; it is entirely focused upon the emergence of slavery in the

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[28] Ibid., 10.

United States. Chapter three, "Persons of Mean and Vile Conviction," is a study of the events leading up to the American Revolution, using terms such as *impoverished, populist, the Establishment, feudal kingdom, upper class, middle class, lower class,* and *monopoly* to detail what Zinn describes as the first instance of class warfare in the United States.

Were these issues present in the past? Yes and no. Inequality existed, most certainly. But the concept of class, let alone class warfare, had not even the slightest inkling of conception to the American colonist. Mistreatment of the Native Americans and blacks was certainly present, and it is not at all my intent to minimize the detriment of these actions nor ignore the plight of minorities in the present day. However, devoting the entirety of the founding of America to issues such as these completely ignores all other factors that were of equal or greater importance to the establishment of the United States.

Zinn[29] himself sums up his historiographical approach in *A People's History of the United States*, when he writes,

> I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past's fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare. That, being as blunt as I can, is my approach to the history of the United States. The reader may as well know that before going on.[30]

Consensus historiography

The last form of historiography that reviewed in this thesis is Consensus historiography. Embraced by many conservative scholars, it is often recognized as a response to the New Left history, primarily for two reasons. One, Consensus historiography refuses to use history as a force or tool for social reform. It wholly rejects the idea that history should be used to shape the

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[29] To learn more about Zinn's personal life and his political involvement, the documentary *Howard Zinn: You Can't Be Neutral On a Moving Train* (narrated by Matt Damon) gives an excellent biography of the author.

[30] Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2005), 12.

present, avoiding historicisms at nearly all costs. And two, it greatly downplays the importance and significance of class conflict in the United States, choosing instead to emphasize the prevalence of American values.

To the Consensus historian, the focus of the New Leftist historians was far too narrow. Something as complex as the American Revolution cannot simply be explained through the idea of class warfare, a theory nonexistent until the emergence of Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin. Consensus history recognizes that the colonists were grappling with problems that surpassed economic disparity. Instead there was an emphasis upon autonomy, self governance, freedom from oppression, and the rights of individuals.

Consensus historians attempted to produce ground for discussion that had been previously eliminated by other schools of thought. Americans were described by the New Leftists as greedy and self seeking, the upper class bent upon suppressing the lower. Richard Hofstadter, one of the founders of Consensus historiography, argued against the dangers of following such a path in his 1948 work *American Political Tradition*, in which he writes that many historians

> put such an excessive emphasis on conflict, that an antidote was needed. ...It seems to me to be clear that a political society cannot hang together, at all, unless there is some kind of consensus running through it, and yet that no society has such a total consensus as to be devoid of significant conflict. It is all a matter of proportion and emphasis, which is terribly important in history. Of course, obviously, we have had one total failure of consensus, which led to the Civil War. One could use that as the extreme case in which consensus breaks down.[31]

Essentially, Consensus historiography argues that the American people cannot be simply defined as adhering to one common denominator across multiple centuries. Instead, Consensus

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[31] Jack Pole, "Richard Hofstadter" in *Clio's Favorites: Leading Historians of the United States, 1945–2000,* ed. Robert Allen Rutland, ed. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 73–74.

historians argued that Americans were not driven by class warfare, but were instead motivated

by what was practical; practical for both the individual and the great majority of the civilization.

Hofstadter wrote further that American values could be summarized as such:

> However much at odds on specific issues, the major political traditions have shared a belief in the rights of property, the philosophy of economic individualism, the value of competition; they have accepted the economic virtues of capitalist culture as necessary qualities of man.[32]

One of the most famous Consensus historians, the late Daniel Boorstin, applied this

historiography in his extensive study of the history of the United States. Boorstin elaborates upon

this in his Pulitzer-Prize winning work *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*. The book

applies this approach to the creation of the United States, explaining that America was neither

focused upon achieving a grandiose idea of becoming a "city on a hill" for other nations, nor was

it being pushed and pulled along by economic determinism and class warfare. Instead, to

Boorstin and the majority of the Consensus historiography, Americans simply did what was

practical.

Boorstin's approach is evident in his explanation of the American Revolution. He writes

that the American Revolution was not a radical event, but instead that,

> American experience had far outrun English theory. Colonial legislatures, in control of local and internal matters over which faraway London was powerless, were content to leave to London the broad questions of imperial policy, trade, and navigation which required the power of the British navy. Americans had worked out a *modus vivendi* which, with occasional adaptations to the shifting needs of empire, might have continued to function indefinitely. When, in the 1760's, the British government tried to tighten its rein on the American colonies, London was defying the facts of life.[33]

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[32] Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition: And the Men Who Made It* (New York, NY: Knopf Inc., 1948), xxxvi–xxxvii.

[33] Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York, NY: Random House, 1965), 397.

To Boorstin and the Consensus historians, the Americans were not attempting a radical revolution, but instead were attempting to hold onto the world that they had created in the new continent. The British were unrealistically attempting to make the colonies conform to guidelines and regulations that went against the very nature of the colonies.

Internet historiography

It is evident that several approaches to the examination of history exist. Historical thought differs greatly between schools of historiography, showing quite simply that there is no limit to the ways history can be approached and studied. Scholars have endlessly debated the process by which history ought to be approached, arguing upon which events and causes we ought to place emphasis. However, nothing in human history has added more to this discussion than the internet.

Even at the advent of the internet, it was evident to many prominent historians that the web was making incredible strides forward. Roy Rosenzweig noted this when he wrote, "With hypertext (and the Web), it is as if while reading a book of history, you could click on a footnote and immediately find yourself reading the book mentioned in the note. If the Internet constitutes all the roads of the global computer world, the World Wide Web encompasses its paved roads."[34] Rosenzweig also notes that the internet in 1997 was not without its critics, citing historian Gertrude Himmelfarb in his article. Himmelfarb writes that she was

> disturbed by some aspects of the new technology's impact on learning and scholarship. Like postmodernism, the Internet does not distinguish between the true and the false, the important and the trivial, the enduring and the ephemeral. Internet search engines will produce a comic strip or advertising slogan as readily as a quotation from the

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[34] Michael O'Malley, and Roy Rosenzweig, "Brave New World or Blind Alley? American History on the World Wide Web," *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (June 1997): 133.

Bible or Shakespeare. Every source appearing on the screen has the same weight and credibility as every other; no authority is 'privileged' over any other.[35]

Rosenzweig acknowledges this criticism as having some value, but ultimately determines that it is shortsighted, pointing out

> The very ordinariness of the Web turns out to be interesting; on the Web the past is deeply embedded in the present in ways that escape our notice in the conventional archive or library. Moreover, the power to access information at great distances and great speeds offers the possibility of making new connections—between disparate ideas and between the past and the present—that might otherwise be missed.[36]

Most importantly, Rosenzweig points out that "Finally the Web offers one key departure—it lets users produce their own versions of history and place them in a public context where no one regulates access, no gatekeeping organizations police content or methodology. We hope to make both the advantages and the disadvantages of this 'democratization' more apparent."[37] This is perhaps the most important aspect of internet historiography. The playing field upon which research and history is built was drastically changed by the creation of the web.

This shifts the study of history significantly. History, to some degree, has always been about the incorporation of facts. The making of a good historian was often thought to center around either the memorization of facts or the knowledge one could retain on various subjects. The creation of the internet has changed this completely. The scope of knowledge held by a professional historian was what previously gave historians their credibility; that knowledge is now easily accessible to anyone with a web browser. This accessibility has increased even more

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[35] Gertrude Himmelfarb, "A Neo-Luddite Reflects on the Internet," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 43, no. 6 (November 1996): 56.

[36] Michael O'Malley, and Roy Rosenzweig, "Brave New World or Blind Alley? American History on the World Wide Web," *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (June 1997): 134.

[37] Ibid., 134-135.

with the emergence of the smartphone and other handheld devices that have become a central element of consumer technology.

As Rosenzweig noted, the internet provides connections between historical events and ideas at a faster rate. Free of having to search endlessly by hand through documents, scanning hundreds of pages with the naked eye, the historian can now enter a few characters into a search engine and immediately produce a digital copy of the desired text. Remarkably, this does not cheapen the historiographical process; conversely, it enriches it. Internet-armed historians have the ability to research sources quickly and promptly, giving them more time to spend on the development of ideas and the synthesis of first hand sources. The internet has allowed the study of history to become less about the memorization of facts, dates, numbers, names, and places, instead shifting the discussion to focus more heavily upon the engaging of historical theories and the clash of schools of historical thought.

Chapter 4: What is Wikipedia's historiography?

The main argument of this thesis is that Wikipedia has advanced and developed, if not

created, a new style of studying history and that this new approach must be embraced. It is

interactive and user-based in its approach, shifting the power of publication to all who use and

edit Wikipedia. It engages the user, forcing her or him to become a part of the conversation in the

writing of history. This user-based, interactive approach will be first explained through what is

known as Web 2.0 before explaining in detail how Wikipedia fits into the landscape of

historiography.

Web 2.0 theory

Joshua Stern, professor of Education and Computer Sciences at West Los Angeles

College, gives a thorough explanation of Web 2.0,

> Web 2.0 is a term that describes the changing trends in the use of World Wide
> Web technology and Web design that aim to enhance creativity, secure information
> sharing, increase collaboration, and improve the functionality of the Web as we know it
> (Web 1.0). These have led to the development and evolution of Web-based communities
> and hosted services, such as social-networking sites (i.e. Facebook, MySpace), video
> sharing sites (i.e. YouTube), wikis, blogs, etc. Although the term suggests a new version
> of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to any actual change in technical specifications,
> but rather to changes in the ways software developers and end-users utilize the Web. Web
> 2.0 is a catch-all term used to describe a variety of developments on the Web and a
> perceived shift in the way it is used. This shift can be characterized as the evolution of
> Web use from passive consumption of content to more active participation, creation and
> sharing. Web 2.0 Websites allow users to do more than just retrieve information. Now
> users can build on the interactive facilities of Web 1.0 to provide 'network as platform'
> computing, allowing users to run software-applications entirely through a browser. Users
> are able to co-author the data on a Web 2.0 site and exercise control over it. These sites
> have an 'architecture of participation' that encourages users to add value to the
> application as they use it. This stands in contrast to traditional Websites, which limit
> visitors to passive viewing and whose content only the site owners can modify.[38]

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[38] Joseph Stern, "Introduction to Web 2.0 Technologies," Professor Publication, West Los Angeles College, 2013.

In summary, Web 2.0 focuses largely upon creating an internet that is built upon collaboration. In some situations, information can be added as an annotation to other existing information such as in a comment to a Facebook status. Other times, simple forms of approval or disapproval can be given without constructing any original text or comments, such as upvoting or downvoting a post on the popular forum site Reddit. Other forms of Web 2.0 involve the reposting of information from another source on one's own internet page, as is featured frequently on social media sites Twitter and Tumblr in retweeting and reblogging respectively.

Wikipedia is perhaps the most interactive Web 2.0 site in existence. It involves the use of various forms of Web 2.0 technology, offering forums within its site that allow for interaction and discussion between users. Greatest of all, it offers complete editing power of information to all. It grants authorship to anyone who has access to an internet browser, making it the single largest collaborative educational tool in the world.

A great deal of literature exists that does not mention Wikipedia by name, but advocates for the further progression of Web 2.0 technology in education. This form of Web 2.0 can be seen in the writings of Paul Anderson who explains that Web 2.0 has begun to evolve into a new phenomenon which he calls Library 2.0, which is entirely dependent upon collaboration between librarians and authors around the world.[39] Additionally, Sunil Tyagi, senior librarian at Uttar Pradesh, writes that while many library staff workers use Web 2.0 technology to communicate

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[39] Paul Anderson, "'All that Glisters is not Gold'-Web 2.0 and the Librarian," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 39, no. 4 (December, 2007): 195-198.

with one another, there is a surprising lack of Web 2.0 communication between students and faculty at universities.[40]

The advancement of Web 2.0 in the scholastic community has increased at a rapid rate in the past several years. However, there is a surprisingly low amount of support for many Web 2.0 methods to be incorporated into educational settings. Wikipedia, as discussed earlier, has largely faced rejection from the academic community. And yet, interactive technology has found to be significantly lacking in educational environments. An article in *Teaching Exceptional Children* noted that 64% of teachers in the United States wished they had obtained more training relating to internet resources considered to be part of the Web 2.0 movement.[41]

Wikistoriography (This "h" isn't silent, it's just not there)

Niels Brügger notes in his study of digital history that the internet has transformed historiography by making the method in which we review, write, and obtain information a "historical source in its own right." Brügger breaks digital and internet historiography down into the categories of internet studies and digital history, strongly emphasizing that internet methodological research has become its own form of historical research. In this same way, the landscape of historical research has added not just another scenery, but has instead

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[40] Sunil Tyagi, "Use of Web 2.0 Technology by Library Professionals: Study of Selected Engineering Colleges in Western Uttar Pradesh," *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology* 32, no. 5 (September 2012): 439-446.

[41] Kelly J. Charles, and Virginia Dickens, "Closing the Communication Gap: Web 2.0 Tools for Enhanced Planning and Collaboration," *Teaching Exceptional Children 45*, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 24-32.

complemented itself with an entirely new dimension of historiography; this new historiography is embodied in Wikipedia.[42]

Wikipedia's historiography, referred to in this thesis as Wikistoriography, is unique in the sense that it is the epitome of a consensus of information. A social space that constantly revises the content it produces, Wikipedia is a conglomeration of authors who have never met, working together towards the common goal of information literacy and free information access. Amy Elias, a professor of English at the University of Tennessee, writes that while Wikipedia is not without its errors, "online technologies as a method of producing and disseminating literary history will need to be at least part of our debate about global literary history."[43] Elias makes an excellent point noting Wikipedia's importance in the future of internet history. However, Wikipedia should not simply be a part of the debate. It is instead perhaps the central element that is driving web historiography forward.

Wikistoriography generally approaches the writing of history and documentation of information with three keys in mind. First, authorship of information does not equal ownership of information. Second, existing information should never be considered to be without flaw or in a finalized format as room for improvement always exists. Third, it overwrites outdated information with new and updated information as the known facts of an idea, event, or individual are brought to light.

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[42] Niels Brügger, "When the Present Web is Later the Past: Web Historiography, Digital History, and Internet Studies," *Historical Social Research* 37, no. 4 (December 2012): 102-117.

[43] Amy Elias, "Interactive Cosmopolitanism and Collaborative Technologies: New Foundations for Global Literary History," *New Literary History* 39, No. 3 (Summer, 2008): 721.

Authorship vs. ownership

The more focused sources that exist on Wikipedia hone in on topics such as authorship, transparency, and collaboration edits. Adele Santana and Donna Wood address many of these issues in their highly influential article on the responsibility of Wikipedia users. While praising the information that Wikipedia holds on its site, they criticize its lack of author identification, advocating for a reform of Wikipedia that would require authors to identify themselves on their Wikipedia profile page, listing credentials, education, and other background information.[44]

Santana and Wood fail to realize Wikipedia is designed to ignore the preconceived notion that authorship and ownership of information must be kept together. Wikipedia, as Daniela Simone advocates in her work "Copyright or Copyleft?," is meant to separate the author from the work. It is when we believe that information "belongs" to the individual who wrote it that information development and historical thought ceases to progress and instead becomes stagnant.[45]

The intent of Wikipedia is to remove the idea that authorship equals ownership. Wikistoriography is wholly committed to free exchange of information, one of the focuses of the Web 2.0 movement. Wikipedia's copyright policy is virtually nonexistent in that no information written and published on the site can be claimed as the property of one individual. It can be reposted, literally copy and pasted, into the text of another article. It can be paraphrased or quoted in a news article, blog post, or book without a citation given to the original author.

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[44] Adele Santana and Donna J. Wood, "Transparency and Social Responsibility Issues for Wikipedia," *Ethics and Information Technology* 11, no. 2 (2009), 133-144.

[45] Daniela Simone, "Copyright or Copyleft? Wikipedia as a Turning Point for Authorship," *King's Law Journal* 25, no. 1: 102-124. *H.W. Wilson*, (accessed February 5, 2015).

This discourages authors from simply reposting the information of others and using it as justification to prove the idea they support is true simply because another individual with a like minded perspective wrote something similar. When authorship is removed, readers can expect to think more critically about the information put in front of them. As Crovitz and Smoot pointed out, Wikipedia encourages its users to read with a critical mind, looking for improvements and synthesis that can be produced.[46]

Room for improvement

Wikistoriography takes the premise of critical reading and, arguably, extends it further than any other historiographical approach. While other forms of historical writing can be read and responded to, the Web 2.0 environment of Wikipedia allows readers and users to be a much larger part of the discussion. If one noticed an error within a work they had published, there would be no way to correct it. With academic publishing, there is no eraser that can fix and rewrite errors. Publication in an academic journal is more or less final, unable to be edited following its release.

This is not the case with Wikipedia. Wikistoriography allows individuals to always improve upon information, recognizing that information is never finalized and ready to be declared "infallible." To date, it is the only major existent form of historiography that is self critiquing, leaving open the option to continually edit work. For Wikipedia, there is only rewriting, a constant refining process of all information. For more information regarding the frequency at which Wikipedia has been revised by users, see Appendix A.

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[46] Darren Crovitz, and W. Scott Smoot, "Wikipedia: Friend, not Foe," *The English Journal* 98, no. 3 (January 2009): 91-97.

Additionally, Wikistoriography creates an entire new process that replaces the peer-review system. If an article is to be published in an academic journal, it must first be reviewed by other scholars that agree with the premise and conclusion of the work who also find the research to fit their personal criterion. Wikipedia operates upon the premise of "publish first—revise later," encouraging the premise that information can always be revealed to contain flaws, allowing it to be revised at a later time.

A common fear among some in the academic community is that Wikipedia is too loose in its guidelines, allowing for false information to be accidentally or maliciously posted. A response to this can be bifurcated into two responses that address the accidental scenario and the malicious scenario.

There is always an existing danger of coming across false information or content. Again, the general fear is that false *facts* will be posted on Wikipedia. This is flawed for two reasons. One, it assumes that facts are the sole foundation upon which history is built and, two, it does not take into consideration that false facts can be found in any kind of publication, academic or otherwise. Both of these assumption-predicated worries are easily fixed by the premise that humans ought to always read critically. If you disagree with the information, change it. Make it better. Add to the conversation. Wikipedia makes this not only an option, but the primary option.

The issue of vandalism, while certainly a worrisome possibility, is easily answered by Wikipedia's community. As an analogy, let us look at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall located in Washington, DC. To date, there have been three known cases where vandalism of the memorial wall occurred, each to varying degrees of severity. Vandalism of Wikipedia, much like vandalism of the memorial wall, is often easy to spot. When swastikas were scratched into the memorial wall in 1988, not a single person wondered if the swastikas were a part of the

memorial. In the same way, it is doubtful that many are tricked by vandalism of Wikipedia. The memorial wall was fixed, the defaced panels of the wall being replaced in a matter of a week.

Fortunately, fixing vandalism on Wikipedia is even easier than this and can be completed in an even shorter amount of time. Vandalism, if detected by one of Wikipedia's users, can be changed in a matter of seconds with the press of a few buttons, reverting the page to the exact state it was in prior to the vandalism. While the vandals in the case of the memorial wall were never caught, Wikipedia has a strict policy of blocking users who vandalize Wikipedia, suspending either the user's account or blocking a particular IP address from making any kind of edit to any Wikipedia page in the future. Vandals of Wikipedia certainly exist, but there are far more users that contribute in a positive way to the community. Vandals of the memorial wall did not lead to a closing of the wall to the public; instead, it became part of the national discussion about the modern existence of Nazi ideology in the United States. Wikipedia is no different.

Constantly updated information

Following in the strain of "publish first—revise later," Wikipedia has a reputation for updating information as it happens on its site. For articles that receive a large amount of edits while an event is still rapidly unfolding, Wikipedia posts a large banner at the top of the page letting readers know that the information on the page is in development and that not all information may be completely up to date.

Wikistoriography highlights that history is never finished being written with its constantly updated and revised articles. In this sense, Wikipedia acts as perhaps one of the fastest historical publications. It produces journalistic information on developing events in a format that will continually be revised and kept in the same location even after the event has ended and the dust of the aftermath has settled. In this sense, Wikistoriography has created a unique platform

that can function simultaneously as a relative summary of news sources that creates the base for a historical text once that information is no longer deemed relative news. This approach builds an article from the bottom-up, starting with relative sources that remain as the foundation of the article as time progresses.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

What is to be made of Wikipedia? Academics originally predicted that the site would die out, losing relevance. However, the same shortsighted argument was made regarding the internet in the early 1990s. Just as many scholars deemed the web to be nothing more than a passing fad that would lose relevance, many believed that interest in the site would decline over time. Instead, it has only continued to grow and can no longer be ignored in the conversation of internet historiography.

Historiography is changing at an exponentially accelerating rate. The internet has created new methods by which history can be documented, stored, written, and researched. Historians and scholars have given up on rejecting the internet's involvement in academia. Wikipedia, the sixth most visited internet site in the United States, cannot be ignored in a review of internet historiography. It is the highest ranking information based site in the world, solidifying it as perhaps the largest database of information known to humanity.

Is Wikipedia perfect? No, but neither is any historical source, encyclopedic or otherwise. The aim of Wikipedia is not to create a flawless database, but instead to enrich content and information with user based edits and the free exchange of information. Wikipedia encourages its users and readers to not be passive in an educational setting; it places the power of contribution in the hands of the user, changing its readers from students to co-teachers, from consumers to creators.

Appendix A

	All languages	English	Russian	German	Spanish	Japanese	French	Italian	Chinese
Feb 2016	11,607	863	243	355	333	139	359	210	194
Feb 2015	6,347	874	321	352	205	155	326	186	137
Feb 2014	8,556	974	330	342	267	164	353	276	188
Feb 2013	22,342	830	473	394	260	145	395	281	282
Feb 2012	7,255	929	347	455	257	168	433	324	242
Feb 2011	8,005	963	777	438	565	193	396	318	125
Feb 2010	7,226	1,090	449	461	388	247	421	301	127
Feb 2009	7,899	1,486	331	476	303	279	439	335	596
Feb 2008	8,333	1,983	233	521	359	326	462	445	120
Feb 2007	9,393	1,694	231	560	391	470	575	861	119
Feb 2006	6,865	1,558	176	524	239	326	521	211	108
Feb 2005	2,987	713	46	367	58	208	298	66	66
Feb 2004	1,850	524	10	246	69	176	78	60	86
Feb 2003	641	177	1	61	8	77	62	9	
Feb 2002	322	263		6	21		5		
Feb 2001	4	4							

Figure 1. Number of new articles created per day.[47]

	All languages	English	Russian	German	Spanish	Japanese	French	Italian	Chinese
Feb 2016	38.8 M	5.1 M	1.3 M	1.9 M	1.2 M	1.0 M	1.7 M	1.3 M	866 k
Feb 2015	34.4 M	4.8 M	1.2 M	1.8 M	1.1 M	955 k	1.6 M	1.2 M	803 k
Feb 2014	30.7 M	4.5 M	1.1 M	1.7 M	1.0 M	903 k	1.5 M	1.1 M	741 k
Feb 2013	25.0 M	4.2 M	969 k	1.6 M	964 k	851 k	1.3 M	1.0 M	661 k
Feb 2012	21.1 M	3.8 M	819 k	1.4 M	860 k	797 k	1.2 M	894 k	393 k
Feb 2011	17.8 M	3.5 M	671 k	1.3 M	717 k	738 k	1.1 M	778 k	335 k
Feb 2010	14.9 M	3.1 M	498 k	1.1 M	557 k	658 k	908 k	662 k	285 k
Feb 2009	12.3 M	2.7 M	363 k	933 k	438 k	569 k	762 k	543 k	227 k
Feb 2008	9.6 M	2.1 M	236 k	770 k	325 k	472 k	617 k	411 k	165 k
Feb 2007	6.4 M	1.5 M	136 k	594 k	195 k	337 k	442 k	260 k	113 k
Feb 2006	3.5 M	927 k	56 k	382 k	92 k	194 k	243 k	136 k	57 k
Feb 2005	1.4 M	463 k	12 k	209 k	38 k	106 k	85 k	30 k	21 k
Feb 2004	493 k	210 k	1.7 k	57 k	16 k	35 k	27 k	6.4 k	5.9 k
Feb 2003	167 k	109 k	119	14 k	2.8 k	2.2 k	6.5 k	1.1 k	90
Feb 2002	30 k	25 k		1.3 k	1.3 k		178	4	
Feb 2001	151	151							

Figure 2. Total number of Wikipedia articles.[48]

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[47] Wikimedia, "Wikipedia Statistics," Wikimedia Statistics http://stats.wikimedia.org/ (accessed March 24, 2016).

[48] Ibid.

	All languages	English	Russian	German	Spanish	Japanese	French	Italian	Chinese
Feb 2016	2,155,489	1,031,454	76,303	168972	111249	94,748	112466	63,170	45,054
Feb 2015	1,989,279	958,406	70,371	160,588	100,311	86,332	103,710	58,521	40,514
Feb 2014	1,814,993	880,001	64,121	151,181	89,542	78,026	94,729	53,256	35,531
Feb 2013	1,641,918	803,300	56,839	140,613	79,671	70,154	85,129	48,097	30,871
Feb 2012	1,457,763	723,660	47,542	128,962	68,859	61,591	74,389	42,056	26,358
Feb 2011	1,261,861	633,564	38,402	116,011	58,095	53,525	63,713	35,613	22,757
Feb 2010	1,059,519	540,461	27,846	101,676	47,524	44,851	53,021	29,169	19,247
Feb 2009	839,403	436,500	16,797	86,721	35,589	35,619	41,765	22,553	15,099
Feb 2008	611,369	323,636	9,086	68,708	23,906	25,743	29,839	15,420	10,716
Feb 2007	363,347	192,685	4,379	47,537	11,647	14,542	18,599	8,234	5,954
Feb 2006	136,376	65,118	1,374	24,920	3,879	5,174	7,932	2,679	2,402
Feb 2005	42,123	17,841	329	9,772	1,039	2,226	2,357	600	787
Feb 2004	9,862	4,796	25	1,859	212	577	547	87	121
Feb 2003	2,225	1,331	3	309	55	60	107	7	5
Feb 2002	498	389		22	25		5	1	
Feb 2001	6	6							

Figure 3. Number of Wikipedia users who have edited at least ten times.[49]
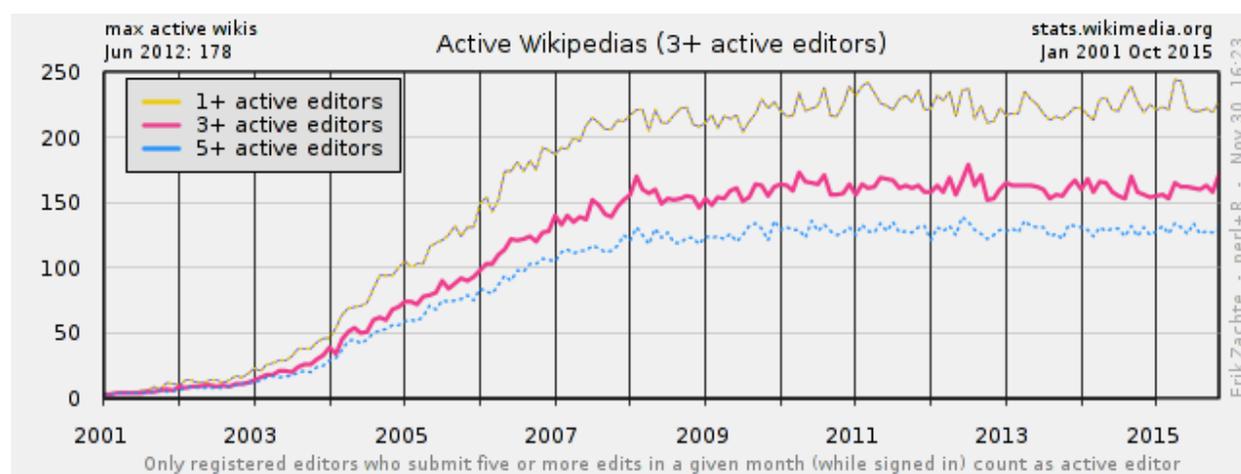
Figure 4. Number of different language Wikipedias.[50]
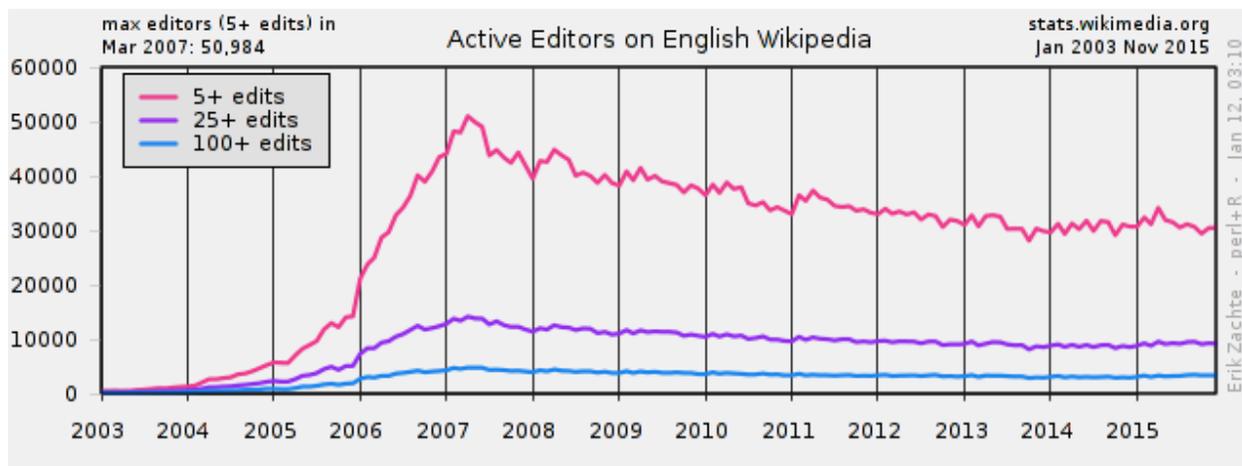
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[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

Figure 5. Active editors on English language Wikipedia.[51]

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[51] Ibid.

Appendix B

The following is a collection of web pages and interactive sites that involve Web 2.0 techniques and any component of the Wikimedia foundation. Some detail the power that a site such as Wikipedia holds, while others document some of the more interesting happenings involving the Web 2.0 community.

Histography: Interactive Timeline of History. http://histography.io/
- This site uses a super computer to read every Wikipedia page and then create a timeline from any date that is found within an article. Each dot on the timeline links to the text of the respective page from which the date was taken.

Lists of lists of lists. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_lists_of_lists
- A particularly meta page, this Wikipedia page gives a list of all pages on its site that contain lists.

Print Wikipedia. http://printwikipedia.com/
- Mentioned in the thesis above, this site contains a description and images of Michael Mandiberg's art project titled *Print Wikipedia*, the entire catalogue of Wikipedia's articles printed and bound in book format.

Traditional Knowledge Digital Library. www.tkdl.res.in/
- A library of free information created in India to prevent unethical patents and biopiracy of traditional and indigenous knowledge. It protects knowledge regarding algae, fungi, bryophyta, yoga poses, and other information and concepts that could potentially be exploited by large corporations for monetary gain.

The Wiki Game. http://thewikigame.com/
- A user must arrive at a particular article from an article chosen at random by only using the blue hyper links, refraining from using the search bar. Hyperlinks have been shown to effectively communicate the ideological relationship between two or more pages.

Wolfram Alpha. http://www.wolframalpha.com/
- The largest free computational knowledge answer engine. Wolfram Alpha is a collaborative tool built by professors and scholars from around the world.

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