

General Information

Wikis

A wiki is an on-line system of documents that can be edited by anyone with permission and allows a user to easily link from one topic to another.

History

Ward Cunningham, a programmer, started development in 1994 and installed his WikiWikiWeb on-line in 1995. It was called a wiki after the Hawaiian word for fast and entered the Oxford English Online Dictionary in March of 2007.

How it Works

A single wiki page typically holds one topic with hyperlinks to other pages for other topics. Editors can range from the general public to registered editors or just individuals depending on how the wiki is set up. Some wikis even require registration just to view them. When an editor changes something it is normally posted without review. A record of the change & past versions are recorded and an edit summary may be added to explain the reason for the change. Editing uses wikitext rather than html because it's simpler and faster, although less flexible and powerful.

Security

Critics of completely open wiki systems argue that they can be easily ruined by vandals. Proponents, however, argue that the community of users will catch malicious content and correct it quickly. In fact, while there have been instances of errors going undetected for a short time, for the most part, this has been true. Wikis take a "soft security" approach by making it easy to fix vandalism rather than try to prevent it. Most wikis today allow minor "IP identified" editing but registered users receive extra privileges. Registration tends to be a process with levels of access based on historical reliability of the editor rather than a simple sign-up procedure.

Examples:

Some examples of wikis are as follows:

- Wikipedia (2001) - anyone with a computer and internet access can edit and view it. Because of its open architecture, Wikipedia has millions of articles in hundreds of languages.
- Citizendium - requires the users' real name and bio, slowing growth but making it "vandalism-free".
- ICG Link Knowledgebase - The knowledgebase you are reading now has a single editor who receives article suggestions from various sources. The public can view all parts of it.
- ICG Link Internal Employee Procedures Manual - ICG Link also employs an internal wiki where company procedures and shared information is stored. It is modified only by approved editors and only employees have permission to view it.

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