

Thoughts on Representation

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São Paulo, 30 August 2014

Who represents Wikipedia?

- Anybody?
- Nobody?
- "the community"?
 - only those with $>N$ edits?
 - only those who remember the GFDL license?
 - only admins?
- ~~only the Wikimedia Foundation?~~ Pfft.

A word from Wittgenstein:

"Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language."

--Philosophical Investigations (1953)

Danke! Let's take one step back

- "Representation" can mean lots of things:
 - ownership, legal responsibility
 - being a legally-authorized representative
 - making commitments on behalf of "Wikipedia"
 - presenting and discussing community norms, values, and vision
 - expressing an individual opinion while identifying as "from Wikipedia"
 - (news headline: "Asaf, Editor of Wikipedia, says...")

Which "representation" worries us?

- there are probably different anxieties and concerns around the different senses of "representation"
- volunteers are volunteers :)
- Clarity on what is legitimate for these *different* kinds of representation could be achieved, with some public, on-wiki discussion

Some examples from outside PTWP

- Reactive and proactive communications (media, press) are *organized* by a designated volunteer; local chapter a default contact point for "muggles"; many participate; individuals don't *have* to coordinate interviews; on-wiki documentation and post-factum discussion; tolerance of misstatements and misquoting; deliberate corrections. (Israel)

Some examples from outside PTWP

- Volunteer media contacts listed on ENWP; global mailing list used to report post-factum (ComCom); local chapters referred to when appropriate; no consultation required or expected before approaching media or creating partnerships in local or even individual initiatives
- The community engages (or not) with whatever happens. (USA)

Some examples from outside PTWP

- Local chapter whose membership includes almost all the very active editors; projects, grants, and institutional partnerships are run by chapter volunteer, and recently new staff, with broad community support.
- The chapter rejected one individual's idea; he still pursued it, with an individual grant from WMF; everybody's happy. :) (Estonia)

So...

Representation to figure out...

- ~~ownership, legal responsibility~~
- being a legally-authorized representative
- ~~making commitments on behalf of "Wikipedia"~~
- presenting and discussing community norms, values, and vision
- expressing an individual opinion while identifying as "from Wikipedia"
- ...?

Stay in touch!

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