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What is a wiki?

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The idea

A wiki is a web-based tool that allows people to easily add, modify, or delete the content of a web page simply by using a web browser.

Wikiwiki is Hawaiian and means *quick*. It describes the idea of creating and sharing content easily and, obviously, very quickly.

In public wikis such as Wikipedia, visitors don't even need a user account to make changes to a page that other people have created or edited before. Have you ever updated a Wikipedia page yourself? You should definitely try!

Wikis use specialized wiki software and are often created in a very collaborative environment. The content is typically non-linear. In order to find relevant information, a powerful search function becomes very important. There are, however, many ways to organize a wiki so that users can navigate to content without relying only on the search function of their wiki.



Wikiwiki Shuttle in Hawaii

History

The first wiki (named *WikiWikiWeb*) was invented by Ward Cunningham in 1995.

Cunningham became impatient with existing text processing programs and was looking for a new documentation system that was adapted to fit the needs of programmers. He wanted to develop a simple software that would allow programmers to work collaboratively on source code and to publish it immediately. Also, the new program should document all editing steps automatically to track all changes that have been made. In the end, the first wiki was put online and is still working.

Wikis are for good reasons a popular technology to this day and have become very mature and feature-rich. They are a great tool for collaborating on information of any kind.

Basic functions

Editing: Every wiki page has a clearly visible editing link or button. This should encourage page visitors to immediately contribute to the content if information is missing or simply wrong. Companies should be careful when limiting the edit options on a page – they will surely miss out on important knowledge transfer opportunities.

Linking: To make it easy for users to find related information, it is very easy to insert links anywhere in the wiki, even to a page that does not yet exist!

History: With the history function, it is possible to trace every change that anyone has ever made to a page. Losing versions of important content is a thing of the past.

Recent changes: All recent changes in the entire wiki are clearly visible. Nobody wastes any time looking for the most important and most up-to-date information.

Examples for public wikis

There are large and small wiki communities that use MediaWiki to collaborate. Some examples of public wikis:

- [Wikipedia](#): Free online encyclopedia
- [FileZilla Wiki](#): Help site of the popular FTP software
- [Joomla! Documentation](#): Help documentation of the popular CMS software
- [MoodleDocs](#): Documentation of the learning platform Moodle
- [Antwiki](#): Where ant scientists share their information

Literature

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