Why *Not* Wikipedia?

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Why Wikipedia is *Bad*

It’s a wiki, which means that it is a collaborative site with an openly editable model.

That means anyone can write anything about anything, regardless of the person’s expertise or even basic knowledge on the topic.
Then How can Wikipedia be Good?

Wikipedia can actually be a great starting point for researchers.

Sure, there are a lot of flaws, but…

Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater!
The Fast Answer

Wikipedia is BRILLIANT for the fast answer to a question.

If a student really doesn’t understand the topic of research, Wikipedia can help clarify.
Examples

In a history class, the student might have problems understanding the correct order of French monarchs...

List of French Monarchs

Examples

Or understanding the order of battles in the American Revolution...

List of American Revolutionary War battles

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_American_Revolutionary_War_battles
Examples

Or, in a biology class, a student might not know what a Tsetse fly is…

Tsetse fly
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsetse_fly

Or, in math, the student doesn’t know what a polynomial is…

Polynomial
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polynomial
Duh…

Now I’m sure you’re all thinking, “We already know that. Tell us something new…”

Well, did you know that Wikipedia now offers references?
Cite your Work!

Now, Wikipedia strongly encourages citing references within the article.

This means that most articles now have a list of references.

These can contain Notes, Citations, Sources…
Examples

2013-2014 Thai Political Crisis
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013%E2%80%9314_Thai_political_crisis

Interstate 805

La Leyenda
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Leyenda
Unraveling the Sweater

When showing a student how to do research, I like to talk to them about “unraveling the sweater.”

Basically, it’s the idea of finding more resources through the bibliography of one source. This works with Wikipedia, too. Especially on a topic that you can’t find a lot on.
True Story

A student was looking for resources on the legal dispute between the World Wildlife Fund and the World Wrestling Federation.

This was not a U.S. case, so it was a little more difficult to find documentation for it.
True Story

We found cases, but we also checked Wikipedia…

WWE
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WWE

World Wide Fund for Nature

It led to 9 more resources, including the text of the agreement.
The Bad Side…?

As with everything on the Internet…sometimes the links in the References section die…

And, of course, it should NEVER be cited on a paper….

But here are some resources that are easy to search (like Wikipedia) but are reliable and useful for papers.

All are available at any public library.
Why even try Wikipedia?

Because…it’s what people are using.

According to the OCLC report Perceptions of Libraries, 2010: Context and Community:

“Wikipedia is now used by 73% of Americans, with half of these users visiting the site at least once a month. This usage rate rivals both search engines and social sites, making Wikipedia an information staple for online Americans.” p34
Why even try Wikipedia?

And don’t try to convince yourself that those 73% are all kids or older folks. Nope…88% of college students use Wikipedia to find information, second only to search engines (93%). p52

The library website? Only 57% of college students use that…and our online databases? 30%!

Sadly, most people don’t even know that their library has a website. I kid you not.
But fret not! All is not lost…

For those who are hesitant about or intimidated by using our resources…Wikipedia is the perfect gateway drug…to information!

Show your users how to effectively use Wikipedia… and then show them some cool resources that are easy to use (like Wikipedia) but more reliable (unlike Wikipedia).

After all, only 3% of Americans surveyed considered Wikipedia a trusted source. p41
Literati by Credo

An all in one database Literati by Credo includes topic pages providing students an overview of the topic.

Literati by Credo also identifies relevant source material from other databases and websites.
Welcome. Let's Get Started!

Search

Search by: Image, Mind Map

Warning: Only citable, accurate, verifiable information will be found as a result of doing this search.

Where Do You Want to Go?
Gale Virtual Library

Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL) offers an online collection of reference eBooks.

You can search a single eBook, within a Subject, or across your library’s entire eBook collection.
Thank you!

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