Descending Mount Everest:
Steps Towards Applied Wikipedia Research

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ABSTRACT

Over the last years, Wikipedia has seen an explosion of academic interest, as indicated by a steadily increasing volume of scholarly publications. Due to its history, its size and the immediate availability of its data under open licenses, Wikipedia has served over time as a testbed for sociological and psychological theory; as the primary source of data for models of commons-based peer production and computer-supported collaboration; as a body of norms for research on the governance of online communities; or as a large multilingual corpus to mine, or against which to train text analysis algorithms. This explosion of academic interest reveals a gap between Wikipedia as a topic of scholarly research and Wikipedia as a living community in need of actionable solutions, facing real challenges and the first serious growth and sustainability problem in its entire lifecycle. The Wikimedia Foundation and the Wikimedia communities have yet to find a viable model to leverage academic expertise to solve these challenges, in the same way that Wikimedia projects have effectively engaged with a large community of contributors and software developers to produce its contents and support its open source infrastructure. In this talk I will review recent research trends spanning scholarly work and internal research conducted at the Wikimedia Foundation, and how these relate to some of the most urgent needs of the Wikimedia movement and the Wikimedia Foundation's work priorities. I'll discuss models that can support actionable research, as well as open opportunities for researchers and contributors to collaborate on developing joint solutions and identifying new growth opportunities for WIkipedia and its communities.

BIOGRAPHY

Dario Taraborelli is a social scientist working at the Wikimedia Foundation, where he leads research into product development and editor engagement. He is interested in factors that sustain online collaboration and peer production. As an open access advocate and a co-author of the altmetrics manifesto, he is also interested in how the Web is reshaping scientific collaboration and scholarly communication and in new ways to measure the impact and reuse of scholarly knowledge. He holds a PhD in cognitive science from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (France).