First Page

A wiki (/ˈwɪki/ (About this soundlisten) WIK-ee) is a hypertext publication collaboratively edited and managed by its own audience directly using a web browser. A typical wiki contains multiple pages for the subjects or scope of the project and may be either open to the public or limited to use within an organization for maintaining its internal knowledge base. Wikis are enabled by wiki software, otherwise known as wiki engines. A wiki engine, being a form of a content management system, differs from other web-based systems such as blog software, in that the content is created without any defined owner or leader, and wikis have little inherent structure, allowing structure to emerge according to the needs of the users.[1]

Wiki engines usually allow content to be written using a simplified markup language and sometimes edited with the help of a rich-text editor.[2] There are dozens of different wiki engines in use, both standalone and part of other software, such as bug tracking systems. Some wiki engines are open source, whereas others are proprietary. Some permit control over different functions (levels of access); for example, editing rights may permit changing, adding, or removing material. Others may permit access without enforcing access control. Other rules may be imposed to organize content. The online encyclopedia project Wikipedia is the most popular wiki-based website, and is one of the most widely viewed sites in the world, having been ranked in the top ten since 2007.[3] Wikipedia is not a single wiki but rather a collection of hundreds of wikis, with each one pertaining to a specific language. In addition to Wikipedia, there are hundreds of thousands of other wikis in use, both public and private, including wikis functioning as knowledge management resources, notetaking tools, community websites, and intranets. The English-language Wikipedia has the largest collection of articles: as of February 2020, it has over 6 million articles.

Ward Cunningham, the developer of the first wiki software, WikiWikiWeb, originally described wiki as "the simplest online database that could possibly work."[4]
"Wiki" (pronounced [ˈwiki][note 1]) is a Hawaiian word meaning "quick."[5][6][7]

Characteristics This section needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. Find sources: "Wiki" – news · newspapers · books · scholar · JSTOR (March 2017) (Learn how and when to remove this template message) Ward Cunningham, inventor of the wiki Ward Cunningham and co-author Bo Leuf, in their book The Wiki Way: Quick Collaboration on the Web, described the essence of the Wiki concept as follows:[8] A wiki invites all users—not just experts—to edit any page or to create new pages within the wiki Web site, using only a standard "plain-vanilla" Web browser without any extra add-ons. Wiki promotes meaningful topic associations between different pages by making page link creation intuitively easy and showing whether an intended target page exists or not. A wiki is not a carefully crafted site created by experts and professional writers, and designed for casual visitors. Instead, it seeks to involve the typical visitor/user in an ongoing process of creation and collaboration that constantly changes the website landscape. A wiki enables communities of editors and contributors to write documents collaboratively. All that people require to contribute is a computer, Internet access, a web browser, and a basic understanding of a simple markup language (e.g., MediaWiki markup language). A single page in a wiki website is referred to as a "wiki page", while the entire collection of pages, which are usually well-interconnected by hyperlinks, is "the wiki". A wiki is essentially a database for creating, browsing, and searching through information. A wiki allows non-linear, evolving, complex, and networked text, while also allowing for editor argument, debate, and interaction regarding the content and formatting.[9]
A defining characteristic of wiki technology is the ease with which pages can be created and updated. Generally, there is no review by a moderator or gatekeeper before modifications are accepted and thus lead to changes on the website. Many wikis are open to alteration by the general public without requiring registration of user accounts. Many edits can be made in real-time and appear almost instantly online, but this feature facilitates abuse of the system. Private wiki servers require user authentication to edit pages, and sometimes even to read them. Maged N. Kamel Boulos, Cito Maramba, and Steve Wheeler write that the open wikis produce a process of Social Darwinism. "... because of the openness and rapidity that wiki pages can be edited, the pages undergo an evolutionary selection process not unlike that which nature subjects to living organisms. 'Unfit' sentences and sections are ruthlessly culled, edited and replaced if they are not considered 'fit', which hopefully results in the evolution of a higher quality and more relevant page."[10]

Navigation Within the text of most pages, there are usually many hypertext links to other pages within the wiki. This form of non-linear navigation is more "native" to a wiki than structured/formalized navigation schemes. Users can also create any number of index or table-of-contents pages, with hierarchical categorization or whatever form of organization they like. These may be challenging to maintain "by hand", as multiple authors and users may create and delete pages in an ad hoc, unorganized manner. Wikis can provide one or more ways to categorize or tag pages to support the maintenance of such index pages. Some wikis, including the original, have a backlink feature, which displays all pages that link to a given page. It is also typically possible in a wiki to create links to pages that do not yet exist, as a way to invite others to share what they know about a subject new to the wiki. Wiki users can typically "tag" pages with categories or keywords, to make it easier for other users to find the article. For example, a user creating a new article on cold weather cycling might "tag" this page under the categories of commuting, winter sports and bicycling. This would make it easier for other users to find the article.