Update on Some U.S. Government MediaWikis

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Representing no agency, unofficial

EMWCon
April 4, 2019
Federal Enterprise MediaWiki calls

• Monthly, for U.S. Federal government people
  – 2nd Thursdays from 1-2pm eastern time usually
• Demonstrations, discussions: extensions, templates, policies, sites, conferences, …
  • These are internal govt-staff-only systems by necessity
  • People on these calls are my source for what follows

• Email list
  – EnterpriseWiki@listserv.gsa.gov
  – We’re a digital.gov Community of Practice

• Contact: Tom O’Neill (thomas.oneill@hq.doe.gov) or me (meyer.peter@bls.gov)
Diplopedia at U.S. State Dept.

- Hosted by eDiplomacy office for knowledge collaboration
  - Serving over 100K users at >275 posts in >190 countries
  - Tim Hayes & Bob Watts: WattsRM@state.gov, eDiplomacy@state.gov

- >29,000 content pages
  - Grew steadily since 2006
- >76,000 registered users
  - Jumped since single-sign-on began
  - All can edit at will

- Thousands of page views per day
- Integrated into regular enterprise search
Diplopedia (2)

• Popular content: administrative guidance and resources (e.g. HR)
• Portals and pages about posts, office mgmt, desk officers

• Diplopedia has many biographies of international officials
• Users from many agencies including USDA/FAS, USAID

• Challenges:
  – Particular staff take a special interest in the wiki, then move on to another post – content falls out of date
  – Bandwidth has been a challenge for some eDiplomacy apps
  – Classified (secret) info is on another platform

• Visual Editor now available, and helps

• Moving to cloud (had been IIS then Linux)
  – This will help mobile users
• Want big distribution to install/upgrade
Powerpedia at U.S. Dept of Energy

• DOE employees and contractors can see it
  – ~100,000 people, since 2011

• 4400 registered editors can edit

• 11,000 articles
  – 49,000 other pages (portals, discussion, user)
  – 19,000 uploaded files

• Visual Editor running since mid-2018 – that helps
• Runs on AWS cloud since early 2019)
  – expected to ease upgrades and sandbox testing
Statipedia: rest in peace

• Was for all Fed govt staff, especially if working on statistics
• It ran from 2010-2018, hosted by EPA, now shut down
  – Which is a personal tragedy; it was a joy and useful
• 2900 content pages
• It was hard to get participation -- 50 editors
  – didn’t have much official support
  – needed easy single-sign on but didn’t have it
• Never had any scandal or security or discipline problem
  – Responded to Freedom of Information Act requests
• Some of the content now percolates elsewhere
Intellipedia

• Shared across U.S. intelligence agencies
• Multiple platforms: unclassified and classified (secret)
• Hundreds of thousands of articles
• Has an interesting history re “connecting the dots” of diffuse, partly-visible, networked threats
  – And organizational innovation
• Updates
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WikITA at US Intl Trade Administration

• ITA is in Dept of Commerce
  – 400 people at headquarters and ~1500 in field
  – Field staff mostly in U.S., also in 90 countries (embassies)
    • Foreign staff on Diplopedia too which was helpful, inspirational
  – All ITA staff can view wiki; only registered users can edit

• Content: mostly administrative procedures
  – Human resources, records management, conference rooms
  – Relates to Knowledge Management and metadata initiatives
  – >900 content pages, >400 registered users

• WikITA is award-winning effort of ITA manager Blanche Ziv
  – She welcomes each new editor with customized email

• Needed: Mobile-accessible for usability in the field people
• Will therefore need to be on a cloud, but isn’t
Many more

- NASA
- Los Alamos Labs
- NREL public semantic mediawikis:
  - OpenEI (https://openei.org)
- Those are technically advanced

- OSTP/NITRD wiki (interagency, info tech R&D)
- Dept. of Labor wiki (interagency)
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission
  - starting soon

- Wikipedians in Residence
  - National Archives, CDC/NIOSH, museums
- Little Wikidata participation from agencies
Reflections

• Probably most US govt staff can’t access an enterprise MediaWiki
  – Canadian government’s Gcpedia is the broadest one I know
• I collect government examples, sporadically
  – Want everyone in U.S. govt to have shared MediaWiki

• Better governance using wikis seems straightforward
  – Govt staff could search for terms and abbreviations across agencies, compare practices across agencies, have sourced/footnote information
  – There’s fear and uncertainty, but not much misbehavior

• Wiki activity grows slowly but is not very visible
  – It continues across administrations; not controversial
  – High officials don’t recognize it
  – Candidates for office don't mention it
  – Idea of civil servants sharing, sourced, footnoted, cite-able glossary information broadly across doesn't seem to grab the imagination
    • Sometimes “knowledge management” does