

Hello everyone, my name is Jason Scott, I run a site called textfiles.com; made a documentary called Bulletin Board Systems: The Documentary. I run a variety of sites which are basically involved in the collection of online history, as a result I'm somebody who has a very strong relationship with information, the collecting of information and therefore the collecting of truth, of fact, of history, and in some small amount, collaboration and working together towards a goal.

So, the name of this speech is called "The Great Failure Of Wikipedia". Part of that is branding, because that sounds really exciting, but part of it is also really true.

I first became aware of Wikipedia about a year and a half ago, maybe about a year and a half to two years now, where I'd heard what a lot of people hear when they hear about Wikipedia. They hear about the idea that it is this online encyclopedia that anybody can edit, and that there's this software that allows people to collaborate, provide information, truth that they find or history or facts that they find and together, working together, this large group of people are able to create a superior learning and reference tool that because of it's free license will allow people to share it universally without limit up to the infinite future to the point where, as Mr. Wales puts it, it is the availability of the sum of human knowledge to everyone on Earth for free.

Now, these are extremely lofty goals, and so when one goes to it, one kind of goes onto Wikipedia, finds first of all this ugly colour scheme, and then, they find that there's this interesting amount of information, in fact a mass of information. The further they click, the more information they find, until they're amazed at just the pure mass of knowledge that seems to be possessed here about the most minor of subjects, and the most major of subjects, all of it seemingly pretty well-edited, pretty well put together, where it isn't, it looks like there could be some rules that come by, and

so for many people when they go to Wikipedia they might come with a pet subject and say "Wow, this is an amazing success, I wish to know who the King of Spain is, and then I can find that out here, here's the King of Spain's name." Fine. "Oh, and it turns out Spain exports this crap a lot, let's find out more about that crap," and four hours later they come away and say "Wow, Wikipedia's a great experience."

I do not dispute that, I do not dispute that Wikipedia -- for a person who is playing the part of a tourist, a web browser -- is a beautiful success. It provides you with a large amount of information, most of it seeming to be relatively accurate, and for the purposes of the fact that you didn't know how much of something there was, or what the name of something was, or what something stood for, you get that reference pretty quickly.

The problem is that once you start to ... (and I again, completely buy that if this site was called Jimbo's Big Bag o' Trivia, it would have been a fine success and nobody would have had any problem with it) but the problem is that Jimbo Wales, when he put together this mission statement of Wikipedia and the Wikimedia Foundation, he again painted it as the sum of all human knowledge, presented universally, for free. In fact, Mr. Wales tends to be for me most of the source of a lot of the criticism of Wikipedia, simply because of two reasons.

Number one: Along the process of putting together Wikipedia, he has put together an excellent vision but in doing so, while he's given over some of the responsibility to the Wikimedia Foundation and other parts, he has maintained control of Wikipedia. So his statements are still considered to be Wikipedia's statements. This is actually at odds with a lot of the mission statements, so for instance when he goes on CNN and says "We make the Internet not suck", he is speaking for Wikipedia. So this puts them in an interesting position.

When I started out with Wikipedia, I started out actually editing the Xanadu film entry, because it was a minor interesting thing and put in some facts and so on. I dealt with Wikipedia as a lot of people who take a more than slight interest do, which is that you go into Wikipedia and begin to edit it, begin to make minor changes.

Now, this brings up an interesting idea, which I've tried to push, which is that unknowingly, and these kind of things happen, unknowingly Wikipedia happened on a form of human addiction. That is to say, it turns out that if you give people a stage, and you give them a stage where they have total control, even if it's for a short amount, they will not rest until they can do it again.

In other words, if you say to somebody "well if you go and you edit this entry on Jimmy Carter ... for however long it is in there, you are the authority on Jimmy Carter, and everyone will know it," this is a completely addictive process. It's what keeps a lot of people going to Wikipedia as an editing faction, because when they use it, they end up saying "Wow, I've done it, I've done it, I've changed the world," and to some extent they're correct. Because of Wikipedia's freedom ... and again, this calls into a criticism, when I talk about Wikipedia in a non-positive fashion, I receive a number of criticisms, which are very normal.

Now there's an entire faction of people who say "Who gives a shit? It's Wikipedia", and that's fine, and then there's a group of people who say "Well, Wikipedia's really important and you just don't know it yet". Now I always say you cannot aggrandize and self-depreciate at the same time. You can't say "I'm really good, but actually I'm kind of an asshole." If you do that, what actually ends up happening is that you get to choose what, you know, you get to put on the asshole or the aggrandizement cap based on the criticism that you received that day.

So, in doing so, I'm going to assume that Wikipedia is holding to the credo that it put together, that is to say that it is aiming to be the sum of human knowledge, that it continues to compare itself against reference materials.

So the first criticism is that if it's on Wikipedia, you shouldn't believe in it. Now this is what I call the illegitimate child theory. People say "Well, you know, you shouldn't have unprotected sex. You should not have sex in a way that you do not regret the outcome." That's fantastic. That would explain all the illegitimate children that occur every year. You know, you can say how people should be, and then you can see how people are.

With Wikipedia, because it provides this easy bit of information for people, they can go and get the basic knowledge of something, they can turn away from that and say "That's it, that's all I need to know, if it's wrong, it's wrong", and because of Wikipedia's high page rank, and because of the fact that it can generate a lot of text, it has now become a target for spammers, and initially, Wikipedia has been able to handle this pretty well. One of the side effects of Wikipedia's massive ... (and this is a benefit of Wikipedia's massive interest) is that it gets a lot of fucknuts. Now because of that, it's able to fight against the spammers ... now to avoid that for the moment, what a lot of spamming places now do is they pull Wikipedia text, which is licensed under the GFDL, and they proceed to put it on their own sites, and call it web answers dot whatever and they fill it up with text ads.

Now this is interesting because what ends up happening is, for instance, let's say, Carmine DeSapio (we're unfortunately going to have to go through a lot of trivia here). Carmine DeSapio was the last head of Tammany Hall, which is the political machine that controlled New York City for a hundred years. He was the only non-Irish head, he basically got into a lot of trouble, and that was the end of Tammany Hall.

Now, almost all the information on Carmine DeSapio is from Wikipedia. If you go and type this man's name in, you'll get a hundred matches. All of them are variations of the Wikipedia article. The Wikipedia article was typed in by a retiree from Iowa, off of the New York Times obituary from Carmine DeSapio's death, which happens to be locked down under registration so it doesn't get out as much. He transcribed it wrong! In doing so he got the name of his daughter wrong, he got his age wrong, he got a number of other important facts wrong, all of which are duplicated now throughout the web.

Now, who gives a shit? It's Carmine DeSapio, he's the last guy of Tammany Hall, I get it, we're done. And that's the problem, is you have to say: Well, which one are you going to do? Are you going to self-aggrandize, or are you going to criticise? And I'm going to go with criticising because again, when you say sum of human knowledge...

Now, let's go back into Wikipedia itself. One of the things that Wikipedia has going for it, which I consider one of it's great successes, is the fact that it has this general philosophy of opening up to the world, and saying to the world: "Hey, come on in and edit!" Now keep in mind in 2006 that's a bit of a lie.

What Wikipedia ... and this is the function of this speech, is not to criticise Wikipedia but to point out how Wikipedia represents the first wave of a coming information war and something where the Internet, as it becomes more important as a source of information, is going to be headed off by certain forces, by certain techniques, some of which are successful and some of which are not, and because Wikipedia has let itself be open to this we are seeing these techniques in use today, where in ten years they will actually affect lives directly. In 20 years, they will be vital to lives. Wikipedia, because of it's high page rank, becomes the source material, and it has a large amount of people who want to do things for it, a

large amount of people who want to control it, and a large amount of people who want to wreck it.

Now wrecking it is variant. One of the ways people point to the success of Wikipedia (and this is what drives me nuts in these articles that compare it in Nature and other writing) is that people say: "Well, I went in and I made a stupid error, you know, I went in and I said, you know, George Bush has a purple nose, and it was changed within thirty seconds! Wikipedia is a success!"

Now keep in mind the George W. Bush article spends less than 20% of it's time unvandalised. On a given day, over 80% of the day, the George Bush article is spent vandalised. How is that handled? How are they able to do that?

The answer is, is that because of this constant onslaught of vandalism (which we find generally comes from high school students -- high school students, Singapore, and college students, in that order) is because there are a wide variety of bots, scripts, assistant programs that people have written to monitor Wikipedia and to alert them. So, when a person comes in and just makes an edit, and they don't have a user account, that automatically sets flags on the log, a thing notices that, and will automatically undo it, OK?

So you're not really talking with Wikipedians there, you're really just kinda fighting a bot script, something that is the equivalent of "you typed the wrong password in". You came in and you did something really strange. Because you're somebody who wasn't there before, and you went immediately to this article and you made this amount of change, it is assumed you are a vandal, you get a red flag, somebody notices it, and they undo you.

So, you really can't the success or failure of Wikipedia's editing by that. You can judge the success that somebody had to write a client to

interact with this information space and be able to undo it that quickly.

In Wikipedia, there's basically a form of information vandal (they're called "vandals"), who come in and undo something. That's an interesting problem too because there is an entire Wikipedia language ... set that aside for the moment.

In surgery stations, there is a problem where there are antibiotics used to work with patients. Because of that, over time, a sterile room which has constant antibiotics, will develop super-viruses: Strains that are much more powerful than the antibiotics because they're in this constant environment of onslaught, until when you get hit with one of those super-viruses, should this happen, you are at a great disadvantage because antibiotics don't work, this thing has been through a lot more problems than you can imagine. Wikipedia is unintentionally causing these to happen in the form of vandals.

See it's one thing if you get in on the door and you're just somebody with a can of spraypaint, and you run into the front of the city hall and you spray "FUCK YOU" and somebody sees that, they arrest you and it goes away. Hooray, society works, civility is wonderful.

In Wikipedia, because of the fact that it is a system, it is a system of politics, a system of gaming, a system of people being aware of rules, being able to interpret those rules any way they want to and then interact with others, and then use their internal language.

The term they use inside is called "Wikilawyerling" and the reason it's called that is because you end up taking these very very thin credos that Wikipedia has put forward, in the absence of anything else, and then being able to interpret them to your own whims. Because of that, there are groups of people now working to destroy Wikipedia. They're doing so by slowly

building up karma, and knowledge, and ability in the Wikipedia system. Wikipedia has about 900 administrators. A good portion of them, more than they would like to admit, are people who are working from within to understand it, take it over, destroy it. The Wikipedia system enables this.

Now, why does it enable it?

Jimbo Wales is a Randian Objectivist. This means that in his particular interpretation of that philosophical thought, he does not like to interfere, he likes to give general ideas, he likes to trust in people, and he likes that the truth, that the truth represents an honest objective entity that cannot be questioned. A is A. That is to say, if somebody says "this is blue", no amount of your stupid liberal whining is going to make it not blue. That's the theory behind that aspect of Randian Objectivism.

What he did with Wikipedia was, put forward a number of very simple credos: Wikipedia will have a neutral point of view; Wikipedia will always cite it's sources; Wikipedia will never be an original source of information; and then said: "Go with it."

This worked for a very long time by some standards. It worked for at least a year and a half. That Wikipedia in it's early days was able to handle this. It had a certain amount of editors, it had a certain amount of people working on it, and they could all kind of agree, and when they didn't agree, they could work out ways.

Now, the problem with these credos is that they don't hold up. For instance, "neutral point of view". The idea behind a neutral point of view in Wikipedia is that Wikipedia will not take sides.

So if you have, for instance, the Hindenburg disaster, there is an entire school of thought, and they are not compatible, two schools of thought: One school of thought says ... it's the "inside" and

the "outside" schools. The "inside" school says the gas inside the Hindenburg ignited, and the Hindenburg blew up. The "outside" school says that the covering on the outside of the Hindenburg was of a design that wasn't very good, and was in fact flammable and that's why the Hindenburg went up.

They are not compatible. There will never be a situation where they go "I could see that, the entire thing was a huge bomb." But, Wikipedia, because of it's neutral point of view, ideally has to present both of these views. Two conflicting, completely not compatible views, which have to share the same essay space with no separation between them except for a vague section header.

Oh, and the people don't believe in the other one get to edit in the same space as the people who do. You can imagine what happens: Conflict, constant unending conflict. Now the Hindenburg Disaster, perhaps you can say, OK, these are all fat old white guys, and that's going to be no big problem. But if you end up with one where the actual existence of a country, say Tibet, is under scrutiny, where one says "this doesn't exist" and the other one says it does, you can imagine how well and how willing these groups are to work together to come up with the neutral point of view.

Neutral point of view is also, because of Jimbo's lack of direct influence, something that's used to say: "If you put something in Wikipedia that espouses too direct a view, even if it's in the same area as other opposing points of view, that is not neutral enough." In other words, you have cases were people post something that's a fact, and someone goes "that's not a neutral point of view," and the answer is "OK." And this is the thing, the number one question that I get, and the number one question I think a lot of people get if they do any work on Wikipedia is "Who the fuck are you?"

And the reason for that is because there's no limitation. There used to be about three divisions

on Wikipedia. There used to be basically: editor; developer; Jimbo. Now there's about six, so there's unwashed anonymous person; editor; admin; developer; Danny; Jimbo; and bureaucrat. These small stratifications have occurred over time. Most of them were based off of the ability and the privilege of affecting certain bits of Wikipedia.

Within a very short time, Wikipedia needed the ability to protect pages. There were simply some pages that were just untenable, they could not exist without having somebody protect them. Now protection is against the idea of Wikipedia: It's the place that anybody can edit, anything you can edit. But realism sets in.

Wikipedia ran into several problems, first of all it had to start adding users. In the initial phase of Wikipedia you didn't have users, you just had an IP. Well that got to be a little bit wacky, so they started to add users. When you add users, you add identity. When you add identity, you start to add politics, because identities have to keep up their own space.

This became one of the largest fights within Wikipedia, an amazing fight, you know, as somebody who has been watching Wikipedia from the outside, you start to really enjoy the fights, because they are so deep, so involved. In fact, one of the big fears Wikipedia had (or Jimbo had, in the guise of Wikipedia) was becoming Usenet. This is something that he would say a lot of 2002-era interviews was: "I don't want to become another Usenet." Now, that's not possible, because in Usenet at least you couldn't edit other people's articles. Now, you can. It's actually the worst aspect of Usenet.

Also, Usenet was distributed. You could have Usenet in different places. Because Wikipedia is in a centralised location, you still have this central control.

Wikipedia has three events in the past year and a half that has totally changed the atmosphere of Wikipedia. That is: The ninja, the sex offender, and the publisher.

The ninja is named Ashida Kim, he's from Florida. He believes very much in his martial arts skills, he's written a book called *Secrets Of The Ninja*, sold by Paladin Press. He didn't like Paladin Press, he tried to sue them to stop publishing his book, they didn't, so he started to threaten them. He had another case where he was done wrong, started to threaten them. You can imagine how much Ashida Kim loved finding an article about him, written in Wikipedia, which listed his real name, which listed information about him, and which criticised his martial arts techniques.

There's a group that is, basically, kind of, they call themselves ... they're against what they call "belt factories." That is to say martial arts places that produce a lot of belts so that you get a lot of different spaces. Basically they paint themselves kind of a like a consumers union of dojos. However, they kinda run their own dojo, so there's some question about what they are, right?

One thing is for sure -- Ashida Kim wants to them to die. On more than one occasion, he has written to them to say: "You will be killed by ninjas within weeks." You can imagine how much Wikipedia delighted Ashida Kim when it starts to publish his real name.

Ashida Kim knew immediately what to do -- go for the family. The first thing he did was figure out Jimbo's social security number, where he lived, the name of his daughter, where his daughter went to school, who he married. He then proceeded to put them into Wikipedia, as fast as he could. He put them into the edit summaries, so when you edit something you say what you were doing, put in his social security number. There was no way to remove edit summaries. So even though they could undo the

work (and they could add this feature which Jimbo had added for Ashida Kim's attack, to delete things wholly and totally from the Wikipedia database), he couldn't get rid of the edit summaries.

This actually took them a few weeks to figure out how to program it to remove edit summaries. It still causes them a huge amount of problem in the code, to remove an edit summary, remove the history and still maintain the basic aspect, because he pissed off Ashida Kim.

There is another guy, his name is Brian Peppers. Brian Peppers is an ugly motherfucker. He was in the sex offender database in Ohio, and because of a condition he had with his skull, his eyes bug out. He is just an ugly bastard. To see him, your initial thought is this must be a doll, nobody can be walking around like this.

He was in some sort of a home, this is what's believed, he was in some sort of a home and he inappropriately touched a nurse, so they kinda hauled him down and it's not clear whether or not he was finally convicted, but he was definitely entered into the sex offender database, so it is possible to go to this place and view a picture of Brian Peppers.

A entry was put into Wikipedia about Brian Peppers. Here is Brian Peppers, he was a sex offender. So, people started saying this man is "not notable". "Not notable" is the cancer of Wikipedia, again something to keep track of in the future. Because in Wikipedia, there are things that are given as rules but no way to codify what exactly those rules are, that is to say that there really is no final word except for Jimbo. Jimbo wanted something where the people worked it by themselves. And in doing so, and he has said this on several occasions, he didn't want any politics.

What Wikipedia has taught us now, is that in a vacuum of politics, politics will be created. There is no vacuum of politics. People who are

encountering this space where they can not lord over others for technicalities and gain power for themselves will then proceed to invoke technicalities, take power from other people. They just do this. This is what human beings do.

The Brian Peppers article: This was entered and people said "not notable". Not notable says if something is not of great import then it probably doesn't belong in Wikipedia. For instance, the idea being, that say we were to do Wikipedia entries on every street in Ohio, with a short description of which stores were on every street in Ohio. The theory is that Wikipedia could not possibly carry all of that and still make sense, and so on.

This gives rise to the two schools: Inclusionist, deletionist. It is glorious that this has come out now in 2006, instead of 2020. The inclusionist vs. deletionist debate is as firm and strong as the abortion debate, gun control debate or death penalty debate.

Inclusionism says Wikipedia, because it is a virtual encyclopedia, is capable of carrying the sum of human knowledge (coincidentally the theme of Wikipedia). Because of the fact you can sort things and work things out, you're able to actually keep the sum of all human knowledge on a place, keep it changed, and use the power of the computer. Fuck yeah!

The deletionists take the attitude of Wikipedia is not a junkyard, an area for the cruft of all aspects of humanity that ever existed, turning into an untenable Katamari Damacy-like ball of shit that rolls through the Internet. We should clean up stuff that is not important, not interesting, and we should just get that shit out of there. Who cares what the names of every character in Serenity is? Who cares? So the idea is, delete that.

Wikipedia had a function built into it allowing people to reach a consensus to delete articles. They gave this to almost everybody. Ultimately

only an administrator can delete it, but it is possible for any fucker in the place to come up to an article and go "You are not worthy. I present this to the Wikipedia community to be deleted."

The Wikipedia people then vote. Does the majority win? No! Many times, Wikipedia works off of a consensus policy. Consensus essentially means when the administrator shows up, he makes a decision, based on the voices of what people have said. This is how houses are destroyed, using eminent domain. You have everybody say "this is a bad idea", and then the guy sitting in the seat goes "hmmm, but man, they're giving us some cash," and that's the end of that house.

In Wikipedia you will have 75-to-45 votes, in which the 45 win simply because of the quality or because of the number of neutrals. You have this enormous amount of weight that can be pushed around by an administrator. It is also possible to vote for the adding and deletion of administrators, and (in what I consider to be insane) there is something called the "Miscellany For Delete," and what this means is you can actually reach consensus on what other people on Wikipedia are allowed to do. All of this shouldn't be surprising in the case if there was a politic vacuum -- the fact that people allowed to kind of reach a consensus on everything started saying "well, I can do this". So the notability debate becomes an issue.

If I love manga, and I think that manga is just the thing that drives my blood, and then you know that there was once something "neon" in it, and it was made in Japan. You don't care about manga, you don't even know what manga is. Anything I write about manga, no matter whether it was the best-selling manga in the world, or whether it wasn't the best-selling, or whether it was a new area in manga, you don't care -- that is "not notable." Unnotable, or I just looked this up on Google. It got a hundred hits. That is "not notable". This got 2,000 hits, it's not notable.

Who cares about (and these are all actual arguments I've encountered) who cares about this particular country's political structure. Who cares about this particular computer's architecture? Who cares about this range of kings? Just say that they were all in one place, you don't have to give one entry on every king. So what ends up happening is, you once again say "Who the fuck are you?" And the answer is, you're just somebody, you're just some random guy on the street.

The most frustrating part about Wikipedia is the fact that that when you make a change, somebody who wants to undo that change is just some guy. Jimbo holds this up as the great aspect of Wikipedia is that everybody gets to get their hands in it and we're all working together but they don't realise we kill each other. We kill each other every day. Over shit, over Nintendo games, over the fact that somebody parked in the wrong space. We do this. We're human beings.

Wikipedia holds up the dark mirror of what humanity is, to itself. And it's interesting because of the fact that it is an online experience you're able to see this and this is why I say it's important: You can learn how people interact in a relatively bloodless way. We don't have a case that people are generally killed over Wikipedia, I don't think too many people use Wikipedia for their medical information yet. But you never know. you never know whether that's going to happen next.

So, with the notability debate, this was applied to Brian Peppers. Who cares, he's just ugly. That's not notable. He's just some sex offender. Poeples are only putting him on here because he's an ugly motherfucker.

Well, screw you, Brian Peppers is seen everywhere. There's an yourethemannowdog entry about him, he's been mentioned on Slashdot, he's been linked from everywhere, the

GNAAs use him in their spamming, he's a very important person.

So people sit there and argue, right? So they delete it. They put him up for deletion. His article is immediately deleted. The article is created again. It is put up for deletion. This almost never happens. Usually when something is put up, it's automatically ... six times, the Brian Peppers article goes in. Each time, the argument becomes more and more inflamed. Almost like watching a match falling into a gas tank.

You just did not expect this, literally dozens of people are jumping in on the Brian Peppers controversy, up to the point where Jimbo himself sets foot into it and says: "There's a lot of fighting here. There will be no editing on this for one year." This makes things even worse, because people say: "Who the fuck are you? Why are you telling us that we can't debate this like human beings? You've just locked us out! Screw you!"

They start creating "Brian Peppers (Internet Meme)", "Brian Peppers (Sex Offender)", and so on to get around this limitation. Some people leave over it, that's what happens a lot.

Wikipedia really wastes energy, that's its little secret. You say, wow, this is ... you know, it's an amazingly inefficient process. Not just like, we could really tune the spark plugs and it'll run a little better. I mean literally just dropping ballast as it goes.

Wikipedia has what's called a "feature article". When an article achieves a certain level of quality, it is then put up as a featured article. There is actually a list on Wikipedia of articles that have been demoted from featured. Literally dozens of articles that once they hit featured status, they start to slowly actually degrade in quality, to the point that they lose their featured quality status and just become regular old articles again.

I followed an article on the swastika. I chose the swastika because my people who work on it a lot tell me that one of Wikipedia's biggest ones was the swastika. It has one thousand edits on it, and I use the point of this one time, when somebody put in a link between the swastika and socialism: That is to say the Nazis kinda linked themselves, they were involved with the socialists, so they kinda redid as a branding the swastika as two Ss, kinda forming. Not to say that they followed all the rules of socialism or that socialists ran the Nazis or anything else, but this was a branding thing. Guy put it in, he cited a source.

Guy comes along, deletes it. Nonsense, writes nonsense. Guy, original one, does what everyone else does -- fuck you -- goes back, and puts it back. Third guy comes in and says "don't undo the work of others". Now the battle of July begins. About a hundred edits, going back and forth, trying to keep socialism in, and finally no, it's gone, it's wrecked.

Now, the socialism thing -- the guy who wrote that was a software guy, a software developer in Texas. The guy who was undoing him? Guy in Seattle. The third guy, the guy who said you can't fight like this -- guy in Sweden. All of them computer guys, none of them history experts, just a bunch of guys arguing over it, with no direct knowledge.

This happens constantly. There is not only a dislike of experts, there is a hatred of experts. Experts are derided on Wikipedia because they don't tend to follow the rules. They tend to put down cited sources and then say "I don't really care about your view of notability, I just proved it, done." And when you say "well, screw you" and then undo it and they realise that they can't follow the rules, they leave.

So you end up with a certain level of quality that's maintained, especially in certain kinds of articles, where undisputed facts -- basically any case where you can prove something without a shadow

of a doubt, in a way that it actually happened -- gets through on Wikipedia but a lot of other filtering does not.

As we look at Wikipedia from the inside, towards these mechanisms that exist, that to me is the most fascinating aspect. Because again, because of Jimbo's not wanting to directly control rules, except for, like I said, where he sets foot in, you end up with a mess like Seigenthaler. Seigenthaler is the third one, the publisher. He's the one that everyone knows.

Seigenthaler was a man who was a newspaper reporter, a newspaper publisher, worked with Robert Kennedy, had a long and distinguished career. Somebody put in an entry saying that he was suspected of shooting John F. Kennedy. Seigenthaler found out about it. Seigenthaler for some reason was pissed.

Seigenthaler did not do what Wikipedians had done from time immemorial. He did not go onto Wikipedia and start editing, and join the big ball of fun. He went and published an article in USA Today, he took it out of town, and talked about this.

This broke Wikipedia. This broke Wikipedia deep, hard and fast, because while you may look at Wikipedia from the outside as being this way, it is inside an organisation. This broke Wikipedia. Friends of mine have gained access to Wikipedia's internal help queue. They have an entire ticketing declaration for John Seigenthaler to handle any John Seigenthaler related issues.

See, because one of the things Jimbo didn't really expect was the oncoming massive tidal wave of legality, legal threats and attacks. There is now an entry in Wikipedia ... Wikipedia has a number of a declarations like I said, WP:NOT, which means Wikipedia is not an encyclopedia, Wikipedia is not this, it's considered to be this kind of an event.

Basically what happens is that as you become an administrator, you start to speak in code. This does two things, number one is that it makes it easier for you to talk to other administrators, and number two, it blocks out newbies, because they can't speak the code. So instead, they kinda stay over in the back.

So for instance, there's WP:BEANS. Somebody says "WP:BEANS", it means "don't stick beans in your nose". What that means is, don't tell people about stupid stuff that people could be doing in Wikipedia, because that just gives ideas and doesn't forward the argument. So, someone will say "hey, WP:BEANS". Well, if you're a newbie, thanks.

There is now an entry called WP:OFFICE. What that is, is Wikipedia "front office". That means that if you go to an article, Jimbo (and Jimbo has done this now on several dozen occasions that we can track), goes in, deletes something, and just says WP:OFFICE. Which means, I'm not going to tell you why I deleted it, I'm not going to discuss it, you are not to add to it, and nobody else can edit this except for me.

This organisation came in and threatened Jimbo. Jimbo decided to say "this article seems to lack neutral point of view. I am going to block it, apropos of nothing, outside of process, and we will work with them to come up with a more neutral article." That was seven months ago, it's been blank ever since. That's the full entry about them. You can't find history about them. You can't find any of the edits that were made.

One of the big fallacies that people currently have is "well, even if people undo your work, at least you can see it." It's not true. People will go to the history of an article that's disputed, and they will find that that history's actually been utterly and completely purged from Wikipedia. The history is gone.

This may (still looking into it) this may be a violation of the GFDL that Wikipedia works under, where you are taking somebody's work and just completely deleting it from view without ... after they've submitted it, and you've made the change. That's just easy. That's an easy attack.

The more pressing thing is the fact that you have a situation where there is now an organisation working within Wikipedia, a smaller one, the administrators, the actual people, who previously should have made more firm rules finding themselves instead having to make in-the-dark, non-transparent rules.

So basically what you end up with is, you end up with a situation where now people are in the dark, they're angry, they don't understand what's going on. Wikipedia has got battles on the inside. Enough that I do know that some of the higher point of administrators have been talking about deposing Jimbo. Jimbo doesn't know that. Now he does.

Jimbo runs an organisation called the Wikimedia Foundation. He's on the board, he helps control it, he makes decisions based on it. Sometimes he makes decisions apropos of nobody else. So, he has since started a startup. The startup is called Wikia. Wikia has received four million dollars in funding, it's purpose is kinda to develop things.

So Wikipedia is now kind of allied. It's also sold rights to the Wikipedia to answers.com, so that this work is now available somewhere else for pay, for ads, for money. All these changes are normal, they're understandable, but because Wikipedia presents itself -- again, sum of human knowledge, sum of the work of everyone working together -- it gets caught out. If it was Jimbo's Big Bag o' Trivia, dude, hey, \$4M startup, that's pretty good!

So again, like I said, Wikipedia is just a warning. Wikipedia is a shot across our bow. It's a way to

see what happens when unfettered information enters onto the Internet.

Can of soup. When you get a can of soup, you don't tend to know where it came from. Your one bit of knowledge and security is the colour and the brand name on the outside of the tin can. Written on a piece of paper, which you trust, was put there by a machine, by the company that's claiming it's what it is, and you don't know where the ingredients came from today, tomorrow. They don't, because many times they sub-contract. So you don't know where the celery came from, you don't know where the tomato came from.

Wikipedia is the same can of soup. People are now pulling from it. While in an ideal world, with no illegitimate babies, there's nobody using Wikipedia as a primary source, the fact is people are. The fact is people are using Wikipedia.

Wikipedia tends to be, at this point, the first hit for most proper and non-proper nouns. Putting in anything gives you the Wikipedia entry. In fact, if you have Trillian, Trillian has an automatic setting so that any word you have in there that matches on Wikipedia ends up as an underlined word. You click on it, and it tells you what the answer is. To someone who's using instant messaging, they don't know where this entry came from when they clicked on it, they also tend to be out of date because they index it across the Trillian ... and so on. So as a result, you can't say just go in and change it, because it's actually using older and older indexes. That's what I mean by the concern I have, the worry that I have, when I make these big points.

Yes, you can look at Wikipedia and go, "OK, so what you're saying is somebody didn't get the plot of The Search For Spock right, I'm sorry."

But on the other hand, you can look at it and say, "Wow, somebody is going to use this as somebody else's biography. Somebody is going to make a

decision about that," and not all of them are going to be like Seigenthaler. Not all of them are going to be able to get the attention of USA Today, especially when it becomes old news that oh, Wikipedia totally slandered you, sorry.

What I think we can learn from Wikipedia is to understand that people will always act this way. When Google decided to do a study of web pages ... it's one thing to say "we find that in our sample group, people act this way." ... Google used a billion pages to come up with their study. A billion pages is an excellent sample, so when they said the average web page has the use of thirteen elements, chances are that's pretty right.

With Wikipedia, if you say given this set of behaviours, and given this stage that people could put things on, people will act this way, it's a pretty good indicator of saying "OK, well the next time I set up an organisation the next time I make something editable by the public, the next time I make the going-on, this is what's going to happen, people are going to go on and try to destroy it, they're going to try to destroy it on the front end, they're going to try and destroy it from the back end."

I have people who have been working for two years from the inside of Wikipedia to slowly ruin it. They have been able to change rules, they have been able to make administrators get deleted, they have been able to modify how rules are run in some places. Why? It's fun!

People will play World of Warcraft for 80 hours a week. There's no difference between that and playing Wikipedia for 80 hours a week. It's even more fun because of none of the characters in World of Warcraft think they're what they are. People on Wikipedia, some of them think "hey, I'm contributing to the sum of human knowledge." You can fuck with those people, that's extra bonus time. So, 80 hours a week on Wikipedia, who cares, that's pretty cool, that's pretty neat.

So it's not a waste of time to these people, and they're right. If they're able to successfully screw with an article, a lot of people will see it. I'd buy entirely that the Penny Arcade theory, which was normal person, plus anonymity, plus large audience, equals flaming fuckwad. That's the mirror that Wikipedia is presenting to us, and I think that we can learn quite a bit from it.

When we look at something old (I'll leave it with this thought) when we look at something old, when you walk into an old church, when you walk into a place, and you find say a handrail, and your hand goes down, your hand goes down and touches the handrail. You do not find the hand rail up here, you do not find the handrail down here. This is because at some point, somebody who was a designer, who was an architect, looked at where human beings were, and put the handrail where human beings are, so that a hundred years from now, four hundred years from now you can still put your hand there.

That is an important design aesthetic, sometimes that is forgotten. Things where they forget that, for instance when language is written, which is full of hype and horror and whatever else, say in the 19th century talking about -- "oh, in the future airships will do this and there will be wondrous wires and you can..." -- those words are forgotten, they weren't designed for human beings, they were designed to sell a product.

When Wikipedia started out, Wikipedia was designed for an idea, a theoretical idea. An idea of human knowledge edited by everybody, with no idea of how human beings actually are. Over time, Wikipedia is becoming an accurate handrail, it's letting people now put their hand where it is, and it's not the place that I think Jimbo Wales expected it was going to be.

Alright, that's it.