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Web users going to Wikipedia for news

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8 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Web users going to Wikipedia for news

BNE: A new and unexpected player has joined the ranks of Internet news sites. Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, is emerging as the online resource of choice for millions of increasingly discerning web surfers. People are eager for more in-depth analysis, context and reference material about the latest news stories. Hitwise, the Internet traffic measurement site, reports Wikipedia attracted 22.3 percent of people searching for information on the Gaza Strip when Israel withdrew its settlements in August. This beat Google News, Yahoo News and the BBC hands down. It seems the traditional news services are unable to adequately satisfy surfers' insatiable demand for information.

Wikipedia was founded in 2001 and has quickly flourished, growing to almost 700,000 articles in 100 languages. Encyclopedia Britannica has a paltry 80,000 articles in comparison. Wikipedia can be edited in real time by anyone, which raises questions with critics about the legitimacy and accuracy of some of the facts and statements on the site. However, it is the collaborative, community-based nature of its contributions and editing policies that allows it to provide such sought after information. This is in stark contrast to the rigid top-down editorial approaches of other news sites. The popularity of Wikipedia can be also attributed to its having entries on almost anything from the latest bizarre trends to extensive, up-to-the-minute coverage of Hurricane Katrina.

Visit: <http://www.wikipedia.org>

WARM-UPS

1. NEWS: In pairs / groups, talk about news. Why do you like it? Do you follow the news for any of these reasons?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. To feel intelligent | f. To kill time |
| b. To stay informed | g. To find out new things |
| c. Because I'm a world citizen | h. The news is living history |
| d. News is fascinating | i. It keeps my brain active |
| e. I love discussing current events | j. It's just a habit |

2. SOURCES: Which of the following news sources do you value and trust most?

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Wikipedia | • Newspapers |
| • Internet news sites | • Magazines |
| • Television | • Family and friends |
| • Radio | • Breaking News English.com |

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Internet news sites / Wikipedia / encyclopedia / web surfers / in-depth analysis / news stories / Google News / Yahoo News / BBC / up-to-the-minute news

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. ENCYCLOPEDIA: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "encyclopedia". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. TWO-MINUTE DEBATES: Debate each of the arguments below with a partner for just two minutes, before moving on to the next partner and debate. Student A agrees with the first argument, Student B, the second.

- News isn't important. vs. News is highly important.
- The Internet is best for news. vs. Newspapers are best for news.
- A lot of news reporting isn't true. vs. All news reporting is true.
- News is too depressing. vs. News makes us understand reality.
- Wikipedia is best for news. vs. Traditional news sites are best.
- International news is most interesting. vs. Domestic news is most interesting.
- There's too much doom and gloom. vs. News isn't about happy stories.
- TV news is better than other TV programs. vs. Dramas and comedies are best.
- I'm fed up with news on terrorism. vs. News on terrorism affects us all.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. News agencies go to Wikipedia to find the latest news stories. T / F
- b. Wikipedia is the destination for increasingly discerning web surfers. T / F
- c. Surfers chose Wikipedia over Google in August for news about Gaza. T / F
- d. Traditional news services adequately satisfy surfers' demand for news. T / F
- e. Wikipedia has 100 times more articles than Encyclopedia Britannica. T / F
- f. Wikipedia can be edited in real time by anyone. T / F
- g. Traditional news agencies have rigid editorial approaches. T / F
- h. Wikipedia has up-to-the-minute coverage of Hurricane Katrina. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| a. unexpected | easily |
| b. emerging | in demand |
| c. discerning | absolute |
| d. hands down | discriminating |
| e. insatiable | surprising |
| f. flourished | measly |
| g. paltry | put down to |
| h. sought after | expanded |
| i. stark | surfacing |
| j. attributed | voracious |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| a. joined the ranks of | the BBC hands down |
| b. emerging as the | 80,000 articles in comparison |
| c. increasingly | online resource of choice |
| d. This beat Google News, Yahoo News and | of Hurricane Katrina |
| e. adequately satisfy surfers' insatiable | Internet news sites |
| f. a paltry | after information |
| g. raises questions | demand for information |
| h. provide such sought | with critics |
| i. in stark | discerning web surfers |
| j. up-to-the-minute coverage | contrast to |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

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Wikipedia was _____ in 2001 and has quickly flourished, growing to almost 700,000 articles in 100 languages. Encyclopedia Britannica has a _____ 80,000 articles in comparison. Wikipedia can be edited in _____ time by anyone, which _____ questions with critics about the legitimacy and accuracy of some of the facts and statements on the site. However, it is the collaborative, community-based _____ of its contributions and editing policies that allows it to provide such sought after information. This is in _____ contrast to the rigid, top-down editorial approaches of other news sites. The popularity of Wikipedia can be also _____ to its having entries on almost anything from the latest bizarre trends to extensive, up-to-the-minute _____ of Hurricane Katrina.

traffic
insatiable
emerging
hands
player
reference
withdrew
discerning
attributed
raises
paltry
coverage
founded
nature
stark
real

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'news' and 'site'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "NEWS SITES" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Wikipedia and other news sites.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- ranks
- choice
- in-depth
- 22.3
- hands
- insatiable
- flourished
- paltry
- critics
- sought after
- top-down
- trends

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What do you think of Wikipedia becoming a dominant news source?
- d. Do you think there is a need for more extensive coverage and background analysis?
- e. Do you get enough news information?
- f. Do you think Yahoo News, Google News and the BBC should change?
- g. Do you look at, read or watch the news every day?
- h. What news stories are you interested in most?
- i. What is your favorite news source?
- j. Do you have an insatiable demand for information?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you feel different if you're not up to date with the news?
- d. How often does the news make you angry?
- e. How does the news change your perspective on life and the world?
- f. Do you get fed up with some stories?
- g. What do you think of a news site that anyone in the world can edit and update?
- h. Do you ever feel there is information overload?
- i. Would you like more news, more often?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

WHAT KIND OF NEWS?

What kind of news stories do you choose to read, watch or listen to? Why?

Write a value of 1 (never read, watch, listen to) to 10 (always read, watch, listen to) in the middle column for each of the categories in the left column. Which is the best news source for each of these? Why?

CATEGORY	VALUE	NEWS SOURCE
World news		
Domestic news		
Gardening		
Motoring		
Politics		
Sports		
Science		
Entertainment		
Gossip		
Business		

In pairs / groups, share and compare your values. Ask each other to explain in full, with examples, exactly why you chose your scores.

Change partners and report what you heard from your first partners. Are there any similarities between different students' answers?

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Wikipedia. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. WEB SITE COMPARISON: Make a poster comparing three different news web sites. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out about similar things?

4. NEWS DAY: Keep an account of how much time you spend looking at, reading, watching, discussing, thinking about, writing about, studying about news for one day in your life. Explain your findings to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all have similar news habits?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| a. unexpected | surprising |
| b. emerging | surfacing |
| c. discerning | discriminating |
| d. hands down | easily |
| e. insatiable | voracious |
| f. flourished | expanded |
| g. paltry | measly |
| h. sought after | in demand |
| i. stark | absolute |
| j. attributed | put down to |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| a. joined the ranks of | Internet news sites |
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| c. increasingly | discerning web surfers |
| d. This beat Google News, Yahoo News and | the BBC hands down |
| e. adequately satisfy surfers' insatiable | demand for information |
| f. a paltry | 80,000 articles in comparison |
| g. raises questions | with critics |
| h. provide such sought | after information |
| i. in stark | contrast to |
| j. up-to-the-minute coverage | of Hurricane Katrina |

GAP FILL:

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