Wikipedia Scholarly Survey Results

By: Erik Moeller, Deputy Director,
Wikimedia Foundation

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Results of the survey on use of Wikipedia by the scholarly community

Methodology: The survey below was publicized from February 18 to February 26, 2009 initially in a blog and newsletter update by the Public Library of Science. It was picked up by various science blogs and was also distributed by at least one forum dedicated to criticisms of Wikipedia. The total number of complete responses is 1,743. (A complete response is one which was submitted, but every answer could be skipped by the respondent, which is identified as "no answer" below.) The respondents were self-selected, and had a chance to win one out of five 32 GB USB sticks as an incentive.

This is not a scientifically designed survey, but intended as a feeler survey of the specific subset of the scholarly community that is engaged in the world of open access publishing. This is due to the overlap of values and principles with the Wikimedia community, and to further explore if the perceived potential of partnerships between Wikimedia and the open access community is shared by its constituencies. Results in the general scientific community would likely be substantially different.

The raw response data is shown below, followed by an analysis of a sub-sample who have indicated a direct association with the Public Library of Science. The results indicate strong interest from scientists engaged in the open access community to be directly involved in partnerships targeted at improving both Wikipedia itself and enriching scientific publications.

Known biases, in addition to aforementioned self-selection:

1. *The list of negatives regarding Wikipedia was only shown to respondents who picked "somewhat unfavorable" or "very unfavorable" as their opinion about Wikipedia. Because this overall number is very small, the responses do not give a representative picture of the spectrum of negative opinion regarding Wikipedia.*
2. *As noted above, the survey was mentioned in at least one Internet forum dedicated generally to criticisms of Wikipedia, which resulted in some small clusters of entirely or almost entirely negative responses. These approximately 10-20 responses could be*

identified due to the time-range in which they occurred, but did not significantly affect the result and were not removed from the sample.

The data below shows both the general response, and a sub-sample of respondents who identified as PLoS Authors.

How would you characterize your general opinion of Wikipedia?				
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**	**PLoS Authors**	**Percentage**
No answer	12	0.69%	1	0.44%
very favorable	1028	58.98%	149	66.22%
somewhat favorable	561	32.19%	67	29.78%
neutral	87	4.99%	2	0.89%
unfavorable	36	2.07%	3	1.33%
very unfavorable	16	0.92%	3	1.33%
I don't know Wikipedia	3	0.17%	0	0

Which of the following problems do you perceive with Wikipedia? (Multiple choices.) This question was only asked of respondents who answered "unfavorable" or "very unfavorable" above.				
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**	**PLoS Authors**	**Percentage**
It is unreliable and not peer reviewed	44	2.52%	4	1.78%
Its coverage of my subject area is very poor	20	1.15%	3	1.33%
It is hostile to expertise	22	1.26%	4	1.78%
Articles on important subjects are deleted	6	0.34%	1	0.44%
Its power structure is questionable	29	1.66%	4	1.78%
It is not family-friendly	13	0.75%	3	1.33%
The organization behind it is not trustworthy	26	1.49%	5	2.22%

Other	9	0.52%	2	0.89%

Do you use Wikipedia as part of your professional work?

Answer	Count	Percentage	PLoS Authors	Percentage
No answer	24	1.38%	3	1.33%
Yes, frequently	500	28.69%	54	24.00%
Yes, occasionally	1029	59.04%	151	67.11%
No	190	10.90%	17	7.56%

Do you use Wikipedia in your spare time?

Answer	Count	Percentage	PLoS Authors	Percentage
No answer	25	1.43%	5	2.22%
Yes, frequently	719	41.25%	103	47.78%
Yes, occasionally	899	51.58%	106	47.11%
No	100	5.74%	11	4.89%

Have you ever used an image or other multimedia file from Wikipedia or Wikimedia Commons in a publication?

Answer	Count	Percentage	PLoS Authors	Percentage
No answer	50	2.87%	8	3.56%
Yes, frequently	67	3.84%	7	3.11%
Yes, occasionally	265	15.20%	26	11.56%
No, never	1361	78.08%	184	81.78%

Would you be in favor of more links to Wikipedia from scientific, open access publications?

Answer	Count	Percentage	PLoS Authors	Percentage
No answer	41	2.35%	7	3.11%
Yes, on relevant keywords	567	32.53%	66	29.33%
Yes, but clearly separated from the main content area	671	38.50%	91	40.44%
No	304	17.44%	44	19.56%
I don't know	160	9.18%	17	7.56%

Would you be in favor of more links to scientific, open access

publications from Wikipedia articles?				
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**	**PLoS Authors**	**Percentage**
No answer	47	2.70%	3	1.33%
Yes	1595	91.51%	207	92.00%
No	47	2.70%	5	2.22%
I don't know	54	3.10%	10	4.44%

Would you be in favor of efforts to invite scientists to add or improve Wikipedia articles?				
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**	**PLoS Authors**	**Percentage**
No answer	36	2.07%	4	1.78%
Yes, on a large scale	1184	67.93%	153	68.00%
Yes, in a limited fashion	431	24.73%	61	27.11%
No	31	1.78%	5	2.22%
I don't know	61	3.50%	2	0.89%

Would you participate in such an effort to improve Wikipedia?				
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**	**PLoS Authors**	**Percentage**
No answer	141	8.09%	10	4.44%
Yes, absolutely	683	39.19%	102	45.33%
Yes, but only if I can do so as part of my work	743	42.63%	99	44.00%
No	176	10.10%	14	6.22%

What is your relationship to the Public Library of Science (PLoS)? (Multiple choices.)				
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**	**PLoS Authors**	**Percentage**
I am an author of PLoS articles	225	12.91%	225	100.00%
I am a reader of PLoS articles	1390	79.75%	179	79.56%
I am a member of the Editorial Board	14	0.80%	8	3.56%
I am an external peer	103	5.91%	43	19.11%

reviewer				
I am a PLoS Board member	6	0.34%	3	1.33%
I am a librarian	67	3.84%	0	0
Other	43	2.47%	0	0
No relationship	207	11.88%	0	0
29 respondents provided an example of a different relationship to PLoS, including several people additionally identifying as readers, and some as members of the publishing industry (2), PLoS supporters (2), staff or former staff (2), submitters (3), and retired scientists (3).				