



Highlands Regional Library Cooperative

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Why Wikis?

What is a Wiki?

In its most basic form, a *wiki* is a webpage that can be viewed and modified by anybody with access to the Internet. More technically speaking, it is a repository of information, a discussion medium, a tool for collaborations between users. Because wikis are an emerging technology, definitions of them are constantly changing. You can expect, however, for a wiki to be: open for editing by anyone, based upon HTML, streamlined for easy creation of hypertext (for example, the omission of spaces in title pages allows for quick page creation and automatic links between pages within a wiki system), comprised of content that is always in flux.

How Does a Wiki Work?

Wikis provide users with both author and editor privileges so that they maintain, create, and organize content independent from the wiki's host. On a technical level, wiki users generally need no more expertise to create and update content than the skills necessary for basic word processing. Most wiki software is free and can be web-hosted.

Who Uses Wikis?

- *Students* may use a wiki to collaborate on educational projects.
- *Researchers* may use a wiki to share resources and findings on their work in a common field of study.
- *Professionals* may use a wiki to plan a conference or dialogue with distant colleagues.
- *Administrators* may use a wiki to allow various stakeholders to create and edit documents quickly and freely without waiting for more complicated technologies to be implemented.

“If any can edit my text, anyone can ruin my text.”

The main concern of wiki hosts is the fact that because users maintain wikis themselves, there is very little control over the accuracy of content or the intentions of editors and authors. Some of the controls that do exist are the concept of “soft security” whereby the integrity of the majority of users outweighs those with bad intentions and technologies (such as, email, RSS feeds, and edit histories) that notify users and administrators of changes. Wikis may also be equipped with password protection so only authorized individuals may join to create and edit content.

Why Host a Wiki?

Wikis can be a dynamic part of any knowledge and information sharing community. As a free and democratic technology, wikis create a unique opportunity for anyone with an imagination to develop an open, internet-based conversation, regardless of expertise, interests, or skill levels.

Serving the Counties of
Bergen, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic,
Somerset, Sussex and Warren



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Additional Resources:

There are a variety of tools for creating wikis. Two popular ones are:

PBwiki: This site says creating a wiki is as easy as making a peanut butter sandwich, features an attractive design, an easy-to-use interface, RSS feeds, and the option to password-protect content. Some features are fee-based. <<http://www.pbwiki.com/>>

Wikispaces: Wikispaces is a free tool for K-12 educators. The education-specific pages are private so only space members can edit them. With its easy editing interface, Wikispaces is a good choice for teachers getting started with wikis.
<<http://www.wikispaces.com/site/for/teachers>>

For a comprehensive comparison of other wiki platforms, visit WikiMatrix
<<http://www.wikimatrix.org/>>.

Wikis Worth Looking At:

Library Success: A discussion of best practices for libraries faced with a range of contemporary issues. <<http://www.libsuccess.org/>>

Wikibooks: Collection of textbooks that can be edited by anyone. <<http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki>>

Wiki Travel: A project to create a reliable, up-to-date, and free world-wide travel guide.
<http://wikitravel.org/en/Main_Page>

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