

13 Ways to Look at the Wikipedia

(apologies to Wallace Stevens)

#1

The Wikipedia Can't Possibly Work...

but it does

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anyone can edit any article at
any time

someone has to be in charge

without the experts, how can
you trust the information?

Viet Nam

WMD's

"I will never use it"

"over my dead body"

anyone can edit any article at
any time

#2

Wikipedia is the next big thing

In 1978 the PC was the next
big thing

In 1982 a \$500 spreadsheet
was the next big thing

In 1992 the commercial
Internet was the next big thing

In 1995 streaming media...

Big , yes but...

#3

Community

Vision

Mission

Wikipedians

Values

Practices

Leader

#4

mantra

let a thousand users edit

real virtual community

#5

values

Be nice!

NPOV

#6

practices

Don't criticize, improve!

real-time peer review

#7

How big is a fully grown
Wikipedia?

reference work or reference
library?

reference library

50,000 volumes

10,000 articles each

potential 500,000,000 articles

the eBay effect

winner-take-all

#8

it's not about the technology

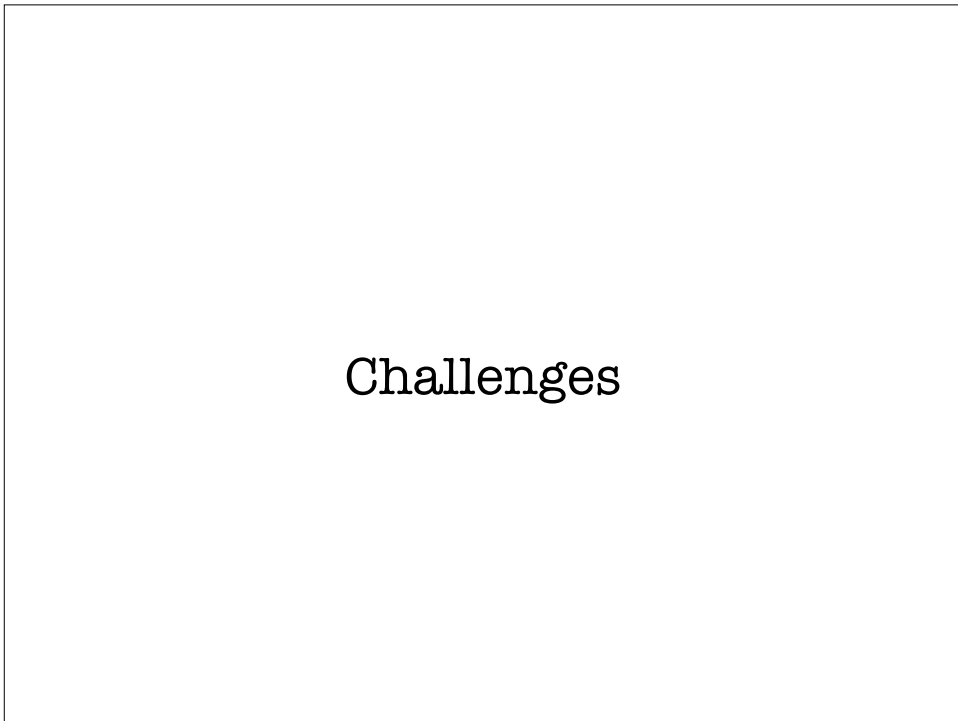
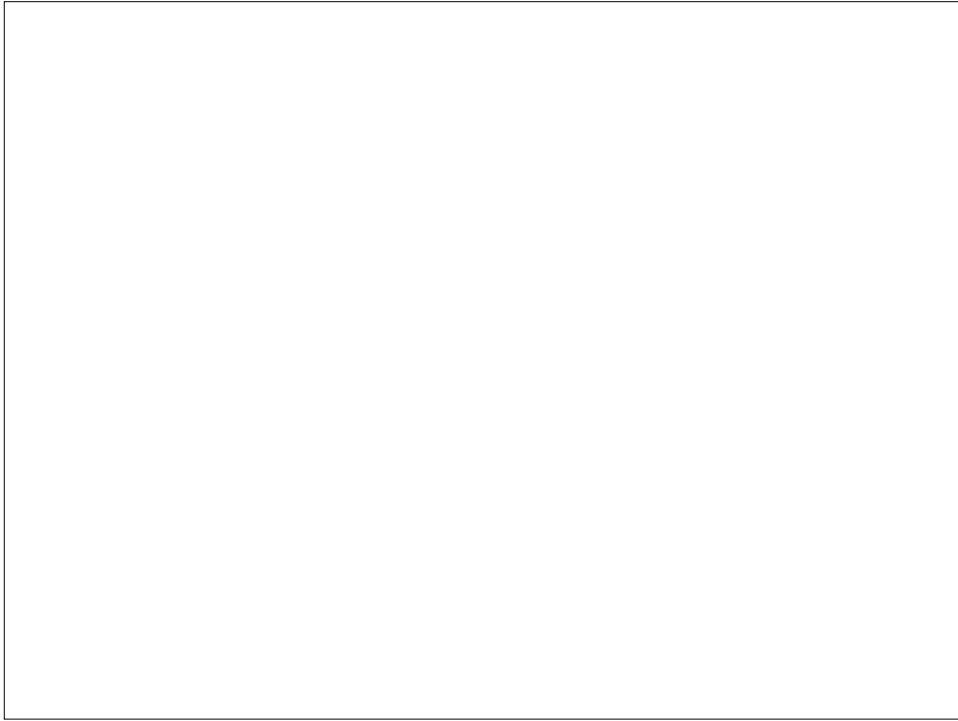
little technology leverage

(compared to potential)

community trumps technology

example: votes for deletion

How are Wikipedians like
the Amish?



#9

From Information to Meta-
information

#10

Risk of ecosystem collapse

Immune system discerns
self from not-self

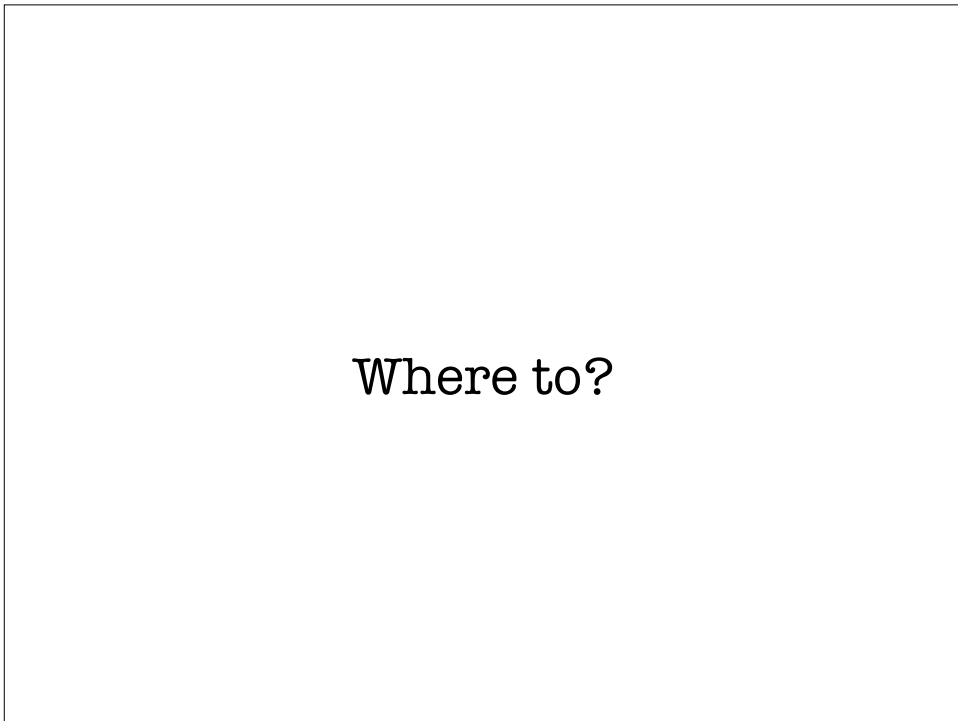
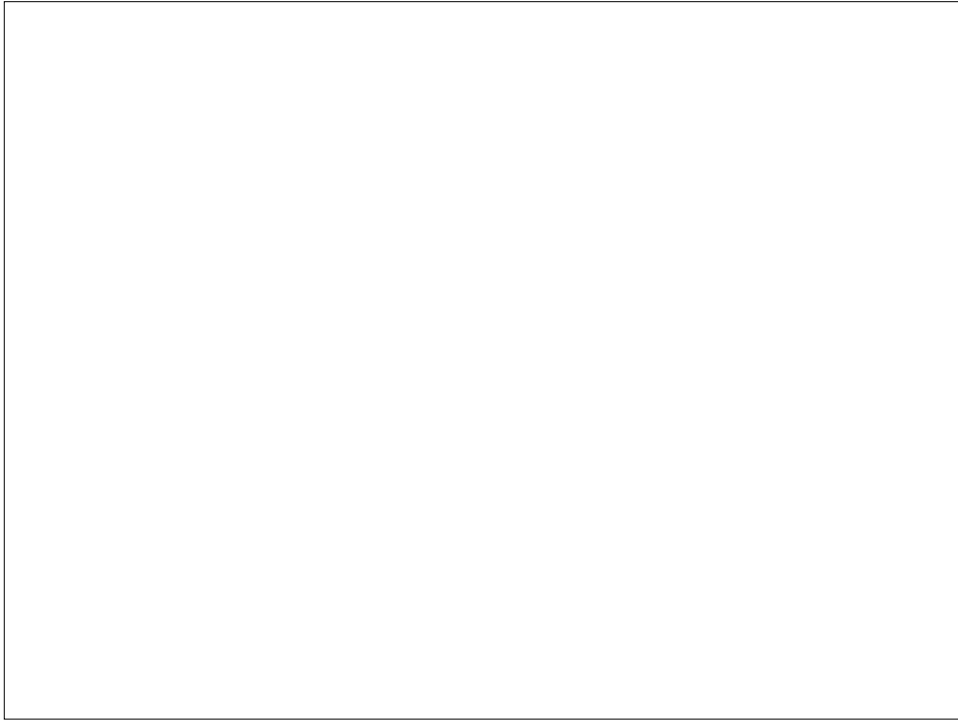
Mobilizes and attacks alien
invaders

Unless overwhelmed

As wikipedia grows in
importance...

The risk of overwhelming
invasion grows

Is wikipedia's immune
system up to the job?



#11

Academia

#12

Non-profits

#13

Health Care



Questions?