



# Wikipedia:Wikipedia Signpost/2019-09-30/In the media

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## In the media

# A net loss: Wikipedia attacked, closing off Russia? welcoming back Turkey?

By [Smallbones](#) and [Tilman Bayer](#)

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## Net loss?

*Wikipedia down: 'Malicious attack' brings down online encyclopedia after pages fail to load* according to *The Independent* (<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/wikipedia-down-not-working-stopped-ddos-attack-wikimedia-foundation-outage-why-a9095851.html>) on Saturday, September 7. The attack was a [distributed denial of service](#) (DDoS). About a dozen other news outlets reported the story, but few went beyond the report on the [WMF News](https://wikimediafoundation.org/news/2019/09/07/malicious-attack-on-wikipedia-what-we-know-and-what-were-doing/) (<https://wikimediafoundation.org/news/2019/09/07/malicious-attack-on-wikipedia-what-we-know-and-what-were-doing/>) which condemned the attack and attributed it only to "bad faith" actors. One exception was [Haaretz](#), which reported (<https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/.premium-access-to-wikipedia-blocked-after-first-of-its-kind-cyber-attack-1.7808087>) that a Twitter account named "[@UkDrillas](#)" (since suspended) had claimed responsibility (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190906220724/https://twitter.com/UKDrillas>) for the attack, indicating (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190906221538/https://twitter.com/UKDrillas/status/1170088545358426113>) that it was exploiting an [Internet of Things](#) (IoT) vulnerability. [Haaretz](#) quoted an expert ([Alp Toker](#), head of [NetBlocks](#)) as saying that the attack had lasted at least nine hours, and that "our data suggest

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at least two regional networks were targeted, in the U.S. and in Europe, causing different parts of the world to be out at different times."

oker also pointed out that "organizations like the Wikimedia Foundation seek to maintain a direct relationship with users in the interest of privacy, which means they can't readily opt for commercial DDoS protection services. Developing defenses against large-scale attacks while running a free and open service is an unsolved technical problem." He was apparently referring to the fact that Wikimedia's privacy principles generally preclude the sharing of private reader data such as IP addresses with third parties, whereas e.g. Cloudflare's standard DDoS protection service involves redirecting traffic to the company's proxy servers. However, on the day after the attack began, WMF Executive Director Katherine Maher stated (<https://twitter.com/krmaher/status/1170425781178310656>) that Cloudflare was indeed coming to the rescue: "they've been absolutely top notch, helping us roll onto a new service offering of theirs that was barely yet in the wild, direct lines of collaboration between staff on both sides" - apparently (<https://twitter.com/eliasong/status/1170435827496652802>) a reference to the "Magic Transit" service (<https://blog.cloudflare.com/magic-transit-network-functions/>) Cloudflare had announced in mid-August, with presumably somewhat differing privacy implications. In any case, the apparent attacker had already announced (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190907161652/https://twitter.com/UKDrillas>) they would stop targeting Wikipedia (at least for some time) and take down certain video gaming services instead, with Twitch.tv and Blizzard Entertainment's World of Warcraft subsequently seeing major outages (<https://www.secplcity.org/2019/09/09/attackers-ddos-wikipedia-twitch-and-world-of-warcraft/>) as well. On September 20, PC Gamer reported that a suspect had been arrested (<https://www.pcgamer.com/suspect-who-ddosed-world-of-warcraft-classic-is-arrested/>), quoting a Blizzard employee.

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## Perhaps something good came out of the attack:

Wikipedia Gets \$2.5m Donation to Boost Cybersecurity (<https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/wikipedia-gets-25m-donation-boost/>) from Craig Newmark, the founder of *Craigslist*, according to InfoSecurity. (<https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/wikipedia-gets-25m-donation-boost/>) Other coverage followed that of the WMF News. (<https://wikimediafoundation.org/news/2019/09/10/wikimedia-foundation-announces-2-5-million-in-support-from-craig-newmark-philanthropies-for-security-of-wikipedia-and-organizations-other-free-knowledge-projects/>)

## Turkey's ban of Wikipedia to be overturned?

Citing a pro-government journalist, *Ahval News* (<https://ahvalnews.com/free-speech/turkeys-top-court-set-rescind-wikipedia-ban-pro-govt-journalist>) on September 11 was the first of several outlets to predict: "Turkey's top court set to rescind Wikipedia ban". But there's no actual news yet.

**Russia's internet to be sealed off** and the **Great Russian Encyclopedia** is still the future of the Russian internet according to *Belsat*, a Belarusian-language broadcaster funded by the Polish government. Tests are scheduled (<https://belsat.eu/en/news/tests-scheduled-law-on-runet-autonomy-to-come-into-force-soon/>) on equipment that has already been installed that will enable the Russian government to isolate the Russian internet in case the World Wide Web threatens its stability. The Great Russian Encyclopedia (<https://belsat.eu/en/news/russia-may-get-autonomous-wikipedia-in-four-years/>), which has been proposed since at least 2016, is predicted to cost the state \$30 million and to be available in four years. It will be edited exclusively by experts. *The Signpost* predicts that the GRE will always be the future of the Russian internet and that *Belsat* will continue to have a contentious relationship with the Belarusian and Russian governments.

## Net gain?

**Grant Ingersoll has been hired as the Chief Technical Officer** of the WMF (WMF News (<https://wikimediafoundation.org/news/2019/09/18/wikimedia-foundation-welcomes-grant-ingersoll-as-chief-technology-officer/>)). His background with Apache Solr (now part of Lucene), and especially Apache Mahout led him to be interviewed by Java technology zone technical podcast series (<https://www.ibm.com/developerworks/podcast/glover-ingersoll-110111/index.html>) back in 2011. During the discussion, Ingersoll speaks primarily about scalable machine learning. More recently, Ingersoll has been the CTO of Lucidworks. Ingersoll is a recognized expert on automated data retrieval.

## Politics

**XOR'easter cleans up.** *The Washington Post* ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/checking-the-web-on-hunter-biden-a-36-year-old-physicist-helps-decide-what-youll-see/2019/09/25/16573a1e-df9c-11e9-be96-6adb81821e90\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/checking-the-web-on-hunter-biden-a-36-year-old-physicist-helps-decide-what-youll-see/2019/09/25/16573a1e-df9c-11e9-be96-6adb81821e90_story.html)) reports that editor XOR'easter cleaned up the Hunter Biden

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article after the former Vice-President's son became news last week. The article was reportedly biased by sources including the *Epoch Times* and *The New American*. WaPo quoted XOR'easter saying "I had to get in there and clean it out like a garbage disposal. Sometimes you just have to muck around."

## You've been published in a fake academic journal

BuzzFeed News reports that *This Website Will Turn Wikipedia Articles Into "Real" Academic Papers* (<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanhatesthis/wikipedia-fake-academic-journal>). If only it were that easy. The so-called academic papers are missing a few things, like a listing of the authors' names, abstracts, publishing dates, footnotes, graphs, tables, and other illustrations. But if your professor has never read an academic paper, you may be in luck citing the "academic paper".

The best way to view the output is to go to the site <https://m-journal.org/> and enter the name of your favorite Wikipedia entry. The site then generates the "article" and can also generate a citation. If you resubmit the same Wikipedia entry, you get a nearly identical article, but with a different title, authors and publication dates. See the two citations for Seth Kinman below.

- McGrath, Tony. "The Complete History of Exploding whale." JournalOfm.org, M-Journal, 31 July 2010, <https://journalofm.org/article/the-complete-history-of-exploding-whale.pdf>.
- Richards, Margaret. "The Complete History of Seth Kinman." JournalOfm.org, M-Journal, 5 August 2003, <https://journalofm.org/article/the-complete-history-of-seth-kinman.pdf>.
- Richards, Stephen. "How Mad Gasser of Mattoon Altered U.S. History." JournalOfm.org, M-Journal, 12 April 2017, <https://journalofm.org/article/how-mad-gasser-of-mattoon-altered-u.s.-history.pdf>.
- Smith, Darien. "How Seth Kinman Altered U.S. History." JournalOfm.org, M-Journal, 2 August 2014, <https://journalofm.org/article/how-seth-kinman-altered-u.s.-history.pdf>.

Those who get upset at violations of the CC-By license will have enough material to be angry for at least a year. But don't take this seriously folks. *Please* don't take this seriously.

## Odd bits

- **Automated translation of English to Hindi Wikipedia:** *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/science-ministry-to-go-on-a-hindi-wikipedia-blitz/article29402577.ece>) reports that the Indian Ministry of Science and Technology is using automated processes including artificial intelligence to translate articles into the Hindi language Wikipedia. Scientists will also help translate and create new articles in Hindi and other Indian languages costing up to \$US1.4 million over three years.
- **Ask Alexa (and an Anonymous Crowd Answers?):** Denyse O'Leary on *Mind Matters* (<https://mindmatters.ai/2019/09/ask-alexa-and-an-anonymous-crowd-answers/>) questions the use of crowdsourcing as it's being tested by Amazon to answer questions

posed to Alexa. Her argument is that "Wikipedia is a classic example of how crowdsourcing can go wrong", so why would it work for Alexa? She gives five reasons why it doesn't work on Wikipedia:

- hidden points of view can be inserted
- doubtful claims can appear to be well-accepted
- crowds can shout down experts on obscure topics
- sourced, but untrue, information can be accepted as factual
- the end result can be "appallingly biased" — where she's quoting Larry Sanger

The ultimate source of these problems, according to O'Leary is the anonymity and lack of accountability of the authors. *Mind Matters* and O'Leary are associated with the Discovery Institute which is known for its strong support of intelligent design over Darwinian evolution. The Discovery Institute has previously taken issue with how Wikipedia handles intelligent design content.

- **Which witch, when and where? Try Wikidata:** Emma Carroll, a new Wikipedian, landed a challenging internship ([https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/ecarroll3\\_witchcraft\\_visualisation/2019/06/10/week-one-an-intro-to-the-witchcraft-of-information-services-and-wikidata/](https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/ecarroll3_witchcraft_visualisation/2019/06/10/week-one-an-intro-to-the-witchcraft-of-information-services-and-wikidata/)) "to use the data recorded within" the Survey of Scottish Witchcraft Database (<http://witches.shca.ed.ac.uk/>) and "find visually interesting ways to document the data for public viewing through the form of digital maps and Wikidata." From this June through September she tracked down the residences of many of the over 3000 accused Scots witches from the period 1563 – 1736, then displayed these and other locations on digital maps and uploaded the data to Wikidata. The Scotsman (<https://www.scotsman.com/heritage/map-of-scots-women-accused-of-witchcraft-published-for-first-time-1-5009814>) covers the details of the project with the help of Ewan McAndrew, Wikimedian in Residence at the University of Edinburgh. About 20 accused Scots witches now have Wikipedia articles.
- **Mad Gasser of Mattoon:** The Mattoon Journal Gazette & Times-Courier ([https://jg-tc.com/news/local/mattoon-mad-gasser-incident-began-years-ago-this-month/article\\_b8ca3620-f674-5377-ad38-da980cafd4b6.html](https://jg-tc.com/news/local/mattoon-mad-gasser-incident-began-years-ago-this-month/article_b8ca3620-f674-5377-ad38-da980cafd4b6.html)) cites Wikipedia 75 years after they first reported ([https://jg-tc.com/news/local/mad-gasser-attacks-drew-attention-to-mattoon/article\\_a44c7506-9285-5a70-92d6-801c9986a94f.html](https://jg-tc.com/news/local/mad-gasser-attacks-drew-attention-to-mattoon/article_a44c7506-9285-5a70-92d6-801c9986a94f.html)) this case. No, it's not a time warp. The *Journal Gazette* first reported the story in 1944, which was then reported in academic journals, which were then cited by more questionable sources, which were cited in the Wikipedia article. For the anniversary of the event, the *Journal Gazette & Times-Courier* cited Wikipedia. The case may have resulted from mass hysteria. Or was

it industrial pollution? Spilled nail polish? A real "mad anaesthetist"? Or was it just a normal case of the paranormal?

- **New high possible for WIKI on the stock exchange:** The shares of Seattle-based marijuana advertiser (<http://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/4454913>) Wikileaf Technologies, which makes no claims to be related to Wikipedia, began trading (<https://www.proactiveinvestors.com/companies/news/903492/buds--duds-cannabis-stocks-a-sea-of-red-after-analyst-warnings-on-sales-social-life-networks-shines-ahead-of-upcoming-conference-903492.html>) at C\$0.40 per share on the Canadian Securities Exchange (CSE) using the ticker symbol WIKI. The unusual listing is reverse takeover of an already trading company which avoids the regulatory scrutiny of an IPO. The CSE is Canada's youngest stock exchange and has a budding business trading the shares of over 100 marijuana companies. (<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/in-the-wild-west-of-pot-stocks-us-companies-create-a-green-rush-2018-12-14>) Marijuana company shares have been smoking hot this year, but are widely considered (<https://globalnews.ca/news/4460887/canada-weed-stocks-skyrocketing-investing/>) to be speculative investments.
- ***The Twenty-Six Words That Created the Internet*** (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-twenty-six-words-that-created-the-internet-review-protecting-the-providers-11566255518?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=1>): The book of that title by Jeff Kosseff is reviewed in The Wall Street Journal. The 26 words are

No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider,

in Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. Every Wikipedian could benefit from knowing the issues surrounding these words and how this law might change.

- **Defending Wikipedia's honor:** Vice has Asked a Wikipedia Contributor Why Everyone Thinks They're Unreliable ([https://www.vice.com/en\\_in/article/8xwgev/we-asked-a-wikipedia-contributor-why-everyone-thinks-theyre-unreliable](https://www.vice.com/en_in/article/8xwgev/we-asked-a-wikipedia-contributor-why-everyone-thinks-theyre-unreliable))? The administrator on the Indonesian Wikipedia, whose user name is not given, does a very good job defending our honor.
- ***New West cops blocked in attempt to scrub off-duty assault from Wikipedia*** (<http://www.newwestrecord.ca/news/new-west-cops-blocked-in-attempt-to-scrub-off-duty-assault-from-wikipedia-1.23940522>): The Police Department of New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada was caught removing the history of an alleged bad cop from "their" Wikipedia article. In 2009 the cop allegedly participated in a robbery and assault. He got a conditional discharge in court, with a year of probation and no permanent criminal record, but lost his job as a policeman. The New Westminster Police

Department was almost as lucky, getting a permanent soft block for a promotional username NWPD media. So who policed the police department?

- **Cannibalism**: a minor media outlet continues the custom of sensationalizing Larry Sanger's activities (<https://www.tweaktown.com/news/67510/wikipedia-co-founder-tweet-s-cannibalism-drinking-human-blood/index.html>). It's a wild ride through Larry's tweets, but in the end Larry comes down "firmly against cannibalism."
- **Read a random article on your Apple Watch**: *MiniWiki unofficial Wikipedia Apple Watch app adds 'Random' articles, independent language* (<https://9to5mac.com/2019/09/22/miniwiki-apple-watch-wikipedia-random-articles-independent-language/>). If the illustration in the article is a good guide, you can read up to 21 words on the watch.

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Was UkDrillas and/or the suspect also accused of going after explainxkcd? Because that seemed more like the Chinese launching their Hong Kong-fueled Streisand Effect Cannon. The Russian Conservapedia should be great. Good thing Intel is so heavily invested in Cloudfare, the endowment should pick up some of that. [73.222.1.26 \(talk\) 19:42, 30 September 2019 \(UTC\)](#)

I'm very glad @HaeB: wrote the section on the DDoS. It's the best write-up I've seen anywhere. Of course many techies might know many more sources on this than I do. During the attack (I only had minor problems, but they were noticeable) I mainly wondered "what would anybody have to gain by attacking Wikipedia?" Haeb mostly answered this. As far as the Russian Conservapedia, if you mean the Great Russian Encyclopedia, it reminds me of the "Nedostroy" that I saw during the 1990s when I lived in Moscow. Nedostroy are buildings that were left over from the Soviet period that were "not completely built" or "not yet finished" and were probably going to stay that way. Most were

poorly designed, poorly built, dinosaurs waiting to collapse from neglect. The GRE will likely be declared to be finished sometime, after copying large parts from the last Great Soviet Encyclopedia but nobody will ever say that it is the backbone of the internet.  
Smallbones<sup>(smalltalk)</sup> 20:38, 30 September 2019 (UTC)

I was surprised that we don't have an article on Nedostroy, but I did look up an example on Google maps dated 2017 [1] (<https://www.google.com/maps/@55.6672415,37.4803968,3a,75y,257.88h,111.88t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sgjDYk18wIToTR1k5zrNOYw!2e0!7i13312!8i6656?hl=en>). This building was probably in the same condition in 1993. Smallbones<sup>(smalltalk)</sup> 20:56, 30 September 2019 (UTC)

Yekaterinburg TV Tower is a good example of a Nedostroy.  
Smallbones<sup>(smalltalk)</sup> 22:09, 30 September 2019 (UTC)

"недострой" (nedostroy) is a regular informal term for incomplete construction, not necessarily due to neglect or abandonment. Therefore there is no such article even in Russian wikipedia. Not only Russia suffers from abandoned construction projects (<https://www.businessinsider.com/wildest-real-estate-projects-lie-in-ruins-2019-2>). Heck, we even have a worldwide catalog of **notable** these, see "Unfinished building", and Russia is of minimal representation there. This neologism is based on the Soviet-era term "викт:долгострой" (dolgostry) - a construction project sluggishly dragging for long time. Staszek Lem (talk) 23:18, 30 September 2019 (UTC)

BTW: Great Russian Encyclopedia has nothing to do with the internets. Staszek Lem (talk) 21:03, 4 October 2019 (UTC)

## Cleaning up, or enforcing a preferred POV?

I'm confused by the triumphal tone used in describing XOR'easter's editing. I have heard many cases where our biased editors come to consensus against alleged right-wing outlets. I wonder if XOR'easter does much to clean up the left-wing rags being used as sources here? Chris Troutman (talk) 19:30, 2 October 2019 (UTC)

What 'left-wing rags' in the Hunter Biden article did you have in mind? Richard Nevell (talk) 21:11, 2 October 2019 (UTC)

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