Why Wikis are Wacky
Why Wikis Work Well

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What’s a Wiki?

“The smallest on–line database that could possibly work” – Ward Cunningham
No Really...What’s a Wiki?

- A group editable Web space
- A collaboration tool
- A knowledge management database which leverages the *Wisdom of Crowds*
H.L. Mencken was Wrong

“No one in this world, so far as I know, has ever lost money by underestimating the intelligence of the great masses of the plain people.” — H.L. Mencken
Examples of the *Wisdom of Crowds*

- Google — PageRank™ and Markov Chains aside, what Google actually does it to measure the “goodness” of a search based upon how good others think the page is. This may be one of the best examples of how the many in aggregate determine what others are looking for.

- Who Wants to be a Millionaire? — The crowd was right 91% of the time; the “experts” were right about 65% of the time.
More Examples

- Open Source — Open Source Software (OSS) projects leverage the knowledge of many to create software which in many cases works better than the corresponding commercial product. The real power of OSS is that “Many eyes make all bugs shallow.” The result of this is that often bugs in OSS are fixed much more quickly than those in a commercial product. Open Source encryption schemes tend to stand the test of time better than ones which aren’t published.
Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a Web–based, free–content encyclopedia which is edited collaboratively by volunteers. It is actually a collection of hundreds of independent language editions, with the English language edition having over 560,000 articles.

- How it works — MediaWiki
- Why it works — The Wisdom of Crowds
- Who cares about this stuff? Why would anyone do this?
What Could ITS Do?

We could create an ITS Knowledge Management Framework which would be:

- open to full-time and part-time ITS employees for reading and writing
- open to all Penn Staters (read only)
- have some moderation
- include a self-actualizing ITS skills database
What needs to be done?

- Single sign–on integration → MediaWiki login/account
- How do we “export” a read–only copy to everyone?
- How do we “moderate?” Who “moderates?”
- Do we integrate it with the LDAP directory?
Where Else Could ITS Employ Wikis?

- Project Sites — Let the developers flesh out ideas (*e.g.* The LionShare Wiki)
- Running a service for instructional purposes (*e.g.* Rich Doyle’s Composition classes)
- Student organizations
- “Org Charting”
Questions?

Some URLs:
<http://www.wikipedia.org/>
<http://lionshare.its.psu.edu/cgi-bin/twiki/view/Main/WebHome>
<http://google.com/>