Wikipedia:Wikipedia Signpost/2019-03-31/News and notes

< Wikipedia:Wikipedia Signpost | 2019-03-31

News and notes

Blackouts fail to stop EU Copyright Directive

By DannyS712 and Smallbones

The Danish, German, Czech, and Slovak Wikipedias blacked out for 24 hours on March 21 to protest before the final vote on the EU Copyright Directive. The Asturian, Catalan, Galician, and Italian Wikipedias followed with their own blackouts on March 25. Unlike the anti-SOPA blackouts of 2012, this protest did not lead to the desired result. The directive passed on March 26 by a vote of 348 in favor to 274 opposed.

Popular protests went well beyond Wiki-blackouts. A Change.org petition (https://www.change.org/p/european-parliament-stop-the-censorship-machinery-save-the-internet) collected over 5 million signatures. According to (https://www.dw.com/en/eu-copyright-bill-protests-across-europe-highlight-rifts-over-reform-plans/a-48037133) *Deutsche Welle*, 40 street protests were organized in Germany, with 40,000 protesters in Munich and 30,000 in Berlin. Other protests were held in Austria, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Protest cartoon by Wernerhuth

The cause of this furor, the EU Copyright Directive, contains two articles that are predicted to change the internet as we know it. Article 15 (formerly article 11) has been labeled the "link tax". Websites that aggregate news by using links to other sites will be required to pay those sites for the privilege of linking to them. Article 17 (formerly article 13) will make websites responsible for copyright violations that result from user uploads, and pay fines unless they employ adequate means to filter out the offending uploads. Opponents argue that this article will force websites to use heavy-handed filtering technology that will drastically limit the availability and free use of photos, text, and even memes online. See the analysis of the Wikimedia Foundation (WMF) on the directive's effects here (https://wikimediafoundation.org/2019/02/28/we-do-not-support-the-eu-copyright-directive-in-its-current-form-heres-why-you-shouldnt-either/).

The directive will be implemented by legislation in each of the 28 countries in the European Union. The process is expected to take about two years, and the WMF hopes to influence the overall effects of the directive during this period.

– S

How the blackouts were implemented

Coordinated political protests using Wikipedia, such as the blackouts, are always controversial. The recent blackouts were supported by the WMF and were consistent with the WMF's goals and analysis, but individual Wikipedias and their editors decided on whether and how to protest or blackout their sites.

Christian140 protested the German Wikipedia's blackout, writing "Only 139 users voted for this shutdown of 2.28 million articles and rushed this in one week.... I have ... contributed more than 500 articles and now they are abused for the political agenda of a small group." Three RFCs were conducted March 1–8. In the largest 146 (68%) out of 215 editors voted for a protest; 139 (82%) of 167 voted for a blackout instead of a banner.

For the Czech and Slovak Wikipedias the decisions were made by small, but even more determined groups. Czech editors voted 44 (85%) to 8 in favor of a blackout in a week long RFC. Slovak editors voted 18-0 in favor at the same time, according to editors Venca24 and Luky001. Most of the countries' press covered the blackout story. In the Czech Republic coverage started even before the RFC was completed. There were about 2.25 million visitors to the Czech site on the day of the blackout, equivalent to about one-fifth of the Czech Republic's 10.6 million population. There were about 500,000 visitors to the Slovak site, equivalent to almost one-tenth of the Slovak Republic's population. The majority of the Czech Members of Parliament (MEPs) voted against the directive or abstained, but the majority of the Slovak MEPs supported the directive.

– S

Bureaucrat updates

Early this month, the bureaucrat rights of Kingturtle were removed for inactivity. Kingturtle first became a bureaucrat back in 2004, before the current user rights log. From Wikipedia:Bureaucrat log:

> 16:36, 28 Feb 2004 Infrogmation set Kingturtle: +bureaucrat

With the loss of Kingturtle, the 'crat corps fell below 20 for the first time since 2004. A full timeline of Wikipedia's bureaucrats can be found at Template:Bureaucrat timeline.
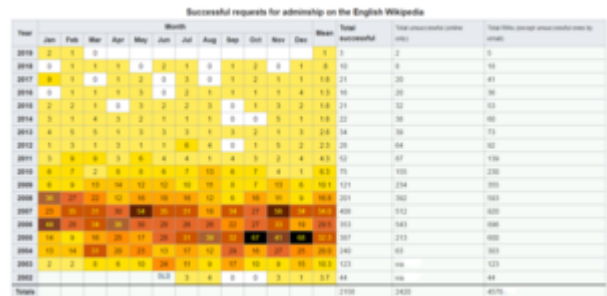
This situation was quickly remedied, however; DeltaQuad nominated herself for bureaucratship in the first week of March, resulting in the first RfB since July 2017. Her RfB was closed as **successful**, and DeltaQuad became (https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Special:Log&logid=97685528) the newest bureaucrat on the English Wikipedia. This RfB was the first successful RfB since Xaosflux's in July of 2016.

– <u>D</u>

Compromised accounts

The administrator rights of <u>Necrothesp</u> and <u>Bogdangiusca</u> were both removed this month as "suspected compromised account[s]." As of writing, neither has regained their <u>bit</u>, though Necrothesp has regained control of their account.

– <u>D</u>

Three new administrators for 2019 so far (none this month): another drought year for the crop of new administrators?

Brief notes

- Three administrators <u>were desysopped</u> due to inactivity in March.
- This month, <u>an RfC</u> closed with consensus to create a new noticeboard for current events. As of writing, no noticeboard has been officially opened.

– <u>D</u>

<u>+ Add a comment (https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?editintro=Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/Templates/Comment-editnotice&title=Wikipedia_talk:Wikipedia_Signpost/2019-03-31/News_and_notes&action=edit&preload=Wikipedia:Signpost/Templates/Signpost-article-comments-end/preload)</u>

From the <u>Electronic Frontier Foundation</u>:

- <u>EU's Parliament Signs Off on Disastrous Internet Law: What Happens Next? (https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2019/03/eus-parliament-signs-disastrous-internet-law-what-happens-next)</u>
- <u>Facing Criticism from All Sides, EU's Terrible Copyright Amendments Stumble into the New Year (https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2018/12/facing-criticism-all-sides-eus-terrible-copyright-amendments-stumble-new-year)</u>

--<u>Guy Macon</u> (talk) <u>18:22, 31 March 2019 (UTC)</u>

The "blackouts" were an impotent snit that the EU, flawed as it is, is actually trying to address the rights involved in intellectual property. The issues can be discussed, but "blackouts" do essentially nihil. Flaws are something to convince the EU lawmakers of, not something to make a todo over online. IMO. Collect (talk) 17:57, 1 April 2019 (UTC)

The system of "intellectual property" is an extension of the system of *human* property: **it is a slave system**. There have been times where a veneer of gentility has been placed on the practice, but this is certainly not one of them. When you are told that you can't set up a way to talk to your neighbors about the news without paying to have a machine watch over your conversation to implement the Massa's wishes, to keep you from saying too much about the news and to check everything you say to see if it's someone else's "property", what does that make you?!

The people have stood around cowed, confused, afraid, as the most radical and conniving extremists of the New Capitalism have made ever more bizarre demands - patenting software algorithms, business plans, setting up ownership of asteroids and space militaries to enforce them. We have stood paralyzed as the health care system, entrusted to the capitalists, stopped wiping out diseases and instead focused on dribbling out treatments for conditions like hepatitis C to only the wealthiest few while the millions of poorer infected were used as a reservoir to infect future wealthy customers. Now the connivers come to destroy even the *hope* of the people for a saner future, to carve up the remnants of even the cheapest and most fundamental of rights as they usher in an age where humans are the cattle of robotic masters.

But it shall not stand. *"The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice."* The cost of defeating slavery in the United States was high: 1 out of every 40 people in the entire country was killed. Yet who can say it didn't need to be paid? There is a Dark Age coming, not because of some divine malice, but out of *necessity*, and the question we need to ask ourselves is how long and how Dark our actions will make it *necessary* for it to be. Wnt (talk) 12:15, 3 April 2019 (UTC)

> I disagree that "copyright is slavery" utterly. Nor ar patents "slavery". Nor is keeping the design of nuclear bombs secret "slavery." Nor is protecting software "slavery." The "dark age" of allowing copyrights and patents led to US strength - in computers, communications, books, movies, art, music and more. So, I disagree. Collect (talk) 12:57, 3 April 2019 (UTC)
>
> > The strengths you describe are the result of a) there being worse censorship policies in countries that otherwise potentially could have competed and b) government grants for research. Wnt (talk) 03:38, 4 April 2019 (UTC)
> >
> > > Or it is possible that you might be quite wrong, of course. Collect (talk) 12:59, 4 April 2019 (UTC)

IN THIS ISSUE

- Discussion report

- Featured content

- Arbitration report

- Traffic report

- Technology report

- News from the WMF

- Recent research

- From the archives

- Humour

- Op-Ed

- In focus

- Special report

- Community view

MAKE SURE WE COVER WHAT MATTERS TO YOU — LEAVE A SUGGESTION (HTTPS://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/WIKIPEDIA:WIKIPEDIA_SIGNPOST/NEWS ROOM/SUGGESTIONS).

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