

AN EXPERIMENTAL MUSEUMS WIKI

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Abstract – Wikipedia is suitable, indeed recommended, for encyclopaedic entries on all museums. However, further more extended use by museums for their own purposes is not encouraged or appropriate in general. If this is required, it is possible for a museum to set up its own wiki with suitable technical support. Alternatively, if support is not available, it is possible to use other external wiki facilities. A museums wiki has been set up expressly for this purpose and other experiments concerning museum-related information.

SUMMARY

Wiki technology allows collaboration on a web-based project, keeping a record of all changes in the process. While wiki technology has been available since the mid 1990s, it is only relatively recently that the technology has become more widely used [1]. The most successful and widely known example is Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>), the online encyclopedia. This records all knowledge that is considered “notable”. This effectively allows any bona fide museum to have a Wikipedia entry [2]. However there is a limit as to how much information is suitable, depending on the size of the museum.



If a museum desires further information in a wiki style, it must either set up its own wiki, requiring some technical expertise, or find an alternative host website. Wikia (<http://www.wikia.com>) provides such a facility in many subject areas, using the same underlying technology as Wikipedia. A Wikia-based wiki specifically for museums has been established (<http://museums.wikia.com>) [3]. Museums and people interested in museums are encouraged to add to this wiki and promote community use of it. Multimedia content is possible, especially images. As an example, Amersham Museum has allowed a number of historic photographs of Amersham in their possession to be loaded onto the Museums Wiki to promote discussion.

This demonstration presents this wiki facility and its contents, covering what has been achieved so far and also the potential for the future. We expect this wiki to be available for continuing use by museum-related organizations and individuals for the foreseeable future.

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References

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