

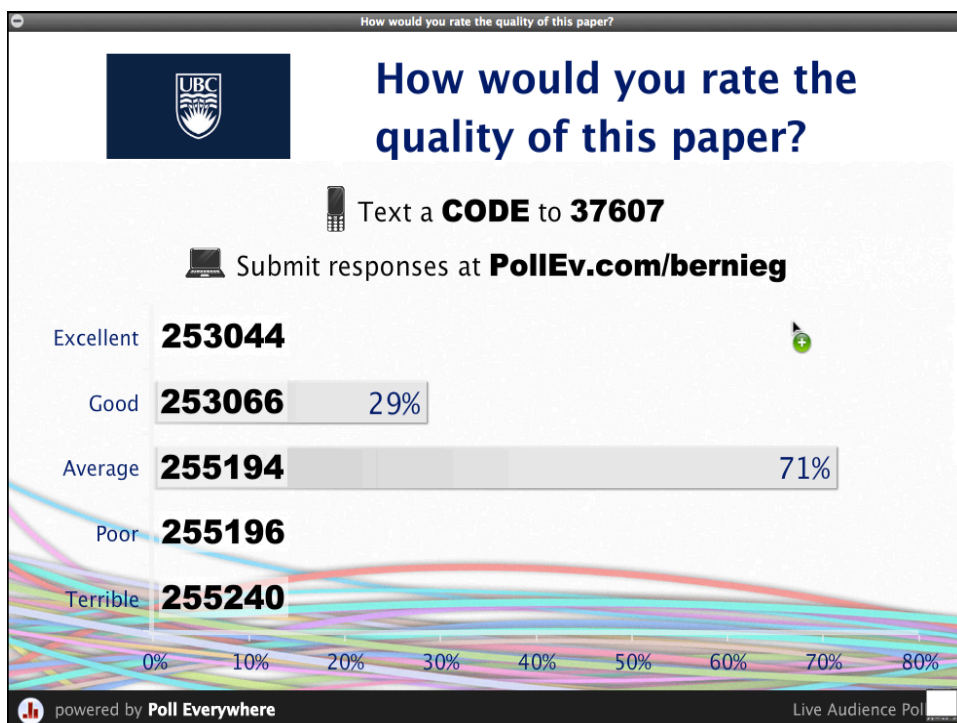
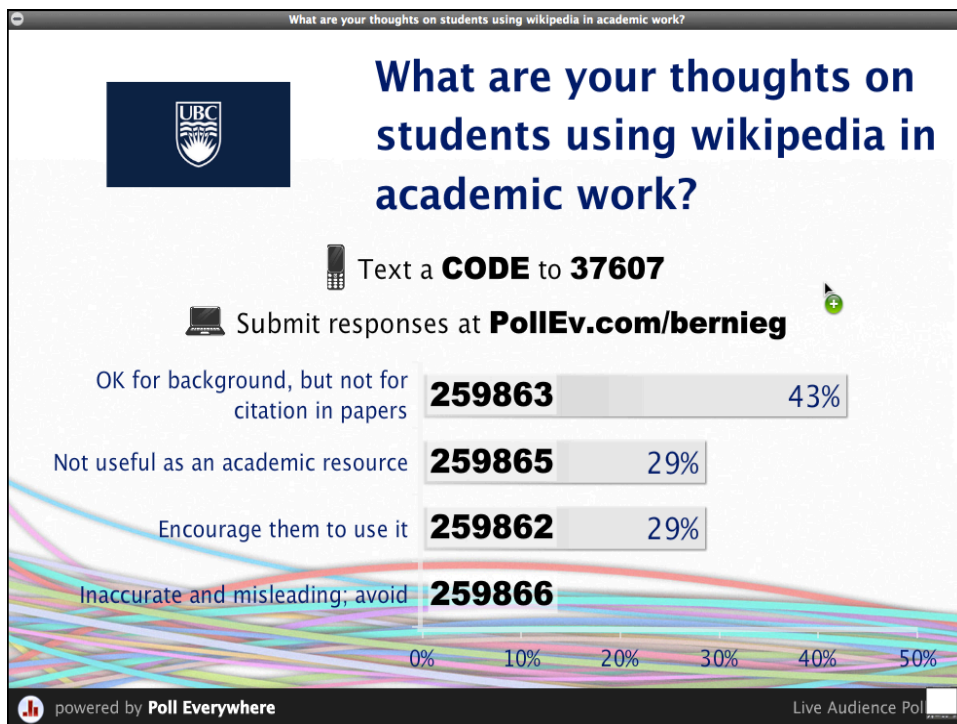
a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

## Wikis

- A Web site developed collaboratively by a community of users, allowing any user to add and edit content.
- Wikipedia has:
  - 29,562,448 pages
  - 4,174,971 articles
  - 18,504,474 users (Norway pop. = 4,953.000)
- Educational Potential?

[Hitwise](#), 2012



Reliability of Wikipedia - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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## Reliability of Wikipedia

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

"Wikipedia hoaxes" redirects here. For a list of known Wikipedia hoaxes, see [Wikipedia:List of hoaxes on Wikipedia](#).

The **reliability of Wikipedia** (primarily of the [English-language edition](#)), compared to other [encyclopedias](#) and more specialized sources, is assessed in many ways, including [statistically](#), through comparative review, analysis of the historical patterns, and strengths and weaknesses inherent in the editing process unique to Wikipedia.<sup>[1]</sup>

Several studies have been done to assess the reliability of Wikipedia. A notable early study in the journal *Nature* said that in 2005, Wikipedia scientific articles came close to the level of accuracy in *Encyclopædia Britannica* and had a similar rate of "serious errors".<sup>[2]</sup> The study by *Nature* was disputed by *Encyclopædia Britannica*,<sup>[3]</sup> and later *Nature* replied to this refutation with both a formal response and a point-by-point rebuttal of *Britannica*'s main objections.<sup>[4]</sup> Between 2008 and 2012, articles in medical and scientific fields such as [pathology](#),<sup>[5]</sup> [toxicology](#),<sup>[6]</sup> [oncology](#),<sup>[7]</sup> [pharmaceuticals](#),<sup>[8]</sup> and [psychiatry](#)<sup>[9]</sup> comparing Wikipedia to professional and [peer-reviewed](#) sources found that Wikipedia's depth and coverage were of a high standard. Concerns regarding readability were raised in a study published by the American Society of Clinical Oncology<sup>[10]</sup> and a study published in *Psychological Medicine* (2012).<sup>[9]</sup>

Wikipedia is open to anonymous and [collaborative editing](#), so assessments of its reliability usually include examinations of how quickly false or misleading information is removed. An early study conducted by [IBM](#) researchers in 2003—two years following Wikipedia's establishment—found that "vandalism is usually repaired extremely quickly—so quickly that most users will never see its effects"<sup>[11]</sup> and concluded that Wikipedia had "surprisingly effective self-healing capabilities".<sup>[12]</sup> A 2007 peer-reviewed study stated that "42% of damage is repaired almost immediately... Nonetheless, there are still hundreds of millions of damaged views."<sup>[13]</sup>

Several incidents have also been publicized in which false information has lasted for a long time in Wikipedia. In May 2005, a user

Vandalism of a Wikipedia article. The section on the left is the normal, undamaged version, and on the right is the edited, damaged version.

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