

updated 11:04 a.m. EDT, Thu September 6, 2007

EMAIL

SAVE

PRINT

New tool mines Wikipedia trustworthiness

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Software flags questionable lines in Wikipedia entries
- It analyzes the reputations of the contributors responsible for each line
- Counts the degree to which a contributor's work survives subsequent edits

[Next Article in Technology](#) »

TEXT SIZE  

BOSTON, Massachusetts (AP) -- Because anyone can edit Wikipedia, the Web encyclopedia's reliability varies wildly. Now a computer science professor hopes to give users a better baloney detector: software that flags questionable lines in Wikipedia entries.

Developed by Luca de Alfaro and colleagues at the University of California, Santa Cruz, the software will color text some gradation of orange if there is reason to doubt its content. The deeper the orange, the more likely it is malarkey.

How does the software have any clue about that? Mainly by analyzing the reputations of the contributors responsible for each line.

By diving into Wikipedia's open volumes of edit histories, the software counts the degree to which any given contributor's work survives subsequent edits by other people. In general, the less tinkering your work on Wikipedia engenders, the more trustworthy you are deemed to be.


That system is not foolproof, as accurate contributions might get quickly overwritten in articles on contentious topics.

Even so, it does yield interesting insights. For example, in an extensive entry on the old Commodore 64 computers -- <http://tinyurl.com/2dbggk> -- the Santa Cruz software tags just three lines, each an unfootnoted statement of purported fact.

For now, the software -- available at <http://trust.cse.ucsc.edu> -- is in demonstration mode and operates on an older subset of Wikipedia entries.

However, de Alfaro showed it to a receptive audience at last month's Wikimania convention in Taiwan, and he hopes to work with the Wikimedia Foundation, which oversees Wikipedia, to make it a real-time option on the site.

Foundation spokeswoman Sandra Ordonez said there have been no official decisions.

"I don't want to give the impression that Wikipedia is low-trust. It really works very well," de Alfaro said. "What I wanted to make sure is that nobody can single-handedly modify information without some trace of that being available for some time afterwards." [E-mail to a friend](#) 

Copyright 2007 The **Associated Press**. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

[EMAIL](#) [SAVE](#) [PRINT](#)

► From the Blogs: Controversy, commentary, and debate

Top News



NYT public editor: MoveOn ad violated standards



Iraq: Blackwater staff will face criminal charges

Most Popular

▼ STORIES

Most Viewed	Most Emailed	Top Searches
1	How Simpson caper crumbled	
2	Ahmadinejad eager to teach U.S.	
3	NYT editor slams paper	
4	Cat found months after tornado	
5	FBI reviews anti-'Jena 6' site	
6	Mime legend Marcel Marceau dies	
7	'Crazy' bull rips apart home	
8	Burrito champ: 'I love Mexican'	
9	'Bridge to nowhere' abandoned	
10	Iraq 'to charge' Blackwater staff	

► VIDEOS

► TOPICS

Today's Featured Product:



Nyko Blu-Wave Infrared Remote (PS3)

• [Check Prices](#)
• [Read Review](#)
7.0 out of 10

Recent Product Reviews:



Panasonic TH-50PH10UK

• [Check Prices](#)
• [Read Review](#)
7.7 out of 10



Sony NSC-GC1 Net-sharing Cam

• [Check Prices](#)
• [Read Review](#)
6.0 out of 10



Microsoft Mobile Memory Mouse 8000

• [Check Prices](#)
• [Read Review](#)
8.0 out of 10

[PCNET.com Ratings >](#)

We Recommend

Stories you may be interested in based on past browsing

CNNMoney: Top class-action lawyer indicted

Exiled Fujimori arrives in Peru to face charges 

The future of energy: Your views

Time.com: Is The CIA Editing Wikipedia?

CNNMoney: NBC to offer free primetime downloads

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [Politics](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Health](#) | [Tech](#) | [Travel](#) | [Living](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Time.com](#)

[Podcasts](#) | [Blogs](#) | [CNN Mobile](#) | [Preferences](#) | [Email Alerts](#) | [CNN Radio](#) | [CNN Shop](#) | [Site Map](#)

POWERED BY


SEARCH

[CNN en Español](#) | [Arabic](#) | [Japanese](#) | [Korean](#) | [Turkish](#)

© 2007 Cable News Network LP, LLLP. A Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

[International Edition](#) | [CNN TV](#) | [CNN International](#) | [Headline News](#) | [Transcripts](#)

[Terms of service](#) | [Privacy guidelines](#) | [Advertise with us](#) | [About us](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Help](#)