



FILE - Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales gestures during the opening session of the French employers' body MEDEF union summer forum on the campus of the HEC School of Management in Jouy-en-Josas, near Paris, August 29, 2012. REUTERS/Charles Platiau

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Wikipedia founder Wales wishes for 15 more free years

By Jenny Tobien, dpa

Berlin (dpa) - On January 15, 2001, Jimmy Wales and programmer Larry Sanger created Wikipedia with the lofty goal of making a comprehensive collection of the world's knowledge available to everyone.

Nearly 15 years later, he hopes to keep that goal alive - and keep it free.

When asked if he can make it another 15 years as an internet encyclopedia free of charge, Wales told dpa, "I hope so. We don't have any plans to change. We're very content as we are."



The online reference platform, which has more than 37 million articles in nearly 300 languages, is financed entirely by donations, rather than relying on income from advertisements. Wales said he doesn't regret keeping Wikipedia free, even as he's watched other internet founders become billionaires.

"I'm very pleased with the outcome. I have an amazing life and I enjoy every minute of it," he said in an interview Friday.

Despite effectively replacing the once omnipresent hardcopy encyclopedia, Wikipedia still faces several challenges in the near future as it seeks to remain free.

Like many technology-based companies, Wikipedia is struggling to recruit females.

"We're really always looking for more female contributors."

About 15 per cent of the global voluntary contributors to the website, known collectively as "the community," are female, Wales said.

"The community is really passionate about changing, but changes come slower than we would like."

In addition to focusing on female recruitment, the online reference work hopes to expand its influence to growing populations that are rapidly gaining access to the internet.

"We're in a period where the number of people who are online in the developing world is really skyrocketing and correspondingly usage of Wikipedia in those countries is skyrocketing."

Wikipedia will focus more on the user experience of its mobile products to reach clients as they migrate to mobile devices, Wales said.

"We need to really focus a lot of attention on making sure that our mobile app is good and our mobile participation is good."

To reach the goal of making a complete collection of the world's knowledge available to everyone, the company will need to keep up the pace with digital trends, Wales said.

"The ongoing march of technology is a really powerful force in helping people to get online and meet other people and learn things and share things."

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