

Using and Customizing MediaWiki for Documentation Projects

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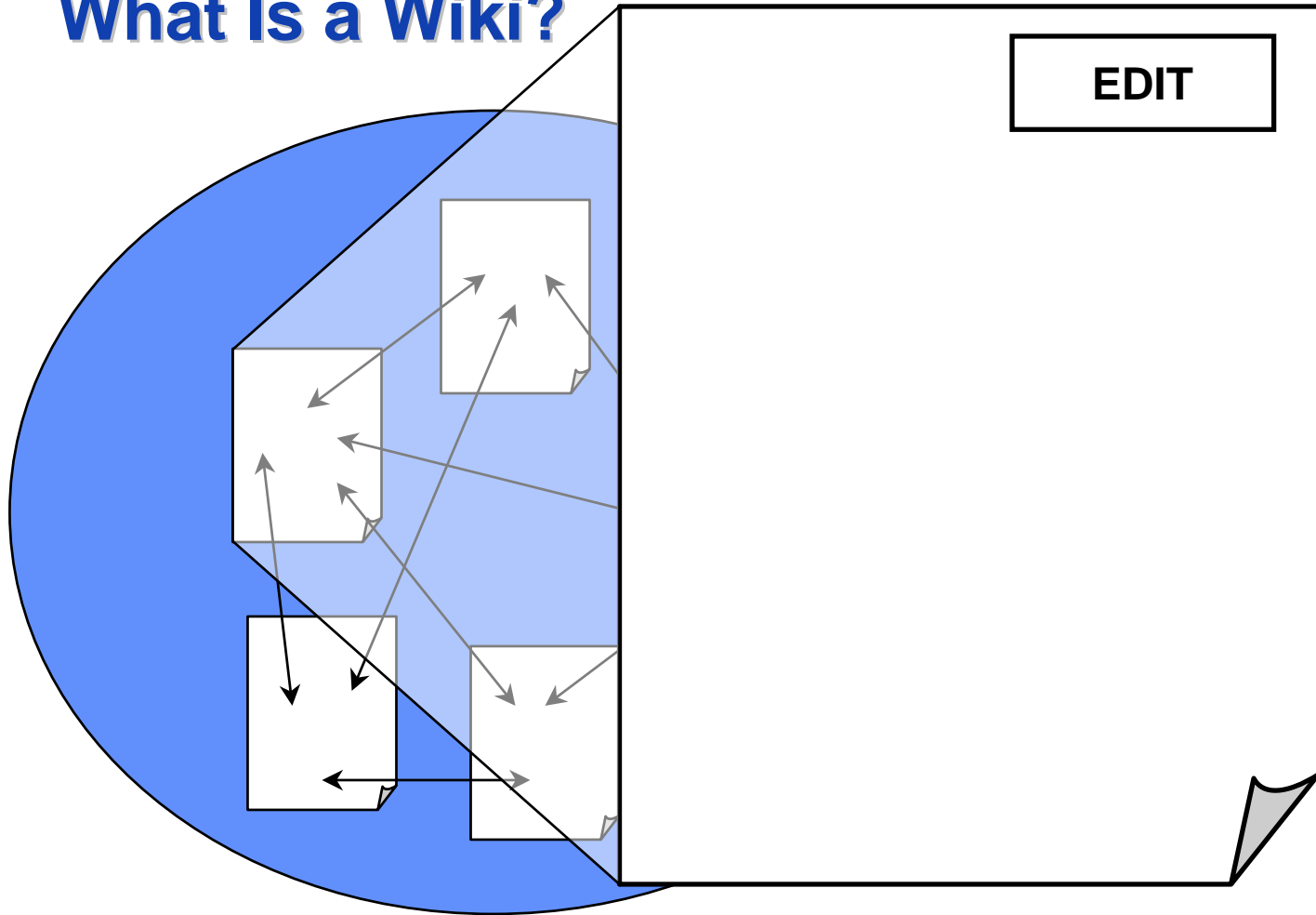
A quick overview of Wiki

What Is a Wiki?

- A wiki is a collection of Web pages designed to enable anyone with access to contribute or modify content, using a simplified markup language.

Source: Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>)

What Is a Wiki?



Wiki Software

- Over 200 wiki engines
- Open source and commercial
- Wiki functionality in other types of software

More information:

- <http://www.wikimatrix.org/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_wiki_software

Productive Uses for a Wiki

- Collaborative writing
- Community software
- Simplified content management system
- Knowledge management
- Groupware

Productive Uses for a Wiki

- Coordination
 - Guidelines
 - Brainstorming
- Highly dynamic processes
 - Input
 - Review
 - Project management
- Collaboration
 - Glossaries
 - Article collections

Real-Life Example:

A Glossary Built with MediaWiki

Purpose

- Support collaborative work of a distributed documentation team
 - Team members working at different locations (different companies, different countries)

Challenges

- Enabling access for all team members
- Content classification
- Separating glossary and project management
- Export to *Author-it* content management system

Why MediaWiki?

- Highly suitable for glossaries
- Easy to learn
- Easy to set up
- Solves some of the challenges (“out-of-the-box”)
- Fairly easy to extend
- “Soft security” suitable for the intended use

Solutions

Separation of different content types

- Built-in namespaces
- “Main” namespace for actual content
- “Project” namespace for project organization

Solutions

Content classification

- Built-in system for categorization
- Semantic MediaWiki (SMW) extension for assigning attributes
 - Enables semantic search
 - Allows fine-grained export

Solutions

Templates

- Ensure consistent layout of articles
- Make it easier to start writing
- Speed up the writing process

Solutions

Export

- Built-in XML export lacks formatting
- Custom-made export to MS-Word

Results

- Over 700 terms and abbreviations
- 40 status reports and many meeting reports
- Happy writers
- Happy customer
- Wiki is still in active use

Real-Life Example:

**Collaborative Writing of an
Accreditation Proposal**

Purpose

- Support a team of university staff in writing accreditation proposals
 - Collecting material
 - Approving material
- Export proposals in MS Word format
- Shorten the time needed for the accreditation process

Challenges

- Distributed team
- Difficulties finding time for common meetings
- 30 people working on few documents
- Wiki skeptics

Solution

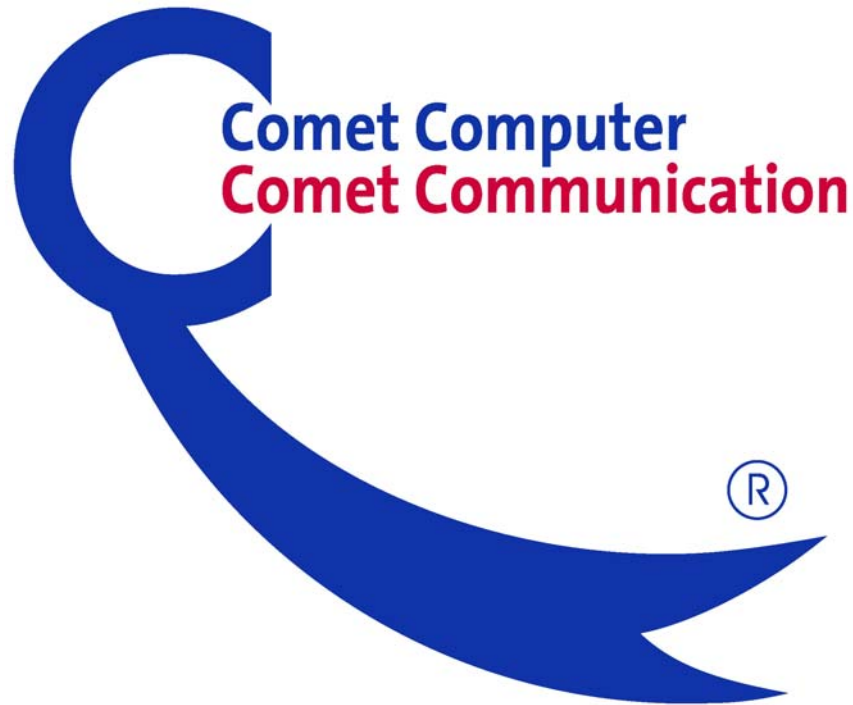
- MediaWiki, hosted by Comet
- Categories predefined
- Initial content added
- Some parts of the content modularized
- Exported with a “bot”

Results

- Proposals written in 3 months instead of 2 to 3 years
- High quality

Conclusions

- Save time
- Better quality
 - Even more time saved
- Low costs or even free
- Not only for limited budgets but also for limited schedule!



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