

## **Wikibook Uses in Higher education courses**

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Wiki, “the simplest online database that could possibly work” (Leuf & Cunningham, 2001) is already prominent in knowledge spaces. We suggest a framework for using wiki in higher education, describe an the construction and implementation of an Introduction to Information Systems wiki textbook and report early results of over a year of wikibased textbook use in academe.

Ward Cunningham published the first wiki in 1995, articulating its promise as a linked collection of free and extensible web pages. Wiki is a hyper textual system for storage and transmission of information. Every page is created and editable through the web using the common browser. The vision of Wikis is an evolution from plain hypertextual systems for learning and information retrieval. This vision is rooted in the legendary (1945) article by Vannevar Bush. Wikis express a high point in the attention to the connection between community and content. The so called “wiki way” and its implementation in the success of Wikipedia illustrate the full potential of such systems.

According to the "Wisdom of Crowd" theory (Surowiecki, 2004) systems need to constrain the crowds' contributions following four rules: Diversity, Decentralization, Necessity of Collective Verdict and Independent Actors. It would be interesting to track the extent to which Wikis fulfill the "Wisdom of Crowds" prescriptions. In this project we examine this question with regard to textbooks in the domain of higher education.

There were a variety of reasons that motivated us to examine the use of Wikis and collaborative involvement of students in the creation and maintenance of their textbooks. These include the impossible rise of book prices, of the absence of up-to-date textbooks in Hebrew in most disciplines and most acutely in our rapidly evolving discipline. The quest for attractive and interactive teaching methods led us to search for book alternatives in a Management Information Systems' course. We choose to implement a new idea of

wiki book for learning. An original text, written in the mid 1990's was used as a "seed" for our wiki. After placing it online we asked students and scholars to update the book content as part of their assignments.

The presentation proposes a framework to understand wiki rules at higher education courses; we propose a method for implementation of Wikis in higher education, and conclude with some data from our case study, including subjective reactions and objective measures of use, performance and correlations between wiki use behaviors and the attainment of learning objectives. Early analysis suggests that wikibooks can significantly improve the learning and teaching processes, that Wikis are a feasible way to alter learning and teaching methods, and that Wikis open many research and operational questions. In the spirit of the Wisdom of Crowds we will like to discuss those issues during the workshop

Leuf, B., & Cunningham, W. (2001). *The WIKI way*. Boston, MA, USA: Addison-Wesley.

Surowiecki, J. (2004). *The wisdom of crowds : why the many are smarter than the few and how collective wisdom shapes business, economies, societies, and nations* (1st ed.). New York: Doubleday.