

Say Goodbye (and Good Riddance) to Wikipedia

By Roger L Simon

The first time I wrote a paper of any sort for school must have been in the third or fourth grade.

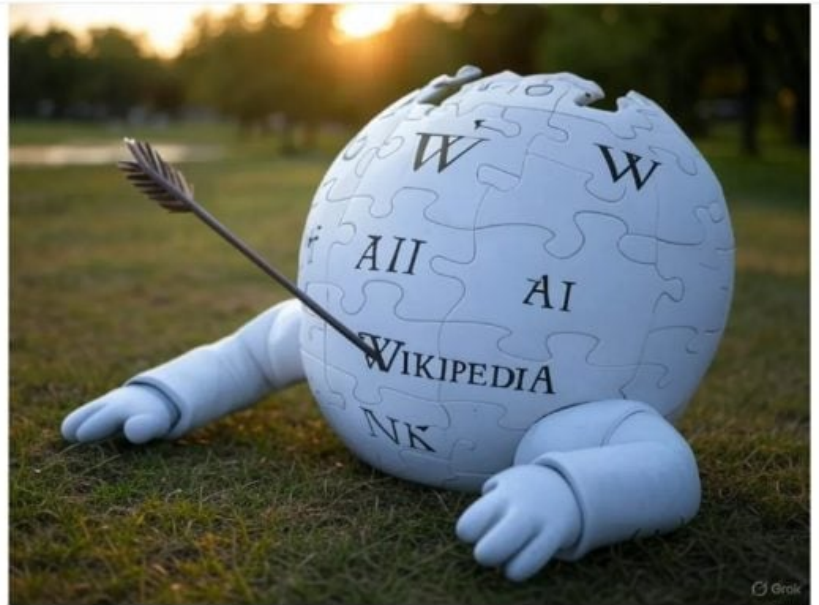
That was something close to seventy-two years ago, so you'll have to excuse me that I don't have the faintest idea of the topic.

But somehow I do remember the source I consulted was the many-volumed Compton's Encyclopedia that we had at home.

It wasn't until later—when I 'm not sure, but pretty early in the game—I got the message that encyclopedias were unreliable, were secondary (or tertiary) sources and were not to be used writing papers. Primary sources, please.

To say that it made it harder was an understatement. Treks to the library became the norm. I learned, as we all do, to jigger word and paragraph orders, find synonyms and so forth, to avoid being accused of plagiarism in academic papers. Sometimes I had an original thought, but not often.

Fortunately, it seemed at the time, in 2001, Wikipedia appeared. It was born out of the ruins of something few remember called Nupedia. Proclaiming itself to be impartial, information on virtually everything was available online—with footnotes yet and links for authentication.



I was suspicious about the impartiality part, but I went along. It was so convenient and had rapidly taken over the internet when it came to research. It was *the* source.

An entry in my name was built by the head of marketing at Pajamas Media (now PJ Media) where I was then CEO.

But when a friend of mine, as a joke, wrote into my entry that I had retired and moved to Fiji, I became skeptical of Wikipedia's editing and supervision. This "fact" remained there for the better part of the year. I was the one to finally correct it. (Part of me wanted to let it go, just for amusement. I should be so lucky as to retire to Fiji.)

Far more importantly, leftwing bias infected Wikipedia virtually from the outset. It was easy to see reading entries about people and companies you knew.

One of Wikipedia's two founders, Larry Sanger, left over this bias very early, almost immediately in 2002. Mr. Sanger has gone on to try to build a more even-handed encyclopedia elsewhere. Unfortunately, I think his attempts have been more or less quixotic, but he has functioned as an important critic of the company he helped found over the years.

Just now. what appears to be a serious war between the editors has broken out inside Wikipedia regarding the current conflagration between Israel and Hamas.

Bloomberg broke the story – ['Edit Wars' on Middle East Page Raise Tensions on Wikipedia](#). Since the article is behind a paywall, here is what Grok AI had to say about it in answer to my question “Is there a conflict about Gaza-Israel inside Wikipedia?”:

“Yes, there is a notable conflict within Wikipedia regarding the portrayal of the Gaza-Israel situation, particularly evident in the editing disputes over articles related to the Israel-Hamas war and broader Middle Eastern conflicts. This tension stems from efforts by volunteer editors to influence the narrative, often resulting in “edit wars” where changes are repeatedly made and reverted as editors push for their preferred slant.

“Posts on X and reports from sources like Bloomberg highlight this internal struggle. For instance, editors and administrators have detailed challenges in maintaining neutrality on pages about the Israel-Hamas war, with disagreements over terminology and framing. One specific example is the renaming of the Wikipedia article originally titled ‘Israel-Hamas War’ to ‘Gaza War,’ which some argue obscures Hamas’s role as a key actor, reflecting a bias in presentation.”

Now this is from Grok, Elon Musk’s version of AI, so whatever bias that implies must be factored in, just as it should from any source, including the one you are now reading. Nevertheless, it’s obvious there is trouble inside Wikipedia, an organization edited by volunteers.

But that trouble is far greater than this one conflict, important as it is.

Wikipedia has already effectively been put out of business by

Artificial Intelligence that is developing at a pace approaching the speed of light. Readers may recall that early in 2024 images of the Founding Fathers reproduced by Google's AI appeared in black face, causing justifiable embarrassment to the company. Not even a year later you can ask it practically anything and get huge amounts of information in seconds. It can draw anything you can think of in any style you desire.

Soon enough it will be able to do practically anything in the arts. I am fortunate, in a bleak way, to be of a certain age, because people who do what I do may shortly be out of business as well. The Writers Guild was right in demanding no-AI screenplays in their recent negotiation, but who is going to police it. AI made movies are just around the corner.

Wikipedia itself, whether they know it or not, and at least a few there must, is already a dinosaur.

Is this a good thing? Not really. As you can tell, I am no fan of Wikipedia, but neither am I a fan of AI, though I have used it several times now to illustrate this Substack in part because it frees me from having to pay for copyrighted photographs. AI is about to alter our lives to such a degree we cannot yet begin to comprehend it.

This is why—although like anyone with a 401K these days I am nervous—I support Donald Trump's tariff policies. Beyond the issue of international trade fairness, one of his intentions is clearly to bring manufacturing back to our country. This is concrete work that AI will eventually affect with robotization, but not to the degree of other white collar occupations many of which are already on the edge of irrelevant.

I don't want to sound too gloomy—I've been gloomy enough—but one last thing. This all makes me nostalgic for long gone days when great "encyclopedic" works were written by one author

like Dr. Johnson's "A Dictionary of the English Language" (1775) or Maimonides' "A Guide for the Perplexed" (1190). At least in those days one author was behind them and we could evaluate the work accordingly. At Wikipedia and via AI, it's anybody's guess.

And now, in the brave new AI world, we have to deal with the Chinese [Deep Seek](#) and something supposedly yet more advanced from China called [Manus](#) that "bridges the gap between conception and execution." What that means is up to you to decide. Unfortunately, it may be difficult because, alas, you are merely human.

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