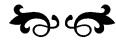




WIKIPEDIA

is a game



Raph Koster

About Me



- I am not a Wikipedian!
- I make games, and I write about games.
- I make online communities and write about them too.
- I think I am here as a sort of professional stranger.
 - Forgive me if I am rude to you in your own house.

Partial Ludography

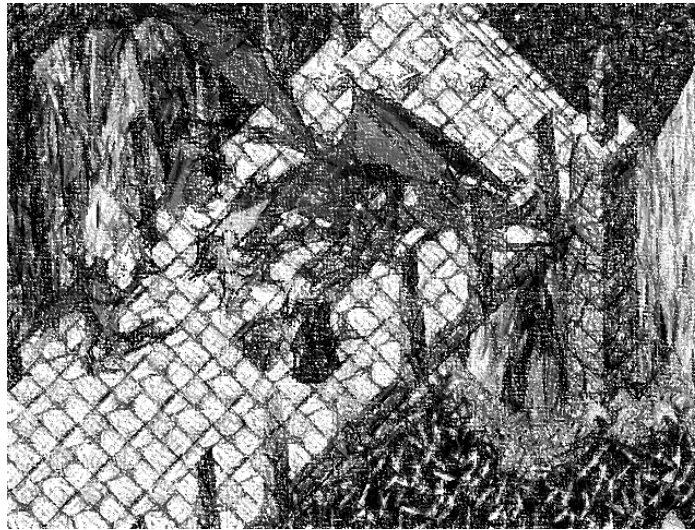


FIG. 0-1

*From top left: Ultima
Online,*

Partial Ludography

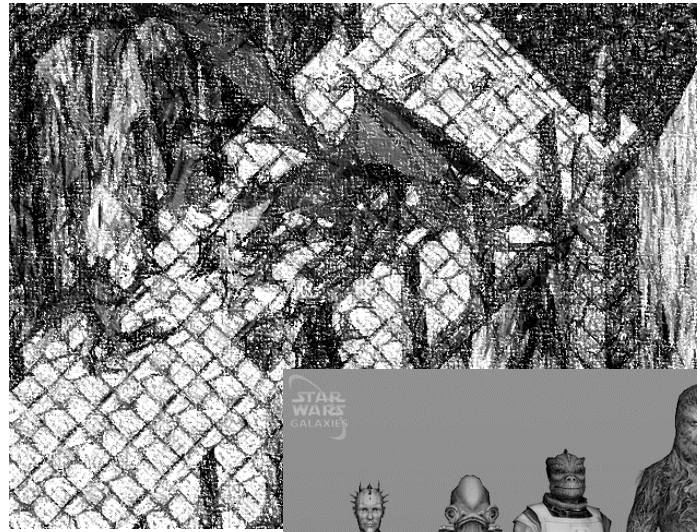


FIG. 0-1
*From top left: Ultima
Online, Star Wars
Galaxies*

Partial Ludography

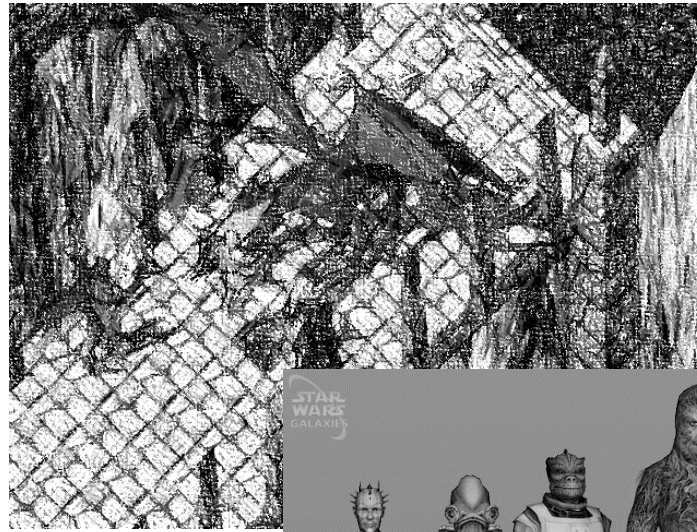


FIG. 0-1
*From top left: Ultima
Online, Star Wars
Galaxies, Metaplace*

Writings

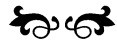
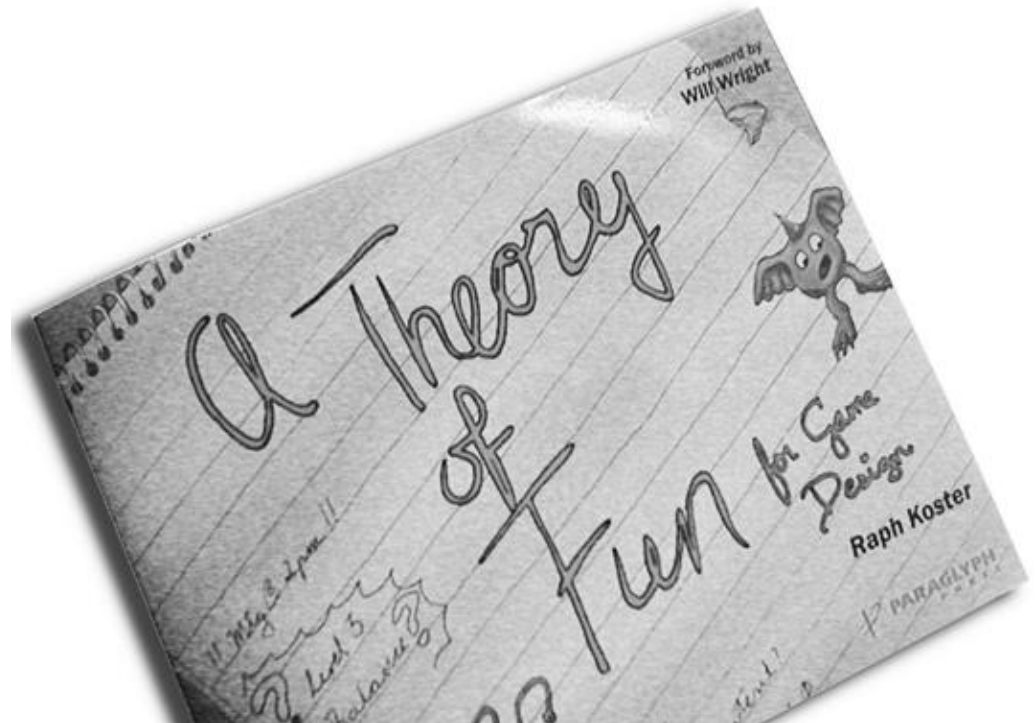


FIG. 0-2
A THEORY OF FUN FOR
GAME DESIGN, *and*
numerous widely
reprinted essays and
articles such as
“Declaring the Rights of
Players.”



♣ BEING A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LUDIC STRUCTURES AND ARTIFACTS

On Games in General

*Fun comes
from...*
☺☺

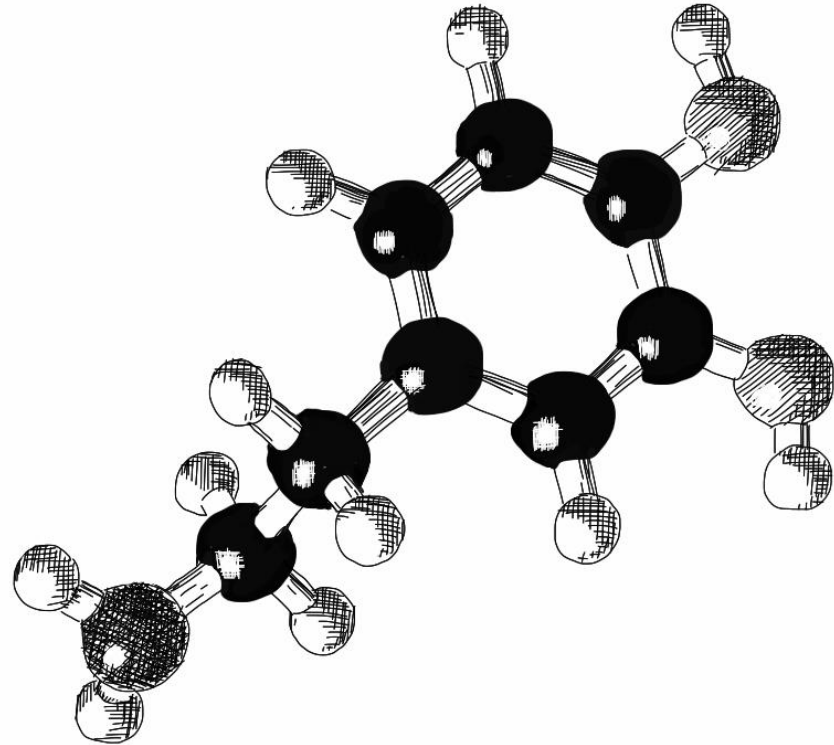
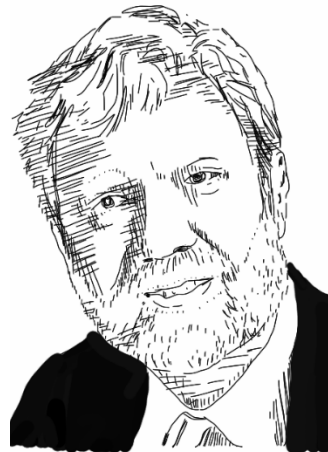


FIG. 1-1

*Endorphins that seem to be
generated in moments of
curiosity and challenge.*

*There's a lot we don't
know about dopamine.*



🌀 FIG. 1-2.

Building schema for situations both real and hypothetical.

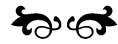
*From top left clockwise: Csikszentmihályi, Biederman & Vessel,
Lazzaro, Ericsson.*

Specific problem types



Mastering one's own physical
reactions

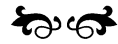
Specific problem types



Mastering one's own physical
reactions

Mastering social situations

Specific problem types



Mastering one's own physical
reactions

Mastering social situations

Mastering systemic webs of
relationships

Specific problem types



Mastering one's own physical
reactions

Mastering social situations

Mastering systemic webs of
relationships

Failing to understand probability

The classic loop

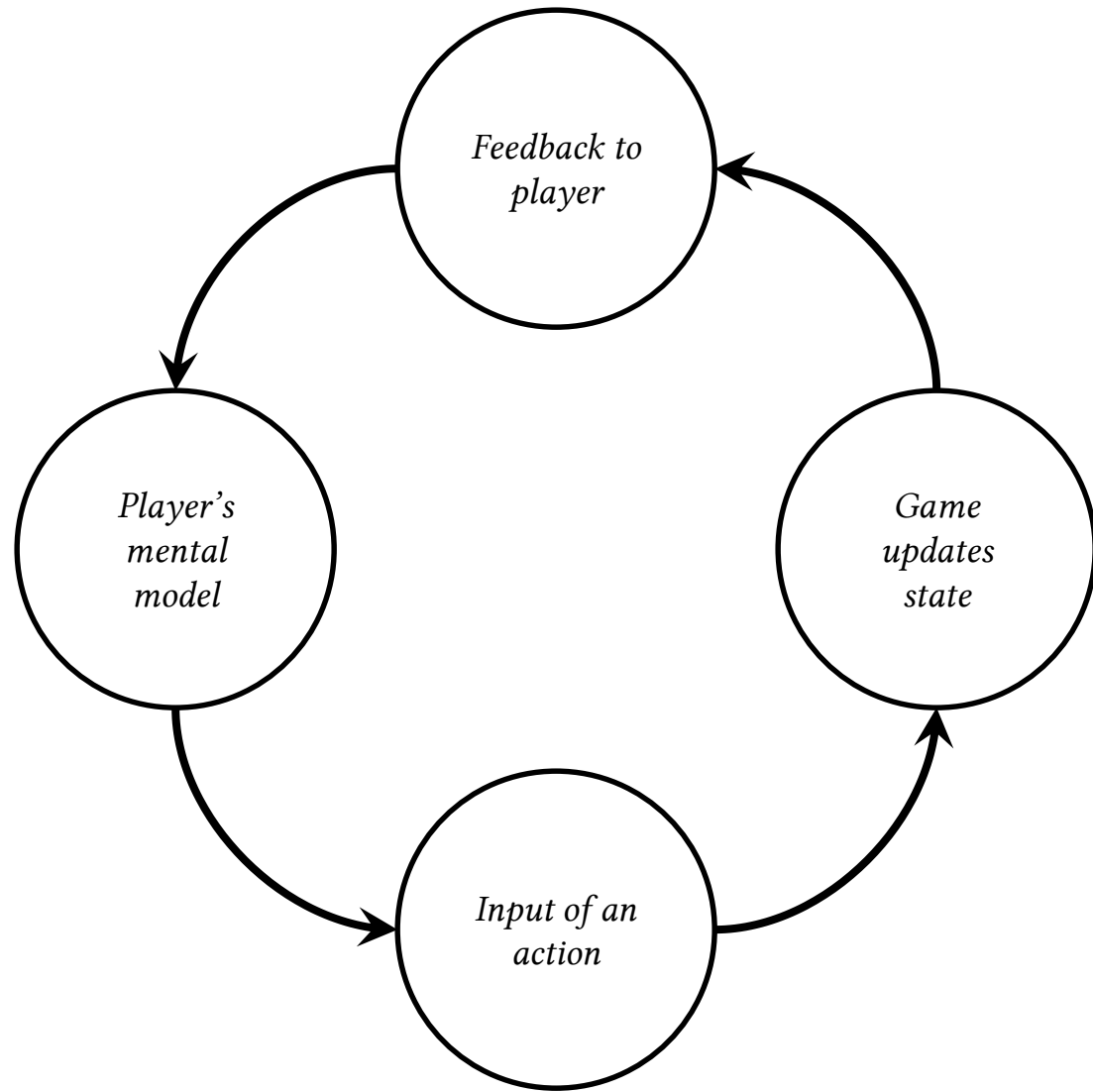


FIG. 1-3.

This is a vastly oversimplified version. A fuller version would note at least two major classes of feedback to the player (systemic and narrative), a five-step process for translating player intent to an actual input to the model, etc.

The classic loop

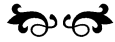
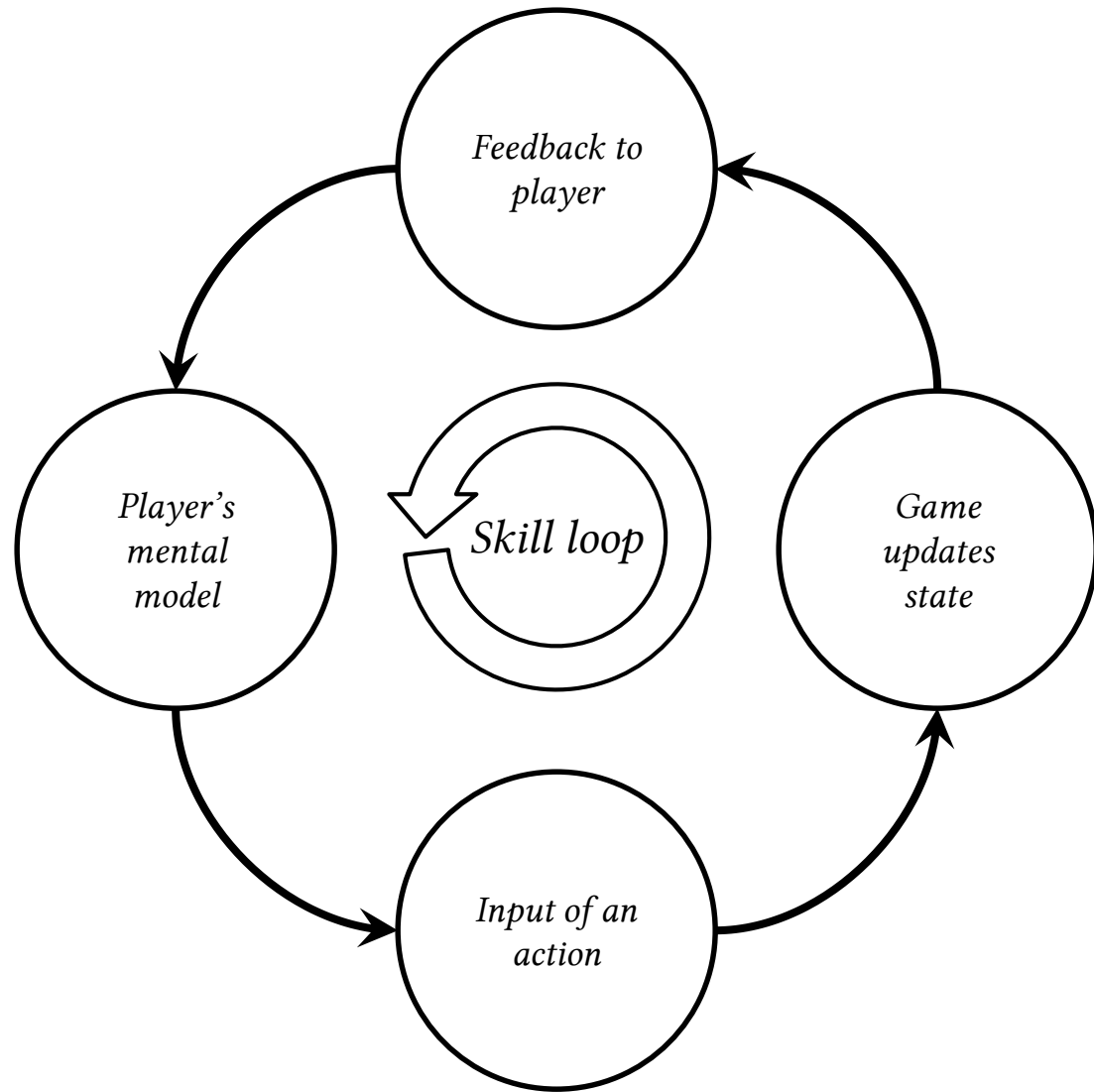
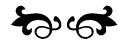


FIG. 1-3.
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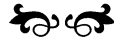


Games are training tools



- They are one of the oldest “social machines.”
 - Predating humans, actually.
 - And have gained greater prominence with actual mechanization into software.
- As such, they must conform to good pedagogical techniques.
 - Usually they do so better than pedagogy does.

Some structures afford play

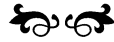


LUDIC ARTIFACTS

Systems designed for play

- *Go*
- *Magic: The Gathering*
- *Association football*
- *Werewolf*
- *Space Invaders*
- *League of Legends*

Some structures afford play



LUDIC ARTIFACTS

Systems designed for play

- *Go*
- *Magic: The Gathering*
- *Association football*
- *Werewolf*
- *Space Invaders*
- *League of Legends*

LUDIC SYSTEMS

Systems susceptible to play

- *The stock market*
- *Musical instruments*
- *Warfare*
- *Politics*
- *The human inner ear*
- *Physics*

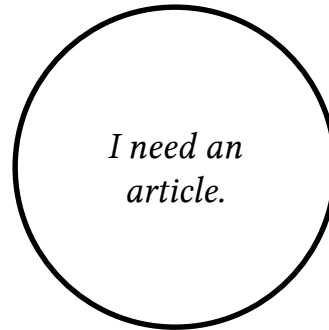
♣ BEING A COMPENDIUM OF WAYS TO PLAY AN ENCYCLOPEDIA

Games WIKIPEDIA *Is*

The game of reading



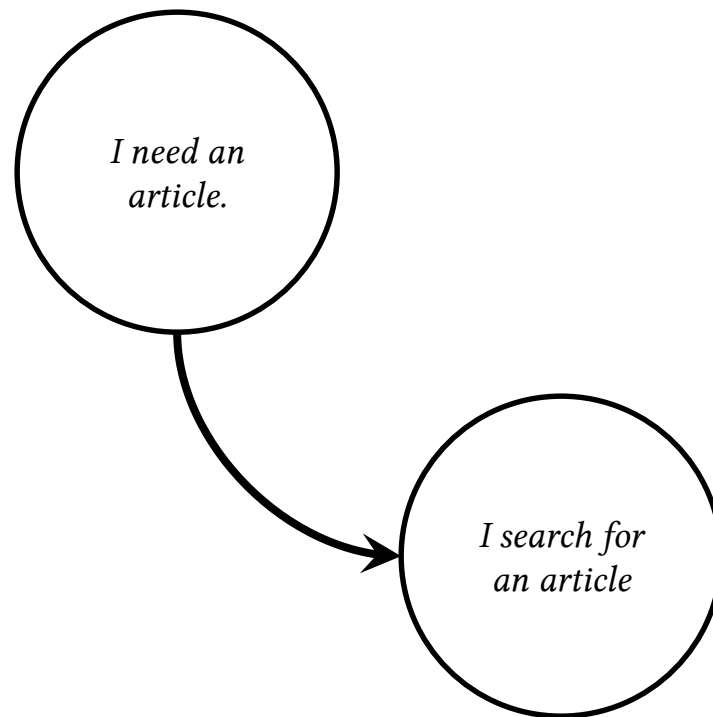
FIG. 2-1.
*Wikipedia does a little
bit to create a learning
loop around reading.*



The game of reading



FIG. 2-1.
*Wikipedia does a little
bit to create a learning
loop around reading.*

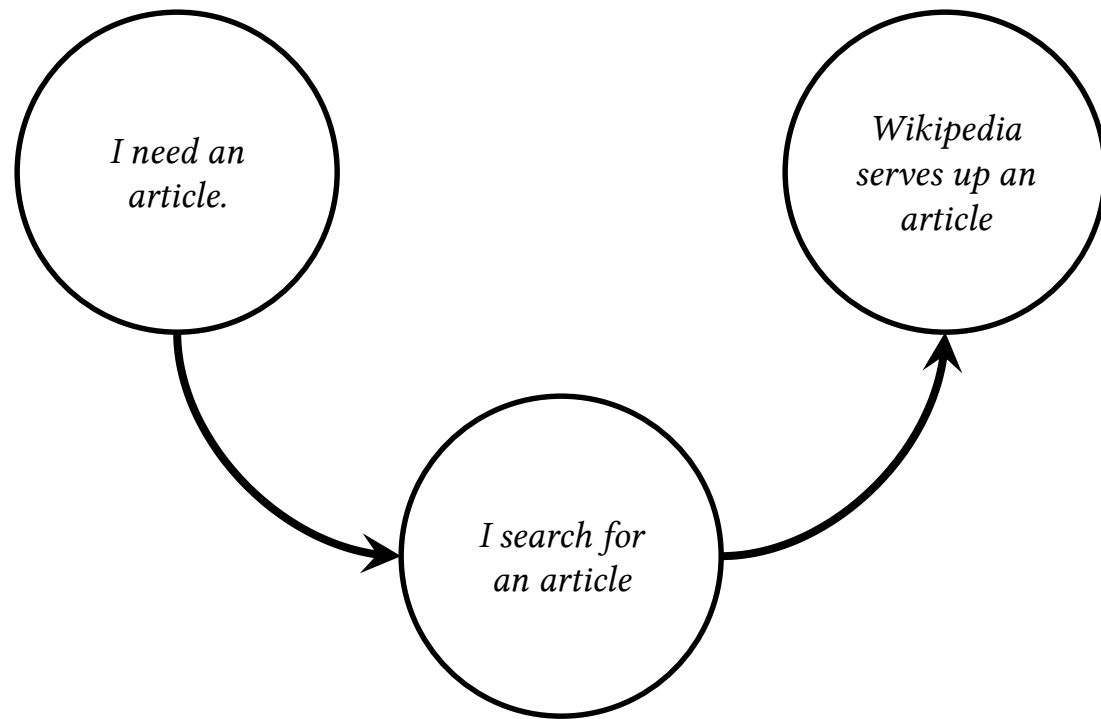


The game of reading



FIG. 2-1.

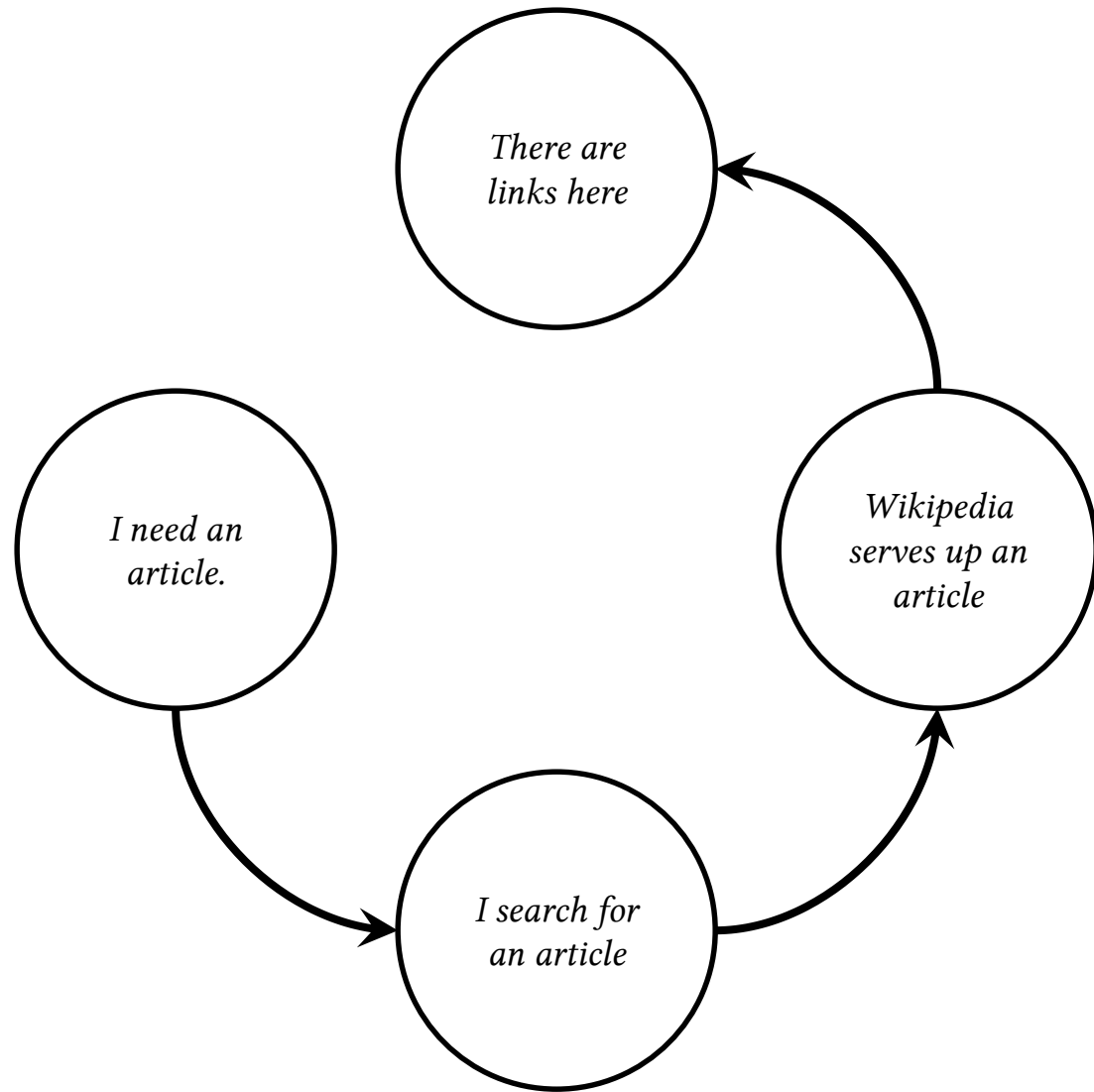
*Wikipedia does a little
bit to create a learning
loop around reading.
There is no discernable
state being updated,*



The game of reading

🐞🐞

FIG. 2-1.
Wikipedia does a little bit to create a learning loop around reading. There is no discernable state being updated,



The game of reading

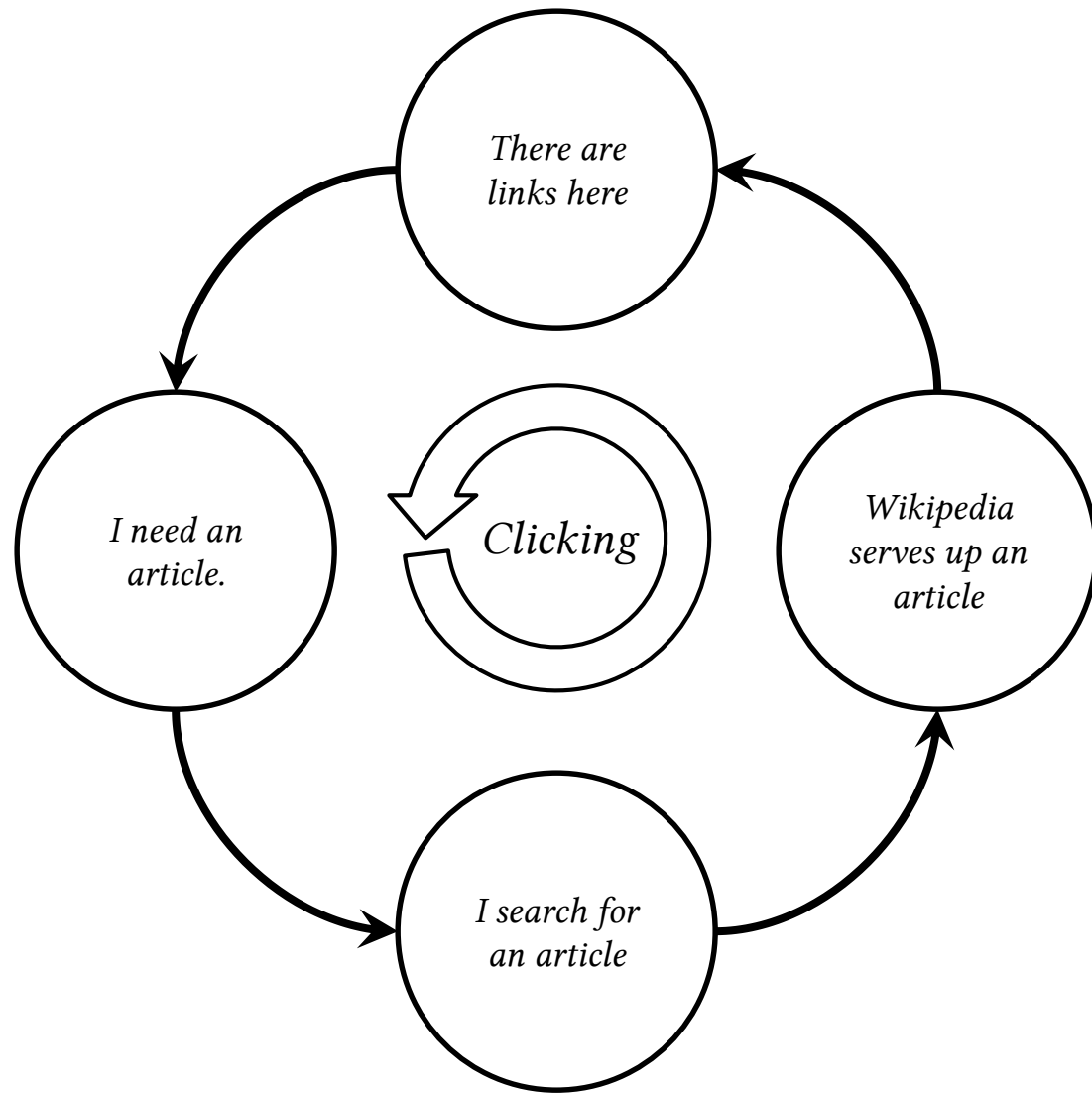
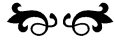


FIG. 2-1.

Wikipedia does a little bit to create a learning loop around reading. There is no discernable state being updated,

The game of reading

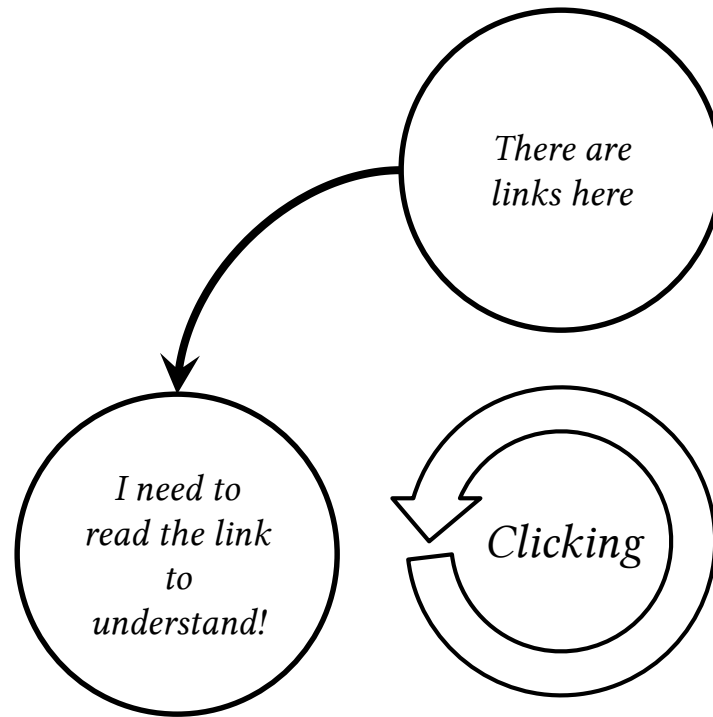


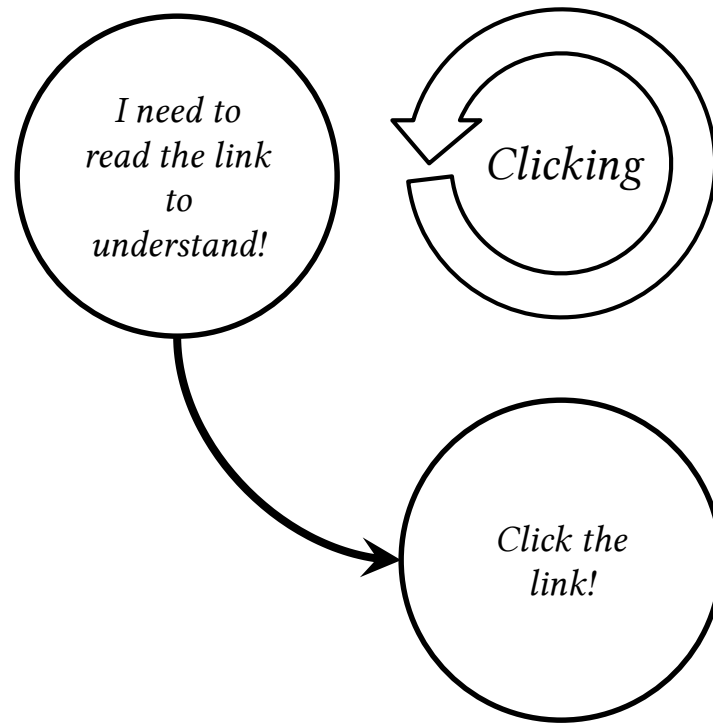
FIG. 2-2.

Wikipedia does a little bit to create a learning loop around reading. There is no discernable state being updated,

The game of reading



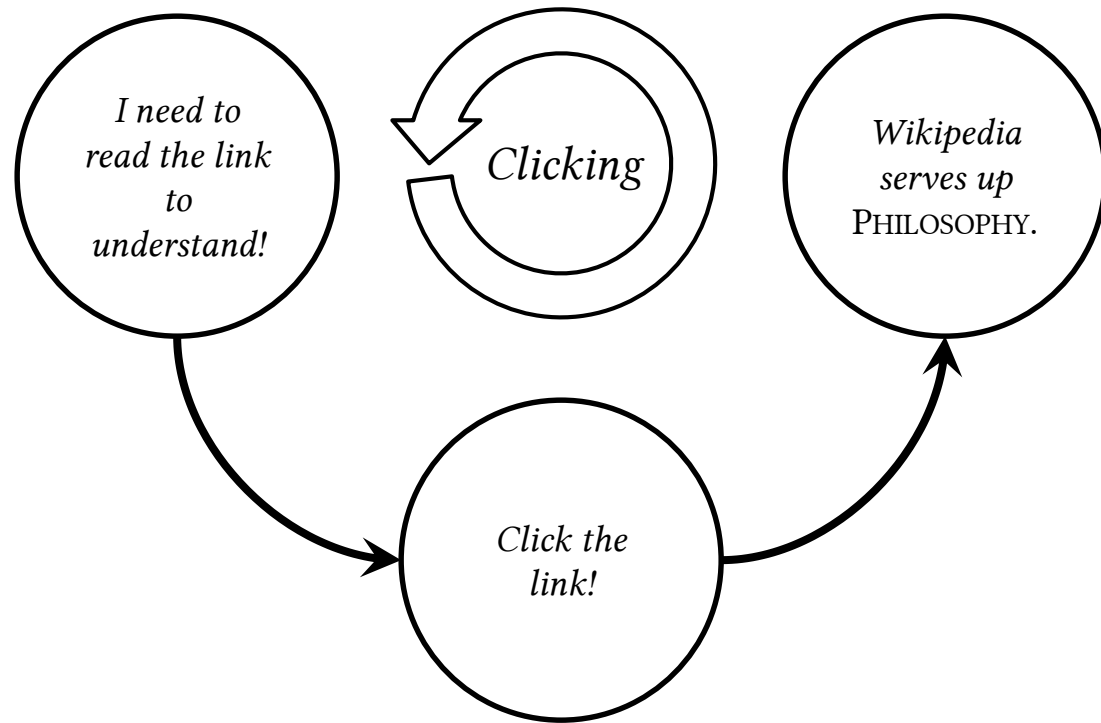
FIG. 2-2.
Wikipedia does a little bit to create a learning loop around reading. There is no discernable state being updated,



The game of reading



FIG. 2-2.
Wikipedia does a little bit to create a learning loop around reading. There is no discernable state being updated, and there is no scaffolding for the user to get better at reading Wikipedia.



The game of reading

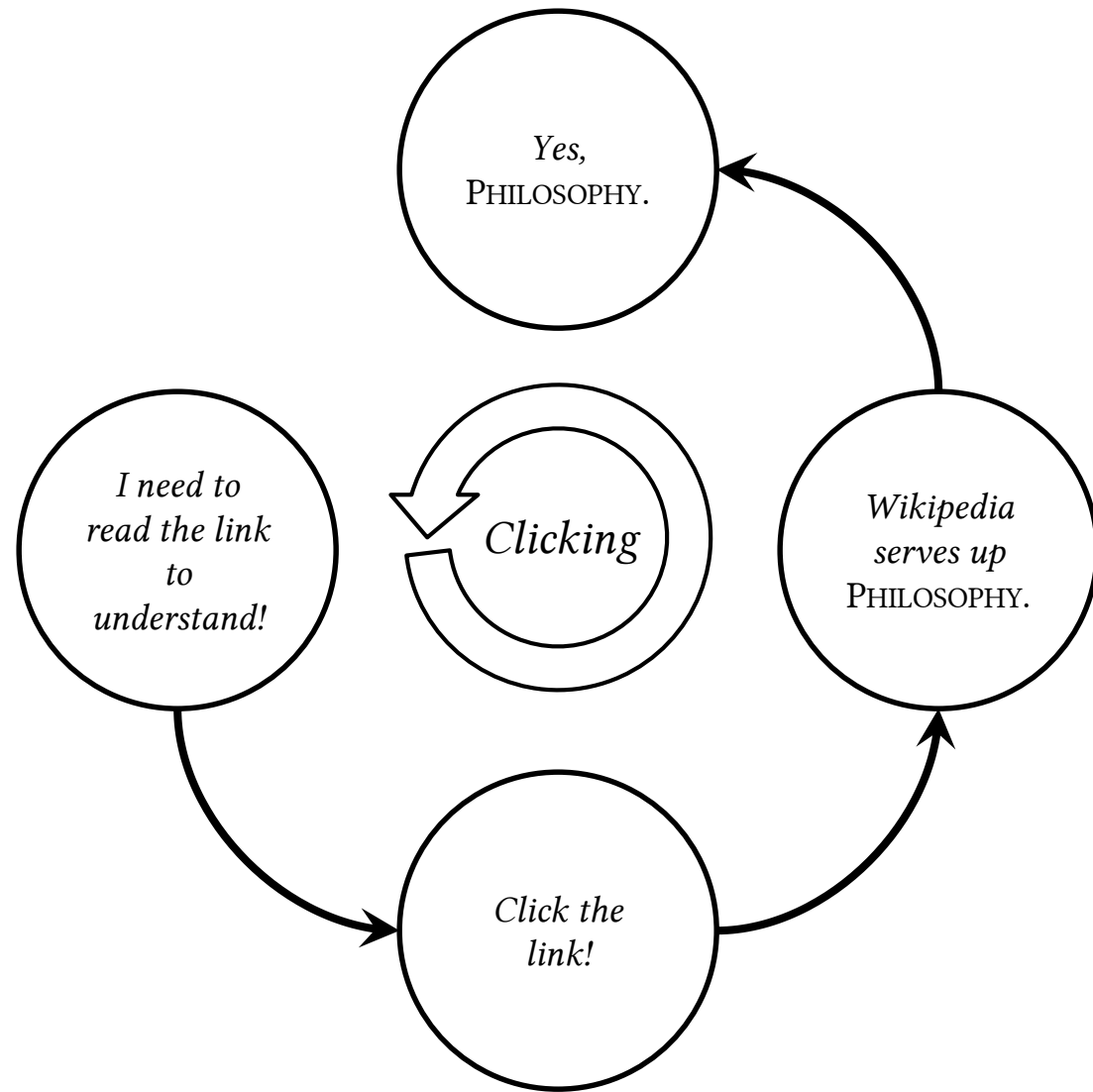


FIG. 2-2.

Wikipedia does a little bit to create a learning loop around reading. There is no discernable state being updated, and there is no scaffolding for the user to get better at reading Wikipedia.

The game of reading

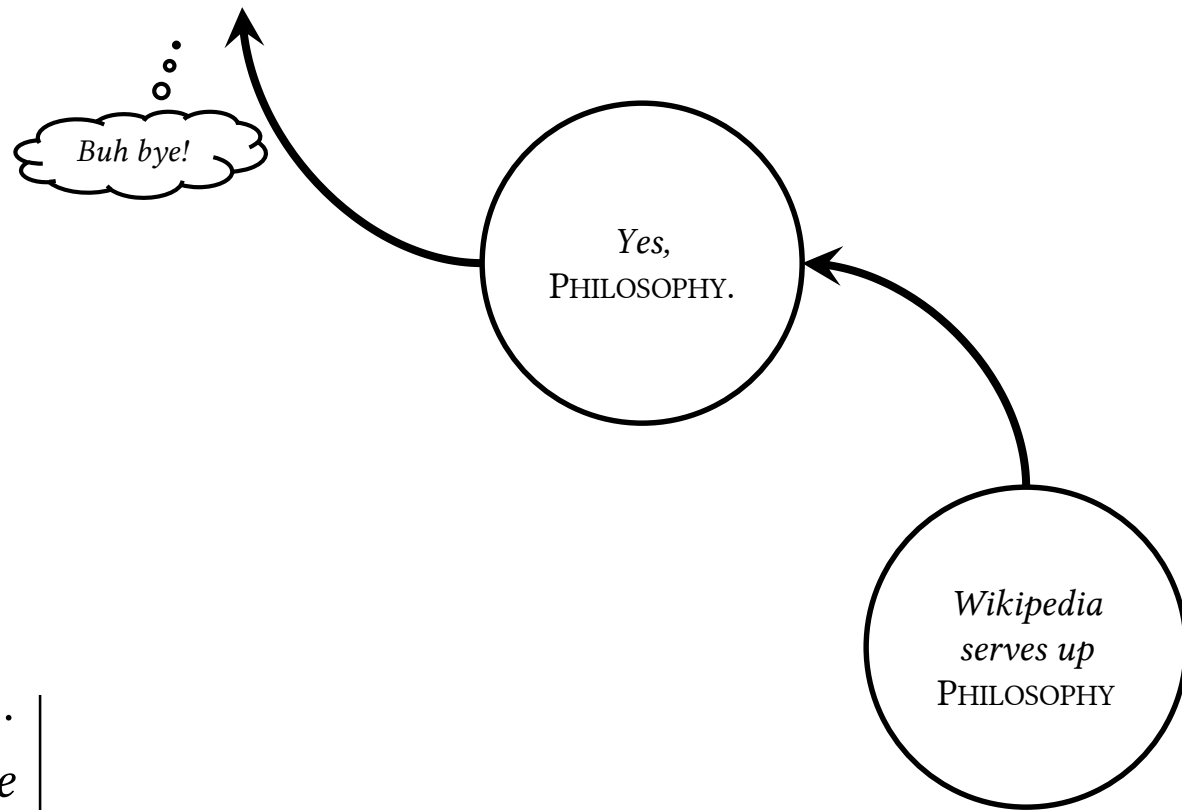


FIG. 2-2.

Wikipedia does a little bit to create a learning loop around reading. There is no discernable state being updated, and there is no scaffolding for the user to get better at reading Wikipedia.

The game of edits

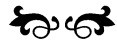
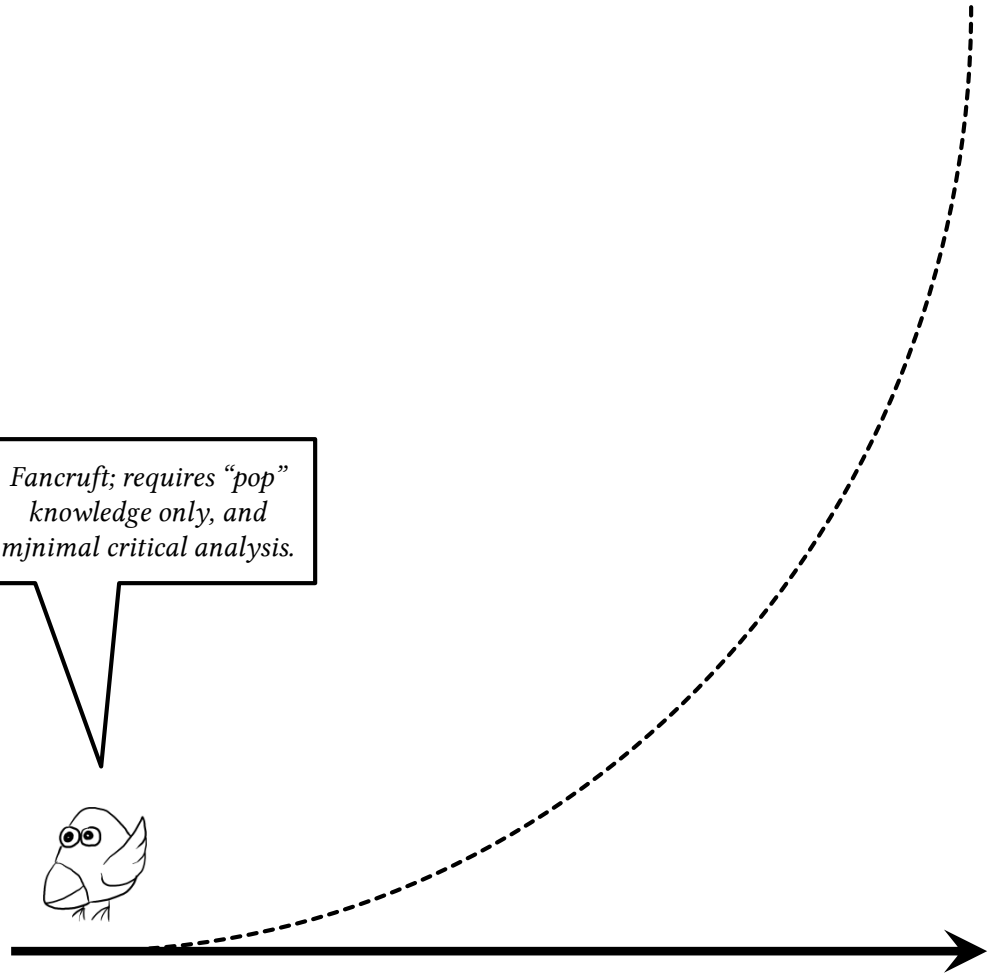


FIG. 2-3

Picture each edit as a monster, wherein low-knowledge edits are weak monsters like rats

Fancruft; requires “pop” knowledge only, and minimal critical analysis.



The game of edits

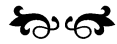
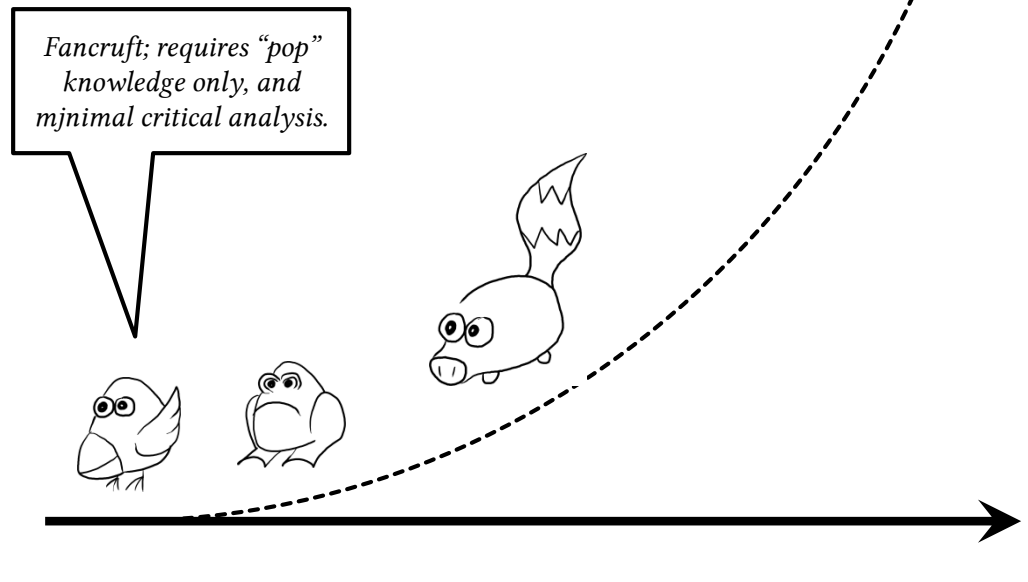


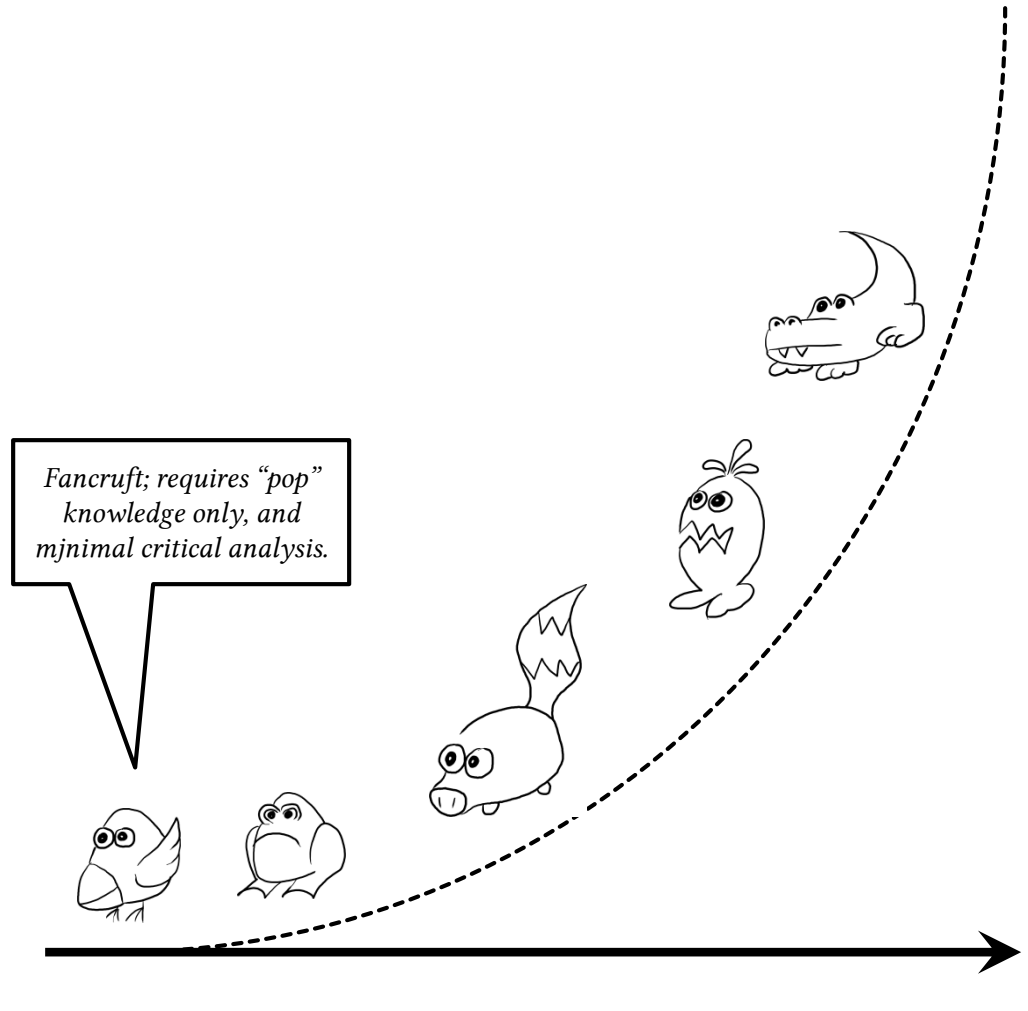
FIG. 2-3
Picture each edit as a monster, wherein low-knowledge edits are weak monsters like rats or frogs,



The game of edits



FIG. 2-3
Picture each edit as a monster, wherein low-knowledge edits are weak monsters like rats or frogs, and complex edits require high levels of subject matter knowledge.



The game of edits

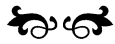
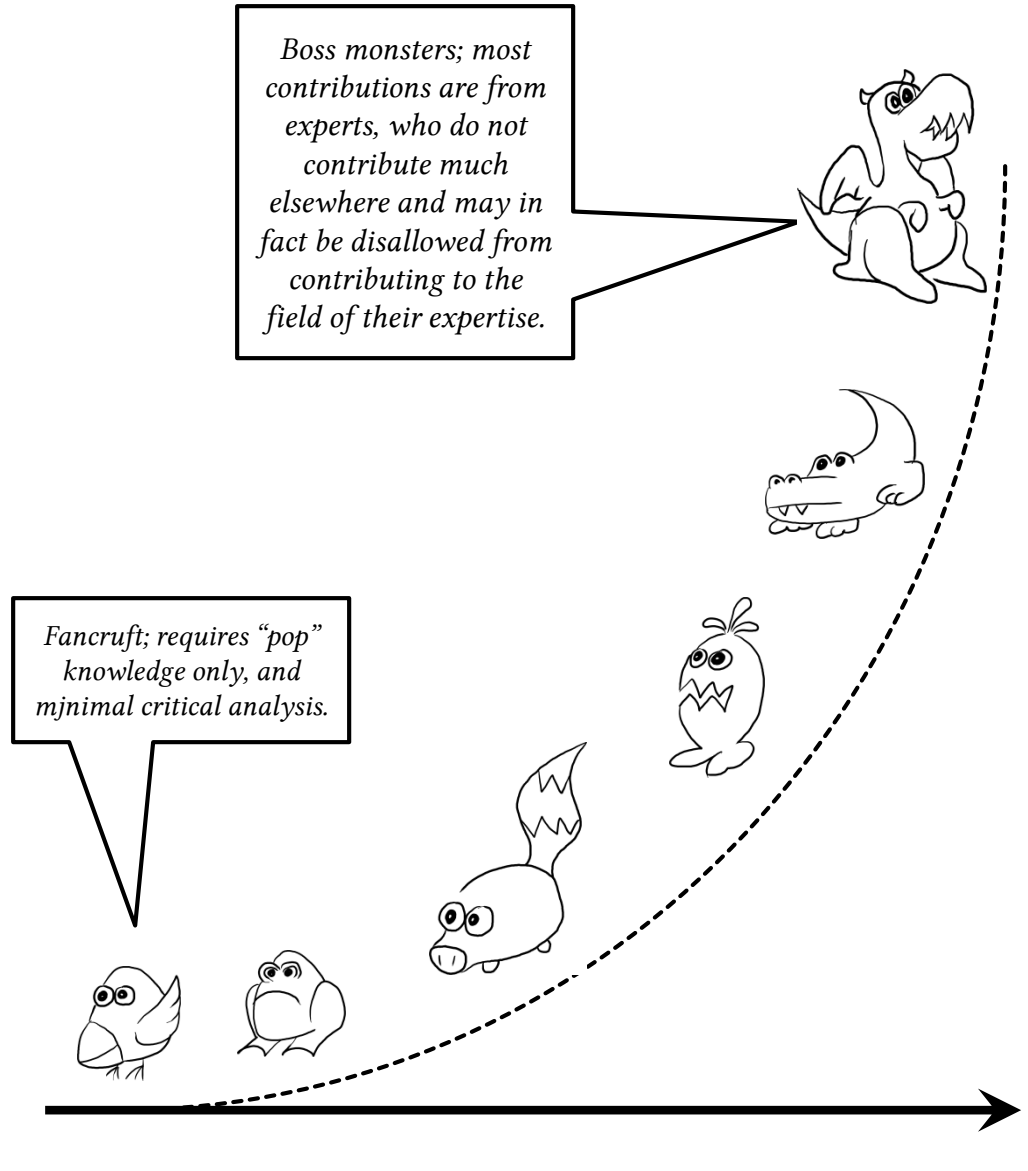


FIG. 2-3
Picture each edit as a monster, wherein low-knowledge edits are weak monsters like rats or frogs, and complex edits require high levels of subject matter knowledge.



*Or you could
switch tracks*

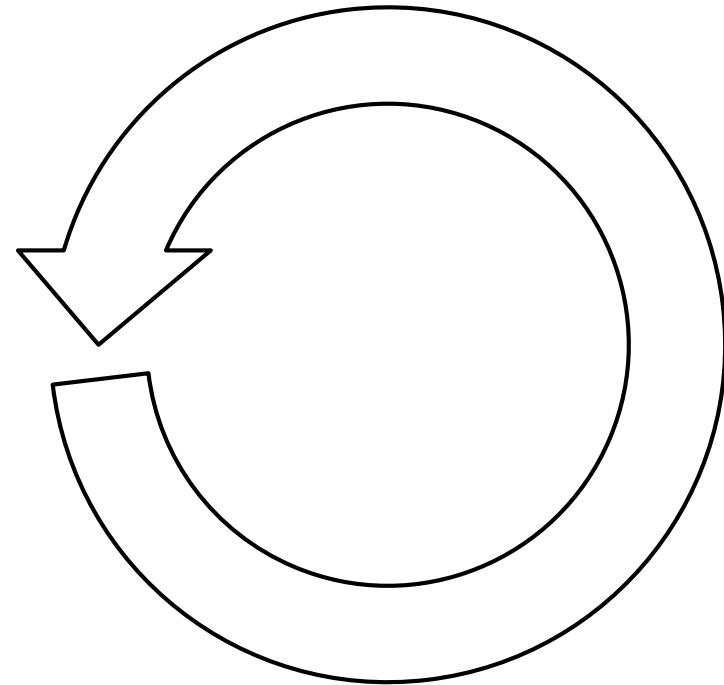


FIG. 2-4

*There is a clear game here,
one that WP:BURO
attempts to deny exists.*

*Or you could
switch tracks*

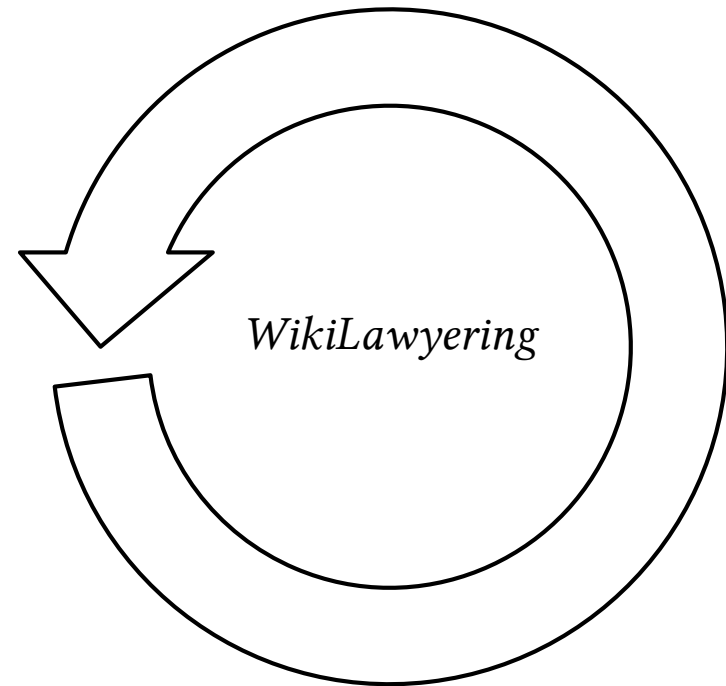


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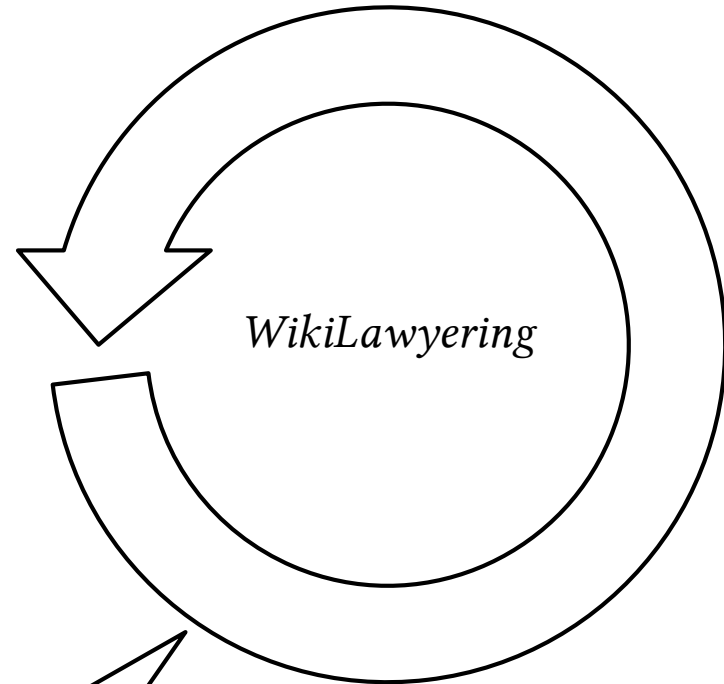
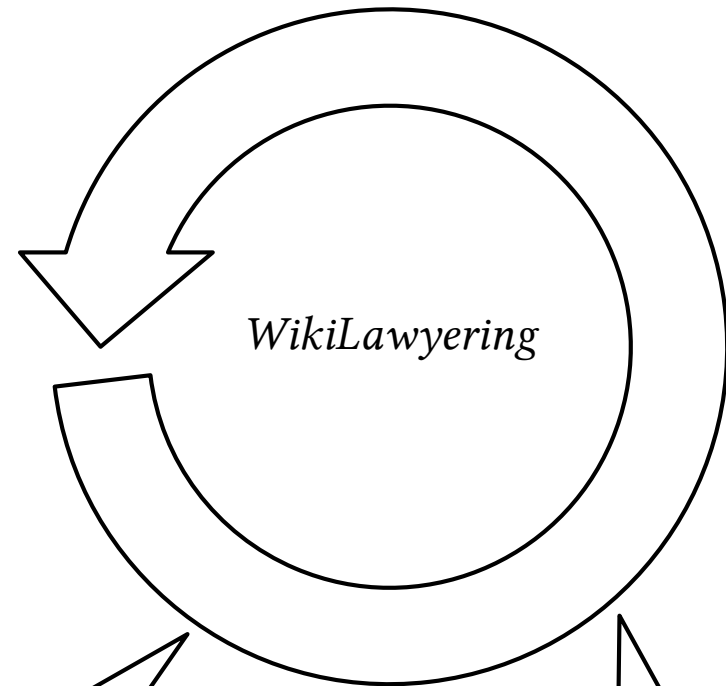
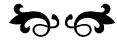


FIG. 2-4

*There is a clear game here,
one that WP:BURO
attempts to deny exists.*

*Many rules to learn with
fun WP:ACRONYMS.*

*Or you could
switch tracks*



*Many rules to learn with
fun WP:ACRONYMS.*

*Rhetorical persuasive
skills and writing ability.*

FIG. 2-4

*There is a clear game here,
one that WP:BURO
attempts to deny exists.*

*Or you could
switch tracks*

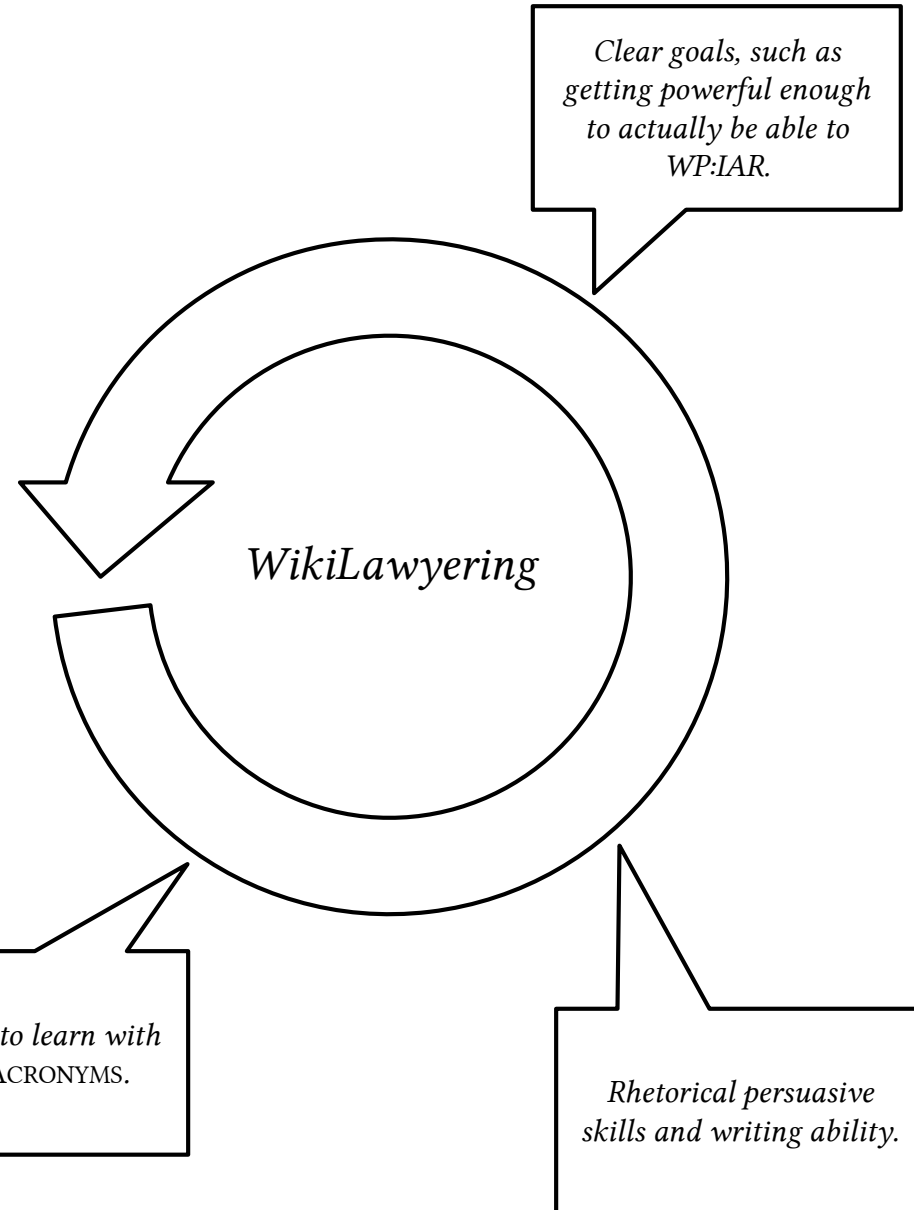
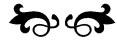


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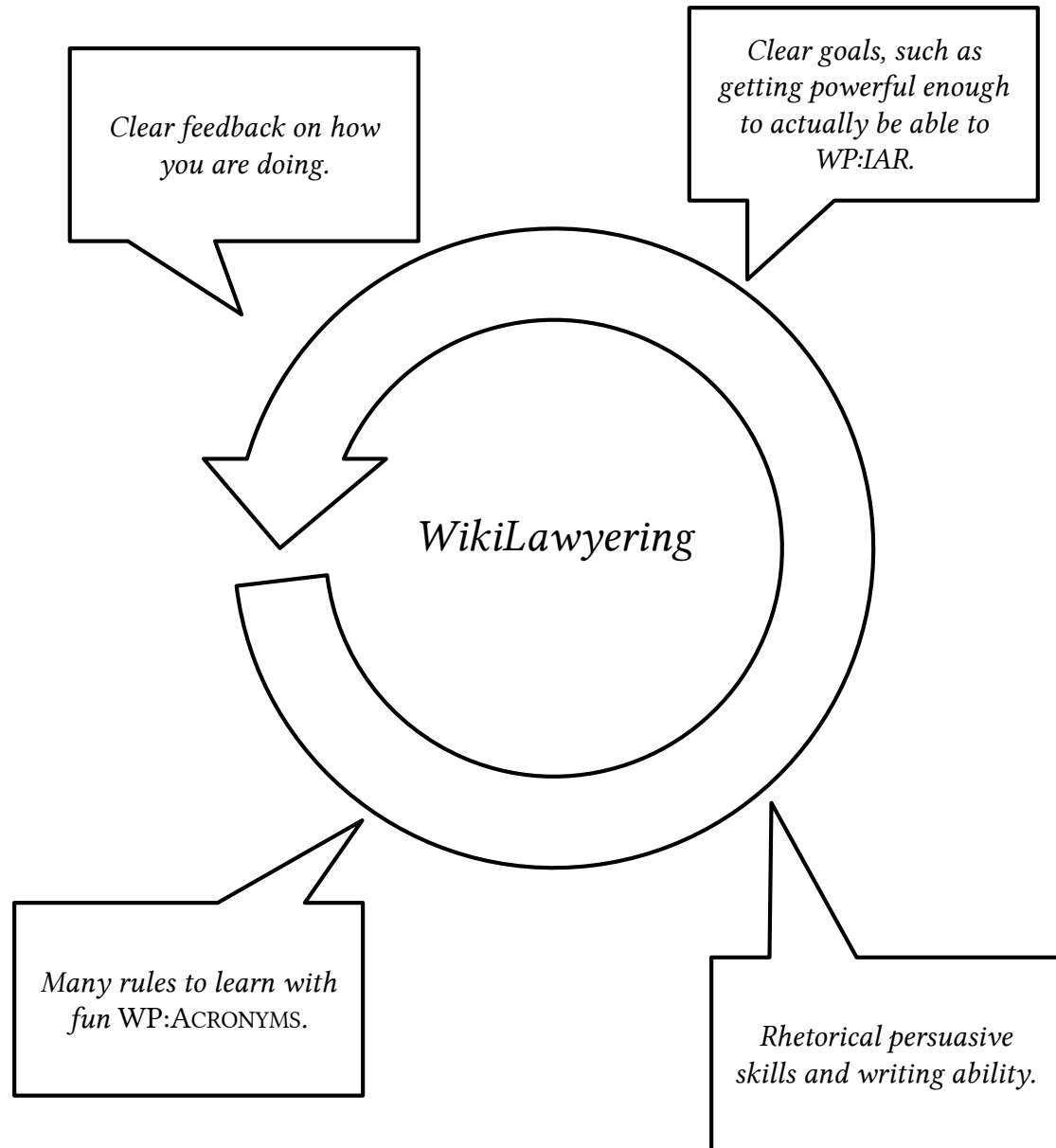
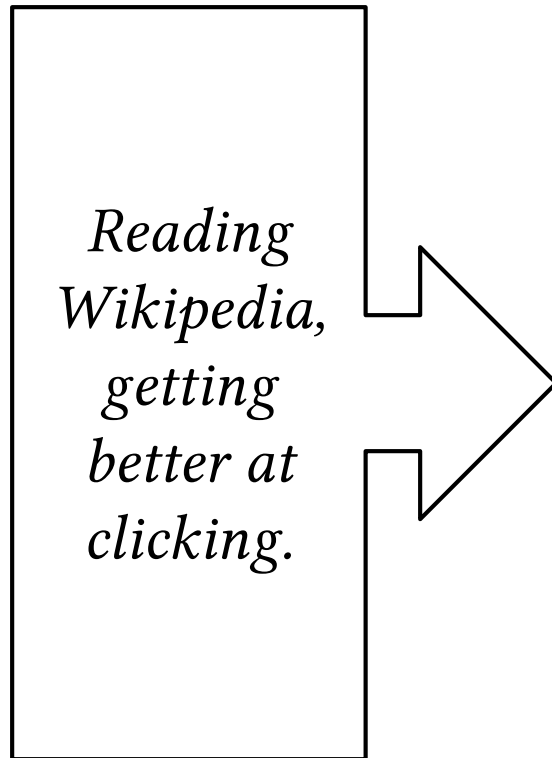


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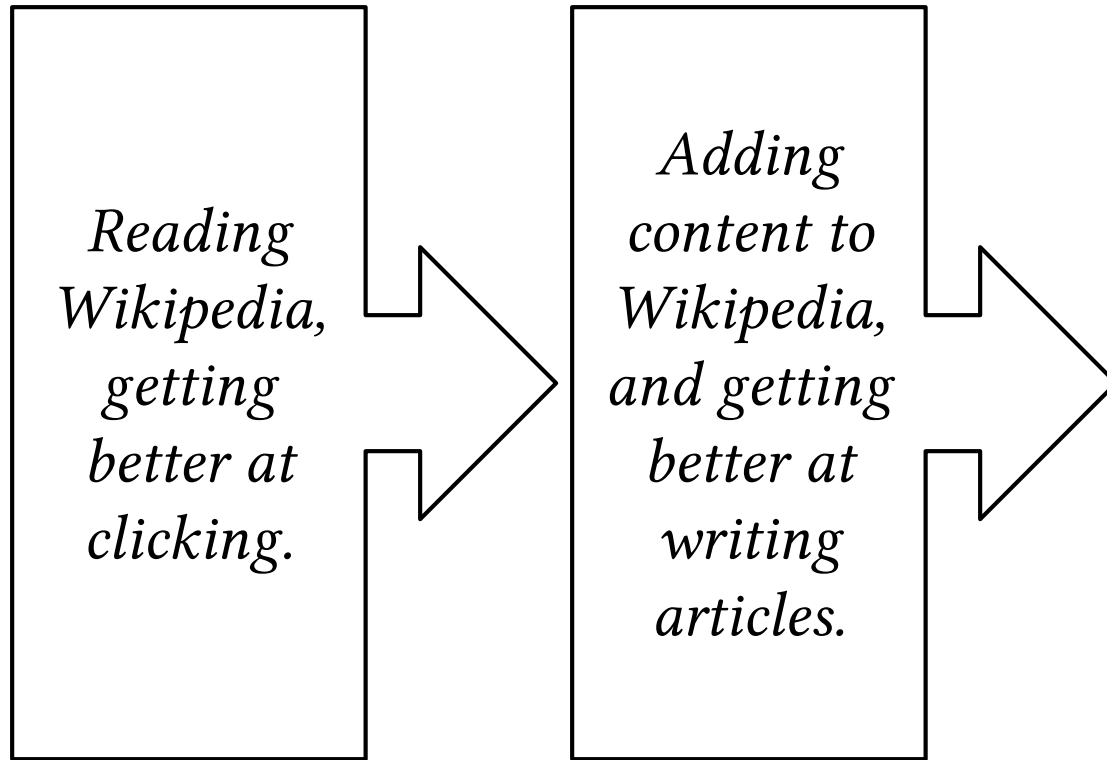
♣ IN WHICH WE EXAMINE WHY WIKIPEDIA MAY BE A BROKEN GAME

Tuning Your Game



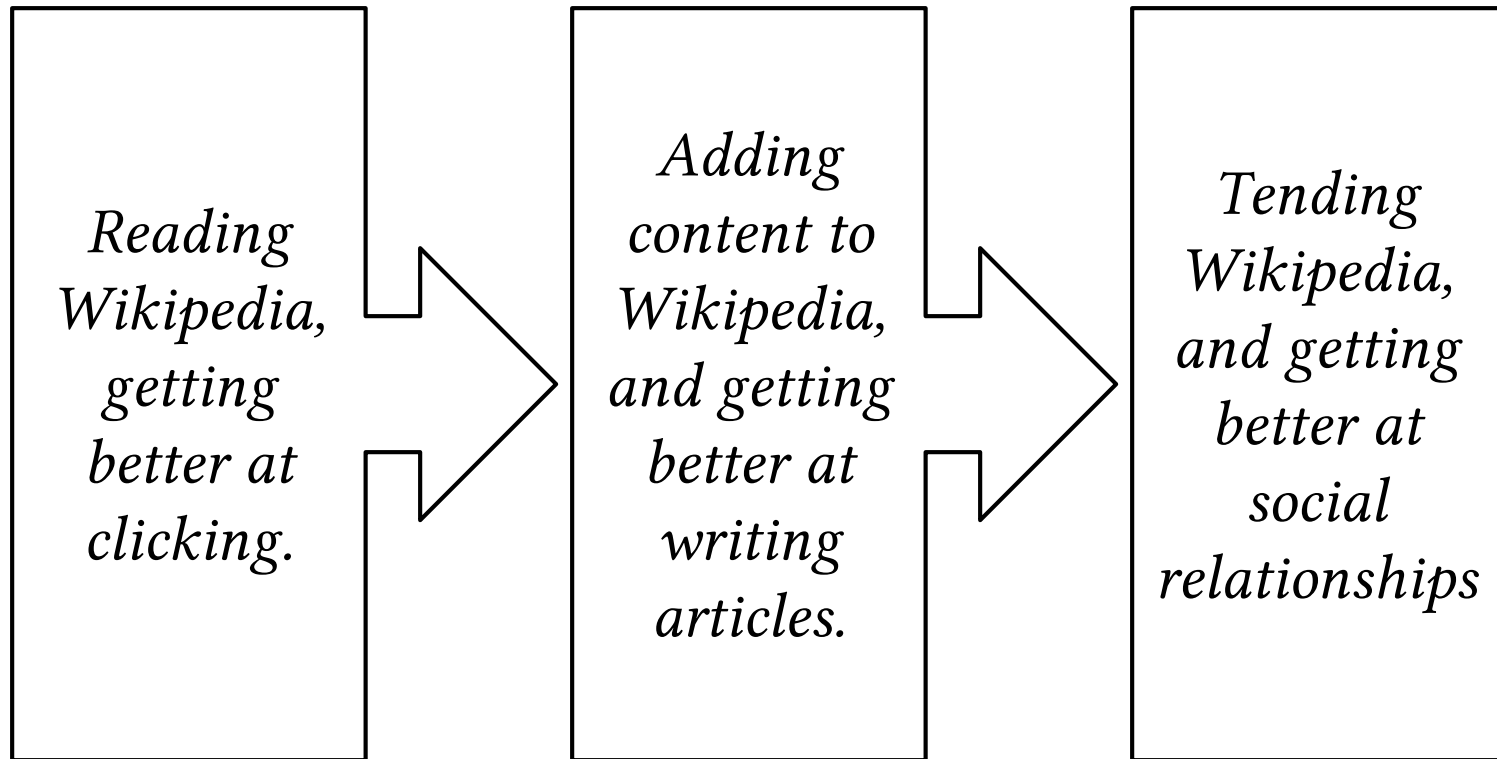
🐞 FIG. 3-1

You will always get newbie readers thanks to external incentives. That said, Wikipedia could dramatically increase its utility if it paid more attention to reader audience, syllabus-style ordering of content, etc.



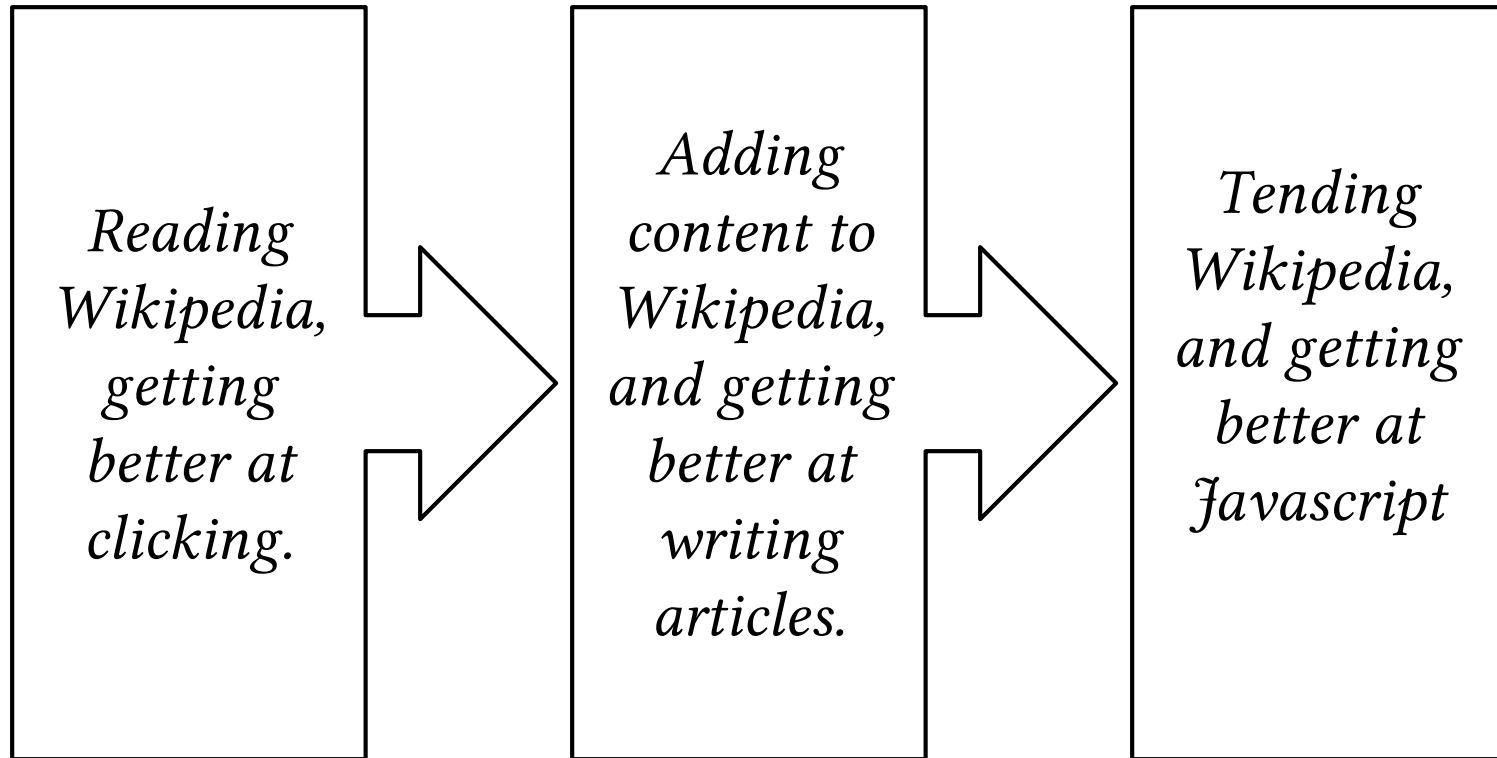
🐞 FIG. 3-1

About which more in a moment.



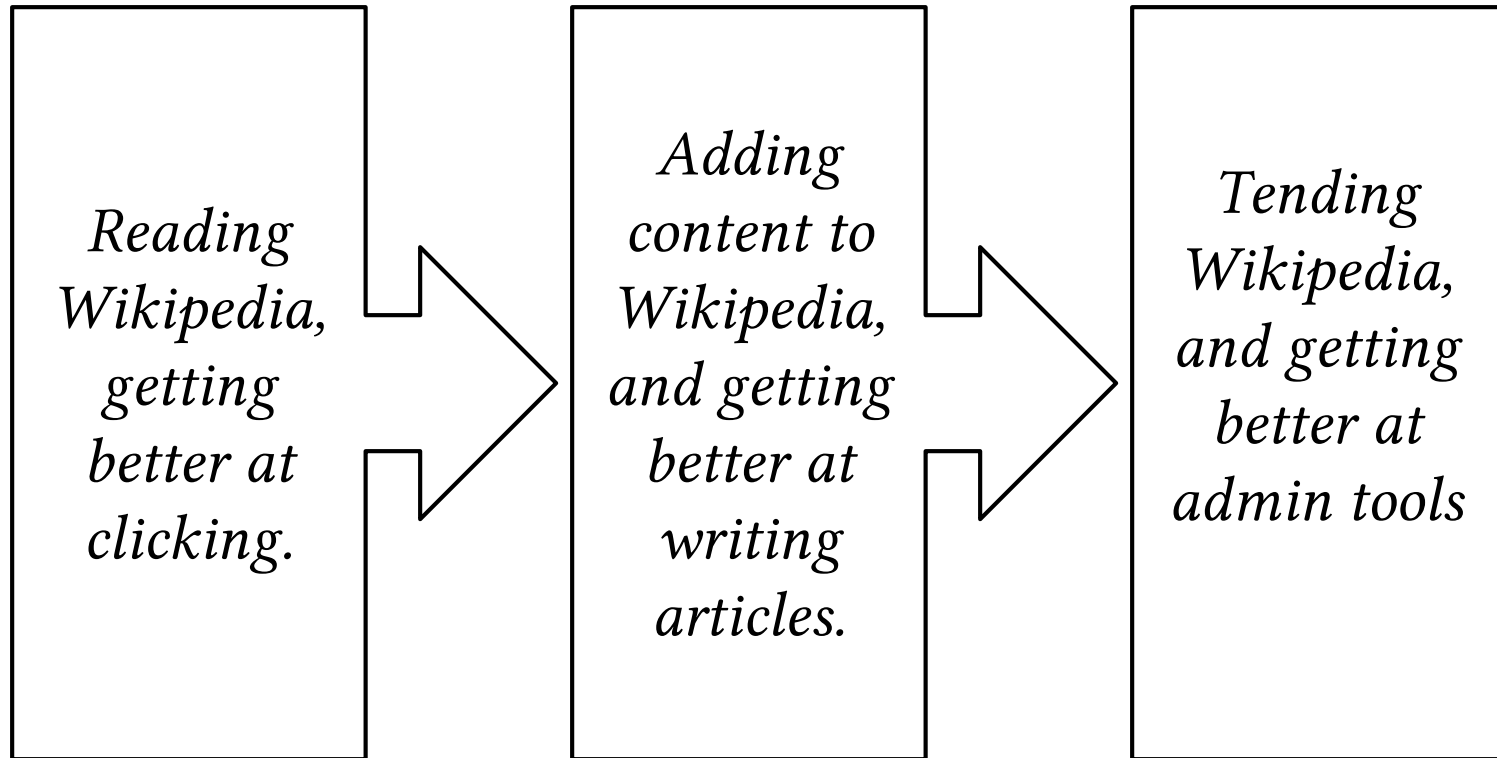
🐞 FIG. 3-1

The admin game.



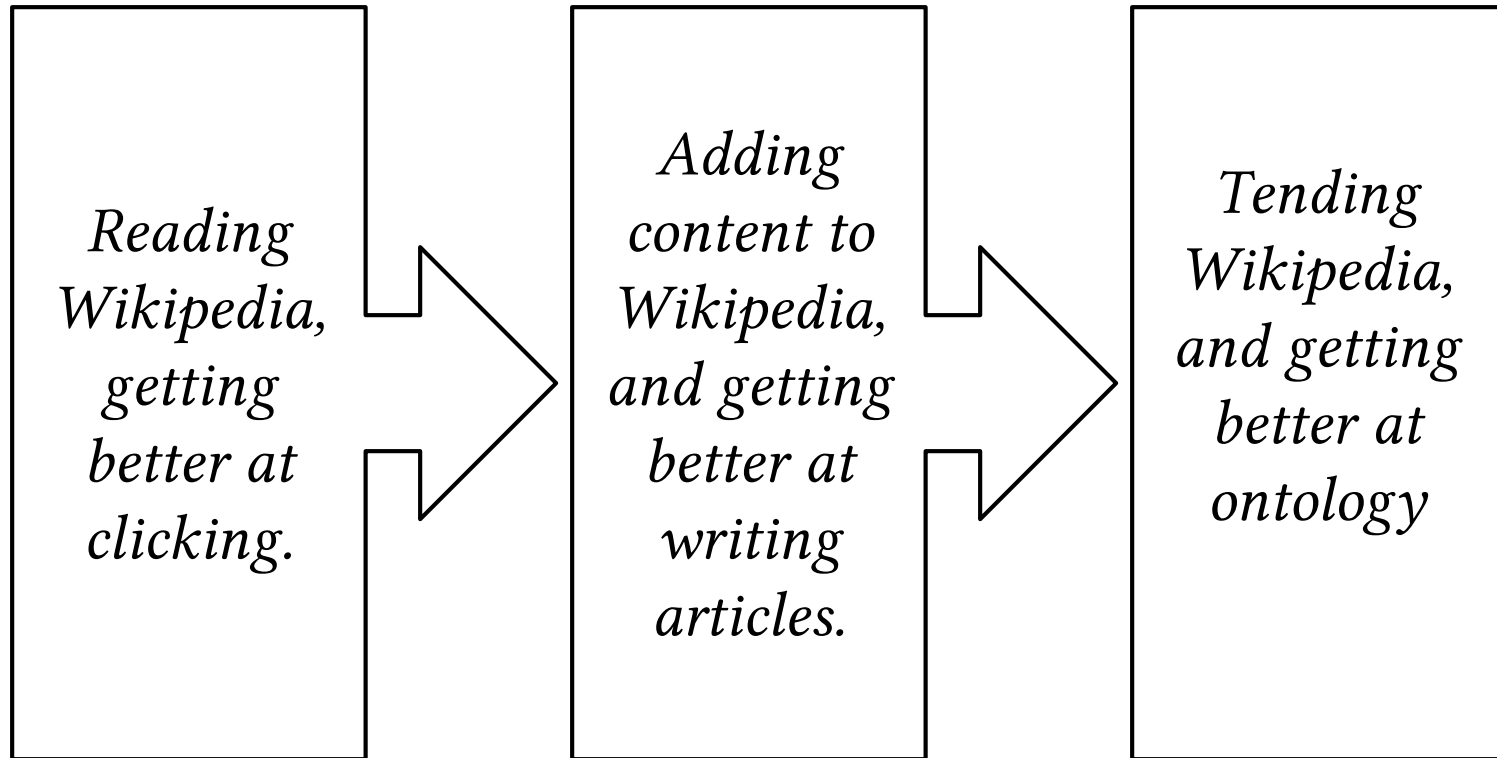
🐞 FIG. 3-1

The admin game.



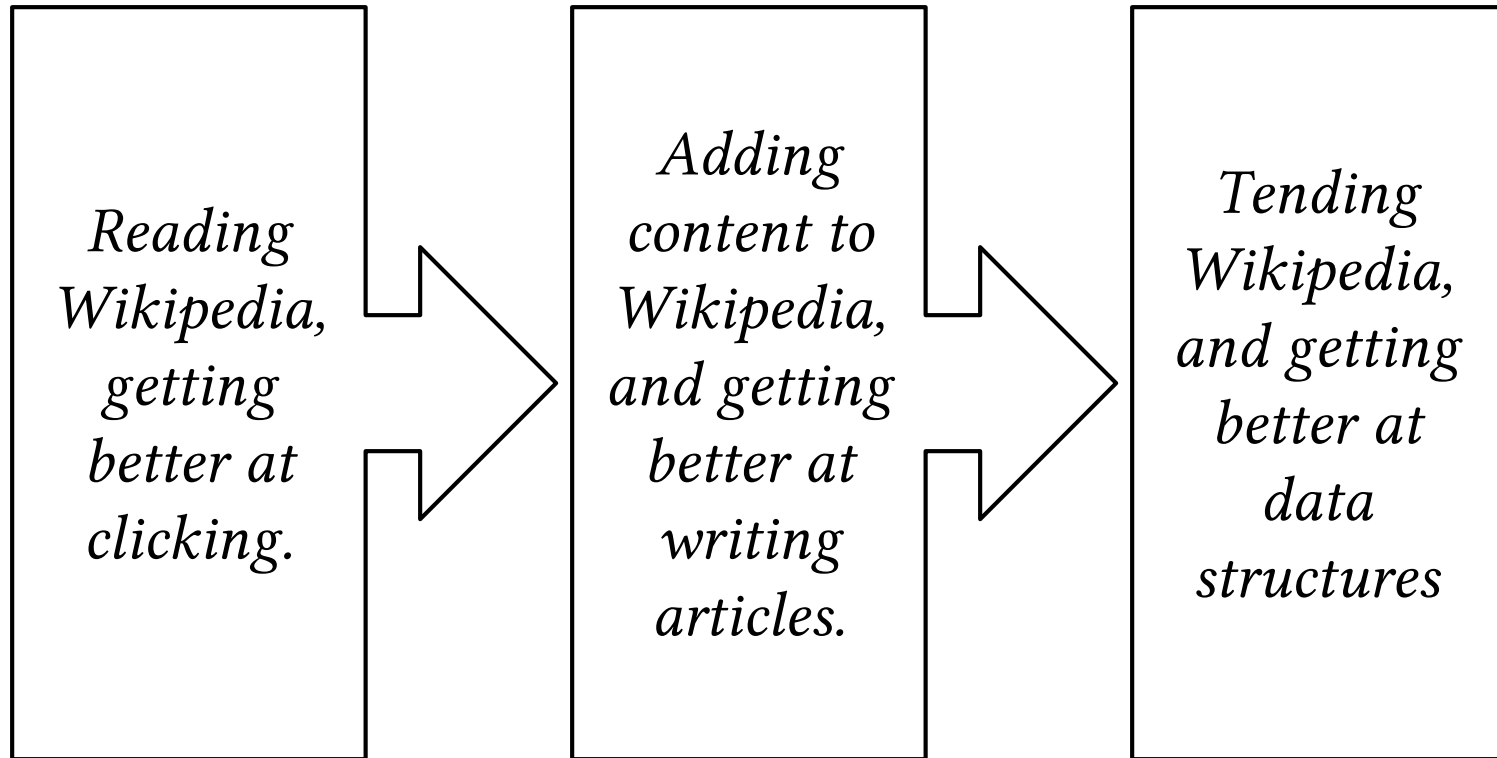
🐞 FIG. 3-1

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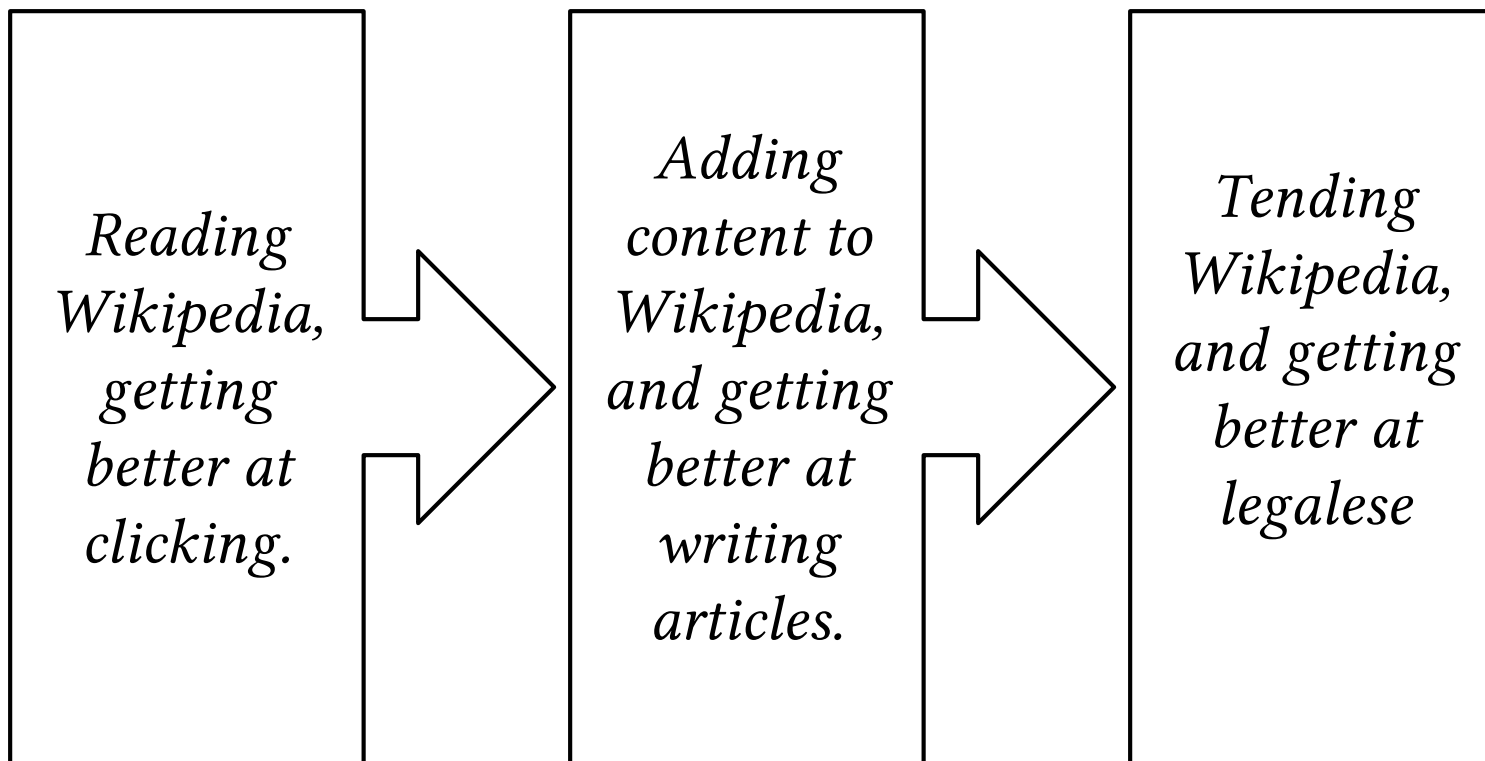
🐞 FIG. 3-1

The admin game.



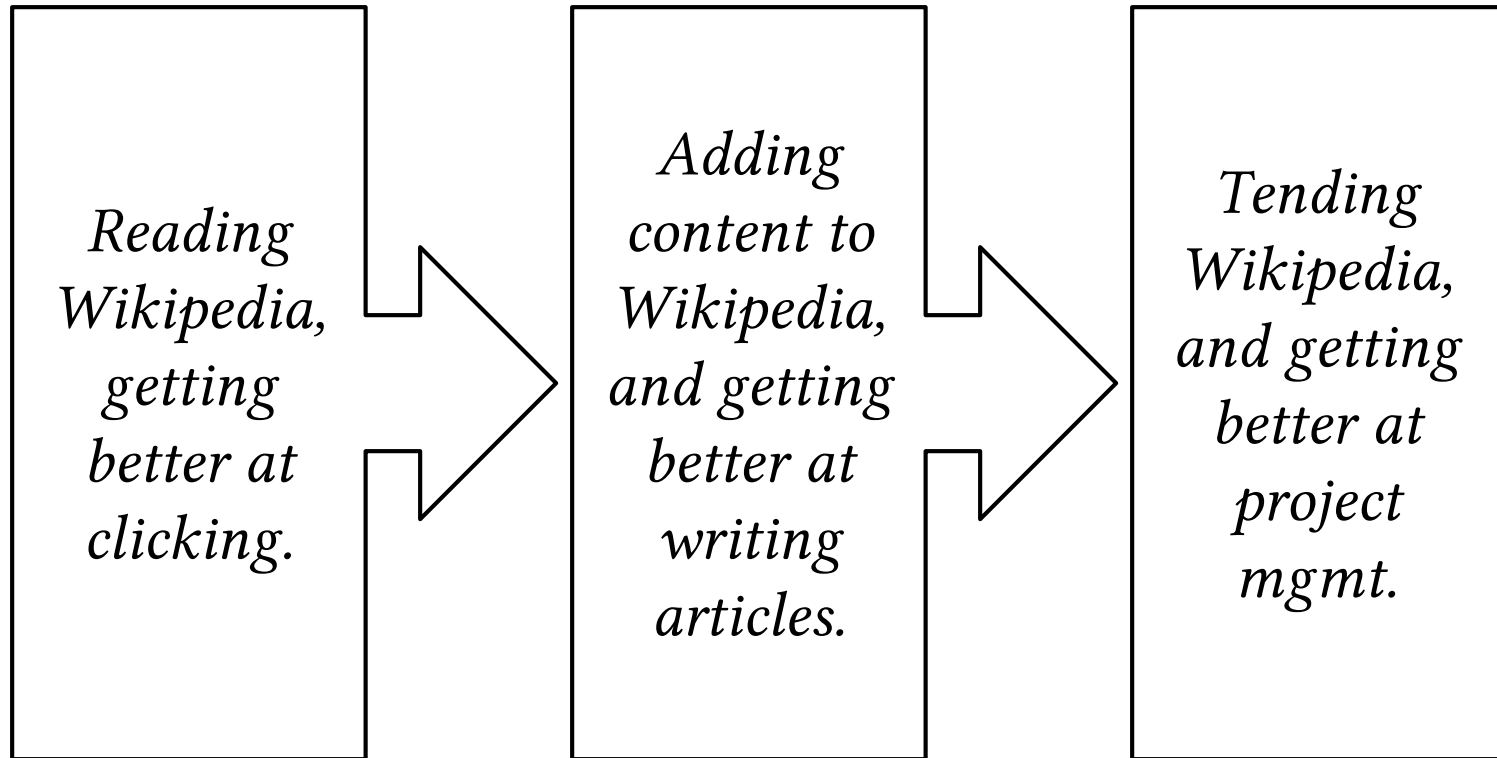
🐞 FIG. 3-1

The admin game.



🐞 FIG. 3-1

The admin game.



🐞 FIG. 3-1

The admin game.

*Reading
Wikipedia,
getting
better at
clicking.*

*Adding
content to
Wikipedia,
and getting
better at
writing
articles.*

*Tending
Wikipedia,
and getting
better at
project
mgmt.*

🦄 FIG. 3-1

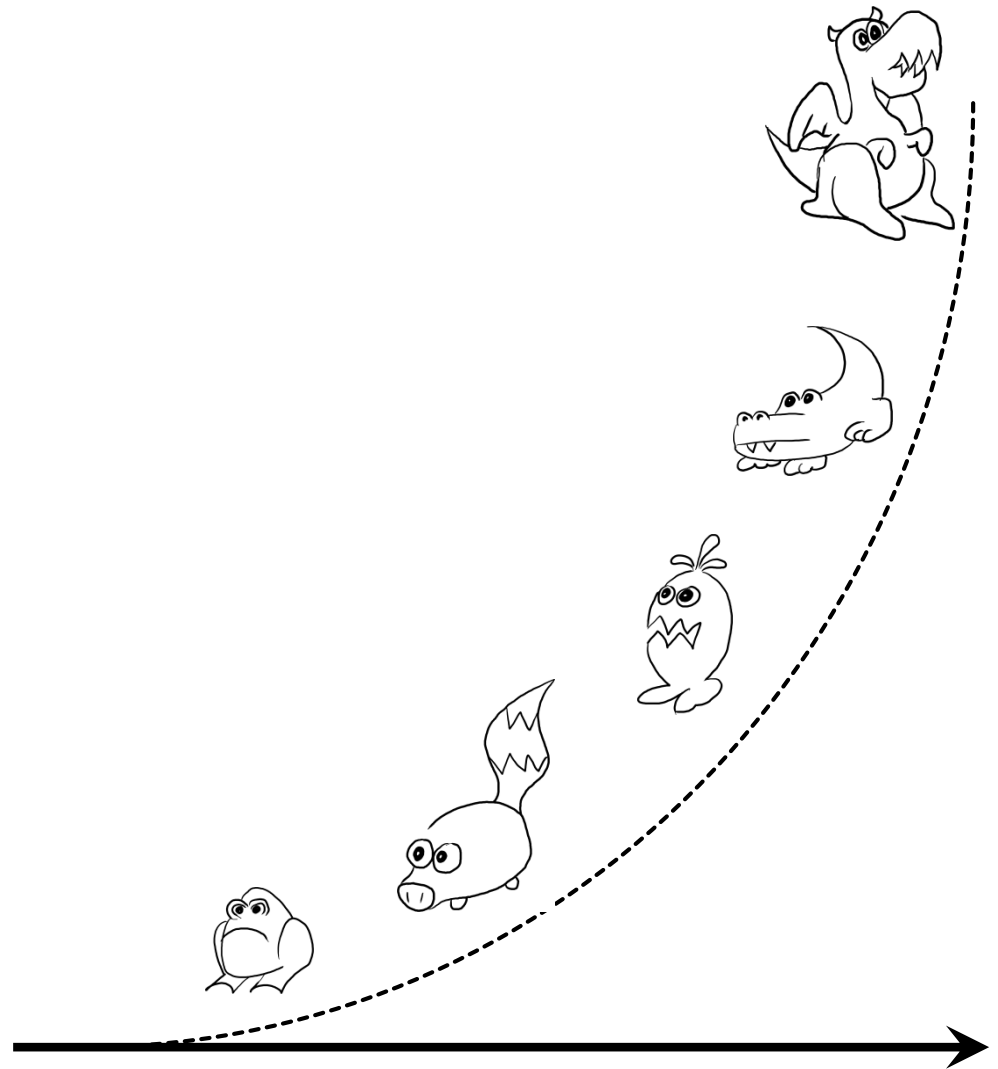
And, of course, in practice migration paths are few.

Knowledge does not respawn



FIG. 3-2

*This game is 100% made of
consumable content.*



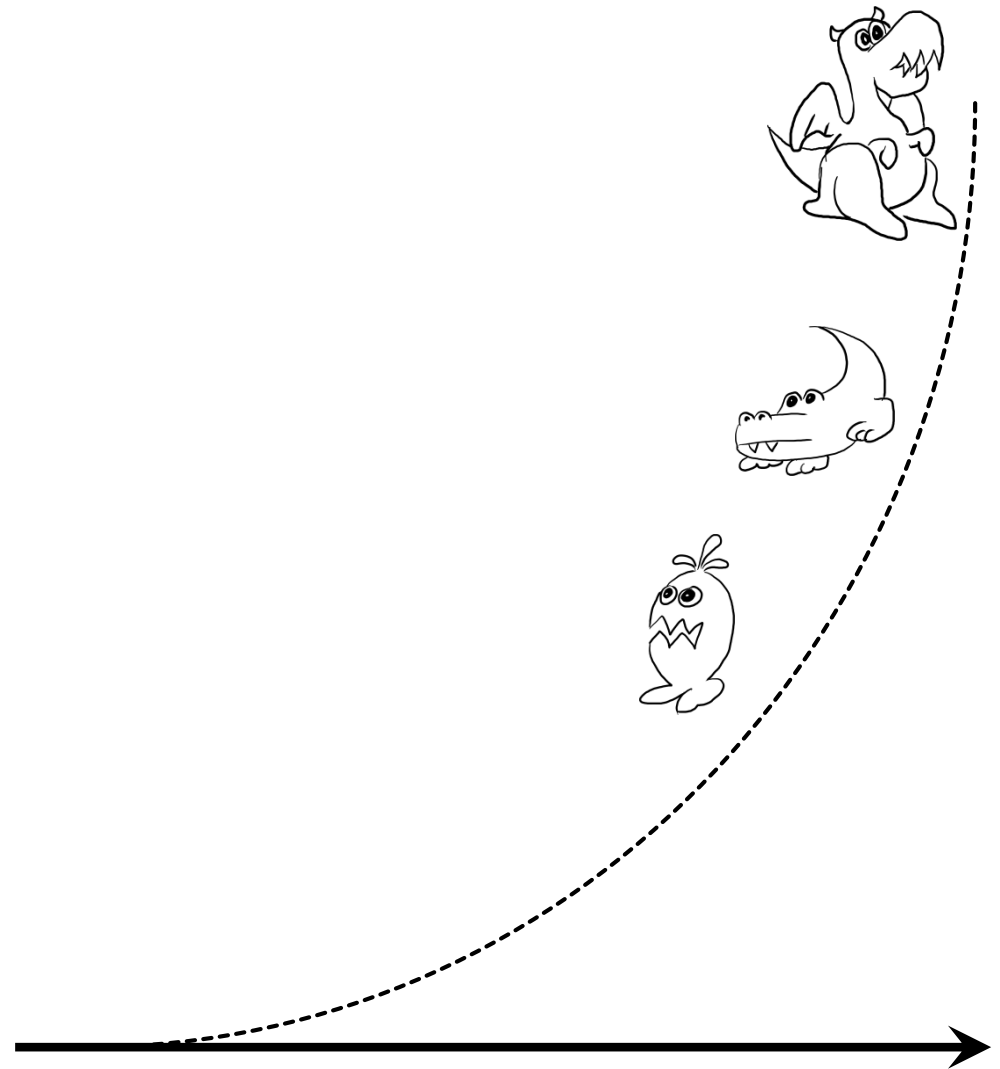
Knowledge does not respawn



FIG. 3-2

*This game is 100% made of
consumable content.*

*New content is only added
at the rate that human
knowledge is added.*



Knowledge does not respawn

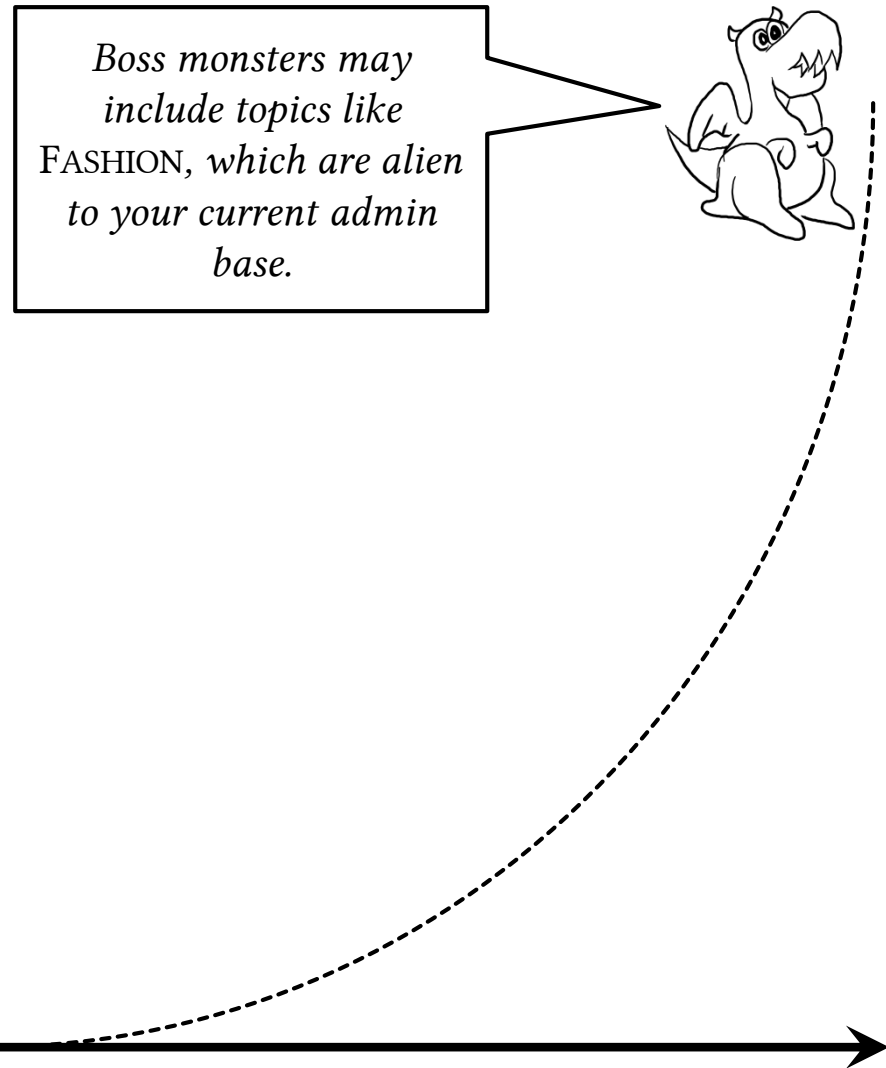


FIG. 3-2

This game is 100% made of consumable content.

New content is only added at the rate that human knowledge is added.

All the good newbie monsters are extinct.

Knowledge does not respawn



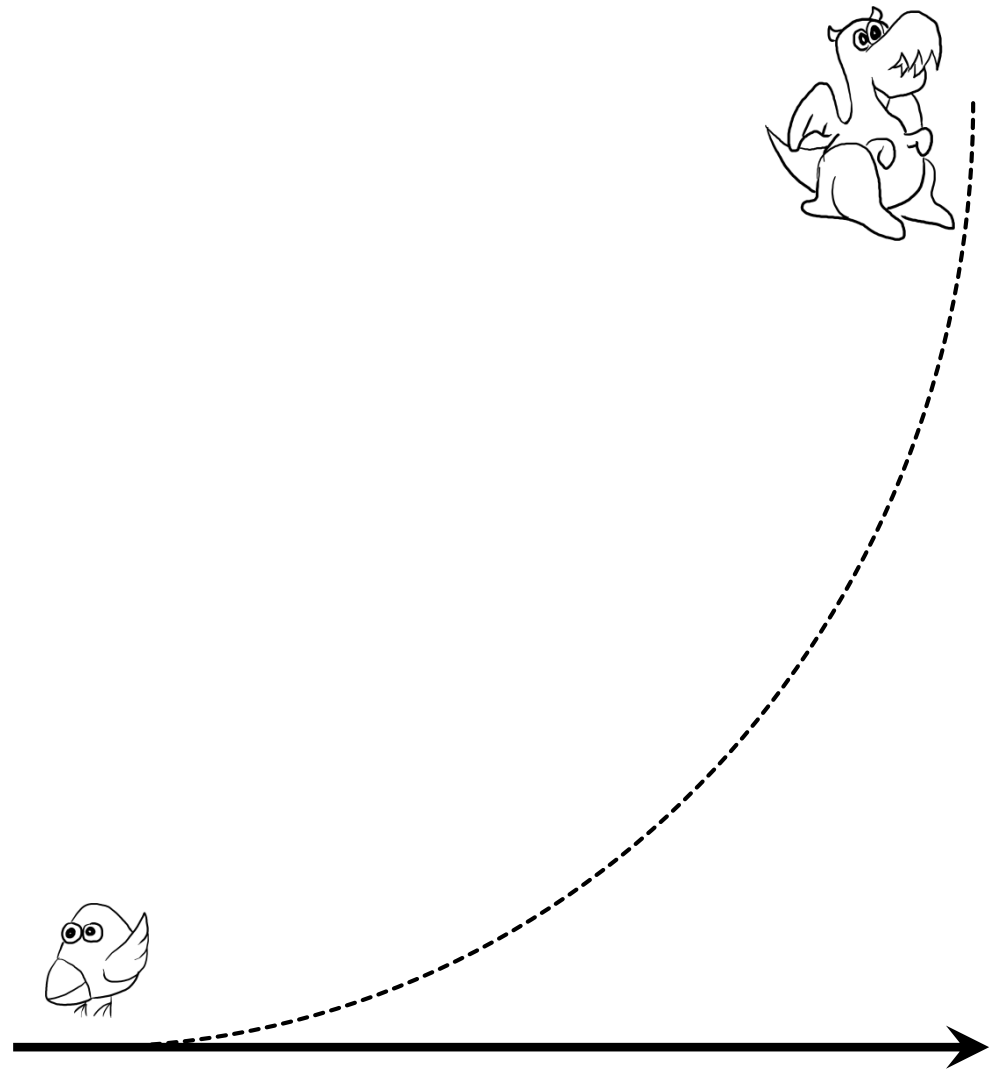
FIG. 3-2

*This game is 100% made of
consumable content.*

*New content is only added
at the rate that human
knowledge is added.*

*All the good newbie
monsters are extinct.*

*Hence new players are
driven to fancruft.*



Knowledge does not respawn



FIG. 3-2

*This game is 100% made of consumable content.
New content is only added at the rate that human knowledge is added.
All the good newbie monsters are extinct.
Hence new players are driven to fancruft.*

Which you then delete.



Objectivity problems



- There's a natural cap in all fields
 - At the pinnacle of fields, we all know each other; conflicts of interest and original research abound.
- Lack of popularity for subjects implies a lack of contemporaneous scholarly attention
 - But people who were there are often not considered valid sources.¹

¹ A requirement for filtration through a scholar or print is the norm. As I fall under WP:SPS, I contribute to Wikipedia by not contributing to Wikipedia.

Flaws in the loop

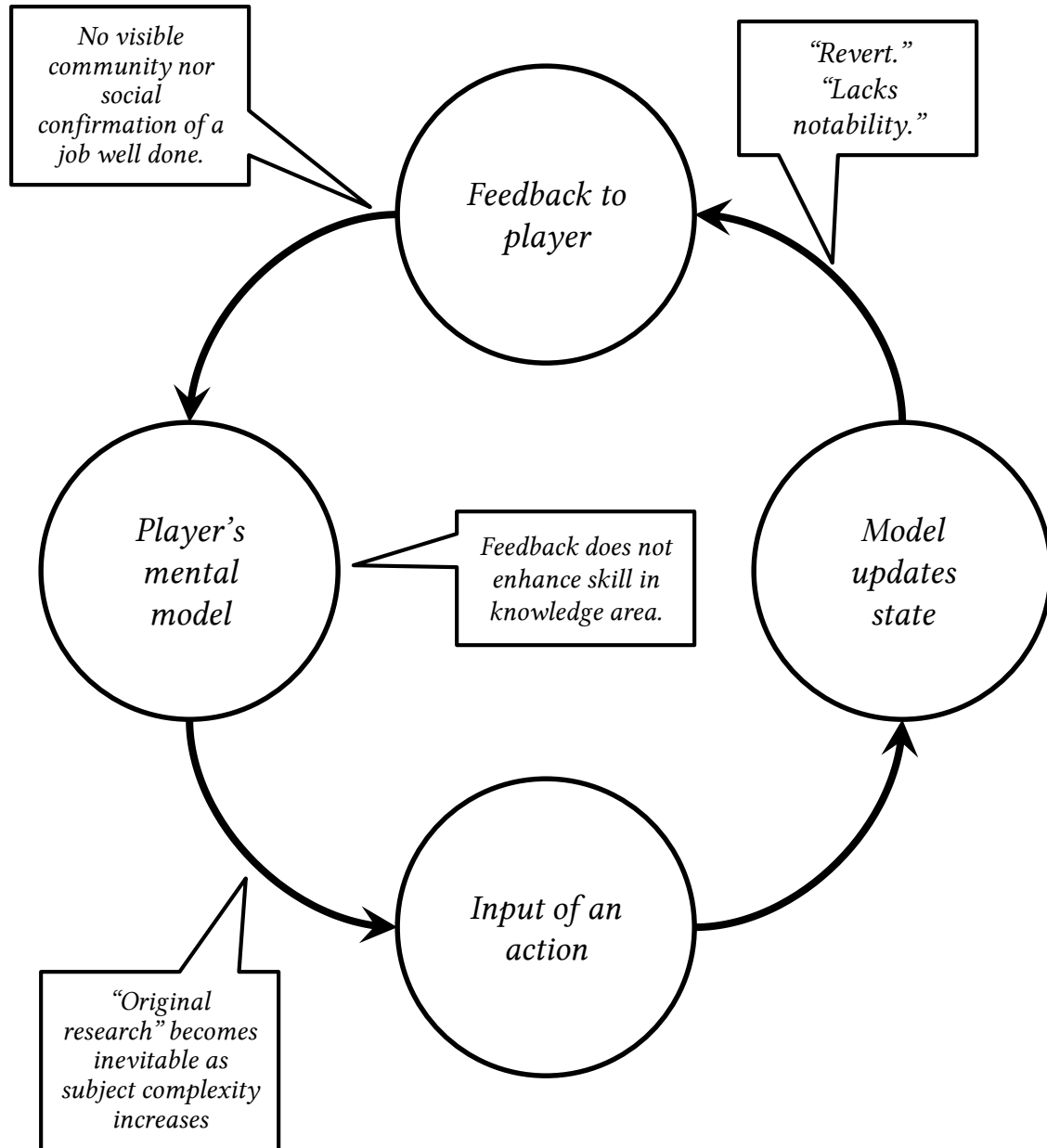
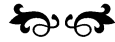


FIG. 3-1.

Improvement in the game of edits is outside the loop; input grows more difficult or obscure as you advance; feedback is low to negative. Positive feedback for a novice would congratulate them on an edit that remains, for example.

Culture clash: WikiFauna



FIG. 3-2
*Clockwise from top left:
WikiElf, WikiOgre,
WikiKnight,
WikiGnome,
WikiFairy. These
archetypes generally
refer to experienced
admin editors, and
serve as a metagame
for them to play.*

Culture clash: WikiFauna



FIG. 3-3

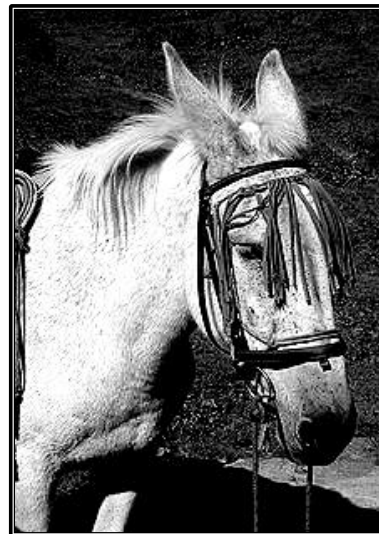
In contrast, casual editors are largely portrayed as helpless, or things to be killed: barbarians, dodos, goblins, puppies, kittens, the sexist trope “WikiPrincess,” and the revelatory “WikiKing,” described as “a not-yet-encultured over-enthusiastic contribution to a particular subject.”



“They think of Wikipedia as a social networking site.”



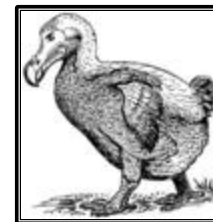
“Uses the Wiki primarily for socializing.”



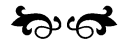
“Edit in good faith, are wrong, newcomers.”



“They act based on curiosity.”



“Good-natured, new, naive.”

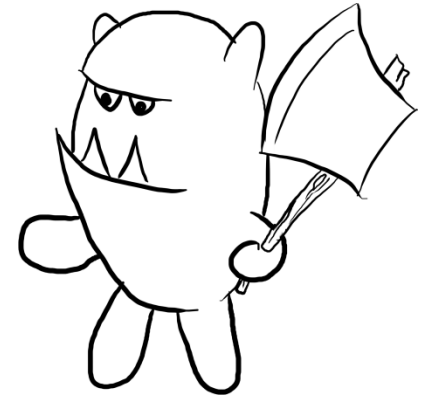


- Editors mostly block, revert, and rearrange
 - They tend a garden
 - And prevent contributions that are inept
- Which is fine unless you are a novice adding content

*Admins are monsters!*¹

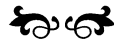


- Editors mostly block, revert, and rearrange
 - They tend a garden
 - And prevent contributions that are inept
- Which is fine unless you are a novice adding content
- You are the orcs!
- The bots are the dire wolves.



¹ In the game played by casual editors or novices.

Games have had these issues too

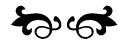


- Admins as in-crowd.
- Consumable content, or the need to reset everything.
- Player class issues including lack of interdependence, lack of progression paths.
- Learning curves & tutorial issues.
- Pure skill games limiting accessibility.

♣ BEING A CATALOG OF COMMON DESIGN TROPES

Solutions Other Games Used

Admins playing games



- Most game services bar admins from engaging with the game proper.
 - But what is your game?
- A strong sense of culture must be imposed and policed.
- Rights over rules.

Player class issues

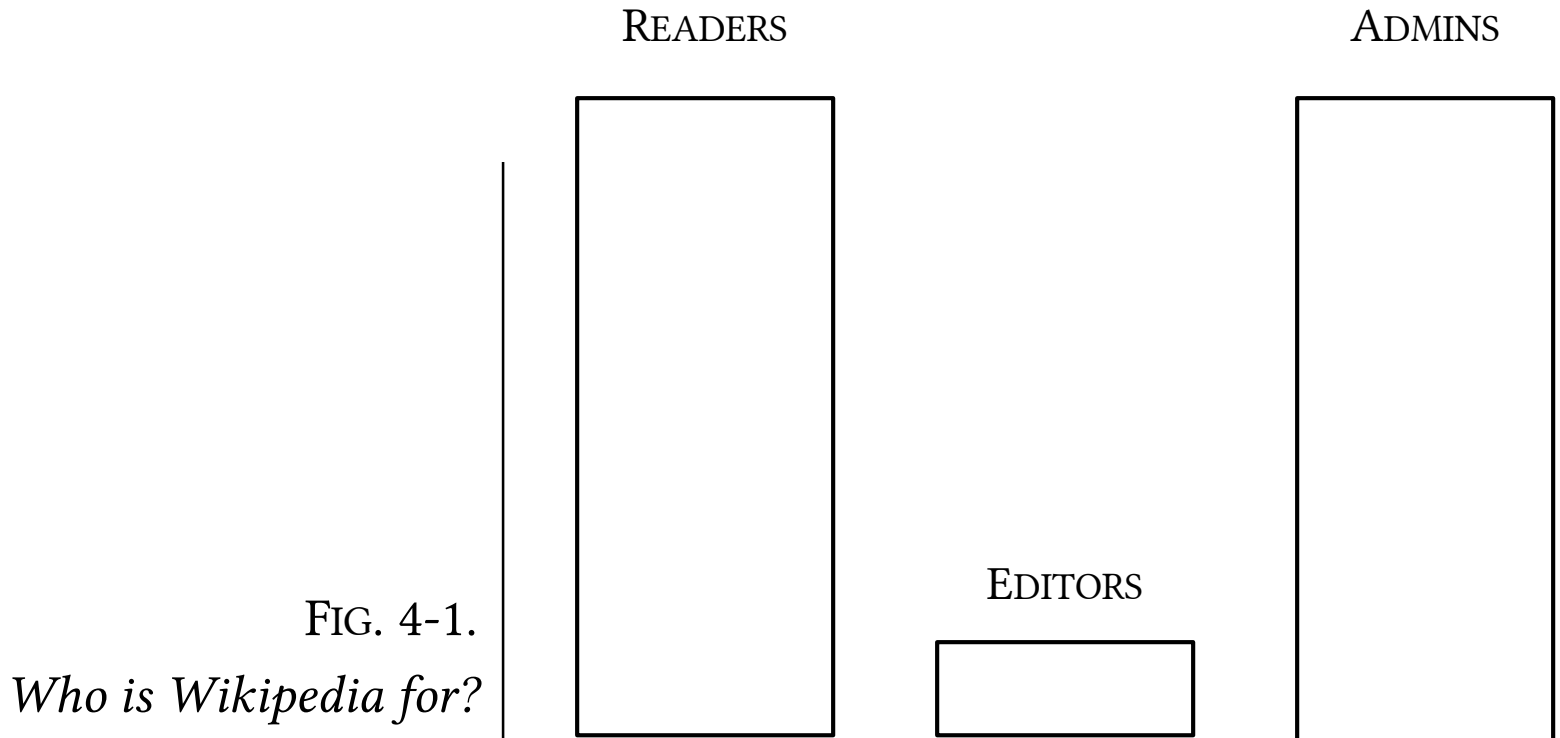
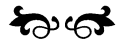


FIG. 4-1.

Who is Wikipedia for?

Player class

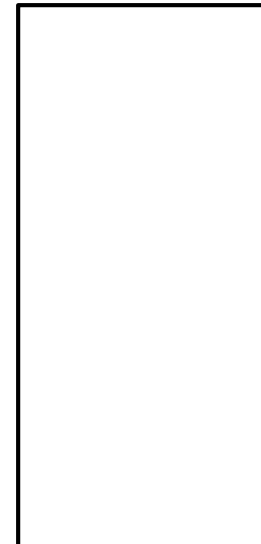
issues



READERS



EDITORS



ADMINS



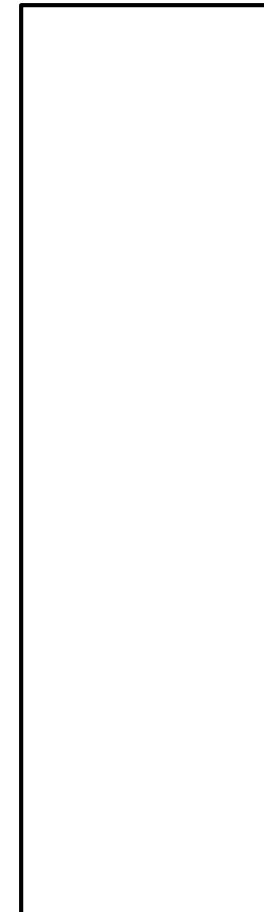
FIG. 4-2.

One hypothesis: it is for readers to better learn with.

Player class issues



EDITORS



READERS



ADMINS



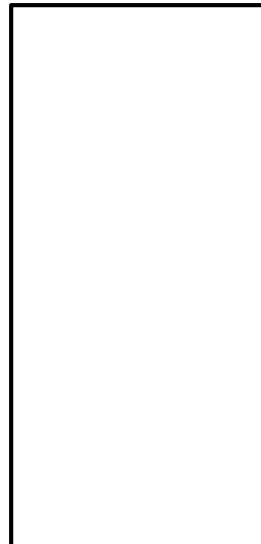
FIG. 4-3.

*A different hypothesis: it is
to encourage readers to
learn the ways of
scholarship and
community.*

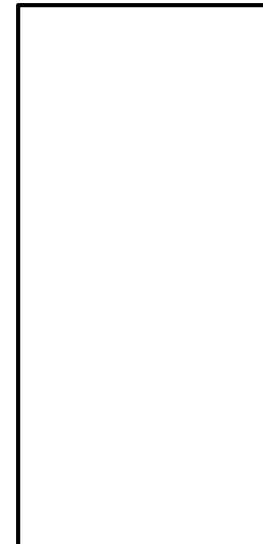
Player class issues



LEARNERS



TEACHERS



MENTORS

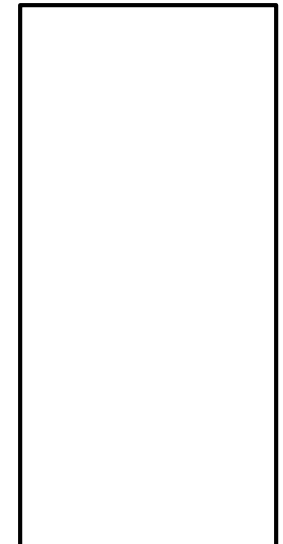
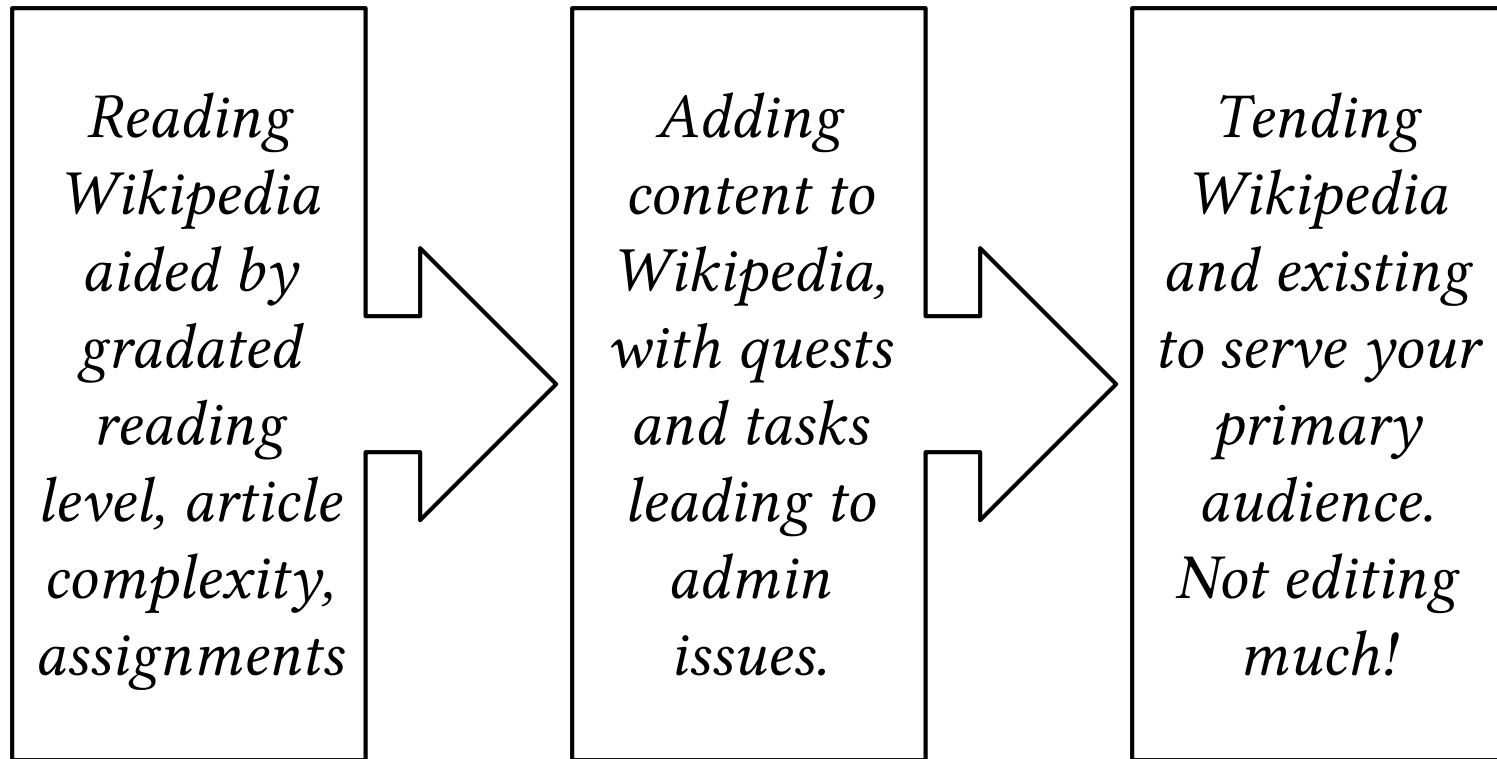


FIG. 4-4.

*Regardless, coming to clear
understanding of roles
will only help in creating
symbiotic relationships
to enculturate.*



🔗 FIG. 4-5.

Create grouping mechanics with interdependence. What can you do that forces contributors and editors to pair up? Guilds! Why do they only reach admins?

The newbie tutorial



- Admins regularly create content for other admins, not for casual contributors.
 - WikiProjects
 - Badge systems
- Wikipedia Adventure exists but novices are not guided to it.
- The tutorial in adding new articles warns against everything easy:
 - Yourself, your friends, your company, copying things, local interest, short articles, living people.

Mitigating the need for skill



- Insert randomness.
- Provide catch-up tools.
- Provide proper matchmaking.
- Handicap the skilled.
- Mentoring.
 - Snuggle seems like an excellent possible avenue.
- Sidekicking.

Content exhaustion



RESET SYSTEMS

Periodically, content refreshes.

ADDING NEW CONTENT

Opening new consumable space.

INSTANCING

Parallel versions of the same content.

ELDER GAMES

Provide specialized orthogonal gameplay.

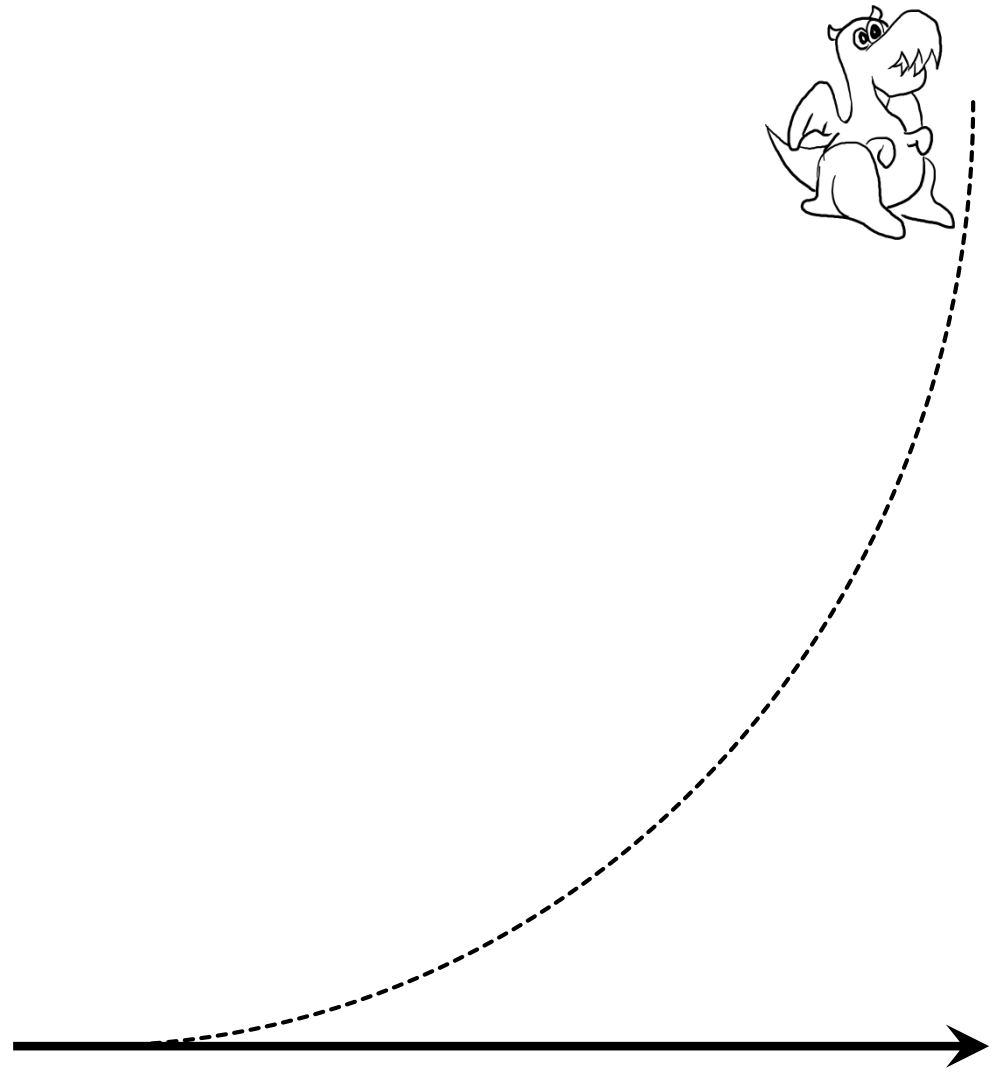
♁ WHEREIN A GAME DESIGNER OFFERS IMPRACTICAL ADVICE

Heretical Recommendations

Solving content



FIG. 5-1.
Encourage vandals.

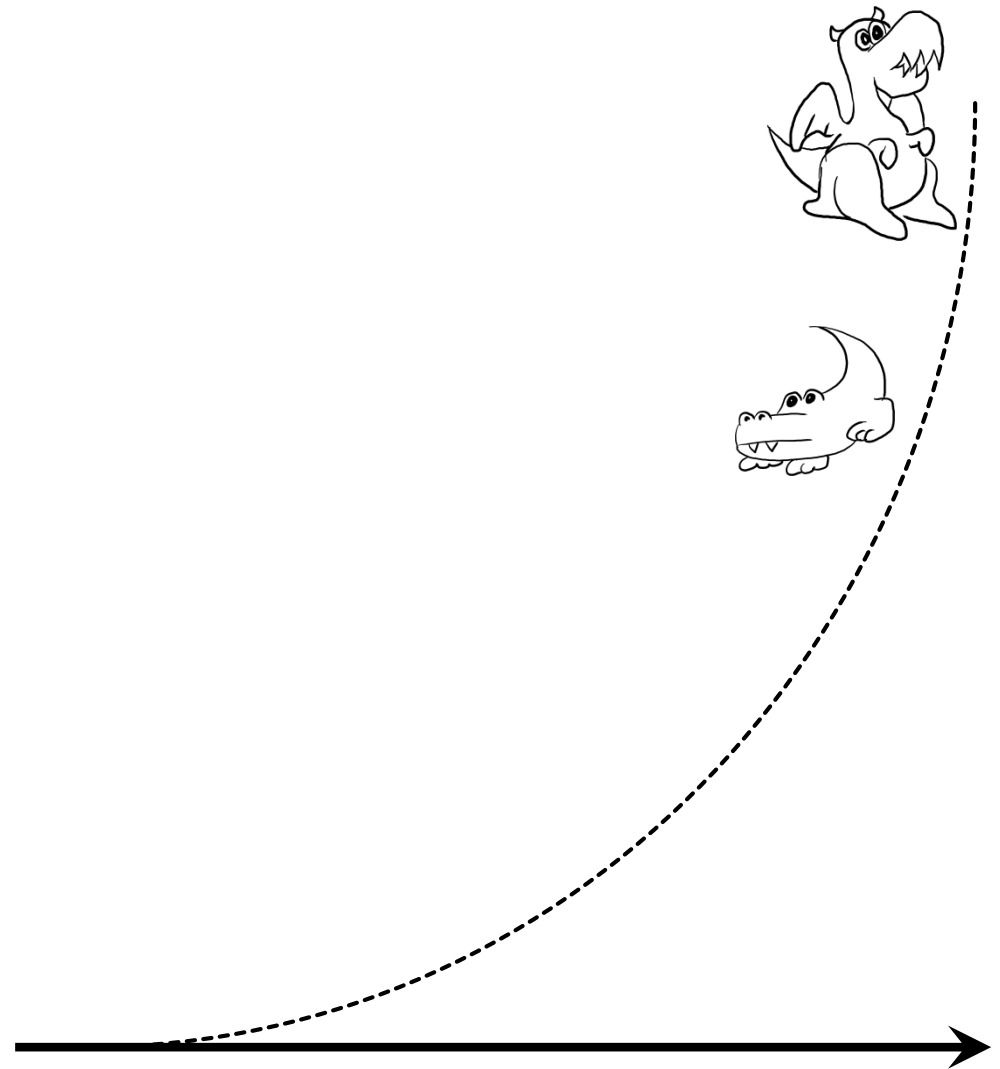


Solving content



FIG. 5-1.

*Encourage vandals.
Create a deletionist holiday,
and then actually zap
everything, just so it can
be rebuilt.*



Solving content

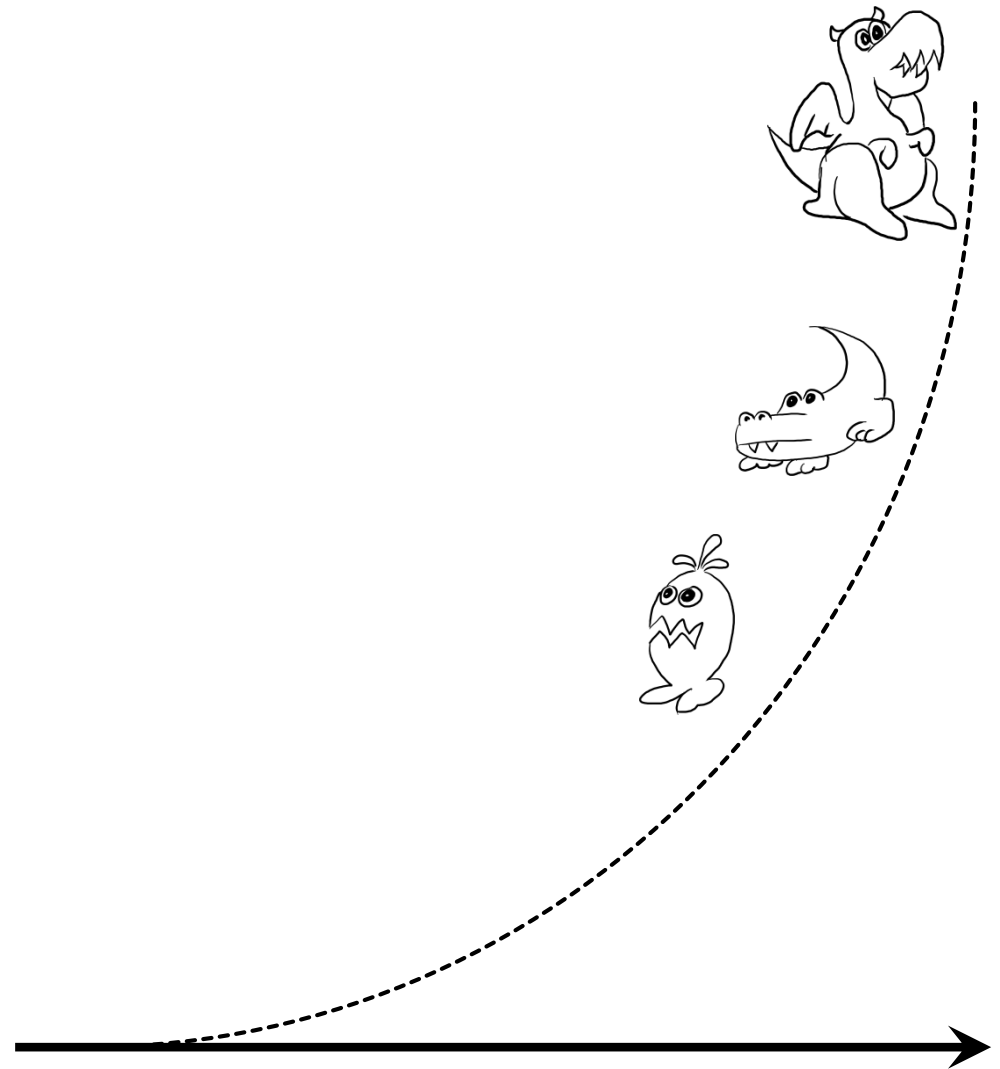


FIG. 5-1.

Encourage vandals.

*Create a deletionist holiday,
and then actually zap
everything, just so it can
be rebuilt.*

*Encourage stuff to get broken
so that there's always
easy stuff to fix!*



Solving content

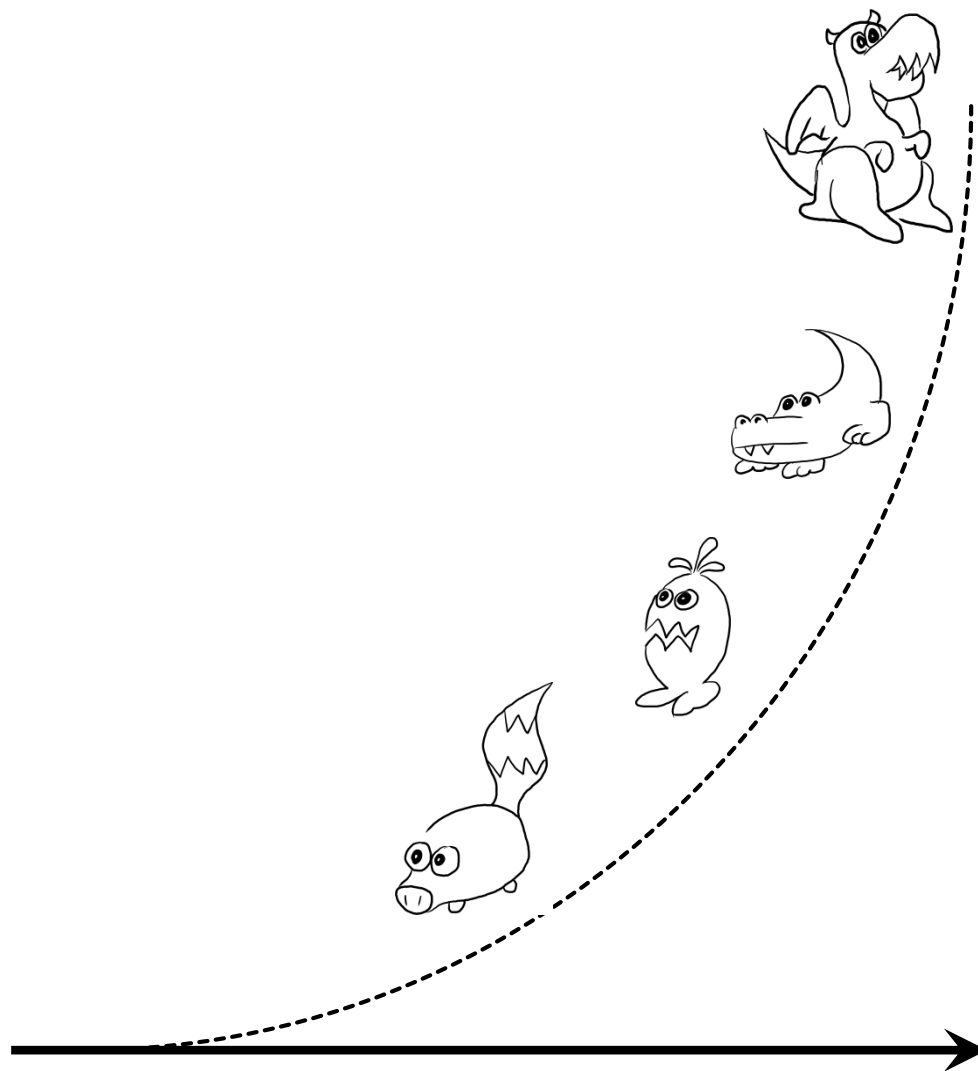


FIG. 5-1.

Encourage vandals.

*Create a deletionist holiday,
and then actually zap
everything, just so it can
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*Encourage stuff to get broken
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easy stuff to fix!
Age out content.*



Solving content

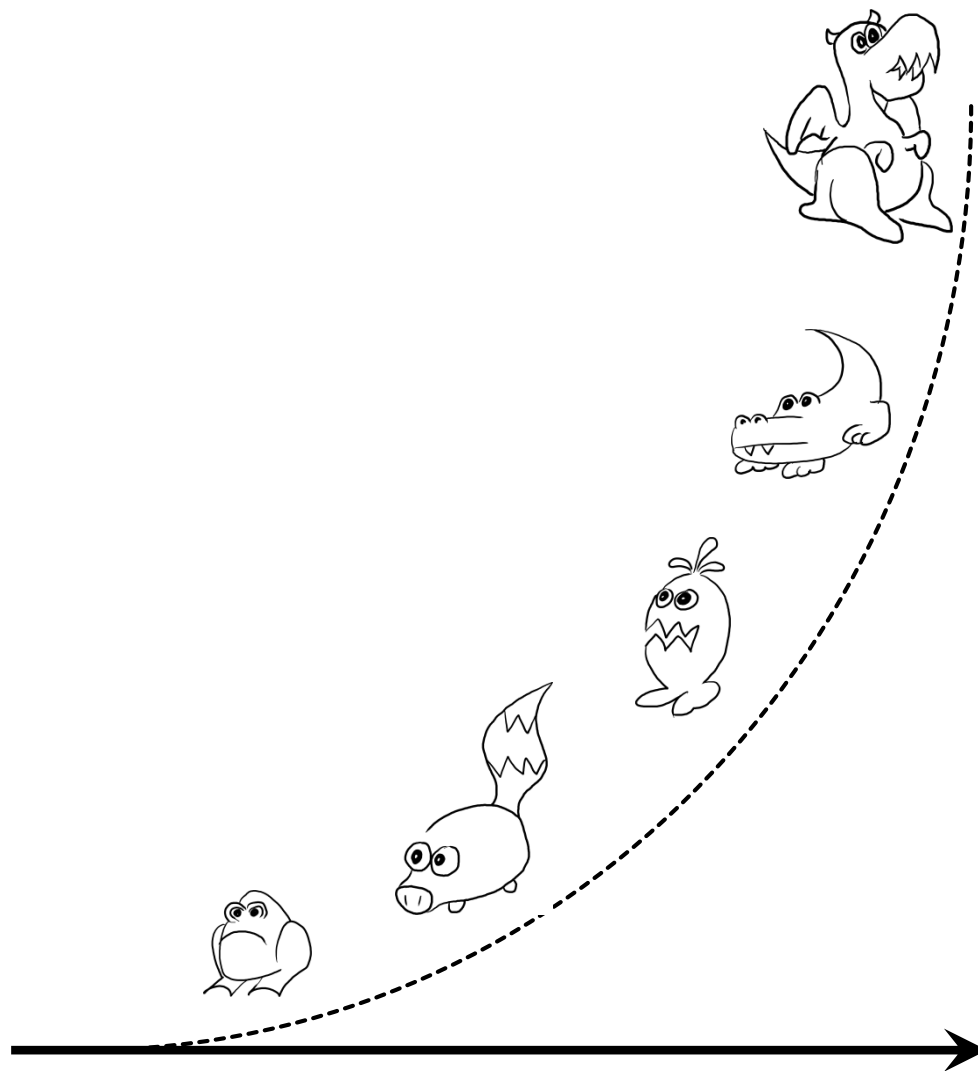


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Solving content

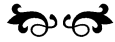
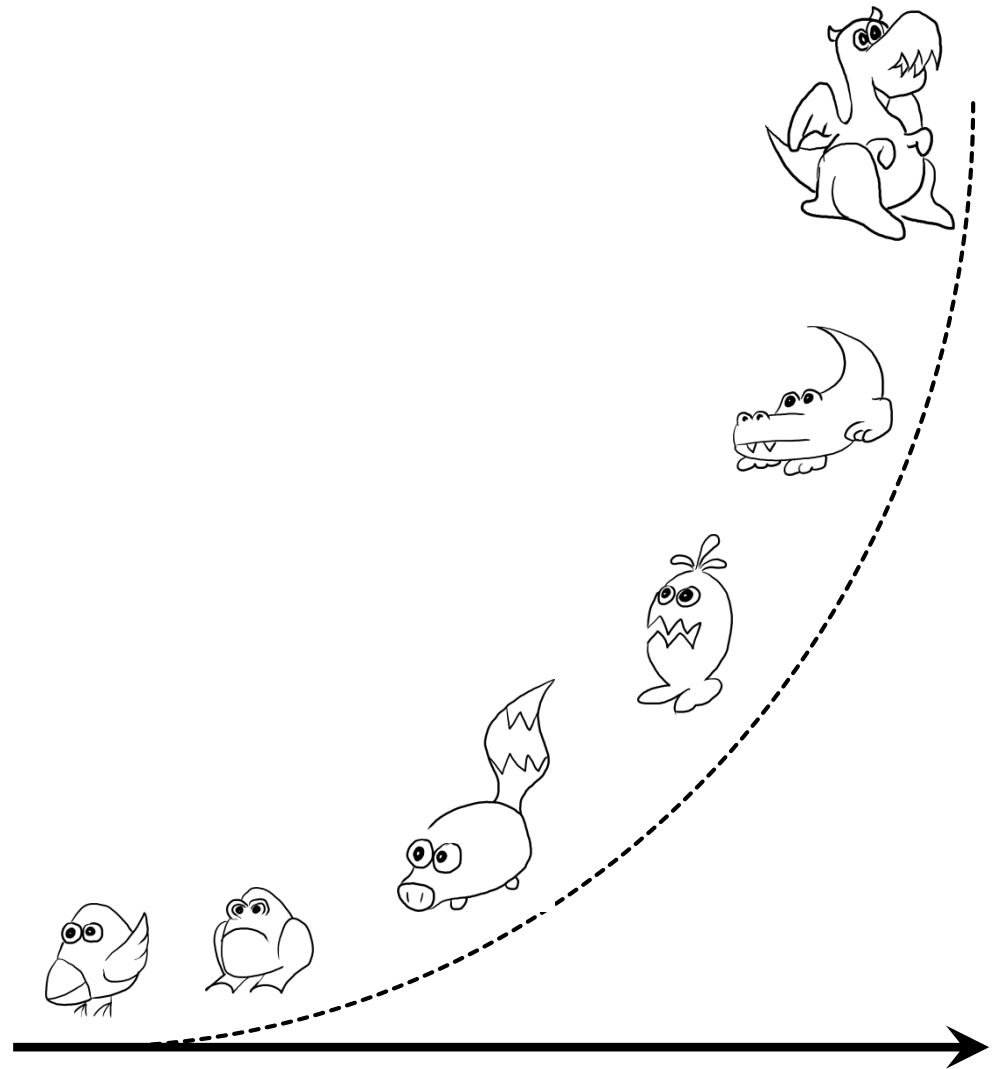


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Solving content

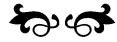


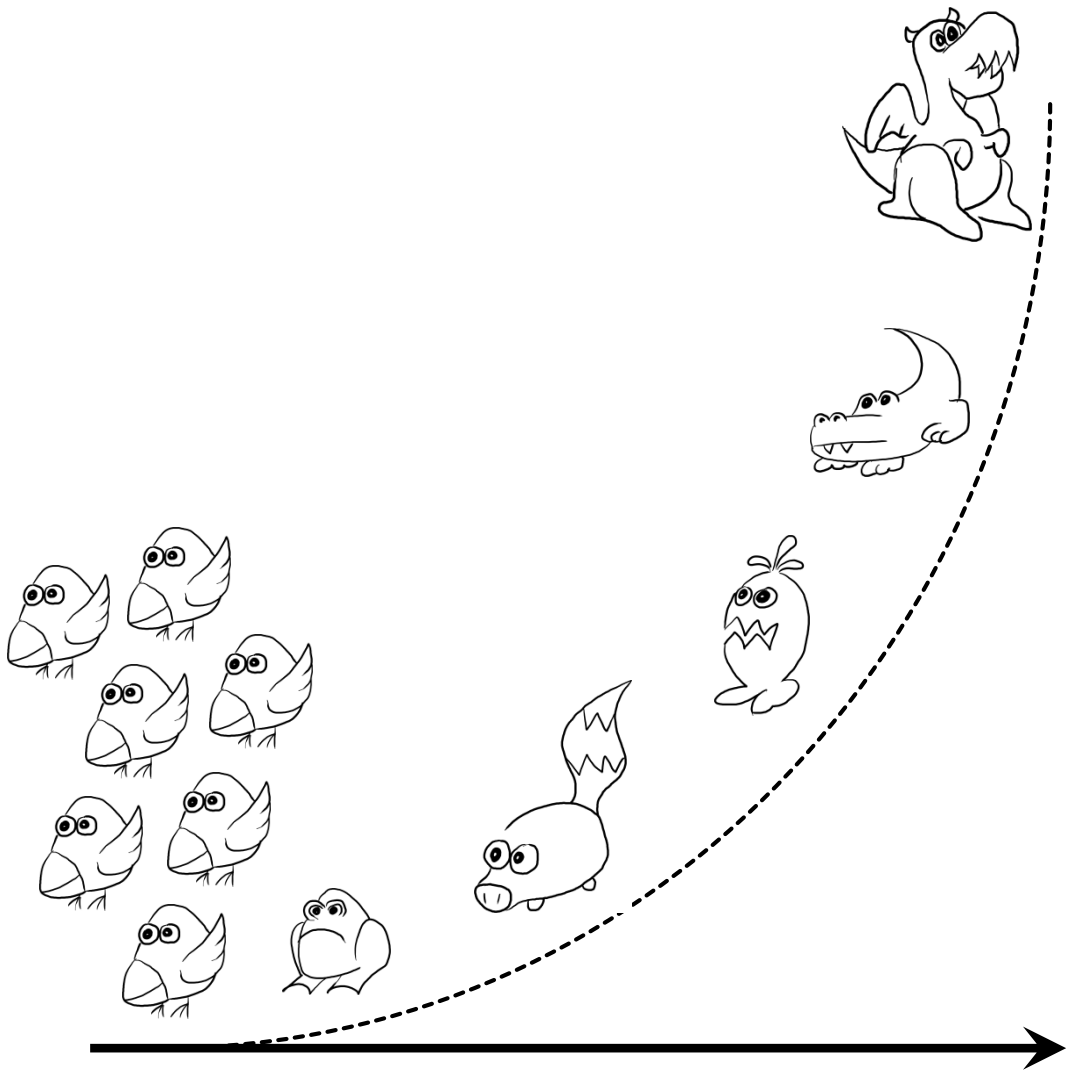
FIG. 5-2.
*Alternatively, you could
invent new fields of
human knowledge, but
that's hard and probably
original research.*

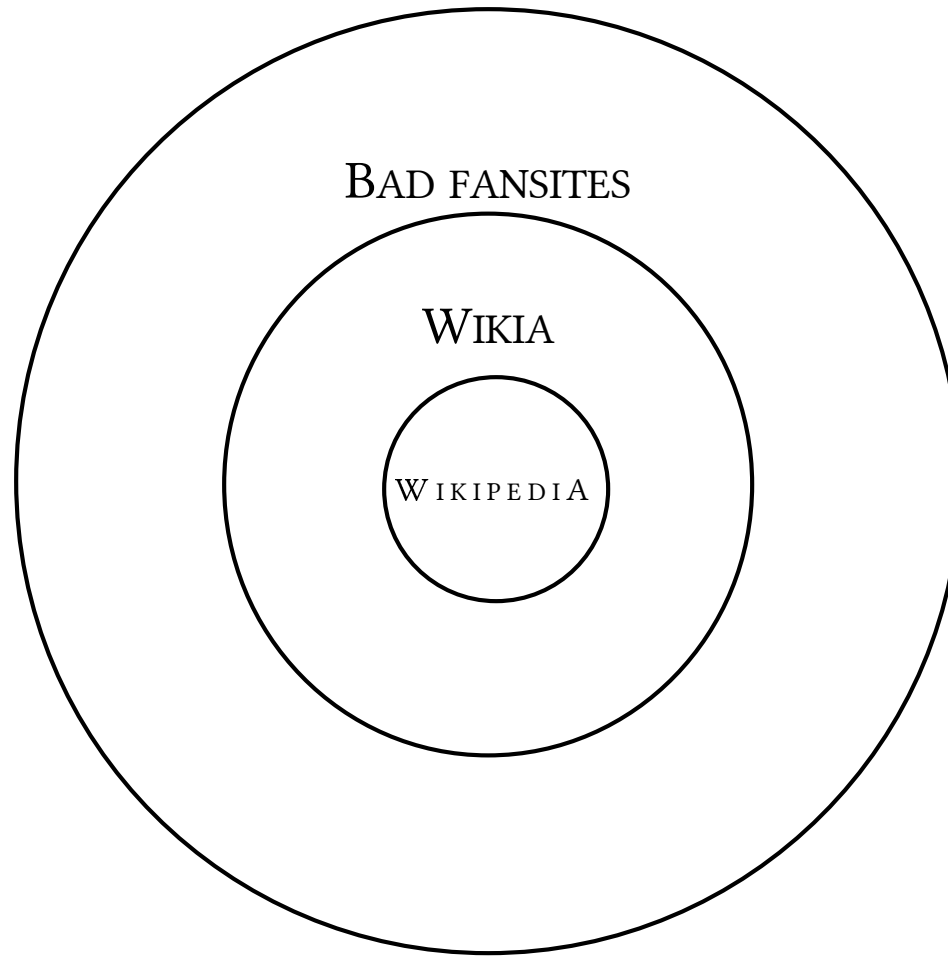


Content expansion

FIG. 5-3.
Lower the notability bar and encourage fancruft.

“But we’re an encyclopedia!” Bah, reinvent that fusty word. Who says you know what’s important?





❧ FIG. 5-4.

Circles of Subjectivity – why not point to Wikia from within Wikipedia?

Instantiating

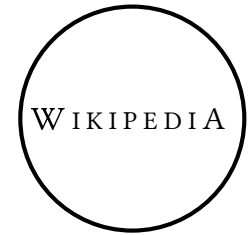
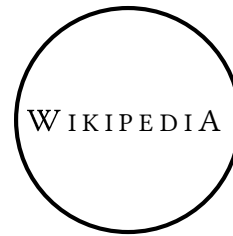
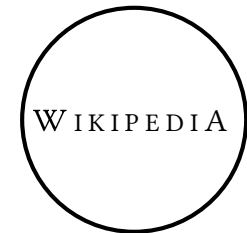
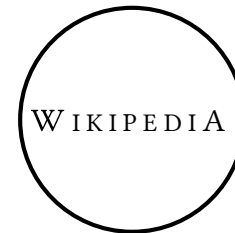


FIG. 5-5.
*Alternate versions of
articles with points of
view.*



Instancing

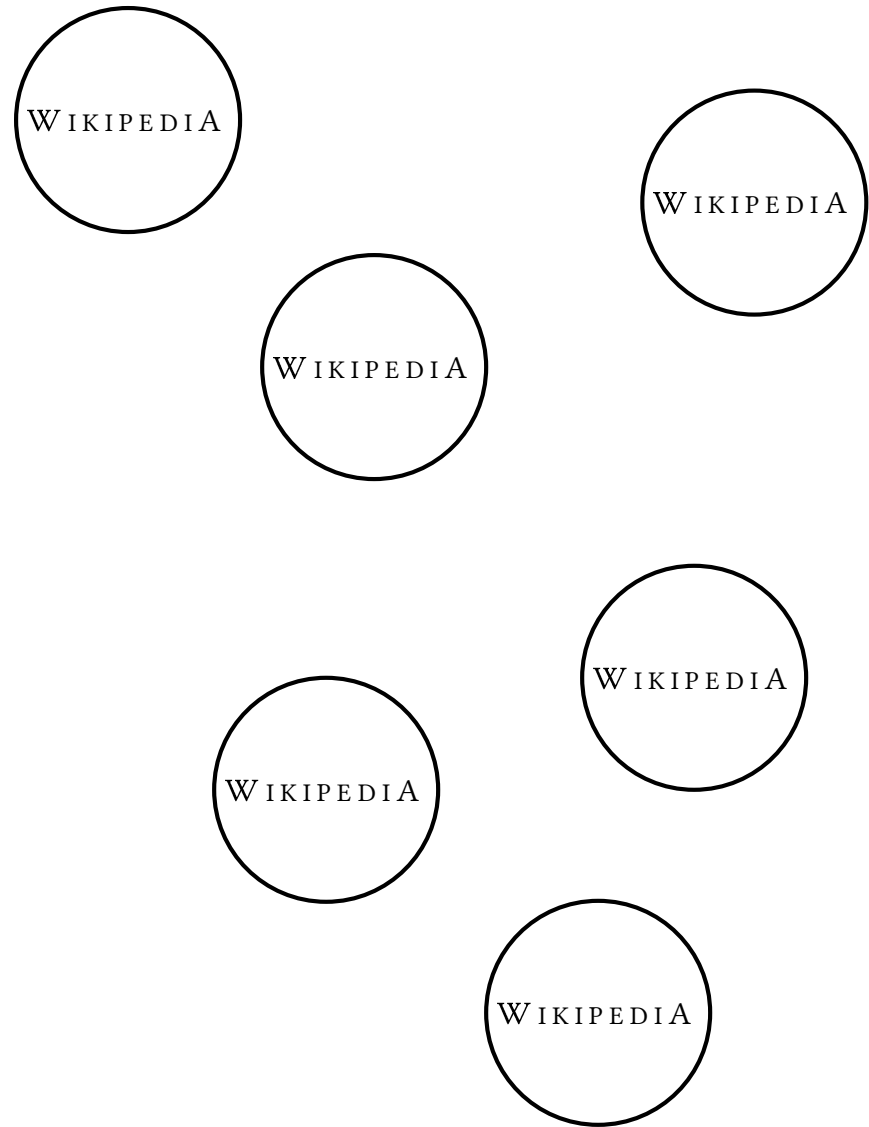


FIG. 5-5.

*Alternate versions of
articles with points of
view.*

*Alternate encyclopedia
shards that aren't just
language.*

Instancing

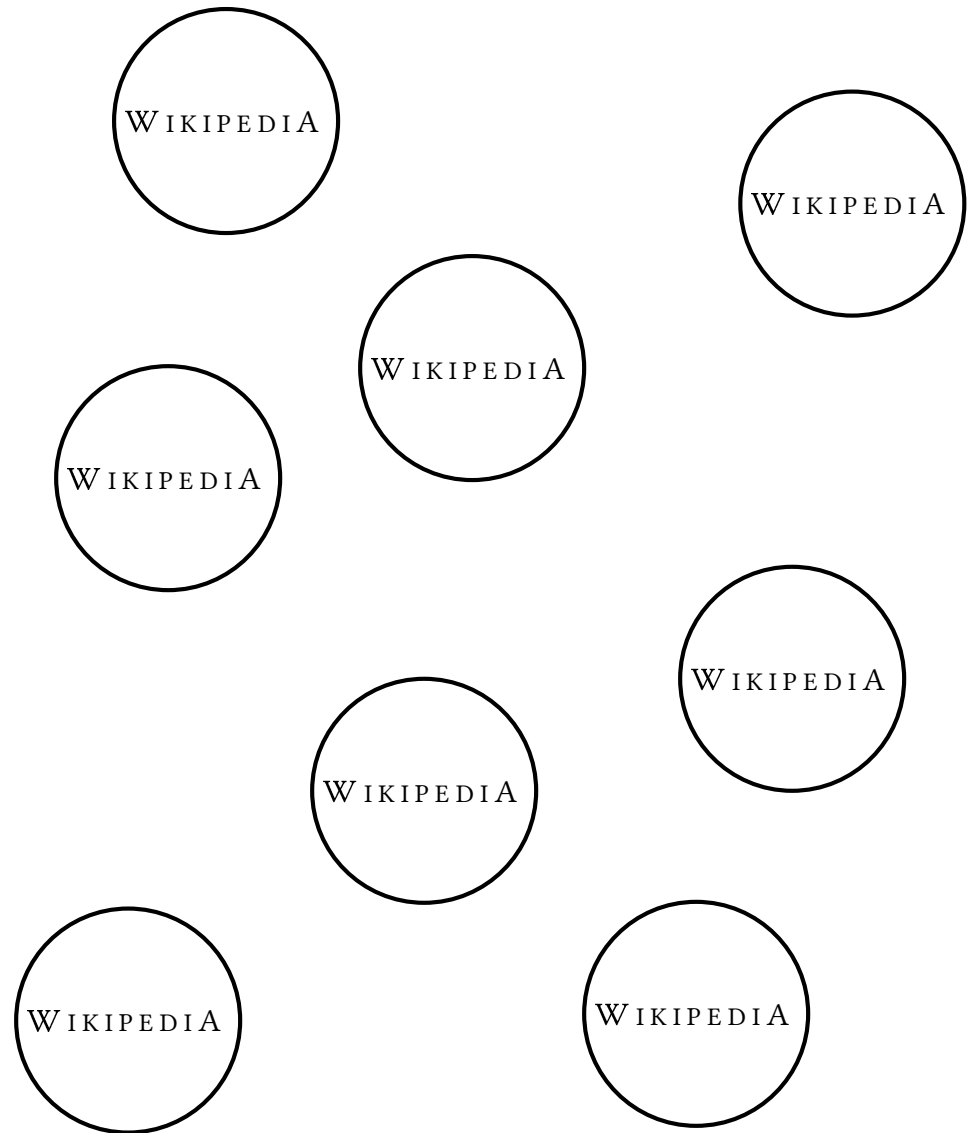


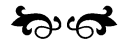
FIG. 5-5.

*Alternate versions of
articles with points of
view.*

*Alternate encyclopedia
shards that aren't just
language.*

*How about a new
Wikipedia, only
written by women?*

Question assumptions!



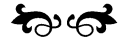
- Is a biased article by someone with knowledge actually worse than no article at all?
- Who should decide what is important in a given town's article, you or the people who live there?
- Are you abdicating responsibility by serving as passive rather than active teachers?
- Consider Facebook and Wikipedia as points on a spectrum, based on subjectivity. Are you right to claim you are not a social network?
- What about the same question, given a robust INTERNET OF THINGS?
- Is notability a fractal characteristic rather than universal?

The heart of the issue



What do you want to be when you grow up?

The heart of the issue



The directory of “important” keywords?

The heart of the issue



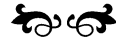
Or of all keywords?

The heart of the issue



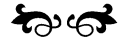
The semantic metadata source for humanity?

The heart of the issue



The semantic metadata source for humanity?
(which will serve as substrate for our eventual
GOOGLAMAZEBOOK OVERLORDS?)

The heart of the issue



A broadcast medium or a community?

The heart of the issue



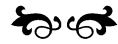
EVERYTHING TO DATE HAS BEEN THE EASY PART.

The heart of the issue



Just remember to Have Fun as you do it.

The heart of the issue



Just remember to Have Fun as you do it.

ALL SERIOUS WORK DESERVES FUN.

THIS HERE IS BY WAY OF BEING THE END.



<http://www.raphkoster.com>
<http://www.theoryoffun.com>

