



## Making Connections a World Away

*Advances in information technologies have become so accessible and economical that average people are able to reach far beyond their own communities to connect with new people, sharing interests or pursuits with people who may have vastly different backgrounds and experiences. The outcomes of these connections unfold in unpredictable ways with each passing day of the Information Age now defining our times.*

*In the articles that follow, we highlight several online communities in which participants have found each other and created critical mass to bring vigor to interests that may never have found a chance to thrive otherwise.*

Photo montage: People with similar interests, separated by geographical distance, are able to share information, ideas, and goals through such Web sites as *Native Youth Magazine.com*, *Youth Radio*, and *Wikipedia*. (Courtesy *Native Youth Magazine.com*, *Youth Radio*, and *Wikipedia*)

### Speaking in Many Tongues



The English language has long dominated the Internet, accounting for about 83 percent of total content, according to The Internet Society. But when you visit the pages of *Wikipedia* [<http://www.wikipedia.org>]*—*the free, collaboratively-edited, Internet-based encyclopedia*—*you'll find a dazzling diversity of languages. Articles in the encyclopedia and the other communications projects that constitute *Wikimedia* [<http://www.wikipedia.org>] are available in languages from Esperanto to Hawaiian to Navajo, gaining considerable ground on English, German, French, Polish, and Japanese, which remain the most prevalent languages on *Wikipedia*.

"It started in an organic, ad hoc way," says Samuel Klein, one of hundreds of administrators who monitors

multilingual content for *Wiki* sites. “New people who are multilingual see the community exists, they find the existing pages, and they join in,” Klein adds.

Since its start in 2001, *Wikipedia* has grown to a worldwide cadre of volunteer contributors. These contributors, now some 30,000, can create, edit, translate, expand, and proofread articles—their own or those of other users. Remarkably, despite its growing size and complexity, *Wikipedia* projects are still developed in a loosely organized, nonhierarchical method that has attracted widespread involvement from contributors in non-English-speaking countries.

Boston-based Klein was attracted, too, by the international nature of *Wikipedia*. “I began a mailing list early last year to encourage users to sign up to a translators list and identify themselves if they were interested and had some skill in translations,” he explains. “It’s now possible to quickly list people who speak Spanish at a certain level, for example. People have also started adding information boxes to their pages identifying their skills in various languages.”

Translations occur through personal interests, referrals, and sometimes by accident. “For example, if I write an article on pineapples and another person writes an article on pineapples in Spanish, we may not know that the other article exists,” Klein explains. “Some third party can come along, see that there’s an article on pineapples in English and another related article in Spanish, probably talking about the same thing, and make a link between them.” Articles can link to the other languages for which there is related content. About 4,000 new articles are produced each day in languages other than English; about 2,000 are produced each day in English.

Other *Wiki* products have proliferated, all using collaborative methods and most in many language versions. These include Wiktionary, a multilingual dictionary; Wikiquotes, featuring quotes from individuals as well as from books, poetry, and films; Wikibooks, with educational and practical texts and manuals; Wikisource, a multilingual library of source texts; and the daily WikiNews.

**Why “Wiki”?** Wiki is a piece of server software that allows users to freely create and edit Web page content using any Web browser. Wiki supports hyperlinks and has a simple text syntax for creating new pages and crosslinks between internal pages.

—From the WikiWay Website

Users can announce new or interesting information available for translation to other users. *Wikimedia* users can locate others with foreign language skills and suggest translation projects.

The *Wikimedia* translators also have a Translation of the Week Initiative, in which an unusual project or article is chosen by a vote every week. A style guide describes how to do translations and instructs on how to link the translations with other languages.

One of the latest projects does not rely primarily on language at all. Wikimedia Commons, another subpage on the vast *Wikimedia* site, is a repository that emphasizes the audio-visual—photos and other graphic images, spoken text, video clips, and music. These media can be shared by the other *Wikimedia* projects, enriching and expanding the access and reach of the Internet to global users each day.

### Native American Youth Share Dreams Online



Native American young people have a place on the Internet where they can communicate with their peers, share information about their communities and culture, and inspire each other to pursue their dreams. The Web site *Native Youth Magazine.com* (*NYM*) [<http://www.nativeyouthmagazine.com>] was launched July 1, 2005, and six months later was logging about 2 million hits per month.

The brainchild of television news reporter Mary Kim Titla, NYM clearly is fulfilling the need she saw for an online magazine that showcases the talents, ideas, and lifestyles of Native American youth. The Web site invites young people between age 12 and 25 to submit articles, poetry, photographs, and artwork. The magazine is a vehicle for sharing information, but also for developing the talents of its readers.

Native youth from across the United States and Canada have responded, and their stories appear in the magazine’s Profiles section. A 23-year-old Choctaw Indian from Mississippi writes, “I am proud that we still have our Choctaw language and heritage. My tribe is doing its very best to keep it alive!” A 14-year-old Navajo from Arizona describes his land: “The Navajo Nation extends into the states of Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, covering over 27,000 square miles [about 70,000 square kilometers]

of unparalleled beauty.” An 18-year-old from Wisconsin says, “I’m a member of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribe. ... My goal for the future is to play college basketball.”

Under Native Youth News, readers find a variety of topics, including a Native American youth art exhibit, a college course in Native American culture, a university program that offers free tuition to students from low-income families, and a story about the naming of a new director for the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities. NYM also devotes pages to sports, photographs, a calendar, and a message board.

Mary Kim Titla, a member of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, spent 18 years as a television news reporter in Arizona. Interest in her people and in the concerns of Native American youth in particular led Titla to develop *Native Youth Magazine.com*. To find out what young readers wanted to see on a Web site, she conducted online surveys and consulted with her three sons (ages 10, 15, and 19), as well as with nieces, nephews, and other young Native people, who continue to advise her. “Native American youth from all over serve as consultants,” she said, “because this Web site is for them.”

In December 2005, Titla resigned from television news to devote her efforts to NYM full time. “I’ve enjoyed being a TV news journalist,” she said, “but I believe my calling is now about molding young Native storytellers, and through the magazine I can help showcase their talents and lifestyles.”

### Young Voices on the Radio



Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, audiences can tune in to the sounds and stories of young people on *Web Radio* at <http://www.youthradio.org/webradio>. Dedicated to keeping young people up to date on what’s going on in the world, the online radio station features news, commentary, and the latest in popular music.

*Web Radio* is a natural extension of the activities of Youth Radio, a youth development and media organization that has been producing radio programming since 1992. Founded by broadcast journalist Ellin O’Leary, Youth Radio’s mission is “to promote young people’s intellectual, creative, and professional growth

through training and access to media, and to produce the highest-quality original media for local and national outlets.” Young people write, record, and produce their own programs, with the guidance of adult professionals.

Topics covered on Youth Radio are as varied as the interests of today’s youth—from everyday concerns like getting along with schoolmates to the war on terrorism. Recent international reports have included a story about a 26-year-old female candidate for Parliament in Afghanistan; a black student’s adjustment to university life in Cape Town, South Africa; and the perspective of a young American living in London during the 2005 subway bombings.

Youth Radio can be heard across the United States on the National Public Radio network and on local commercial and noncommercial stations, including several Spanish-language outlets. Besides tuning in to *Web Radio*, international listeners can find Youth Radio programming on the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation). Based in Berkeley, California, Youth Radio has bureaus in Washington, D.C.; Atlanta, Georgia; and Los Angeles, California. Correspondents report from all over the world.

With support from foundations, corporate sponsors, and government agencies, Youth Radio conducts free training courses in all aspects of radio production, as well as Web, video, and music production. Berkeley-area youngsters age 14 to 17 may apply to attend the 12-week courses, which are taught by professional journalists, audio engineers, and music producers and programmers.

Course participants are 80 percent low income and 80 percent youth of color.

“But technical training is only part of the picture,” according to Youth Radio’s mission statement. “Through journalism education, Youth Radio students also strengthen their foundation in basic life-skills: verbal expression, writing, computer technology, critical thinking, conflict resolution, and more. ... Graduates emerge with a new confidence and hope for creating a positive professional future for themselves, and with the concrete skills and contacts to get them there.” ■

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*The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.*