Writing Assignment 1: Wikipedia

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Due: May 30, 2006 by the start of class

1 Introduction

The online, user-collaborative encyclopedia called Wikipedia has gained an important spot in the dissemination of information on the Internet. It has high rankings in search engines, and is often the final word on a variety of subjects. Your first writing assignment will be to critically analyze the role of Wikipedia in the online and academic communities.

2 Who benefits the most from Wikipedia?

Using Utilitarianism (or the ethical framework of your choosing) evaluate who derives the most benefit from Wikipedia. People to consider include:

- The general populace who uses Wikipedia

- The founder, Jimbo Wales

- The editors who collaborate to form articles

- The subjects of the articles themselves

- . . . and anyone else you can think of

Weigh the benefit that Wikipedia brings to each group of people, and come to a conclusion on who benefits the most.

3   Should Wikipedia citations be allowed in school?

Several universities have adopted a policy of forbidding academic work from citing articles in Wikipedia. Should Wikipedia be singled out for this distinction? Examine the issues surrounding citations of encyclopedias and online resources in general, and present an argument over the use of Wikipedia as a reliable reference.

Be sure to cite specific examples that support your argument.

4   Requirements

This assignment should be no less than 5 pages and no more than 7 pages in length. Devote about 1 page each to an introduction and a conclusion, and 2-3 pages on each of the two topics.

When done, submit a `.zip` file containing your `.pdf`, source `.tex` and `.bib` files by uploading them to your UNIX account and copying them to:

∼`jrmst106/submit/`