

Arguments about Deletion: Guiding New Users in Making Good Arguments

Jodi Schneider
Digital Enterprise Research Institute
National University of Ireland, Galway
jodi.schneider@deri.org

Alexandre Passant
Digital Enterprise Research Institute
National University of Ireland, Galway
alexandre.passant@deri.org

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.5.3 [Information Interfaces and Presentation]: Group and Organizational Interfaces—*Collaborative computing*

Keywords

peer production, Wikipedia, argumentation schemes, online argumentation, critical questions, Articles for Deletion

Peer production systems such as Wikipedia depend on users to not only produce content but also to evaluate and maintain it, including deleting inappropriate content. While individual users may change and remove content, administrative action is required to delete an article (as opposed to just removing its content). Wikipedia's various content guidelines promote shared mental models of appropriate content, which are learned through reading policy pages, as they are encountered [1].

Policies around deletion prove frustrating to many newcomers, who may first encounter Wikipedia's deletion policy when an article they are reading or editing is nominated for deletion. The deletion process can be confusing, and sometimes discouraging, especially to newcomers, who may become disillusioned or frustrated when content they contributed to the encyclopedia is deleted for reasons they don't always understand: 'Notability', the main reason for 28% of deletions [3], is especially likely to be misunderstood by newcomers.

Of Wikipedia's several deletion procedures, "Articles for Deletion" (AfD) is the most deliberative, involving community discussions which are reviewed by an administrator for consensus after 7 days. AfD discussions are open to anyone – even IP users without a username – to read and to comment on, yet they are sophisticated wiki spaces with their own conventions: messages start with a bolded indication of their vote ('Keep', 'Delete', etc.), are signed with the poster's username or IP address, and, most importantly, messages must use appropriate rhetoric based on Wikipedia guidelines and policies. Attracting newcomer involvement in Wikipedia is important, yet the mechanical and rhetorical complexity of deletion discussions can thwart newcomers' efforts.

Experience with editing Wikipedia, as well as with participating in AfD discussions contributes to good decision-making: decisions made with the participation of newcomers are more likely to be reversed, indicating a learning curve [2]. Ensuring broad participation may be important for fighting discussion bias, one of the shortcomings of the AfD process [4].

Our work has three goals: first, to understand the arguments made in deletion discussions; and second, to develop argument templates elaborating the structure of good arguments both for keeping and for deleting content. Third and most importantly, we provide guidance and support for new users in properly structuring their arguments according to Wikipedia's rhetorical standards.

Translating policies into checklists [6] is a known way to democratize knowledge sharing. In the context of argumentation, the most relevant checklists indicate how an opponent could attack an argument—the 'critical questions' attacking the the premises and inferences underlying an argument [5].

Therefore, we plan, first, to examine (both by hand content analysis and then automatically with language technology) a corpus of AfD discussions. Second, we will develop specialized argumentation schemes appropriate to the context of Wikipedia AfD discussions. Third, we will test these argumentation schemes in the form of checklists of critical questions, aimed at newcomers to AfD discussions. If the intervention proves successful, we will subsequently develop a more sophisticated argumentation assistance interface.

1. REFERENCES

- [1] J. Antin and C. Cheshire. Readers are not free-riders: reading as a form of participation on Wikipedia. In *CSCW '10*, pages 127–130, 2010. ACM.
- [2] S. K. Lam, J. Karim, and J. Riedl. The effects of group composition on decision quality in a social production community. In *GROUP '10*, pages 55–64, 2010. ACM.
- [3] S. T. K. Lam and J. Riedl. Is Wikipedia growing a longer tail? In *GROUP '09*, pages 105–114, 2009. ACM.
- [4] D. Taraborelli and G. L. Ciampaglia. Beyond notability. collective deliberation on content inclusion in Wikipedia. In *Fourth IEEE International Conference on Self-Adaptive and Self-Organizing Systems Workshops.*, 2010.
- [5] D. Walton, C. Reed, and F. Macagno. *Argumentation Schemes*. Cambridge, 2008.
- [6] B. D. Winters, A. P. Gurses, H. Lehmann, J. B. Sexton, C. J. Rampersad, and P. J. Pronovost. Clinical review: Checklists - translating evidence into practice. *Critical Care*, 13:210–219, 2009.