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Champaign-Urbana launches Wiki site

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Jacqui Ogrodnik | [0 comments](#)

A group of residents, with the help of University students, has created Wikipedia of sorts for the Champaign-Urbana community.

[Cuwiki.net](#) launched Dec. 1 and was formally presented at an event at the Douglass Branch Library. Eileen Walz and Rubayya Hoque, first-year graduate students in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, introduced the site to community members with demonstrations at the event.

"This website is created by the community, not just for the community," Walz said. "It contains virtual space that anyone can add to, edit and share local knowledge."

CU Wiki was created by a Champaign-Urbana committee that started up in 2011. The committee was searching for a way to build "a website about the Champaign-Urbana area that anyone can edit," which is now the website's tagline.

"Anyone can go in there and write whatever they want," Hoque said. "The website contains pre-made layouts for new articles. If someone made changes to your article, it allows you to monitor those changes."

While the website started as a community project and not a student project, many University classes have begun assisting in generating content for the site.

"If we don't get involved and upload information, there's not going to be anything there," said Abdul Alkalimat, UC2B policy board member and professor of African-American studies.

In September, two Community Informatics classes in the Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences began adding multiple articles to the site as well as snippets of information to which others can add.

Spanish classes will also be taking on projects to translate pages into Spanish. Other language classes are expected to join these projects, Walz said.

"Teams of students will be targeting different sectors of society," Hoque said. "While one group focuses on bars in



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the community, another group will focus on local businesses.”

Other students assist as tech volunteers at the Urbana Free Library and Douglass Branch Library, according to the wiki website.

Students have the opportunity to upload articles focused on individuals, clubs, dorms and University colleges.

The website contains subjects such as history, social services and local businesses. The “Things to Do” page features a list of activities someone can do in Champaign-Urbana, while the “Hidden Gems” page contains a number of little-known businesses.

Ronald William Bailey, department head of African American studies, called CU Wiki a “tool to capture history.”

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