

Davis, at your fingertips



The people behind the screen

DavisWiki.org to host first annual fundraiser event

By MELANIE R. GLOVER
Aggie Arts Editor

Since its creation in 2004, DavisWiki.org — a free encyclopedia guide to Davis created and edited by its users — has grown to hold over 7,000 pages with its 2005-2006 expenses amounting to close to \$3,000.

Some of the expenses were paid for by donations made through the site, while a large sum came from the pockets of DavisWiki co-creators Philip Neustrom and Mike Ivanov, UC Davis alumni.

"Initially, there was no cost for the website aside from our time," Neustrom said, "but then the site really took off."

In an attempt to pay past and future fees, the website will host its first annual fundraiser event, the DavisWiki Hackathon, at 217 Second St. also known as the Tumble House on Saturday at 7 p.m.

site continued to grow, and after using a shared server for \$10 a month, DavisWiki's high bandwidth and CPU quickly required the creators to buy a hosting plan and eventually purchase their own server, which cost roughly \$1,000 and, as of June 2006, \$50 a month for the hosting plan.

Wiki workers hope to gain \$4,000 through the event and donations on the site in order to pay back last year's fees, as well as cover the \$1,000 cost to keep DavisWiki running next year.

"It's just a catch-up game, and it's better to take care of it at this point rather than later on," Neustrom said. "I think it's more important to have money in the bank for next year's work than to pay myself off. We'll see how we align the funds."

The event has been almost en-



he said. In addition to the silver auction and prizes donated by local businesses such as Armadillo Music and The Style Lounge, there will also be free T-shirts and stickers and local band compilation CDs for sale.

"I think Davis has benefited from the wiki, and seeing as it only costs a few thousand dollars a year to run, that is only a few cents more every-

one to have this great resource," said 2003-year senior Rob Jay, who has been

involved with DavisWiki since its inception. "I think it's a great resource for the city of Davis."

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NEWS

New community based website creates a Davis Encyclopedia

Three UC Davis students start online project

By LIZETH CAZARES
Aggie News Writer

A new website allows people to see what Davis has to offer — including different organizations on campus, entertainment events, wireless hot spots and even where to find good hot sauce in town. UC Davis students

DavisWiki on Oct. 30 and has frequently used it since then. He personally created a web page on the site called "Night Time," devoted to things a person can do in Davis after 10 p.m.

He never recall where he first discovered the site, but says, "They've got signs up in coffee shops and whatnot, and they're featured on a lot of websites like daviscoeds.com. So it looks like a lot of people

The three launched the website using MoinMoin, a free software program, but at first made it password-protected. After months of working on it, and getting the site to the point that they wanted, they opened DavisWiki to the public. Neustrom says that the

Web site has scoop on Davis community

Davis Wiki allows users to add and edit listings on everything from city politics to the best places in town for a date.

By Chelsea Pless
Staff Writer

Michael Ivanov's cell phone rang at 5 a.m. The Davis Wiki Web site was under attack, the caller said.

A hacker had vandalized the Web site's pages using an "automatic script attack" that had subverted the layout and design of the site at www.daviswiki.org.

Ivanov had never met the caller, but one thing was certain — he was a dedicated user of the site, which provides information about the city of Davis.

"There are a lot of users who are way more active than I am," said Ivanov, one of the site's creators. "Active users feel like they have a stake in keeping bad content out."

Wiki sites are different from other types of Web sites because they allow anyone to edit the information on their pages. One of the most well-known wiki sites is Wikipedia, the largest reference Web site on the Internet.

The Davis Wiki is the brainchild of Ivanov, now a software programmer in the Bay Area, and his friend and former housemate, Philip Neustrom. They launched the Web site in October 2004 with 300 pages and about 30 users, when they were students at the University of California, Davis. Since then, the Davis Wiki has swelled to more than 7,000 pages and close to 5,300 users.

In the world of wikis, the Davis Wiki has caught the attention of notable wiki powers. One of them, Ross Mayfield, co-founder of Sociobites, the first

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Davis Wiki updates software, server for speed

Site 2,500 percent faster after changes

By TALIA KENNEDY
Aggie News Writer

Though Davis Wiki users may only see minor visual changes to the website, they might notice the site's recently enhanced performance and faster speed. DavisWiki.org underwent major changes in software on Wednesday, coinciding with the implementation of a new server. While some minor visual effects were added, most of the changes were behind the scenes, said Philip Neustrom,

Davis Wiki's creator. "Most of the changes affect the performance of the website, like its speed," said Neustrom, a recent UC Davis graduate who majored in mathematics. "It's akin to redoing the foundation of a house. You don't see the changes on the outside, but it's completely different on the inside."

While many people access the website regularly, others are never logged on. Still others are not sure what a "wiki" really is, said Amit Vainsencher, a junior physics and mathematics double major who helps maintain the site. Meaning "quick" or "fast" in Hawaiian, wiki has become a

term to describe websites allowing any Internet user to create and edit information pages in an expedient manner. The first wiki, WikiWikiWeb, was created in 1994, and other sites such as Wikipedia.org and other sites followed. DavisWiki.org is designed particularly for the Davis community.

"A wiki is a community-minded project that everyone can contribute to," Vainsencher said. "It's easier than most people think. Anybody can add data. The changes were implemented in response to what users had been requesting for some time," Neustrom said.

Some of the visual changes include new interface buttons and

the elimination of pop-ups; images now load in the same window, and can be re-added if someone deletes them. Most significant, however, is the improvement in the website's speed, Neustrom said. "A reasonable raw figure on the speed improvement is 2,500 percent faster," Neustrom said.

Paul Arden, a first-year history major, said he thought the changes to the site were good. "I use the site somewhat frequently," he said. "Davis Wiki is awesome. The amount of information and the various viewing points on all the information make it a great resource."

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TALIA KENNEDY
Campus Contributor

enterprise



Arts UC Davis theater troupe presents 'Macbeth' outdoors

Davis Wiki is 'world's best'

Nieman journalist recognizes site's success

By Jonathan Edwards
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

The number 10,000 shocked Michael Andersen.

In a city with 65,000 people, the Washington-based journalist hadn't expected the town wiki to attract so many unique visitors each day. Other numbers impressed him as well: 14,000 pages edited 13,000 times by 3,300 users last month.

So last week, Andersen declared Davis

Wiki the "world's best local wiki" in an article he wrote for Harvard's prestigious Nieman Journalism Lab, started to help journalism chart a future in the Internet age.

Davis Wiki was born in 2004. Back then, Andersen said he was just starting to see Wikipedia entries pop up on his Google searches but had no idea how important local wikis would be. Creators Mike Ivanov and Philip Neustrom, on the other hand, "really caught the first wave," Andersen said.

Evan Edwards, or JabberWokky as he's known on the wiki, got involved with the project in the beginning, sprinkling the site with his knowledge on a variety of topics. Davis Wiki drew Edwards in because "a lot of things on the Internet are very theoretical," he said. "But the wiki actually had something to do with the real world and day-to-day life."

So a student can check apartment rents, a family can cry out for their lost dog or a group of friends can whip out their mobile phone to see that — yeah — Redrum Burger's open till midnight.



COURTESY PHOTO

Philip Neustrom, co-founder of Davis Wiki with Mike Ivanov, updates an entry at Woodstocks Pizza. Davis Wiki was named "world's best local wiki" by the Nieman Journalism Lab.

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WIKI: Site serves as virtual 'public square' for Davis information

From Page A1

"We have everything from your typical UC Davis student who might be very poor and living in his car, all the way up to senior citizens," Edwards said. "There's a wide variety of input from across the spectrum of the community of Davis."

Moe Moriel helps update the SPCA Thrift Store's wiki site every day, letting people know about the store's merchandise, sales and events for that day. "A lot of people check before they bother to come," Moriel said, especially if they're looking for something specific.

So on Monday, those interested could hop online and see women's T-shirts were half off from noon to 4 p.m. and electronics got the same discount from 2 to 6 p.m.

Edwards violates conventional wisdom by putting personal information (like his phone number and address) online. But, he said, "the only kinds of connections I make are positive ones."

"People feel like I'm talking with someone I could run into at Safeway or the Co-op," Edwards said, describing the wiki as a virtual "public square" where everyone has equal footing. "It creates a lot of empathy."

Before they created Davis Wiki, Ivanov and Neustrom felt the community was losing those conversations in a massive, ongoing loss of institutional knowledge. Half the people

"We have everything from your typical UC Davis student who might be very poor and living in his car, all the way up to senior citizens. There's a wide variety of input from across the spectrum of the community of Davis."

Evan Edwards
early contributor to Davis Wiki project

subject in the middle of the game."

With that idea in mind, Ivanov and Neustrom wrote their own software and recruited friends to come up with ideas and write pages about this and that. They looked at Wikipedia as a possible model but decided it was too formal. So they molded Davis Wiki after Everything2.com, which Ivanov described as "a total anything-goes, worldwide wiki."

"It wasn't trying to be authoritative the way Wikipedia is; it wasn't trying to be neutral. It was a free-for-all, and that was the cool thing about it."

Ivanov wanted to create something similar that was exclusive to Davis. Once they seeded the site with

Before they created Davis Wiki, Ivanov and Neustrom felt the community was losing those conversations in a massive, ongoing loss of institutional knowledge. Half the people in Davis are UCD students, Ivanov explained, and many go to school for four years and move away.

"A lot of knowledge that gets created and passed around through word of mouth just disappears," he said. "We wanted to create a resource where people could share that, so incoming freshmen or someone who's new to Davis could benefit from all of this knowledge that was once locked up in everyone's heads."

Exactly, journalist Andersen said. Newspapers, for example, are "churning out new facts, new facts, new facts" but there's a constant turnover of information that gets junked each day. With a wiki, "you're not writing only for today's audience, but next week's audience and next year's audience."

So someone who's new in town who knows nothing of the deep political history behind a City Council election can hop on Davis Wiki and "jump right into the

to be neutral. It was a free-for-all, and that was the cool thing about it."

Ivanov wanted to create something similar that was exclusive to Davis. Once they seeded the site with original content, they opened it up to the public.

"It kind of exploded once we did that."

Ivanov and Neustrom are hoping for similar explosions in other communities across the United States. Neustrom started Wiki Spot, a one-click, create-your-own-wiki Web site that has given birth to community wikis in Rochester, N.Y., Santa Cruz and Pittsburgh.

"It's super easy," Ivanov said.

Andersen tracks the evolution of wikis. Recently, he read something that made his ears perk up: It took about 10 years for e-mail to become a fixture in daily life. Now, he added, people assume anyone they meet knows how to work e-mail.

"Wikis," he said, "are hitting that same sort of stride."

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