



INNOVATION

ToledoWiki 'learn and launch' set for Nov. 24

Written by Sarah Ottney | Managing Editor | sottney@toledofreepress.com

ToledoWiki is a new website about Toledo that anyone can edit.

Its organizers hope it will become a repository of Toledo information that will help capture community knowledge not presently available online, said 36-year-old Brian Zelip, a University of Toledo graduate who launched the site Nov. 6.

“We are creating ToledoWiki so that everyone can feel like a city insider via this digital liaison between the people, institutions and ideas of Toledo,” Zelip wrote on the website. “By launching this dynamic digital space to freely share all local knowledge about Toledo, our hope is that ToledoWiki will show Toledoans and visitors the depth and breadth of community resources, people, institutions, and cultural attractions that would take a long time to locate and learn about on one’s own.”



Brian Zelip

Similar to Wikipedia, anyone can create a user account and upload photos, embed videos, insert maps and links and more.

“The map function I think is especially cool,” Zelip said.

ToledoWiki runs on free software called LocalWiki.

“It’s very easy to use,” Zelip said. “I don’t know if you’ve ever edited a Wikipedia page, but there’s some code involved. [LocalWiki] is the same as typing up a word document or sending an email.”

All changes are recorded and can be reversed in the case of mistakes or vandalism, Zelip said. A business or organization can choose to apply permissions so only authorized users can edit its page.

Zelip’s goal is to get 100 users by Dec. 6 so the site can receive funding for a year of web hosting from Code for America, a national nonprofit service organization that issued a challenge for communities to take up a civic engagement project.

Zelip, a Dayton native, recently moved to Champaign-Urbana, Ill., after living in Toledo for more than a decade. He is a student and research assistant at the graduate school of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois.

“I still keep in touch with a lot of the good energy in Toledo, so I found out about this software and knew immediately Toledo could benefit from something like that,” Zelip said. “Toledo seemed like a good fit and I think there’s going to be a lot of momentum about it.”

‘Learn and launch’ party

A “learn and launch” party for those interested in learning more about ToledoWiki is set for 4-6 p.m. Nov. 24 at Black Kite Coffee, 2499 Collingwood Blvd. There will be a 20-minute slide show followed by a question-and-answer session and discussion.

“It will be very informal, very loose. There will be some laptops on hand so people can look at the site or make a user account and start editing pages,” Zelig said. “I hope everyone who comes creates a user account and that everyone comes away knowing how to use the website and wanting to put up a page about the things that are interesting to them, because that’s how we get the snowball rolling.”

Among the more than 40 pages already created on ToledoWiki are Mayor Bell’s 2013 budget, Artomatic 419, the Old West End and more. One local DJ is using ToledoWiki as an archive of his music and Streetspun — a “guerilla knitter” who installs yarn coverings on public structures like parking meters, light posts and bike racks — has added photos of the latest “yarnbombs,” Zelig said.

“ToledoWiki is a directory of the community,” Zelig said. “It’s a public archive. It’s a digital commons. It has the capability to record the past yet is also dynamic enough to capture the moment.”

With ToledoWiki, Toledo joins many other communities across the country also starting local wiki projects.

“It’s not just happening in Toledo; it’s happening all over the place,” Zelig said. “Other cities are trying out this kind of thing, which is really exciting. People are learning as they go, learning from each other, asking questions and everyone from Toledo is welcome to get involved in that conversation.”

Among the early proponents and users of ToledoWiki are Zelig’s friends Kelly McGilvery and Rachel Richardson.



McGilvery, who co-founded Artomatic 419 and is a longtime collaborator with the Arts Commission, has already added a few entries to the site.

“ToledoWiki has potential to be a really useful resource about the city,” McGilvery said in an email to *Toledo Free Press*. “One of the most exciting parts of this project so far has been seeing people sharing their unique knowledge on the site. The richness of information gained over many lifetimes in Toledo will make this a really essential resource. The open format of the site means that anyone can jump in and contribute. My hope is that ToledoWiki becomes a site that answers a lot of frequently asked questions about Toledo and provides avenues for exploration for readers and contributors.”

Kelly McGilvery

“I hope that people come away from the [Nov. 24] meeting as enthusiastic as we are about ToledoWiki, and excited to share the website’s story, and to contribute their ideas and knowledge on the site. If the attendees of this launch meeting are able to share ToledoWiki across their varied personal networks, we’ll have a robust set of readers and contributors.”

Richardson, founder of Art Corner Toledo and a *Toledo Free Press Star* columnist, said she is excited about the possibilities of ToledoWiki and plans to attend the launch meeting to learn more about it.

“Brian asked me to get involved and that’s really all I needed to know, that it was Brian’s idea,” Richardson said. “He’s very community-driven and community-oriented. The fact that he was moved to do this from Champaign-Urbana speaks to the fact that people with Toledo roots are always thinking about Toledo no matter where they move or travel to.”

“I think it sounds wonderful. I will admit I’m kind of an luddite, but I understand the power of the grassroots community-driven effort regardless of where it shows up and if it’s on the Internet, it has that much more power and potential impact.”

ToledoWiki is different from Facebook and other social media sites in that it is hyperlocal, Zelig said.

“It’s not about competing with Facebook. This is something else,” Zelip said. “Facebook is great because it lowered the barrier, which is a good thing, but ultimately it’s not local and we don’t own it. They decide what to do with our information.”

The Internet and the concept of collaboratively edited sites like Wikipedia has changed the way information is distributed, Zelip said.

“It’s really changing the world and changing the way we do fundamental things,” Zelip said. “This has a lot of implications beyond just a fun time.”

ToledoWiki also has the potential to harness the knowledge of those whose voices often go unheard.

“It really starts getting exciting when you start thinking how many things can come out of this,” Zelip said. “You don’t need to exclude any voices. Organizations could host workshops to help build digital literacy skills and begin populating that information on the Web. Start teaching people how to use cameras, how to edit. The world becomes our canvas. It’s a very community-minded thing going on and really is what anyone wants to make of it.

“It’s stress-free. You don’t have to deal with it on a daily basis. It’s here when you need it and when you want it. This is really a collective intelligence moment for Toledo. That’s what ToledoWiki is all about.”

For more information, visit toledowiki.net.

Tags: [Sarah Ottney](#), [ToledoWiki](#)

This entry was posted on Wednesday, November 21st, 2012 at 11:51 pm and is filed under [Arts and Life](#).

You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed.

You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.