

East Asian Commons for Historical Reconciliation

Collaborative history textbooks across countries has received increasing attention because of their promising and crucial potentials for historical reconciliation and cross cultural understanding. Recent cases include the Franco-German high school history book project and the Chinese-Japanese-Korean common history textbook project (中日韓共通教科書). However, challenges in involving more stakeholders, creating favorable collaboration environment, and distributing contents remain. This report aims to evaluate the current outcome and potentials Wikipedia and its related sister projects in East Asian context. First it explores Wikipedia's general potential for collaborative history projects as a case of open educational resources (OER) and a case of user-created content (UCC) by reviewing related literature on Wikipedia and recent OECD's reports on OER and UCC. Then it collects and analyzes the contents related to two Sino-Japanese Wars in Wikipedia (free content encyclopedia), Wikibooks (the open-content textbooks collection), Wikimedia Commons (the freely usable media files), and Wiktionary (multilingual free content dictionary). It concludes with recommendations for both the current textbook collaborative projects and the communities around East-Asia Wikipedia.

The report first identifies and explains the general socio-political need for co-authoring history textbooks in East Asian context, particularly around the two historical events of Sino-Japanese Wars that involved not only Japan and China, but also Korea, Taiwan, and Okinawa. Hence, it argues that history textbook collaboration projects are relatively more difficult in East Asia than between France and Germany. In the case of East Asia, less stakeholders are involved and political atmosphere needs improving. It also describes why the inter-government collaboration is less likely to occur in between

China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan than between France and Germany. Han Unification project in Unicode (CJK統合漢字), a collaborative project to accommodate all the Chinese Han characters used in East Asia onto an international encoding standard, provides some evidence that official government stakeholders generally distance themselves, arguably for political concerns, from similar projects that involve political concerns over the East Asian commons. Hence, most projects are maintained mainly by academic and expert communities in East Asia. The Chinese-Japanese-Korean common history textbook project (中日韓共通教科書), unlike the Franco-German high school history book project which enjoys high-profile government support, is also a civic project without direct governmental support and approval.

The success of Wikipedia and its sister projects thus may provide an alternative to create much needed commons in East Asian history for the following reasons. First, they serve as well-linked and ready-for-reuse "open educational resources" (OER). Thanks to the interlingual effort and coordination in Wikipedia and Wiktionary projects, the corresponding content of any single entry in another language, if exists, is only a click away. Such a framework reduces the barrier for cross-cultural communication and promotes comparison, translation, and discussion among contents written in different languages. Also, thanks to Wikimedia's open content license, any one can reuse the resources under GNU Free Documentation License, and the plan for interoperability with the Creative Commons CC-BY-SA license is also in pace. Second, they are heralded as a success story of "user-created contents". The contents are created by end-users (as opposed to expert editors only). Thus as OER, they can involve potentially more stakeholders such as expert researchers, teachers, journalists, and even students. Given the popularity of Wikipedia entries among major search engine's search results, they tend to reach out to more potential users. In addition, they run on

quite limited funding and thus provide a cost-effective platform for collaboration. Last but not least, they are open to further participative web applications because the software in use are also free software, which suggests further innovative use of the contents and content integration are not only possible, and possibly exists already. The recent increasing number of Wikipedia-based research and projects attests their potentials.

To understand the potentials and limits of the Wikipedia-related resources in creating a viable commons for historical educational resources open to all, the report collects the contents related to two Sino-Japanese Wars. The scope of the research is limited to the related contents mainly written in Japanese, Chinese, and English versions of Wikipedia (free content encyclopedia), Wikibooks (the open-content textbooks collection), Wikimedia Commons (the freely usable media files), and Wiktionary (multilingual free content dictionary). Although it might not be comprehensive enough in terms of topic and geography, it covers arguably the most politically controversial parts of the modern East Asian history. In addition, since the Chinese contents are also participated by Chinese-speaking users from Taiwan and Hong Kong, the stakeholders involved is arguable more diverse than the professional historians in the Chinese-Japanese-Korean common history textbook project. To identify any discrepancy in contents among different language versions, a webometric and bibliometric analysis will be deployed to measure the diversity of source materials. To measure and evaluate cross-language collaborative activities, discussion and coordination pages will be collected and analyzed. Special attention is given to the conflict resolution process of edit wars with a framework that describes how a community manages its commons with its social norms. With all these findings, it will be compared with the Chinese-Japanese-Korean common history textbook project on contents, technology, cultural values, and policy implications.

Recommendations on technology, culture and policy grounds are summarized in the conclusion, advocating the East Asian Wikipedia-related projects' experience for building and connecting all digital resources needed for a shared historical educational resources in East Asia. They are ready for web technology (existing data repository, easy access, and potentials in distribution and reuse), tend to be tolerant for cultural and regional diversity (social interaction, community norms, and open for modifications), and requires little institutional overhead. Further research is needed to make more concrete recommendations on legal (particularly different national content regulations on history textbooks) and business (particularly different national textbook, education and e-learning markets). Recommendations made by this report then serves as two-way learning processes. For one, the current textbook collaborative projects can learn from the potentials in OER and UCC examples provided by Wikipedia-related projects. For another, the Wikipedia-related projects' current achievements and limitations in providing East Asia with common history knowledge are partially surveyed and assessed.

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- Currently a doctoral student at the Oxford Internet Institute (OII), University of Oxford, Han-Teng Liao studies the two major user-contributed online Chinese encyclopedias, Chinese Wikipedia and Baidu Baike. Recognizing the general

Enlightenment impulse for peace in encyclopedia projects, he compares how various wars are managed in these two cases: military wars that had erupted in the last century, media and information wars that have persisted since the Cold War, flame wars between Internet users, and edit wars among contributors. His preliminary findings show two increasingly segregated spheres: Chinese-written Internet and China's Internet. He advocates the practice of peer production and the concept of 'commons', to inform the Internet policies and politics research in East Asian context.