

## CIA, Vatican prolific Wikipedia contributors

Written by Joomla! Administrator

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[!\[\]\(666e09182d4cd268646ea700ea60dcdf\_img.jpg\)ELEANOR HALL: The world according to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia is in a constant state of update, as tens of thousands of contributors work to ensure the site's content is correct.](https://youtu.be/EVOkxeW2-nA) But now an innovation on the site has confirmed a long held suspicion, that Wikipedia is a prime target for spin doctoring.

A new identification program on the site reveals that some of the most prolific contributors to Wikipedia are the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), the British Labour Party and the Vatican and that they're not just updating their own entries.

Michael Edwards has our report.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: In the pre-internet age, people turned to books when they wanted information. Now, people go online to sites like Wikipedia.

But the difference here is that the content doesn't come from experts or editors, it comes from anyone.

SEAMUS BYRNE: Wikipedia is basically an open encyclopedia online, that absolutely anyone can edit, anyone can add entries to, and anyone can change anything they read on there.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: Seamus Byrne is the Editor of online technology site Gizmodo Australia. But while anyone can put up content, users do keep track of entries to ensure they're accurate and balanced.

SEAMUS BYRNE: It's quite a large community of users that are really devoted to Wikipedia, and that's something they do spend lot of time monitoring, is when changes are made, I guess so far it hasn't been a case of monitoring the source, but they do try to keep an eye on any bias that may appear within any articles.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: And a new innovation has revealed some interesting sources of that bias.

The so-called wikiscanner rummages through entries and edits posted on Wikipedia to find where they originate. And among the usual list of companies and celebrities spinning their online image are some unusual mentions, including the British Labour Party, the Church of Scientology and the CIA.

Seamus Byrne.

SEAMUS BYRNE: You've always got the feeling they've been doing it, and it just confirms that idea because there's a lot of both, I guess vanity editing, as well as more serious editing that does goes on.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: The wikiscanner site shows the CIA has edited entries on many US government related issues, including presidential biographies and descriptions of military operations. It's also edited topics as diverse as Adam Smith's the Wealth of Nations and the singer, Richard Marx.

Gerard Goggin is an expert on the use of the internet in politics at Sydney University. To him, the presence of organisations such as the CIA on Wikipedia is cause for alarm.

GERARD GOGGIN: It underscores that we've got to be careful with all the sources we quote.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: Seamus Byrne from Gizmodo says proof the CIA is editing on Wikipedia will fuel internet conspiracy theories. He says Wikipedia is just one place the government is watching you.

SEAMUS BYRNE: Surveillance is the big thing. I mean obviously there's the quite large, and I guess people in online circles certainly know about it, called the Echelon Project and it's a series of surveillance systems around the world that actually monitor phone data, all kinds of traffic that goes on, looking for key words related to things like terrorism and all kinds of troublesome issues, and they pull that out and try to sift through it to find any connections that could be made to point to a real problem.

ELEANOR HALL: That's Seamus Byrne, an online editor, ending that report by Michael Edwards.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2007-08-16/cia-vatican-prolific-wikipedia-contributors/641906>

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