Overview of the seniors-oriented activities within the framework of "Wiki Loves Monuments 2011"

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Summary

In 2011, various senior-activities (e.g. picture safaris and workshops) were organized in the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland to stimulate older adults to participate in the "Wiki Loves Monuments"contest. Seniorweb NL and Seniorweb CH additionally mobilized their members via their newsletters. Although these first senior-oriented initiatives were not numerous and rather small-scale, they show that participants in the picture safaris welcome a heterogeneous group of contestants, and that the administrative efforts of participation in Wiki Loves Monuments could be eased with a clear list of monuments. Future experiences with senior-oriented activities will enable the assessment of successful and less successful approaches in the stimulation of older adults' participation in Wiki Loves Monuments.

Description of "Wiki Loves Monuments" and related senior-oriented activities

Wiki Loves Monuments is an international photo contest focusing on cultural heritage monuments, organized by Wikimedia. The contest takes place annually in September, and was initiated in the Netherlands in 2010. After expanding on a European level in 2011, Wiki Loves Monuments is going global in 2012.

In 2011, circa 5000 people uploaded a picture and thus participated in the Wiki Loves Monuments contest. About 4000 participants had not uploaded /edited anything at Wikipedia before; meaning that circa 80 percent of the Wiki Loves Monuments-participants were new to (contributing to) Wikipedia. About 15 percent of the participants filled in the Wiki Loves Monuments questionnaire afterwards. The results showed that many participants came from Russia, Poland, France, Spain and Germany. In several countries picture safaris (walking/biking tour in which various people take pictures together) were organized, e.g. in The Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Portugal.

The Dutch Wiki Loves Monuments initiator had the impression that the share of older adults participating in Wiki Loves Monuments was higher than the share of older adults contributing to Wikipedia in general. This impression was also confirmed at the Swiss Wiki Loves Monument award event. However, this higher share of older participants may not be accurately visible in the results of the questionnaire. The latter was offered via the talk-page of Wikipedia and therefore probably attracted mostly people who were familiar with the interactive Web 2.0-aspects of Wikipedia, which may not be the older participants. Moreover, in some countries (e.g. Switzerland) the small number of filled-in questionnaires did not allow to make statistically significant statements.

To encourage older adults[1] to participate in the Wiki Loves Monuments contest, specific activities for this group were organized in several countries. This short report concisely describes these senior-oriented activities that were organized in 2011 in The Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland.

Overview: senior-oriented activities in The Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland

The Netherlands: Seniorweb's picture safari & Mobilization for Wiki Takes a City tours

Seniorweb NL stimulated older persons to participate in the Wiki Loves Monuments-contest in two ways:
- *first, it organized a 'picture safari' for its members;*
- *second, it mobilized its members to participate in Wikipedia's 'Wiki takes a city' tours by announcing them in the Seniorweb newsletter.*

Senior-oriented activity 1: Seniorweb's picture safari for its members
The existing 'picture group' of Seniorweb NL organized a picture safari in the city of Haarlem, in which circa twenty Seniorweb members participated. Seniorweb NL provided them with information about how to upload the pictures at the Wiki Loves Monuments website. However, the safari group leader had the impression that only few participants actually uploaded their picture to the Wiki Loves Monuments website. (He himself did not upload his pictures either: he considered himself to be a photographer, and did not want to give away the rights to his pictures.)

Senior-oriented activity 2: Mobilisation for Wikipedia's "Wiki takes a city" tours
Wikipedia organized several "Wiki takes a city" tours (photo safaris in a certain city). Via three newsletters, reaching 140.000 people each, Seniorweb NL mobilized for these "Wiki takes a city" tours. However, Seniorweb NL does not have information about how many of its members participated in these "Wiki takes a city" tours.
Newsletters: http://www.seniorweb.nl/zoeken.aspx?q=wiki+loves+monuments)

General remark: Wiki Loves Monuments site: User friendliness OK, administration complicated
The Seniorweb NL responsible for online activities noted that the user friendliness of the Wiki Loves Monuments site was good at the technical level. However, on the administrative level it was rather complicated, as participants needed to provide the official number of the monument. If one did not have the monument list at hand to match the monuments and numbers, this could be time-consuming.

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[1] No exact age limit has been defined; generally the senior-oriented activities focused on people above 55 years.

Germany: Wikipedia presentation & Upload workshop with hobby historians

Wikipedia Germany and the Association of Chroniclers of Potsdam-Mittelmark together organized two activities for seniors, within the framework of Wiki Loves Monuments:

- *first, a presentation about Wikipedia (35 participants);*
- *second, a workshop about uploading pictures to Wikicommons (6 participants; 4 men and 2 women).*

The target group of the presentation and the workshop consisted of people above the age of 50 years having a certain knowledge (in this case: historical knowledge) that would allow them to become Wikipedia-contributors. During the upload workshop, participants were informed about Wiki Loves Monuments and shown where they could find the lists of monuments on Wikipedia. However, it turned out to be difficult for participants to enter their pictures into the lists. As a follow-up, Wikipedia therefore offered online and telephone help afterwards (in September 2011).

Switzerland: Partnership with Seniorweb CH to encourage Wiki Loves Monuments-participation

Wikipedia Switzerland established the following partnership with the online senior community Seniorweb CH: Seniorweb CH communicated to its members about Wiki Loves Monuments via a newsletter and an article in an online magazine, it created a blog about the Wiki Loves Monuments contest and posted contributions in the photographers' forum of its community.

Conclusions

Overview of activities

Within the framework of Wiki Loves Monuments 2011, several activities were organized in The Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland to encourage specifically older adults to participate in the contest. These senior-oriented activities comprised:

- a picture safari for Seniorweb members (Seniorweb NL),
- an online mobilization via newsletters to participate in Wiki Loves Monuments (Seniorweb NL & Seniorweb CH),
- a presentation about Wikipedia and a picture-upload workshop (Wikimedia Germany & Association of Chroniclers),
- online facilities to encourage participation in and discussion about Wiki Loves Monuments (Seniorweb CH).

Although the online senior communities Seniorweb NL and Seniorweb CH widely communicated about the contest via their newsletters, it was not documented how many of their members actually participated in Wiki Loves Monuments. Moreover, the offline senior activities were small-scale, with 20 participants in Seniorweb NL's picture safari and 6 participants in Wikipedia Germany's upload-workshop.

Open questions

After the first year of senior-oriented activities within the framework of Wiki Loves Monuments, some interesting questions remain open:

- What is the gender ratio in these senior-oriented activities?
- What is the effect of Seniorweb's (CH&NL) call to its members to participate in Wiki Loves Monuments? How many members of Seniorweb NL & Seniorweb CH participated?
- Does the Wiki Loves Monuments questionnaire enable to divide the participants of Wiki Loves Monuments into various age groups?

Lessons learned

Various communities in 1 event = positive

As Wikipedia has difficulties in reaching people outside the own community, the Wiki Loves Monuments initiator would welcome heterogeneous groups of participants in the picture safaris, which got positive feedback from the participants in 2011. He therefore suggests letting various communities (e.g. Seniorweb and Wikipedia) communicate about the same picture safari via their own channels, so that a heterogeneous group of participants joins the safari and is able to get acquainted and share experiences.

Ease administrational burden with list of monuments

It was noted that the administrational aspects of participating in Wiki Loves Monuments (connecting pictures with correct number/explanation of monument) could still be improved. It would be easier for participants if they were provided with clear lists of monuments including names and matching numbers.

Start with knowledgeable participants

Wikimedia Germany noted that in order to reach the final objective of enlarging the group of sustainable senior contributors to Wikipedia, the target group for senior-oriented activities should be carefully described and chosen. For their workshop, Wikimedia Germany made positive experiences with participants that were knowledgeable in a certain field (e.g. history) and who therefore had the potential to become Wikipedia authors.

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