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REVISITING REQUEST FOR ADMINSHIP (RFA) TEN YEARS LATER: HOW DO USER CONTRIBUTIONS RELATE TO LONGEVITY IN WIKIPEDIA

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Keywords

Wikipedia, Request for Adminship (RfA), social contribution, content contribution, administrators, trust

ABSTRACT

Wikipedia, known as *The Free Encyclopedia*, is an online collaborative project providing free encyclopedia articles on a variety of topics (Burke and Kraut, 2008). The project is possible due to an international network of independent volunteers, referred to as editors within the project (Viegas et al., 2007). While editors can perform basic tasks, a select set of tasks are reserved for those with the title administrator, such as deleting pages and blocking users. The title administrator is achieved after community assessment through a Request for Adminship or RfA (Kordzadeh and Kreider, 2016; Kreider and Kordzadeh, 2015). During the assessment process, the entirety of the users contribution to the project is available for review, both qualitative (detailed review of every edit made to the project) and quantitative (summary statistics such as total number of edits). Kordzadeh and Kreider (2016) explored how quantitative measures including total number of content contributions, total number of social contributions, total number of clarified contributions related to the binary outcome of a successful or unsuccessful RfA. The readily available quantitative values they identified were shown to predict outcomes with a 76.6%, with variables contributing to the model all being significant at the .05 level using N=754 RfAs from a 2 year period between 2006 and 2008.

Ten years has since past from the time the cohorts of administrators were examined. As Wikipedia relies on the contributions of volunteers, including administrators, an interesting question is how long contributors will remain active in the project. One study, by Zhang et al. (2012), identified that the median active time for a customary Wikipedia editor is 53 days, with two critical phases at 0-2 weeks and 8-20 weeks with increased chance of becoming inactive. One possible explanation for this is role that certain administrative operations, such as reverts, demotivate and drive newcomers away (Halfaker et al., 2011). Our interest, however, is in experienced editors who have become elected to administrator positions. Specifically, are the factors that enabled prediction of a successful or unsuccessful RfA by Kordzadeh and Kreider (2016) similarly effective at predicting whether they will remain active in the community at the ten year anniversary of their RFA. Our methodology will use random selection to select a subset of RfA from the original period. We will perform edit counts at the time of the RfA, and again 10 years later. From here, we will then explore the role that the original values identified relate to whether the users remain active at the 10 year mark. Finally, we will select a random selection of non-administrative users who were active at the time of the first cohorts RfA. We will count their edits at that time, and again at the 10 year mark. For both sets of randomly selected users, we will retest the hypotheses by Kordzadeh and Kreider (Kordzadeh and Kreider, 2016).

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