News Item

Inauthentic Editing: Changing Wikipedia to Win Elections and Influence People | Stanford Internet Observatory

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> The principle that "anyone can edit" Wikipedia has been foundational to the massive success of the nearly entirely volunteer-driven encyclopedia. With its first edit on January 15, 2001, the English Wikipedia website has averaged around 300 million pageviews per day over the past two years as people use the site to research everything from political candidates to animals with fraudulent diplomas. Content from Wikipedia is frequently prioritized by search engines, and Google's knowledge panels use the first paragraph of Wikipedia articles to fuel instant results to user queries.
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> This combination of a low barrier to entry and a high impact makes Wikipedia a tempting target. Not every politician gets a profile in the New Yorker: for the rest, Wikipedia is often the only place with a complete profile of their biographical information and record in office.
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> Building on the work of Wikipedia editors catching politically motivated editing, we investigate one case of "inauthentic editing"—where individuals targeted the Wikipedia pages of two contending politicians during the 2020 British Columbia (BC) general provincial election. Through this deep-dive case study, we also show a process for investigating Wikipedia, and identify Wikipedia's strengths and weaknesses in dealing with inauthentic edits.
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