



**BERKMAN CENTER FOR INTERNET & SOCIETY**  
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY



*Research protocol history – Dynamics of Online Interaction & Behavior*  
**LETTER TO THE RCOM**

Before opening our survey [1] for Wikipedians to participate, we wanted to make sure that we were following the best practices possible according to community principles. So we first committed ourselves to respecting the early suggestions of the Research Committee [2] [3] on how to handle the subject recruitment process and asked advice from other researchers and community members.

Our survey tool is open source, and we will release our research outputs and data under an open access licence (while preserving full anonymity of participants), so that anyone will be able to use the behavioral and attitudinal data that we gather any way that they see fit. We will also propose to present our research at a Wikimania conference. Furthermore, as participants get paid upon completion of the survey (up to \$50), we tweaked the survey so that Wikipedians have the opportunity to donate their funds to the WMF, which we see as a means to contribute to the Fundraising. For the last six months, we have had \$40,000 blocked and ready to fund about 1500-2000 Wikipedians to participate in the study.

We contacted the Foundation in early January in order to present our research goals and methods. We refined our research protocol and recruitment strategy according to the feedback we got. The original plan was to open our survey for Wikipedians to participate in late March. Before doing so, we took the additional initiative to present our research protocol on the admins' noticeboard to get direct community feedback [4]. Sending user talk page invitations to participate in the study via bot did not receive the support we expected. During the discussion, running a targeted SiteNotice banner stood out instead as the most efficient, least intrusive and least disruptive method to advertise the study. So Steven and the WMF nicely accepted to help us out with this solution in early April. We modified our research protocol again and also coded a SiteNotice banner [5] that we planned to display for two weeks on English Wikipedia to all logged-in users starting April 14th. The project was delayed several times because WMF banners were planned to run in this period (Annual Editor Survey, Board of trustees elections, POTY, Wikimania).

After checking the possibilities with Steven, we planned on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June to open our survey for Wikipedians to participate on the 23rd of June at 11:59 p.m. for a two weeks time slot. A second data collection phase was to be planned about 6 months after this date (as a follow up and with the same protocol). However, the communication eventually stopped a week ago. We are totally willing and committed to making our research procedures fully community compliant, but after all this time spent and hard work, the current situation becomes difficult to handle for us and we would really need to be able to start collecting data very soon.

There are 2 things that the Foundation could help us with in order to get the study ready to run on en:wp:

1. Set up our banner at Central Notice:admin [6] rapidly so that we can see how it looks like and try to fix the code accordingly.
2. On the day when we start collecting data, post our call to participate on the Foundation's blog and help diffusing our call to participate by sending it to Foundation\_I and Wikipedia\_I.

Our research team at the Berkman Center and Sciences Po remains mobilized to make this ambitious research project and collaboration with the WMF a deep success! We are all convinced that it will be a major breakthrough in our understanding of online social spaces that will ultimately benefit Wikipedia and its sister projects.

Best regards,

Jérôme (on behalf of our research group at the Berkman Center and Sciences Po).

[1]

[http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Projects/Dynamics\\_of\\_Online\\_Interactions\\_and\\_Behavior](http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:Projects/Dynamics_of_Online_Interactions_and_Behavior)

[2] [http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Notes\\_on\\_good\\_practices\\_on\\_Wikipedia\\_research](http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Notes_on_good_practices_on_Wikipedia_research)

[3] [http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Subject\\_Recruitment\\_Approvals\\_Group](http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Subject_Recruitment_Approvals_Group)

[4]

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Administrators%27\\_noticeboard/Archive222#Researchers\\_requesting\\_administrators.E2.80.99\\_advice\\_to\\_launch\\_a\\_study](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Administrators%27_noticeboard/Archive222#Researchers_requesting_administrators.E2.80.99_advice_to_launch_a_study)

[5] <http://grebdioz.sciences-po.fr/limesurvey/services/wikipedia/banner.php>

[6] <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Special:CentralNotice>