Wikipedia Article Importance

Soumya Khandelwal

khand080@umn.edu

Department of Computer Science & Engineering, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

INTRODUCTION

Wikipedia depends on voluntary work by people to keep it up to date. There are a huge number of articles that need good quality content but only a few editors to work on them. Because of this there are recommender systems for directing Wikipedia editors' focus to articles of higher importance. These recommender systems use different criteria for deciding article importance.

Vital Articles (VA) is a WikiProject whose aim is to maintain "lists of subjects for which the English Wikipedia should have corresponding featured-class articles". Using the contributors to VA as the sample group, we can make claims of how Wikipedians view article importance. But before that, in this study, we try to understand *how well this sample represents the general Wikipedia population* which can be done by analysing the characteristics of the two groups.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How well the contributors to VA represent the general Wikipedia population?

METHODOLOGY

We used the MediaWiki API to get the available individual-user data of all the English Wikipedia editors. Using that we made another list of user data of only those editors who contributed to VA. We then compared the different characteristics of the two groups by creating several graphs. Out of all the characteristics only a few stood out as significant.

RESULTS

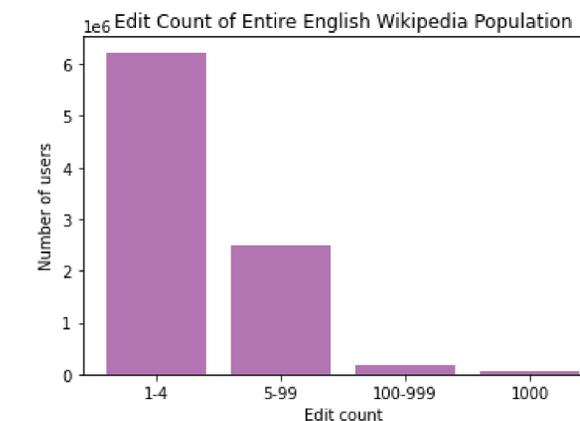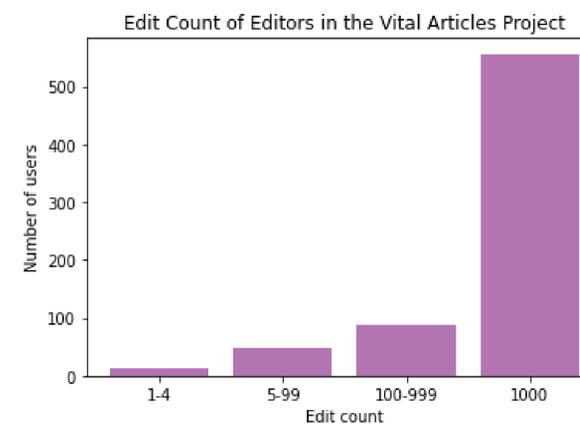| Characteristics		Vital Articles Project Editors	Entire English Wikipedia Population
Gender Demographics	Female	7.1%	12.9%
	Male	92.9%	86.3%
	Percent reporting	40.03%	1.9%
Number of Administrators		79	1119
Median Edit Count		6419	2

The median edit count of the Vital Articles Project's contributors is 6419, which is very high in comparison to the median edit count of 2 of the general Wikipedia population.

Administrators in Wikipedia are editors who are given some special rights. Admin rights are generally given to active, regular, and long-term Wikipedia contributors. Out of 794 Vital Articles editors, 79 (about 9.95% of the population) are administrators. There are a total of 1119 administrators in the entire English Wikipedia which make up (0.003% when total users = 40,650,967) (0.89% when active users = 125,639) of the entire English Wikipedia editor base.

Females make up about 12.9% of the English Wikipedia editor base but only 7.1% of the Vital Articles editor base.

GRAPHS

CONCLUSION

The difference in the median edit count tells us that VA's contributors consist of highly experienced editors who might have better insights, than a general Wikipedian, into which articles need better-quality content and what is considered "good" content.

The percentage of VA editors who are administrators is quite large in comparison to the percentage of administrators in the general English Wikipedia editor base. This communicates to us that the Wikipedians contributing to the project are highly involved in the Wikipedian community beyond just editing and have therefore received responsibility and recognition in the form of admin rights.

Although we do care about the opinions of highly engaged and experienced editors as they know more about the Wikipedian community and its requirements and are more involved in its decision-making processes, we have to be aware of the fact that there is already a gender imbalance in the editor population and the Vital Articles editor base is further skewed towards male users.

Further research on this topic is underway.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS