What are your thoughts on Wikipedia's requirement that all articles present a "neutral point of view"?

Given that the goal of the Wikimedia Foundation is a "world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge," how could Wikipedia improve to offer better information to both readers and contributors?

What are the key strengths and weaknesses of Wikipedia?

Any other thoughts?

Wikipedia's requirement of "a neutral point of view" is admirable in its desire to avoid strongly biased articles, and aim to concentrate on generally accepted factual information. Having said that, it should be acknowledged that even with "strictly factual" accounts, bias enters through a back door by the omission or inclusion of certain facts. So the editors at Wikipedia need to be conscious of that, and perhaps examine each entry to try to minimize bias, though it is impossible to avoid it completely.

For instance, the entry on "Christopher Columbus" is full of indisputable facts, but by making only passing reference to Columbus' cruelties, creates a generally positive impression of him—in other words, it reproduces the conventional story. While you do say at the head of a sub-section that "The neutrality of this section is disputed," the article itself would, I am confident, be resented by Native American historians. The footnotes show no reference to the classic works of Bartolome de las Casas, who is as close as you can get to a contemporary observer, a primary source.

To take another example: The entry on Theodore Roosevelt is full of facts, but omits crucial ones, like his stewardship of the brutal war against the Filipinos. There is one critical sentence buried under "legacy: "However, he has been criticized for his imperialist and interventionist views."   But the general thrust of the article is hagiographic, the conventional story. Yes, articles should be "balanced" but these articles on Columbus and Theodore Roosevelt are far from balanced. So a student, going to Wikipedia for information on them, would simply be getting the traditional story, hardly an inducement to critical thinking, and therefore not educational in the best sense of the term.

This does not meet the Wikipedia's stated goal of giving the world "the sum of all knowledge." It is very much like the *New York Times*' arrogant claim of "All the News That's Fit to Print," but in fact, both in the selection of which news to cover, in the selection of facts within each article, the claim is misleading.

I've just described what I believe is the chief weakness of Wikipedia. There are many articles in Wikipedia which avoid the criticism I have given above, and indeed are admirable in their "balance," but I have used a few examples where Wikipedia falls short of its expressed aim to make its editors more conscious of the problem of bias.