Wikimedia Board Election 2007 Overview
Speaker: Kizu Naoko

Luckily more than a half of Election Committee members are here, Jon Harald Søby, Tim Starling. Also here are our supervisor Jan-Bart de Vreede, Wikimedia Vice-Chair our advisor, Benjamin Mako Hill and our collaborator Wikimedia Volunteer Coordinator Cary Bass. All of us are glad to have questions later from the audience in this occasion. There are other two of our team who are regretfully not here, Philippe Beaudette and "Newyorkbrad". They have been active throughout our activity and continuously inputing their ideas. Also Philippe would be known from the community his shuttling visit to each Village pump page as our messenger. In this occasion I'd thank Philippe and Brad for their contributions to this Election.

Now I'm trying to give you the overview of Wikimedia Board Election this year. Next Jon Harald Søby is giving a talk on some challenges. I'll give the outline of this election first, giving the schedule as its scheme, and the statistics as its outcome. Then to review the rules, I'll give what we newly added to and succeeded from the previous Election.

As for schedule, we spent almost one month for the visible part of Election. Before that, Wikimedia community was invited to join Election Committee from May 6 till 13 and it had been formed on May 21. Originally Election Committee consisted of six people and later Mako became a bit away but still involved as advisor. Before accepting candidates, we had twenty days for preparing all regulations and we aimed to end the whole process before July 15, to enable every new Board member show at this conference.

Election had four phases. Candidate acceptance, endorsement acceptance, voting and results announcement.

First, Candidate acceptance took 14 days, from June 10 till June 24. We set it as long as possible in our aggressive schedule to get candidate statements in languages as many as possible. Second, Endorsement acceptance. It took 7 days, from June 17 till June 24. It was also the latter part of candidate acceptance, and in that week days both candidates and endorsements for them were received in parallel. Official endorsement is a new element for Wikimedia election, we'll later be back to this feature in this presentation. Third, the voting opens for 10 days, from June 28 till July 7. And forth and last, tally and results. Results were announced on July 12, 3 days before planned at first. So the visible parts took almost one months. It is the shortest record in Wikimedia Board Elections since 2004.

Let's see the statistics on this Election. We saw 18 people enter to the Election and 15 among them proceed to the next stage. For those fifteen candidates, qualified accounts on Wikimedia project were invited to vote, 52,750 accounts in total. 4731 votes were cast during 10 days and valid votes were 4170. Almost 8% cast votes were removed mainly due to voters change of mind or struck as votes from multiple projects. This ratio had almost been fixed during the Election. There are some complaints why people should choose one of accounts, and I suppose only single user login can solve this issue. Votes came from 129 projects including four international projects (Commons, meta, betawikiversity and MediaWiki) and three operational websites (Office, Board and Internal). Omitted those seven projects, 76 language communities including Simple English across several projects participated to vote. On 19 projects at least 20 voters cast the ballot and the sum of the votes from those projects are 3,822, equal to 91.56% of votes in total. Among those 19 wikis, except Commons and Meta, only on Hebrew Wikipedia candidate presentations were unavailable in their own language, so even if we omit international projects from the projects in whose language candidate presentations were available, we can still say close to 90% voters got the information about candidates in their language.

As background knowledge of our activity, I'd like to talk about challenges we would have liked to solve. We faced several challenges and the earliest ones were left from the last year. We had several issues we would have liked to solve. One of the biggest was improvement of security of vote. In 2004, even on a good faith, Board members were noticed the interim results and this knowledge affected some of them to motivate an action in public. The community reactions were not favorable and more neutrality and independence would

be expected to the involved parties. From the beginning, Election Committee were aware of this increasing demand to ensure independency and security of result knowledge. Second big challenge arose on communications, following the community growth. In 2006 one seat was open and 17 candidates were running for. Even then, voters complained there were too many candidate to consider their opinions seriously, and due to the amount of works, some candidates unfortunately failed to have their statement translations. Our community were still growing, and in this year, three vacant opened. It looked like inevitable for us to make the path narrower to the prospective candidates, raising requirements for their candidacy. On the other hand, there have been complaints about ineligibility from some community members and we would have liked to reply them sincerely, with respect for their devout contributions.

This year we therefore introduced three new elements. First, third party was involved to tallying. Software in the Public Interest, abbreviated SPI. It is another non-profit based in New York, shortly people behind Debian, OpenOffice and other Open Software. SPI was responsible for tally and server hosting. Michael Schultheiss, the Vice President of SPI took care of those, and did a great job. Kudos to Mike and his SPI colleagues :)

Second improvement is about candidacy. We restricted the candidacy requirements, introducing two new elements. It aimed to reduce their number regarding our experience in the last year: we saw already complaints about 17 candidates for 1 seat. 2007 three seats were opens and the community has grown. So we thought some new restrictions necessary to help the community consider each candidate in depth. The First requirement about candidacy was a long-span involvement. This year their first edit should have been made one year before, before June 1, 2006.
In 2005, three months history was okay, so the requirement of 3 months was enlarged to 1 year. The second requirement is the required number of endorsements from the community. It is a new system for Board Election. 12 Endorsements from qualified voters were required. In consequence, 18 candidates entered, and 15 remained. In my opinion it is a reasonable number for three seats.

Our third improvement is on voters. This year voting eligibility was expanded from editing community to the other types of involved people. That is, sysadmins, office staff and appointed Board members. They were however not accepted without reservation, but we required them to fill the same time scale of other voters. They should be involved to the community at least three months before. Six people in one of those categories voted as parts of us, Wikimedia community.

There are many elements we succeeded from the past. We'll refer three major elements among them. First, voting eligibility from editing were same with the past two Elections. 400 edits were required ant the first edit should be submitted at least 3 months before. Second, we used the same voting system, approval voting, on our house-made interface, Boardvote extension written by Tim Starling. In the approval system you can vote as many as you want. It had been used on Board Election since 2004, so used four times. But are we Wikimedians in 2007 in the same situation of 2004? It is a question and we considered to switch to another system. But finally we decided to keep using it. We concentrated in this issue in two weeks and found two weeks were too short to discuss such a big change. Finally we reported the Board our discussion with possible options and they took the familiar system and let the future discussion consider the change. Next time will the Wikimedia Board member be chosen through a different system? I have no perspective currently and expect further discussion and review.

The third element we kept was the way of communications. We set official meta pages for public relations and for each candidate, two pages were prepared. Platform for statement and a question page from the community. Platform were translated in several languages and fully available in 15 languages including English. Questions were not and most of interactions happened in English and only. Internationalization of the latter will be a future challenge. Translations were made by volunteers, that is, Wikimedia editors. Outsourcing were considered but not realized. As mentioned, all fifteen candidate presentations were translated into14 languages: French, German, Japanese or Italian. In my opinion 14 language translations is a fair number: roughly 90% of voters got candidate presentations in their languages. But still we can improve

and the next time I expect we can see more language diversity.

There are not implemented ideas. As mentioned, voting system change, preset questions for candidate or off-wiki communications including IRC debate or mail notification for voters. What we did is also open to further improvement. We faced many challenges. We fixed some, but not all. We left them to the next year team as their challenges. Later Jon Harald Søby will give a talk on such challenges closely.
As conclusion, this Election was a fabulous and challenging experience for us each Election Committee member. I believe We each are honored to help it out. And if I may, in this occasion, I renew our gratitude for many supports we received. Both support in the community and from our third party partner, Software in the Public Interest. Also our wonderful candidates and voters who made it a fair and historically significant Election. Shortly we'd like to appreciate all of you, Wikimedians! And last and not least, we wishes the best for the new Board and the next year Election Committee. We were lucky to work with you all. Please help them, the new Board and next Committee as well as you helped us.

Thank you for your listening.