

Cross-cultural dialogue through Wikipedia

الحوار بين الحضارات من خلال ويكيبيديا



WIKIMANIA

2008

Alexandria, Egypt

ويكيمنيا 2008، الإسكندرية، مصر

Embarking on a cross-cultural journey

“It wasn't a love trip, but a serious attempt to get rid of hate. Hatred prevents us from knowing reality as it is.”

Ali Salem,

an Egyptian writer,

about his journey to Israel in 1994





ويكيبيديا
الموسوعة الحرة

الموسوعة

الصفحة الرئيسية

الأحداث الجارية

أحدث التغييرات

أحدث التغييرات الأساسية

تصفح

مرحباً بكم في ويكيبيديا

الموسوعة الحرة التي يستطيع الجميع تحريرها.

يوجد الآن 64,366 مقالة بالعربية

- مجتمع
- تقنية
- كل البوابات
- تاريخ
- رياضيات
- علوم
- ثقافة
- أعلام
- أديان

السبت 12 يوليو 2008 م الموافق 8 رجب 1429 هـ نظرة • تحرير • أسئلة • مساعدة • محتويات • تصانيف • محتويات مختارة

أحداث جارية

★ مقالة الأسبوع المختارة

Dork

هذا المستخدم من إسرائيل.



هذا المستخدم بإمكانه التحدث بالعربية بمستوى متقدم.

ar-3

משתמש זה דובר עברית כשפת אם.

he

This user speaks English at a near-native level.

en-4

Cet utilisateur peut contribuer avec un niveau avancé de français.

fr-3

اسمي درور وأنا في 33 من عمري. أسكن في منطقة تل أبيب بإسرائيل.

تعلمت اللغة العربية والثقافة العربية والإسلامية في المعهد اليهودي العربي للسلام بجبعات حبيبة (قرب مدينة الخضيرة في إسرائيل). بعد ذلك تعلمت اللغويات في جامعة تل أبيب وحصلت على بكالوريوس.

يمكنني التحدث بالعبرية والعربية وكذلك بالإنكليزية والفرنسية. بالنسبة للغة العربية أجيد الفصحى وأقل من ذلك اللهجة العامية الفلسطينية ولكن ليس اللهجة المصرية. أتمكن أيضاً قراءة الفارسية بمستوى أساسي، وكذلك قراءة لغتي الييديشية وإسبيرانتو.

What makes Wikipedia a platform of cross-cultural dialogue?

- **It is Internet-based - *It is harder (though not impossible) to restrict access to the Internet.***
- **The open community principle – *The community has to accept any new comer as long as s/he follows the basic principles.***
- **Politics is not at the center – *The primary goal is to write an encyclopedia rather than discuss politics.***
- **NPOV by reaching consensus – *Contributors should agree upon a neutral phrasing through negotiations.***

The UN approach vs. Wikipedia's approach



- **A resolution is proposed by several countries**
- **Other countries may comment about the content.**
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- **A user writes an article or a paragraph**
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- **Users try to agree upon a proper phrasing**
- **Users are encouraged to back their claims with reliable sources.**

What brings an Israeli Jew to the Arabic Wikipedia?

- **Curiosity – What happens at the neighbors' Wikipedia? Are they talking about us?**
- **Presenting oneself and one's community to people you never thought you would talk with.**
- **Having some influence on the way one's community is presented by the “other side”.**
- **Practicing a foreign language and foreign cultural skills in a near-natural environment.**

Be bold - use the local language

Part of my contribution to the debate on the “July 2006 War” Talk Page. My remark was marked with read background and a warning:

“A debate in a non-Arabic language, rephrasing in Arabic is required when discussing controversial issues in the Arabic Wikipedia. This is very essential in order to allow the Arabic Wikipedia community to understand to issue.”

جدال بلغة غير عربية, يرجى إعادة الكتابة بلغة عربية عند النقاش بمواضيع خلافية ضمن ويكيبيديا العربية, هذا الأمر أساسي جدا لإتاحة الفرصة لمجتمع ويكيبيديا العربي فهم الموضوع.

You are trying to interpret a very clear text provided to you in English and in Arabic, according to you biased view of the political affairs in Lebanon. **There is no international body except the Arab League who supports the claim of "Israeli aggression"**. What you are doing in this article is pro-Hezbollah propoganda. Plain and simple. When I bring well-established resources to contradict your claims, you are trying to mislead the user of Arabic Wikipedia further more with

The guy who changes "Palestine" to "Israel"

إسرائيل Israel

فلسطين Palestine

Occupied Palestine

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فلسطين '48

Historical Palestine

فلسطين التاريخية



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المراجعة الحالية (08:35، 11 يوليو 2008) (تحرير)

(رجوع)

Drock (نقاش | مساهمات)

مراجعة 23:12، 10 يوليو 2008 (تحرير)

80.90.161.117 (نقاش)

→ الفرق السابق

سطر 6:

سنة = 2006 |

خريطة = [[صورة:haifa map.png|150px]] |

+ بلد = [[إسرائيل]] |

موقع = http://www.haifa.muni.il/Cultures/ar-EG |

{{

"حيفا" (بالعبرية: חֵיפָה) هي مدينة [[إسرائيل|إسرائيلية]]

تقع على [[جبل الكرمل]] وشواطئه، وهي من أقدم مدن

فلسطين التاريخية. حيفا هي من أهم [[ميناء|موانئ]] شرق البحر الأبيض المتوسط ومقر سكة الحديد الإسرائيلية الرئيسية.

تتميز المدينة بتعددية الطوائف التي تعيش فيها. يعود تأسيس

المدينة حسب تقديرات علماء الآثار إلى عهد

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"حيفا" (بالعبرية: חֵיפָה) هي من أقدم و أكبر مدن

[[فلسطين]] التاريخية تقع على [[جبل الكرمل]] وشواطئه،

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شرق البحر الأبيض المتوسط ومقر سكة الحديد الإسرائيلية

- الرئيسية / الفلسطينية سابقا. تتميز المدينة بتعددية الطوائف

التي تعيش فيها. يعود تأسيس المدينة حسب تقديرات علماء الآثار

Let's leave politics aside...

[تحرير]

إسرائيل و جوائز نوبل

مرحبا/شالوم يا أخ درور ,كيف حالك :) . أقوم حاليا بعمل مقالات لجميع الأشخاص الذين تحصلوا على جائزة نوبل . هل لك أن تساعدني مساعدة قليلة لو سمحت . هل تستطيع أن تساعدني و تقوم بكتابة مقالات عن الإسرائيليين الذين تحصلوا على جائزة نوبل . بما أنك تجيد العربية و العبرية قد تستطيع ترجمة المقالات الموجودة على ويكي:عبري . شكرا مسبقا و مع تحياتي

"Marhaba/Shalom, brother Dror, how are you :). I am currently working on creating articles to all people who won the Nobel Prize. Could you help me out a bit? Could you help me by writing articles about the Israelis who won the Nobel Prize? Since you speak Hebrew and Arabic well, maybe you could translate the articles on the Hebrew Wikipedia. Thanks in Advance and greetings."

Cross-cultural dialogue through Wikipedia

الحوار بين الحضارات من خلال ويكيبيديا



This presentation was created using  OpenOffice.org 2.2

1

I defined this talk as a workshop about Wikipedia as a platform of cross-cultural dialog. I am going to talk mainly about my experiences as a Hebrew-speaking Jewish Israeli writing in the Arabic Wikipedia, but I am sure other people, perhaps even in this audience, have had similar experiences in different languages and cultures, and I hope we could hear some of them and make this talk more general. Before I start I would like to say several words in Arabic:

يسرّني جدا أن أكون هنا في هذا المؤتمر بالإسكندرية وأظنّ أن عقد مؤتمر «ويكيمنيا» في مصر، في قلب العالم العربيّ، هو أمر ذو أهمية كبيرة. ليست الطريق من تل أبيب إلى الإسكندرية طويلة من الناحية الجغرافية ولكنها ما زالت، للأسف، محفوفة ببعض العراقيل، فأودّ أن أشكر الطاقم المنظّم وجميعكم جزيل الشكر على حسن الاستضافة وعلى الجهود التي بذلتموها من أجل عقد هذا المؤتمر.

Embarking on a cross-cultural journey

“It wasn't a love trip, but a serious attempt to get rid of hate. Hatred prevents us from knowing reality as it is.”

***Ali Salem,
an Egyptian writer,
about his journey to Israel in 1994***



2

I chose to open my talk with Ali Salem's words. Ali Salem is an Egyptian playwright and publicist who embarked on a cross-cultural dialog of his own. In what I regard as a courageous act, he decided in 1994 to take his car and cross the border to Israel in order to meet Israelis and talk with them directly in their own environment. When asked about his visit to Israel he said: “It wasn't a love trip, but a serious attempt to get rid of hate.” For me, this is an example of a realistic and productive approach to a cross-cultural dialog. One cannot expect to love the culture which one is about to explore, especially when living in an atmosphere of conflict. However, one should be willing to get rid of his negative emotions towards the “other side's” culture, and ultimately one will have a better clearer picture of the world.

Drork خروج مساهماتي قائمة مراقبتي تفضيلاتي نقاشي

الصحة الرئيسية نقاش عرض المصدر تاريخ مراقبة

مجتمع تاريخ ثقافة أعلام رياضيات علوم كل البوابات تقنية

مرحباً بك في ويكيبيديا الموسوعة الحرة التي يستطيع الجميع تحريرها. يوجد الآن 64,366 مقالة بالعربية

السبت 12 يوليو 2008 م الموافق 8 رجب 1429 هـ نظرة • تحرير • أسئلة • مساعدة • محتويات • تصانيف • محتويات مختارة

أحداث جارية مقالة الأسبوع المختارة

Drork

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اسمي درور وأنا في 33 من عمري. أسكن في منطقة تل أبيب بإسرائيل. تعلمت اللغة العربية والثقافة العربية والإسلامية في المعهد اليهودي العربي للسلام بجبعات حبيبة (قرب مدينة الخضيرة في إسرائيل). بعد ذلك تعلمت اللغويات في جامعة تل أبيب وحصلت على بكالوريوس. يمكنني التحدث بالعبرية والعربية وكذلك بالإنكليزية والفرنسية. بالنسبة للغة العربية أجيد الفصحى وأقل من ذلك اللهجة العامية الفلسطينية ولكن ليس اللهجة المصرية. أتمكن أيضاً قراءة الفارسية بمستوى أساسي، وكذلك قراءة لغتي البيديشية وإسبيرانتو.

Ali Salem had to face many technical problems when embarking on his cross-cultural journey. He dedicates a great deal of his book *A drive to Israel* to describe these technicalities: getting a visa, preparing his car, learning the map, talking to policemen at the border crossing, booking rooms in hotels etc. The Internet in general, and Wikipedia in particular, offer us a tool which is much more available and easy to use. We do not have to leave home in order to embark on our cross-cultural dialog.

These are excerpts from the homepage of the Arabic Wikipedia and my own userpage there. The title reads "Welcome to Wikipedia", and indeed Wikipedia is supposed to be a welcoming place for all. The flag on my userpage is not an act of patriotism (although patriotism is not a bad thing for itself). It meant to clearly indicate my background, so that every user could know exactly what the point of view from which I come is, and what kind of information is available to me.

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4

When I was a child, being in contact with people in other countries was a difficult task. Some countries were totally unreachable sometimes due to geographical distance, but often due to political barriers. Today the Internet enables me to be in touch with people in almost all countries. It is very hard to restrict access to the Internet, though it is not impossible. Wikipedia is Internet based, and in addition it offers a useful conceptual framework for cross-cultural dialog. Each Wikipedian community must be open to anyone who wishes to participate in writing the encyclopedia as long as s/he is willing to follow the basic rules. Politics is not the center of the debates, and this is very important. Even when discussing politics, the idea is to convey information about the political phenomenon, just as one would convey information about a social or a natural phenomenon. This approach allows people to leave aside painful issues, and discuss facts, so they would have a common ground for further political discussions outside Wikipedia, if they wish.

The UN approach vs. Wikipedia's approach



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5

The notion that truth lies somewhere between people's points of view is the one that underlies the Wikipedian approach of choosing the right phrasing by consensus. By comparing these views and compromising, one gains a better description of the world. We usually think of a compromise as a process in which we give up something in order to cooperate, but in this case, compromise actually means gaining better more accurate information. I know this notion is highly debatable among scholars, and yet I think Wikipedia shows that it can work, providing that the Wikipedians adhere to it. This is not easy, as most of us usually engage in a different kind of debates which are decided by voting or a judgmental ruling. The comparison above between the decision making process in the UN and in Wikipedia, roughly illustrates the difference between these approaches. Of course the UN and Wikipedia have different goals, hence different methods of decision making, and yet when it comes to cross-cultural dialog, it is often more beneficial to use the consensus approach rather than the ruling or voting approach.

What brings an Israeli Jew to the Arabic Wikipedia?

- **Curiosity – What happens at the neighbors' Wikipedia? Are they talking about us?**
- **Presenting oneself and one's community to people you never thought you would talk with.**
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6

One might wonder what brings a Hebrew-speaking Jewish Israeli to write in the Arabic Wikipedia in the first place. What's wrong with the Hebrew Wikipedia? Well, I do write in the Hebrew Wikipedia as well, but when I got acquainted with the Wikipedian system, I felt very curious to see what was going on in the “neighbors' Wikipedia”. Of course having some influence on the way things are presented in Arabic, especially issues related to Israel and Judaism, was also a significant factor. Although Wikipedia, and the cyberspace as a whole, is not real life, it allows me to practice foreign language and foreign cultural codes in a near-real-life environment. I cannot think of a better use for this technology.

Be bold - use the local language

Part of my contribution to the debate on the "July 2006 War" Talk Page. My remark was marked with read background and a warning:

"A debate in a non-Arabic language, rephrasing in Arabic is required when discussing controversial issues in the Arabic Wikipedia. This is very essential in order to allow the Arabic Wikipedia community to understand to issue."

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You are trying to interpret a very clear text provided to you in English and in Arabic, according to you biased view of the political affairs in Lebanon. **There is no international body except the Arab League who supports the claim of "Israeli aggression"**. What you are doing in this article is pro-Hezbollah propoganda. Plain and simple. When I bring well-established resources to contradict your claims, you are trying to mislead the user of Arabic Wikipedia further more with

7

Perhaps I plunged into the Arabic Wikipedia in the wrong way – by posting remarks about a very emotionally charged political issue, but I suppose it was inevitable. I was quite upset by the fact that the July 2006 war in Lebanon and northern Israel was described as "The Israeli Aggression on Lebanon". I also noticed several misquotes from journalistic resources. I did not have the courage to write my remarks in Arabic, so I wrote them in English, and saw this red box placed around my remarks, rightfully saying that this is a sensitive debate that should be conducted in Arabic in order to allow all users to express their opinions. I then decided to take my chances and write in Arabic and found out that my remarks are taken much more seriously when phrased in the local language.

The guy who changes "Palestine" to "Israel"

Israel إسرائيل

Palestine فلسطين

Occupied Palestine

فلسطين المحتلة

Palestine of '48

فلسطين '48

Historical Palestine

فلسطين التاريخية



8

One of the things that troubled me as an Israeli was the various references to Israel in the Arabic Wikipedia. Many of them indicated political views. I insisted that the name Israel or the adjective Israeli would be used for places within the "Green Line" (the areas marked in yellow). There is a consensus among those countries and organizations that recognize Israel, that this territory is indisputably part of the country. I was so persistent about this, that when I entered the Arabic Wikipedia chat on IRC someone said: "Here is Dror, the guy who changes Palestine to Israel". In Arabic, as well as in English, Palestine is a polysemy describing both a geographical region and a political entity (currently the Palestinian National Authority which is supposed to become an independent state in the future).

The guy who changes "Palestine" to "Israel"

المراجعة الحالية (08:35، 11 يوليو 2008) (تحرير)
(رجوع)
Drook (نقاش | مساهمات)

مراجعة 23:12، 10 يوليو 2008 (تحرير)
80.90.161.117 (نقاش)
→ الفرق السابق

سطر 6:

```
سنة = 2006 |
خريطة = [[صورة:|150px|haifa map.png]] |
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التي تعيش فيها. يعود تأسيس المدينة حسب تقديرات علماء الآثار
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Some users did argue that saying "Haifa is a Palestinian city" is not wrong, but simply a geographical description of the city's location. Then again, no one suggested to describe Baghdad as a city in Mesopotamia. Some users suggested that Israel should not be mentioned as a country bordering Syria, because Syria does not recognize Israel. However, we are not talking about an article on behalf of Syria but an article about Syria, so this claim is not relevant, at least in my opinion. The solution we reached is saying that Syria borders Israel but does not recognize it, and saying that cities like Haifa, Nazareth, Jaffa etc. are Israeli cities and ancient cities of Historical Palestine. I believe this is another example of how debating with the aim of reaching a consensus eventually results in a richer more accurate phrasing.

Let's leave politics aside...

[تحرير]

إسرائيل و جوائز نوبل

مرحبا/شالوم يا أخ درور ,كيف حالك :) . أقوم حاليا بعمل مقالات لجميع الأشخاص الذين تحصلوا على جائزة نوبل . هل لك أن تساعدني مساعدة قليلة لو سمحت . هل تستطيع أن تساعدني و تقوم بكتابة مقالات عن الإسرائيليين الذين تحصلوا على جائزة نوبل . بما أنك تجيد العربية و العبرية قد تستطيع ترجمة المقالات الموجودة على ويكي:عبري . شكرا مسبقا و مع تحياتي

"Marhaba/Shalom, brother Dror, how are you :) . I am currently working on creating articles to all people who won the Nobel Prize. Could you help me out a bit? Could you help me by writing articles about the Israelis who won the Nobel Prize? Since you speak Hebrew and Arabic well, maybe you could translate the articles on the Hebrew Wikipedia. Thanks in Advance and greetings."

10

Once other users realized I was quite fluent in Arabic and have access to information in Hebrew and other languages, they soon saw the opportunity, and asked me to enrich the Arabic Wikipedia with information they could hardly reach otherwise. This is a request I received to write about Israeli Nobel Prize winners in a campaign to have the biographies of all Nobel Prize winners worldwide. I received other requests to write about Israeli and Jewish cultural figures, and in many cases I wouldn't have learned about these figures unless asked to write about them in Arabic. Apparently when one engages in a cross-cultural dialog one learns a great deal about his own culture. At some point I started to spot interesting articles on the Hebrew Wikipedia which seemed worthy to be translated into Arabic. One example is the article about the Frenkel Brothers, a Jewish family of eastern-European origin that settled in Egypt and introduced the art of animation to Egyptian and Arab cinematography. Once again, when politics is not at the center, a lot of common cultural subjects become evident and pave the way for a more beneficial political dialog in the future.