



## Who on Earth Needs Wikis in Print?

**An interview with Heiko Hees,  
Managing Director of PediaPress**

**Mr. Hees, PediaPress offers users to order books with a collection of Wikipedia articles they have selected personally. Who needs a book you have to pay for, if you can get the information for free on your screen?**

People enjoy reading books. For longer texts it is still the preferred medium – and for a good reason: Scientific studies have found, that people read up to 30 percent faster on paper than on a screen. For that reason alone, reading books is not old-fashioned at all. We also asked our customers in Germany, where the service has been running successfully since February 2009. People seem to cherish their offline moments more and more. In front of a computer they are constantly distracted, by facebook, by twitter, by skype. They love to read a good book, maybe on the train or at the beach. Many of us are staring at screens much longer than we want to. Now you can get the knowledge and skip the screen.

### **Putting a book together - how does it work?**

It's very simple. There's a new "create a book" button in Wikipedia's left navigation bar. Clicking enables you to add articles to your book simply by browsing Wikipedia. Collecting these articles is actually a lot of fun, our customers enjoy it. And we have this useful feature that analyzes your choice and recommends pages to you. It helps people to get excellent new ideas. Once you have collected the content, you can choose a title, add a name as the editor and pick a cover photo from one of the pictures in the articles, which are of course also featured in the book. Finally, you can preview the first 30 pages to get an impression. If you like it, you can order the book. We produce books in several countries, including the US. We have them ready for shipment within two business days. You even have the choice between different mail options.

### **What do the books look like?**

Wikipedia in print is more than the online version. The books come as paperbacks. They have a cover in color, a table of contents, the usual endnotes and an index. You would expect the layout of a computer printout, but it looks nice, pictures on top, you won't find any awkward endings that slipped onto the next page. You get the most up-to-date knowledge on the planet in a perfect bound version you'll enjoy to read and store on your bookshelf.

### **Which are the favorite topics of your customers?**

That was one of the most interesting things for us, too. We're just a small internet start-up and are still enthusiastic about the imagination of our customers. It's fantastic!

Many books seem to be presents. They have a very personal selection of articles, concerning hobbies, favorite tv series, universities or cities. The big part of the books contains a selection, you would never be able to buy in a bookstore and much of it is very special interest. We like this, because we think our service is a great tool for people, who couldn't get the books they wanted. Current books on very small towns for example, or regional historic events. Now they just put them together and they share them! Many people order more than one copy to give them to a friend with the same interest, or to colleagues. And some of the stuff is so off the map, we are surprised that it even is on Wikipedia: Villages, that only exist on Google Earth, the art of pen spinning or "things exploding", including some grown up whales.

**What do you expect from the American market?**

The English speaking community of Wikipedia is the largest, with more than 3 million articles. The users have a wealth of trusted information to choose from, which was believed to be impossible just a few years ago. I think Americans will jump at the opportunity our service offers and create the books they always wanted.

**Any plans for the future of "wikis in print"?**

We will soon be able to offer hardcovers with images in color, which are especially suitable for being used and re-used as reference books. A personal project of ours is to bring affordable quality textbooks to the developing world. We are working on that.

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