

# LocalWiki

PROJECT	GRANTEE	INNOVATION	GRANT
LocalWiki	WikiSpot	An easy-to-use, open-source “wiki” platform tailored to the needs of local communities	\$360,500

Wikis are websites developed collaboratively by a community of users, allowing any user to add and edit content. Based on the success of its first locally based wiki in Davis, California, LocalWiki received Knight News Challenge funding to create specialized, open-source wiki software and to help other geographic communities develop, launch, and sustain wiki projects using this software.

## THE INNOVATION

LocalWiki pioneered locally focused wiki software with the goal of making it easy for people to share knowledge of their own communities. The platform enables users to create pages and articles, upload photos and files, and edit others’ pages. Community wiki pages can feature articles on anything from the news and history of the area to updates on local public transportation, nearby attractions, lost pets, or local social services. Specific innovations within LocalWiki’s software include its accessibility and ease of use, tagging features for pages, and mapping capabilities that allow users to link pages to points and areas on a map. Users can easily view and reverse edits to pages and maps and track their wiki’s number of pages and contributors through a dashboard feature.

## IMPLEMENTATION

LocalWiki set out to develop an enhanced, open-source wiki platform with documentation designed to meet the needs of local communities. Because the project’s Knight News Challenge funding focused more heavily on software development, LocalWiki was limited to launching and testing its software in

just one pilot community. LocalWiki turned to the crowd-funding platform Kickstarter to help fund outreach and education efforts and eventually raised over \$26,000 with the help of 427 individual donors. Delays in the initial disbursement of Knight grant funds pushed back the start of the project by about three months, but progress picked up when the project received its funding. LocalWiki publicly released its first version of the software on November 30, 2011. The platform was designed to be easier for non-developers to install and to create a more accessible editing process. LocalWiki marketed this software to the open-source community through the project’s own development mailing list, through interaction with other projects on GitHub, and through a series of hackathons on LocalWiki’s code.

LocalWiki selected Denton, Texas to serve as its first pilot community because Denton’s project leads seemed the most able and motivated to work under limited initial guidance. By piloting DentonWiki, LocalWiki aimed to gain essential feedback on the new software as it was being developed, and to gain experience helping other communities create and launch local wiki projects. Prior to the launch of DentonWiki, LocalWiki worked with the team in Denton to



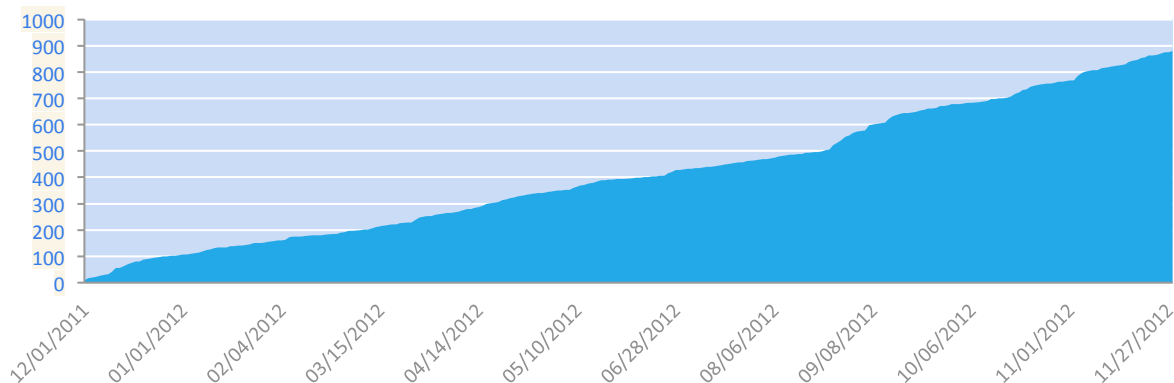
help build a core, dedicated group of editors who would drive the project. Denton's wiki featured over 800 pages when it launched, on the same day as the public release of LocalWiki's new software.

After supporting the first pilot community in Denton, Texas, LocalWiki selected Santa Cruz, California and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina as additional communities in which to test the platform. LocalWiki left the local outreach work up to these focus communities but offered them coaching along the way through visits, phone calls, and emails. By providing direct support to a few successful communities and then building a network of communities implementing the software, LocalWiki hoped to create a model in which communities would reach out to each other for best practices and further spread the platform.

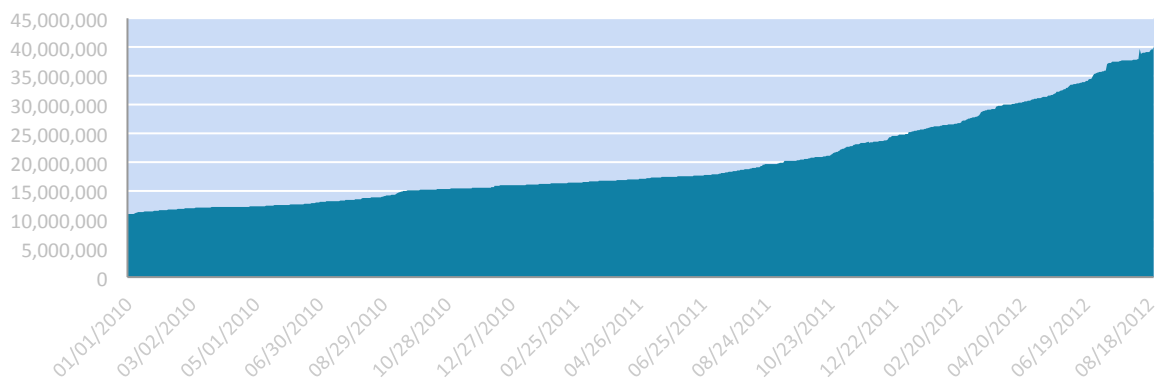
## REACH AND OUTCOMES

LocalWiki is well positioned to achieve its ultimate aim of demonstrating that local wikis are a viable way for communities to manage and share information. LocalWiki's open source code has been adopted and used around the world. Between late August 2011 and the software's first major release in late November 2011, LocalWiki's platform was installed nearly 700 times. LocalWiki is now the second-most installed of the Knight News Challenge's server-focused projects.<sup>1</sup> By late August 2012, there were at least 58 independent LocalWiki projects (of which 37 were considered "major"), spread across nine countries and published in seven languages. LocalWiki only hosts a minority of its community projects, but it received about 26.7 million page views for these projects over the

### Independent Installs



### Content Growth (in pages)



course of 2011.

By late August 2012, LocalWiki's code had been downloaded over 690 times and forked 40 times. It had also attracted 164 individuals who signed up to be notified of changes to the code. Additionally, 73 people have contributed by identifying bugs in LocalWiki's code, and LocalWiki has incorporated others' changes in about 80 cases. Users have downloaded the code to develop mobile web applications, a LocalWiki-like project for Burning Man, and new functionalities such as editable comments. Two users in Portugal used the code to internationalize LocalWiki, so that the platform's user interface could be translated into any language. To date, LocalWiki is available in seven languages.

Although the platform has experienced impressive adoption, most of LocalWiki's community wikis are still working to reach a critical mass of users and become entirely community maintained. LocalWiki has already reached this tipping point with its longstanding DavisWiki project. Nearly one in seven Davis residents contributes to the wiki at some point within the course of a year, and about half of Davis's residents use DavisWiki each month. LocalWiki's other communities have yet to achieve this same level of engagement but have demonstrated a number of initial successes. Santa Cruz, California is LocalWiki's largest focus community, with over 5,400 pages, 4,300 photos, and 2,700 maps. TriangleWiki in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina has seen widespread adoption and use from Raleigh's city council, which has used the wiki to post city government content. Two locally based mobile projects have also used TriangleWiki, incorporating the wiki's content streams in their applications.