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FREE RIDING OR JUST SURFING

Applied ethics

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Abstract

The paper in the broadest sense looks to the usage of the internet and our obligations if at all any, there to be. We use the case of Wikipedia as a reference site. We used literature from the free rider problem, we deconstructed the literature into relevant elements, and then built a framework to which the case of *Wikipedia* can be applied. The results of the application shows, at times, users are not merely surfing when they browse the internet, they are free riding and as such may be morally liable to those internet sites.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts, Applied Ethics for Professionals, in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Yusuf Aboobaker

15 day of January 2012

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Free riding or just surfing[1]

1. Introduction

Ordinarily, when one logs on to the internet, one does not consider the morality of one's actions; it's just surfing. However, if you consider that the act of surfing is to further one's own interest, either directly for pleasure or indirectly, perhaps to complete some work, then one might think there must be a *quid pro quo* for one's gaining benefits from the internet. One may ponder still over fair exchange and conclude that the site owners also gain by sharing their information and thus commutative justice is preserved. Perhaps one considers further that if the site owner wanted to protect the object of exchange (in this case information), he would have protected it via a secured log on.

But what if the site owner did not want to exclude anybody from accessing information? What if the site owner was a not-for-profit organisation whose mission was to disseminate information to the widest possible audience on the internet? What if this organisation depended on monetary contributions so that it could continue to fulfil its mission? What if the site is called *Wikipedia*, would you think differently? (See appendix 1 for further description of *Wikipedia.*)

With this particular case of *Wikipedia* in mind, we begin to explore the morality of our actions; the case of *Wikipedia* brings to light the current ethical debates surrounding 'free riding'. Free riding can be preliminary defined as benefitting from the collective actions of a group without contributing to the production of that benefit, in cases where the benefit would be conferred irrespective of whether or not one contributed[2]. We qualify the definition of free riding with a preliminary label as there are varying definitions depending on perspective and we only mean to introduce the concept here.

We will further examine free riding and other related topics in later sections, but for now it is prudent to share the research question with you, the reader, so that you know where the inquiry is focused. Our aim is to investigate and answer the question: 'Are people who use *Wikipedia* without contributing free riders?'

The case and question of *Wikipedia,* while narrow in scope, has been chosen as a representative instance of a more general phenomenon. *Wikipedia* is one of countless large number of sites that have sprouted up on the internet and which provide information without any hidden agendas. So *Wikipedia* serves well as a proxy for all these similar internet sites and potentially all sites where benefit is given without demanding recompense.

[1] See Oxford Dictionaries (2011b)

[2] This definition is an augmented statement from various sources namely: Wikipedia.org. (2012e). Cullity (1995), Albanese & van Fleet, (1985) and Futter (2012)

Today the pervasive usage and growth of the internet is unprecedented. In the future, we will look back to the year 2012 and reminisce that we are in the dawn of the internet age. As humans, our interactions with each other have begun to change. The way we communicate, access information, 'friendly' relationships, choices made and preferences - all have, and are, changing. Does this mean that our morals will change? It has been a foregone conclusion in the past that, as individuals, we have prospered because we have organised ourselves as collectives. Some, as a way of example, are as families, communities, clans, tribes and states. Some say the moral sentiments that a collective holds is the glue that binds that collective (Devlin 1959 p.10). In the past contributing to the group has been a normal and morally sound thing to do: is this changing now, especially since the internet has allowed us to group in new ways and not on the traditional methods previously mentioned?

We believe that how we conduct ourselves in a collective is still paramount. Just because the boundaries of the collective are becoming less and less clear, does not mean we can ignore our obligations to the collective. In fact, some argue that we have morality only because we live as a collective. In the context of *Wikipedia,* we do not doubt that the majority of the plugged-in world benefits from the website. So, if this benefit accrues to an individual without labour or cost, how we choose to respond to the collective is worthy of deliberation.

Now that we have introduced the 'what', the 'why', the 'who', the 'where' and the 'when' of this research project we would now like to introduce the 'how'. We intend to answer the question of this research project in the context of the current debates in free riding. The basic strategy will be to provide an overview of all the elements of free riding: the problem of free riding, the morality of free riding including the nature of the output of the collective which seems to play an important role in determining free riding, the group, the individual and the choices we should make. Once an overview of these elements has been given, conclusions will be drawn by using a method popular to moral philosophy called reflective equilibrium.

As a reminder, our question is:

2. The question

'Are people who use[3] *Wikipedia* without contributing free riders?'

3. The framework for evaluation

While researching, it was our (perhaps naive) hope that we would find a firm pre-existing framework for evaluating free riding. This framework would have aided us in answering our question about *Wikipedia*. Every turn we have taken shows us more and more complexity and contrasting points of views on the matter. Much has been in relation to the liberal organised state as an institutional group where enforceable laws can be created to ensure compliance of non-contributors where free riding in this

[3] By use, we mean persons who do not contribute editorially but still benefit.

context is generally considered morally wrong. This may not the case with *Wikipedia* as the collective is made of many nationals from different states and has been called by some as a 'networked-institution' (Erskine, 2001 pg.72) where free riding in this context is not seen as morally wrong.

Peter Singer, who writes in the field of ethics, laments that for thousands of years, proponents of opposing views have been engaged in unending disputes without prospect of resolution on what is good, right , wrong or obligatory (Singer, 1993). Singer's description also seems to apply to the concept of free riding. For the most part, there is a general consensus on what free riding is, however, there is a lack of a formal method in the form of a framework. This leaves one with little choice but to apply a practical approach.

John Rawl's: "reflective equilibrium" is an approach which asks us to begin by taking a particular moral judgment, unpack the elements and the related moral principles that we believe govern them then work back and forth on the considered judgements using theoretical considerations ('what ifs') that will bring whole judgement into a coherent state, all the while testing the coherence against our own pre-theoretical intuitions as to what we believe to be right and wrong. Once coherence is achieved, it could be said that we are at a state of equilibrium in where all the contrasting and opposing forces that may be relevant to a particular judgement are counterbalancing each other.

This state of equilibrium may not be permanent as new evidence, new understanding or a new theory is introduced in time which may add force to a judgement which may cause the once coherently satisfied not to be anymore and the whole process of reflective equilibrium must begin again. This might yield the same position or it might change a particular viewpoint.

The primary reason the reflective equilibrium approach will be used to further this project is because it appeals to a pre-theoretical intuition of systems theory the writer holds on how the world in general and, in particular morality, works.

A practical approach

The practical approach we have adopted will proceed as follows. We will present an example of a case of wrongful free riding. This is intended as an uncontroversial case. We will then isolate several relevant elements present in the scenario, which seem to play a role in our interpretation of the situation as one of wrongful free riding. We will then vary the scenario, moving from what we take to be a clear instance of wrongful free riding, to somewhat harder cases, considering the variation in certain elements of the situation in the move from the first case to the second. Let us call this stage 1 of our approach.

Within Stage 2, our approach will then expand on each of these elements identified, drawing on literature as relevant to an understanding of free riding and its wrongful instances.

Stage 3 will allow us the opportunity to refocus on the particular question at hand after the exploration of the free riding problem and its elements. This will be done by asking of ourselves pointed questions based on theoretical considerations formulated on learning gained from the elements investigated in our

exploration. This we believe to be in line with the understanding of how reflective equilibrium should work, remembering, all the while to use our pre-theoretical intuitions as check points as sanity checks to the particular judgements on which we conclude. Then, once we provide answers these pointed questions, we believe we will be in a position to provide an overall answer to the research aim/question.

4. The practical approach

Stage 1 – Understanding the elements of free riding

The uncontroversial case of the free rider problem

People who live in a *cul de sac*, one day, after a Highveld storm wake up to find a large pothole in the middle of the road. There are four neighbours that use that portion of the road to obtain access to their private properties. That evening, on their return from their respective workplaces, they all meet to discuss the pothole that could be very damaging to their cars. They all come to the conclusion that it should be fixed. When it comes time to collect money (assuming that they outsourced the maintenance work), all but one contribute. The three contributing neighbours continue to fix the pothole at their cost. The fourth neighbour to this day drives smoothly over that fixed pothole and does not give a second thought about who fixed or paid to fix the pothole.

This fourth neighbour is generally labelled a free rider because he gains the benefit, despite not having contributing to the shared costs for fixing up the pothole. The problem with this is that he has obtained benefit without cost and, on the face of it, this seems wrong. He has got away without paying his dues. Now, you would think that the three neighbours that did contribute should compel the fourth neighbour to pay. This may well work, but the problem of free riding is that there will be instances where enforcement cannot work. The free rider problem may still exist in these instances.

The relevant elements we have isolated in the above scenario are:

- The free rider – the individual who benefits from cooperative activity without contributing.
- The complainant – a group of people or at least, individual *members of* a certain group. What we have here is not a mere collection of individuals, as perhaps in the example of a group of people standing in Sandton Square. It is a group in some sense over and above the spatial considerations of a collection.
- The complaint – It is clear that the members of the group who collaborated to fix the pothole judge that the free rider has done wrong. The wrong in the contributors' minds being non-contributing to the group's effort.
- The justification of the *complaint* – Members of the groups complain about non-contribution, but why are they justified in complaining. What principles have been broken?

Now that we have isolated the relevant elements from our uncontroversial case we move to harder cases so that we may augment our elements to ensure that all relevant aspects are considered. We build further on our uncontroversial case.

Imagine for a moment that, when the neighbours met that evening to discuss the pothole, the fourth non-contributing neighbour was not present at the meeting that evening when the others discussed and agreed to fix the pothole. Yet the three neighbours still decided to fix the pothole. Imagine further that when the neighbours did meet the non-contributing neighbour was present but he disagreed that all should contribute, his justification being that he was never invited for neighbourly functions while the other three neighbours happily congregated. No warm fruit pies, cups of sugar or an egg here or there were shared with him. Nothing to make him feel welcome in their small neighbourhood, so when it came time to fix the pothole there was no inclination to contribute as he never felt part of the neighbourhood.

If the fourth neighbour still did not contribute when asked, would you think the free rider complaint lodged against him is reasonable?

This adaptation highlights the complaint may not always be justified. We need to augment our justification of the complaint element. There seems to be a context of cooperation, which deals with how the non-contribution comes about. If there are certain factors that can be isolated in the general context it could be shown that the non-contribution of the alleged free rider does not necessarily have to be perceived as morally wrong. This element will therefore provide perspectives and views as to when the complaint against a free rider is justified.

The elements of free riding

The elements now have been introduced. We summarise and order the elements for clarity and we introduce questions within each element. We take this approach because we believe that you, as the reader, would logically ask the questions just as we did.

- The Complainant: We have seen the complainant is a group, but what exactly is a group?
- The Complaint: The complaint or the wrong is non-contribution by the free rider.
- The Justification of the complaint: We have seen that there could be specific contexts where the non-contributor may not necessarily be deemed to have done wrong. We take a closer look at these contexts by asking: What are the grounds for justified complaint? And then we ask: When the complaint is justified why is it wrong?
- The Free rider: It would be obvious to the reader by now, that in order to avoid the label of free rider, the free rider should contribute but, given that he does not, we think is natural to ask then, why do we free ride in those cases of the wrong kind? And, can there be any moral justifications to why we free ride?

In our practical approach, we adopted a three-stage approach to our discovery. In this stage, stage 1, we have unpacked the elements of free riding moving from an uncontroversial case of free riding to a more controversial case. In the next stage of our approach, we survey and review the types of answers that already exist in literature to the questions invoked.

Stage 2 – Review of the elements of free riding

In Stage 2 of our practical approach, we offer a review of the considered and influential points of view on competing principles and beliefs found within literature. Some of the views shared are non-moral beliefs; however, because of our over-arching approach of reflective equilibrium, it is an important feature to include the viewpoints as they aid in providing stable and feasible particular judgements (Norman, 2011). The format of this stage is to answer the question generated in stage 1, where these questions seem to naturally be asked. We have group the questions into four elements. The first element is The Complainant.

The complainant

The complainant is the group making the complaint or a member of a group making the complaint of free riding on behalf of the group (not on behalf of him alone). With regard to a judgment of free riding, the complainant is necessarily a group or a representative of a group.

What is a group?

We have seen the complainant is a group, but what exactly is a group? Oxford Dictionaries defines a group as 'a number of people or things that are located, gathered, or classed together' (Oxford 2011a). This definition, while valid, is too broad from a perspective that is interested in moral content of the group. (Moral content from our perspective *inter alia* means: does the group have moral status where we as members feel a sense of obligation to a group or that even the group can impose moral duties or that the group can bear moral rights?) To illustrate the point, ask yourself the question: is there any moral content regarding a crowd just standing together in a town square? Now you would be tempted to say 'what if the crowd…' but let's just say that there are no 'what ifs' they are just simply grouped together in the town square.

Plainly, you can see there is no moral content regarding the group just described. Peter French (1982) called these types of groups 'aggregate collectives' which he describes as 'mere compilations' (p.273) of individuals, and that these types group do not endure. Other authors (Jones, 2008) are in agreement with French suggesting groups beginning to have moral status must have at least an enduring identity like that of a 'corporate'.

Another quality needed for a group to be considered to have moral stature is unity. Galenkamp and Sagesvary in Jones (2008) argue that if a group is to have moral status, which has rights and can impose duties then the members of the group must feel a strong connection to the group it identifies with. This strong connection, which we speak of, comes in many forms. McDonald in Jones (2008) argues all that is needed is shared understanding towards the purpose of the group, while May in Jones (2008) argues that if the group's members cannot perform their interest alone, individually then the group has strong enough connection and thus moral standing. Another way a group can manifest its unity or a strong enough connection is sometimes referring to the output as participatory (Reaume, 1988) meaning, if the participating in the group brings benefit to the individuals participating in the group, the group can obtain moral stature and possess rights.

Sentience theorists on moral status are a more fervent group (amongst others) claiming that groups cannot have moral status. Sentience theorists suggest that only creatures of feeling can have moral status and not some group given a name, while others select or attribute an ontological or sociological aspect to argue their point. However, many objections to this can be made: moral status is not an all-or-nothing affair. Groups can have a subset of rights and in turn create a sub-set of duties for its members.

In summary, moral philosophers in general agree that groups must possess enduring identities with sufficient unity within the group if they are to be considered as having moral status. This is the type of groups that are of interest to this project because members feel a sense of obligation to this type of group, that even this type of group can impose moral duties, or that the group can bear moral rights.

The complaint

The complaint by the group's members is that the free rider did not contribute. Intuitively non-contribution is usually understood to take the form of not contributing money to ease the burdens of the group, but above we see that non-contribution can take the form of non-participation in anything that could be to the benefit of the group.

The justification of the complaint

This section deals with the grounds for justified complaint and then based on a justified complaint, why the complaint is wrong. We introduce this section by offering a quote to illustrate that group membership which seems patently obvious as a requirement to a justified complaint may not be as clear-cut as it seems on the surface.

> Should it be said, that, by living under the dominion of a prince which one might leave, every individual has given a tacit consent to his authority, and promised him obedience; it may be answered, that such an implied consent can only have place where a man imagines that the matter depends on his choice. But where he thinks (as all mankind do who are born under established governments) that, by his birth, he owes allegiance to a certain prince or certain form of government; it would be absurd to infer a consent or choice, which he expressly, in this case, renounces and disclaims [...]. Can we seriously say that a poor

> peasant or artisan has a free choice to leave his country, when he knows no foreign language or manners, and lives, from day to day, by the small wages which he acquires? We may as well assert that a man, by remaining in a vessel, freely consents to the dominion of the master; though he was carried on board while asleep, and must leap into the ocean and perish, the moment he leaves her. (Hume, 1752 para.24-25)

David Hume wrote these preceding paragraphs and while his reference point is that of a state, it still is a group and is relevant for our discussion here. He raises important questions around the group itself where we might owe some obligation to and the consent of a member and the voluntary status thereof. Intuitively, if we voluntarily consent to a group that would make us part of that group, but what about those cases we do not voluntarily consent, is a complaint still justified? It is for these reasons we take a closer look at the grounds for a justified complaint.

What are the grounds for a justified complaint

Based on our prior sections we have, we hope, shown that the grounds for a justified complaint in a general context can be summarised thus far as: The group must possess certain properties that gives it moral status, the alleged free rider must be a member of such a group and the free rider did not actually contribute. The last point mentioned here; the free rider has not contributed, we shall set aside for the rest of the paper and we will not investigate this further as we make the assumption that non-contribution has taken place. However, for the two prior points, we will unpack these broad brushed grounds and collate them under the headings of group factors and membership factors. Within each of these sub sections we will try to summarise what past writers have written about the issue and then provided a précised account in the form of a condition statement that could be used in a logical manner to determine if a complaint is justified. To begin with our condition statements are:

1. The group must possess properties that give it moral status
2. A person is a group member

Group factors

It has already been shared that groups may, or may not have moral status. If groups are said to have moral status, then it can be said that a group can have expectations for its members to contribute. There are two vantage points to these expectations. Firstly, the traditionalists (Jones, 2008): the traditionalists' vantage point is one where the group inherits some of the moral status of the individual members. Given this inheritance, the group can impose its right as an obligation. An example of a right is reciprocity. Another collective noun for these types of groups is the 'corporate' (Jones, 2008); predominately, we find these types of groups have been formally institutionalised in law, have records on their members and have a decision making structure. Erskine (2001) offers us his point of view. We share a quote from

his paper published in 2001: 'Transnational corporations and transnational NGOs, such as Oxfam, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, and Amnesty International, all qualify as institutional moral agents' (p.72)

The other vantage point primarily invoked by interest theorists (Jones, 2008), is based on those groups that have not been formally constituted as an institution, for example, the San people of South Africa. We see them as a group; we believe as a group they have rights, for example, rights to their culture or way of life. However, their group right is a right that is the shared or jointly held right by a set of individuals. In other words it is 'their' rights as opposed to 'its' right, as it is the case in the traditional vantage point (Jones, 2008). So, for its members the San people, whenever its interests are sufficiently significant it can create duties for other members. Another collective noun for these types of groups is the 'collective' (Jones, 2008); they have generally not been incorporated formally.

Reformulated, the factors, thus far, where non-contribution could be shown that free riding is perceived as morally wrong are:

1. The group must possess some form of moral status like that of a 'corporate' or a 'collective'

2. A person is a group member

Membership factors

We begin this section by stating that group membership is a necessary condition to provide grounds for a justified complaint. However we have seen that group membership is not as clear as once envisaged. The more obvious inclusion to a group is where voluntary consent is given prior to joining the group. Continuing with our conditional bulleted approach what we just stated takes the form of

2. A person is a group member

    2.1. If voluntary consent is given to the group prior to joining the group.

Hart (1955) aside from voluntary consent argues that wrongful free riding may only require that the free rider be in a *special relationship* with the producers of a good (p.186). This relationship, as Hart calls it, is special because they 'belong' to a group. Stated in a more logical way Hart's factor where non-contribution could be shown that free riding is perceived as morally wrong is:

2. A person is a group member

    2.1 if voluntary consent is given to the group prior to joining the group **or**

    2.2 if they are in a 'special relationship' with the group

Later in 1974 questions about the validity of the 'special relationship' by virtue of belonging. (Which by our accounts is condition point (2.2) above.) Robert Nozick (1974) argued that contribution to a group must be based on prior voluntary consent to the collective output and not just be in a special relationship. Nozick supported his argument by way of the following example. He asked us to imagine

the case of the neighbourhood PA system. Just because for 364 days others in the neighbourhood have contributed to filling the airwaves with pleasant chat and music, does it obligate one to contribute on the 365th day when he had not consented to the other 364 days, even though at the time he enjoyed a 'special relationship' as a neighbour and benefited from the PA system? Nozick answers his question in the negative (1974, pg.94). Nozick's aim was to show that, just because we may be in a particular relationship where a group benefit is received, if the benefit is not ordinarily an accustomed benefit it does not impose a duty or create a moral expectation even though we may be part of a special relationship. His arguments were very persuasive and by our accounts replaced the special relationship conditions which we have labelled as 2.2, reformulated, his conditions about membership would read:

2. A person is a group member

2.1 if voluntary consent is given to the group prior to joining the group **or**

2.2 if the group benefit is voluntarily consented to when it is not an accustomed ordinary benefit

Later, in 1979, John Simmons (1979) expands and attempts to clarify Nozick's discussion by introducing two new concepts. Firstly, he introduces the concept of 'acceptance', arguing that the formal voluntary consent which Nozick introduced may not be needed if there is an acceptance of the benefits. Simmons defines acceptance either as 'having tried to get (and succeeded in getting) the benefit' or 'have taken the benefit willingly and knowingly' (p.327). Secondly, he introduces the idea of an 'open benefit' by way of acknowledging that there are in specific circumstances in which one is not in control or cannot control what group benefits can be consented to or accepted, referring to an accustomed ordinary benefit. Simmons describes open benefits as benefits which 'can be avoided' but not 'without considerable inconvenience' (p.327). He also describes open benefits as 'worth the price we must pay for them' (p.334). If we were to reformulate Simmons building on the Nozick factors his conditions about membership would read:

2. A person is a group member

2.1 If voluntary consent is given to the group prior to joining the group **OR**

2.2 If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to when it is not an accustomed ordinary benefit **OR**

2.3 If the group benefit is accepted **OR**

2.4 If the group benefit has the following 'open' qualities:

2.4.1 unavoidable

2.4.2 worth the contribution

Many subsequent writers picked up on the notion of open benefits. They seek to better understand this notion in terms of the particular nature of the group benefit. One such writer is Klosko (1987). He argues that receipt of the group benefit is enough to obligate contribution when the collective output is

deemed as a presumptive benefit and is *non-excludable: '*Excludable goods can be provided to some members of a given community while being denied to specified others' (p.242). Let us explain. Klosko argues that the group benefit must really be of benefit to the free rider. However, he notes that understanding benefit at an individual level is very difficult to ascertain. He therefore applies a reasonable man argument and qualifies benefit with 'presumptive' meaning 'things that every man is presumed to want.' (p.246). At the same time, he further argues that if the good has the quality of having presumptive benefit and the good cannot be excluded from certain members of the group then mere receipt of the good is sufficient to make a non-contributor a free rider of the wrong kind. If we were to reformulate Klosko's factors building on Nozick and Simmons factors his conditions about membership would read:

Klosko's conditions are listed below:

2. A person is a group member

2.1 If voluntary consent is given to the group prior to joining the group **OR**

2.2 If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to when it is not an accustomed ordinary benefit **OR**

2.3 If the group benefit is accepted **OR**

2.4 If the group benefit has the following 'open' qualities:

2.4.1 Has presumptive benefit.

2.4.2 Is non-excludable.

Klosko's line of inquiry into the collective outputs properties spurred many other writers to provide a fuller account of what properties of group benefit should have as they were not satisfied as it did not capture all properties, especially the property of presumptive benefit as it seemed to vague.

Recently Cullity (1995) enumerated properties of the group benefit after reviewing many authors' accounts. Basically, he agrees with Klosko that wrongful free riding does not necessarily require voluntary consent or acceptance but supplements Klosko's analysis to some extent. If we were to reformulate Cullity's factors building on Klosko's factors his conditions about membership would read:

2. A person is a group member

2.1 If voluntary consent is given to the group prior to joining the group **OR**

2.2 If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to when it is not an accustomed ordinary benefit **OR**

2.3 If the group benefit is accepted **OR**

2.4 If the group benefit has the following 'open' qualities:

2.4.1 Jointness in supply: the good is available to all members.

2.4.2 Non-excludability: the cost of excluding a certain member is prohibitive.

2.4.3 Jointness in consumption: the consumption of the good by a member does not reduce the availability for consumption by another.

2.4.4 Non-rivalness: one member's enjoyment from the good does not reduce the enjoyment by another member.

2.4.5 Compulsoriness: if the good is available to one member it is available to all members.

2.4.6 Equality with respect to the distribution of the good; each member receives the good in the same amount.

2.4.7 Indivisibility: Each member can consume the total output of the collective action.

Even more recently Mapel (2005) revisited the open qualities of the group benefit. His conclusions were premised on groups that span different borders. Given this view, he amended the list of properties that the group benefit should have. If we were to reformulate Mapel's factors building on Cullity's factors his conditions about membership would read:

2. A person is a group member

2.1 If voluntary consent is given to the group prior to joining the group **OR**

2.2 If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to when it is not an accustomed ordinary benefit **OR**

2.3 If the group benefit is accepted **OR**

2.4 If the group benefit has the following 'open' qualities:

2.4.1 Non-excludability; the cost of excluding a certain member is prohibitive.

2.4.2 Unavoidable: the good provides unavoidable benefits to the consumer

2.4.3 Worth it: the share of the good received are worth the beneficiaries efforts to help provide it.

2.4.4 The group benefits are distributed in a fair manner

2.5.5 The burdens for producing the group benefit is distributed fairly

Despite Mapel's own contribution to the open qualities of the group benefit, he wondered why subsequent authors should pursue further investigation into the quality of 'open-ness' in-group benefits.

This inclination was based on the 'collection' form of the group. He suggests that boundaries of 'corporate' group membership are becoming blurred and thus the traditional group factors for free riding of the immoral/moral kind are under threat of not being complete. He uses the example where potentially citizens of one state may owe an obligation to another state because the citizens of one state gains benefits from the other state. An example would be Canadians receiving benefits from United States national defence contributions. He argues that Canada's close proximity to the USA has granted Canada the benefits of the USA's mighty defence systems and propaganda machine. Mapel asks of us to change the conditions as traditionally rationalised. He argues that group membership must not be viewed in a formal way like nationality, a residence of a particular country that is to say like a 'corporate', all of which seem to have finite boundaries. Rather, it should be viewed with the lens of a group being a collective, where one is subject to a universality principle for its members that it could be used as the yardstick. He suggests that a collective member is one where, a beneficiary would not be willing to accept the consequences of generalising his free riding to others, this would then make that person part of a group. Reformulated his conditions would be split by the group type and therefore membership criteria would read as follows:

1. The group must possess some form of moral status like that of a 'corporate' or a 'collective'

    1.1. If like that of a 'corporate' go to 2

    1.2. If like that of a 'collective' go to 3

2. A person is a **'corporate '**group member – (note the corporate qualification)

    2.1 If voluntary consent is given to the group prior to joining the group **OR**

    2.2 If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to when it is not an accustomed ordinary benefit **OR**

    2.3 If the group benefit is accepted **OR**

    2.4 If the group benefit has the following 'open' qualities:

        2.4.1 Non-excludability; the cost of excluding a certain member is prohibitive.

        2.4.2 Unavoidable: the good provides unavoidable benefits to the consumer

        2.4.3 Worth it: the share of the good received are worth the beneficiaries efforts to help provide it.

        2.4.4 The group benefits are distributed in a fair manner

        2.5.5 The burdens for producing the group benefit is (could be) distributed fairly

3. A person is a '**collective'** group member (note the collection qualification)

3.1 If the person would be unwilling to accept the consequences of generalising free riding to others

There are two further comment to be made about Maples contribution, the first is about point 2.5.5 We have inserted 'could be' as opposed to 'is' in his requirement. The reason why we believe this must be changed to 'could be' is because Mapel made his conclusions in the context where enforcement of burden distribution is actually possible, that being in a state where retributive laws and policing are present, however in a general case which may not have these enforcement facilities in place, it is our belief that demonstrating that burden distribution 'could be' fair is sufficient.

The second comment concerns condition 3), Mapel's contribution has shown us that there are two distinct approaches to membership, membership to a corporate (which have in our opinion has been the main focus in recent literature) and membership to a collective. Mapel's contribution to the collective however seems to be incomplete when considering the works of Reaume (1988) and McDonald & May in Jones (2008) which we earlier related, as a reminder, McDonald in Jones (2008) argues all that is needed is shared understanding towards the purpose of the group, and May in Jones (2008) argues that if the group's members cannot perform their interest alone. On consideration, Macdonald's and May's conditions could collapse into Maple's current condition of 3.1, However we hold the opinion that Reaume's (1988) condition surrounding the output as participation needs to be included in the conditions. Therefore the conditions of member to a 'collective' will then look like this:

3. A person is a '**collective'** group member (note the collection qualification)

    3.1 If the person would be unwilling to accept the consequences of generalising free riding to others **or**

    3.2 if participation creates the group benefit

In summary thus far, we have tried to elucidate what the grounds for a justified complaint are, we have shown that certain factors must prevail in order for a justified complaint. We have grouped these factors into 'group factors' and 'membership factors' categories. The 'group factors' deal with properties of the group, the 'Membership factors' deals with the how one becomes a member. While we presented these categories independently, the 'membership factors are dependent on the 'group factors'.

Now we turn our attention to the next question we set out to answer in this section: When the complaint is justified why is it wrong?

When the complaint is justified why is it wrong?

In our review we are of the opinion that the answer to this question depends on how the 'membership' came about, and, as such, we will reintroduce the factors mentioned and thereafter cite the most persuasive reason for the wrongness in a label form. After that, we list the factors and their labels of wrongness and we will delve deeper into the labels given.

The membership factors reintroduced will be the last reformulated factors. The reason for this method is because we believe the factors have evolved in time and the last entries represent the latest and most complete thinking or position on the matter.

2. A person is a 'corporate 'group member – (note the corporate qualification)

2.1 If voluntary consent is given to the group prior to joining the group OR

If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to then the wrongness is 'Explicit consent - Promise breaking'.

2.2 If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to when it is not an accustomed ordinary benefit OR

If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to then the wrongness is 'Explicit consent - Promise breaking'.

2.3 If the group benefit is accepted OR

If the group benefit is accepted then the wrongness is 'Implicit consent - Principle of reciprocity '.

2.4 If the group benefit has the following 'open' qualities:

2.4.1 Non-excludability; the cost of excluding a certain member is prohibitive.

2.4.2 Unavoidable: the good provides unavoidable benefits to the consumer

2.4.3 Worth it: the share of the good received are worth the beneficiaries efforts to help provide it.

2.4.4 The group benefits are distributed in a fair manner

2.5.5 The burdens for producing the group benefit is (could be) distributed fairly

If the group benefit exhibits any of the above listed qualities then the wrongness can be explained by 'unfairness'

3. A person is a 'collective' group member - (note the collection qualification)

3.1 If the person would be unwilling to accept the consequences of generalising free riding to others

3.2 if participation creates the group benefit

If the group members are unwilling to accept the consequences of generalising the free riding to others then the wrongness is 'unfairness'.

If the group member participates in creating the group benefit then the wrongness is 'unfairness'.

Now that we have highlighted the justification for wrongness when non-contribution takes place, we now provide a fuller description of each justification for wrongness.

Explicit consent - Promise breaking

As a reminder, we list the membership factors under which the context of cooperation took place in which the justification of explicit consent - promise breaking can be applied.

2.1 If voluntary consent is given to the group

2.2 If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to

The wrongness of promise breaking is intuitively obvious. However, how does it come to 'be' that when we make promises we are then morally obliged to keep them? The answer to this question depends of the moral school you are grounded in. For a natural law theorist obligation stems from virtue, in particular, the virtue of justice which applies to us regardless of voluntary acts. So, to break a promise, you are not acting with virtue. For the consequentialist, it is because of utility maximising; keeping promises brings the most utility and breaking of promises brings harm to the parties. For Kantians, to keep promises is a duty and stems from being a universal law based on categorical imperatives because the motive for keeping promises can be applied universally.

Now that we have introduced promise breaking in the general sense we now pay closer attention in the free riding context.

Nozick brought to the fore voluntary consent into the free rider debate. The moral force of his argument for why we are obligated to contribute is because we have agreed to do so. Ultimately, this boils down to the keeping of a promise. The wrongness of free riding is then a special case of the wrongness of promise breaking: as Habib (2008) states, promises are taken to impose moral obligation.

The basic premises to why Nozick, among other theorists, believes a free rider owes a group is because they have contracted with the group and are 'aware' upfront what their burdens are and what those burdens mean for the benefits they willingly contracted to. The free rider will be 'aware' because she will be told or it is a reasonable position to think that if you receive something that you will ask what is the *quid pro quo* for the benefit as with any formal exchange that may occur. A contract could be viewed as a promissory note.

It is under the conditions of the contract that a free rider will sign up for or when he voluntarily consents to the benefits. Therefore, by joining the group under the auspices of a contract, the free rider is obligated to perform in accordance of the contact which will usually contains both the benefits that will be received and the burdens of for those benefits received. It is the voluntary nature of the interaction that makes it the consent explicit.

While this sounds all clear-cut, it can be argued that, in addition to having contracted to the burdens for certain benefits, the group sometimes yield more benefits for the explicit contractor where there is no contracted associated burden for that benefit. As such, the detractors argue that hiding behind contracts does not absolve an individual from moral obligations to these types of groups which provide more benefit than contracted to, more so when the burdens of group are new and unexpected and cannot and have not been foreseen or disproportionally distributed.

Implicit consent - Principle of reciprocity

As a reminder we list the membership factors under which the context of cooperation took place in which the justification of implicit consent – principle of reciprocity can be applied.

2.3 If the group benefit is accepted

The principle of reciprocity is generally an intuitive maxim which is found in some form or the other in all ethical schools of thought: some may call it the golden rule while other may call it a first principle. To a common man, the principle can be described as: Treat others as you wish to be treated. This means that if you do not want to be harmed then don't harm others or in our context if you don't want feel used, do not 'use' a person in a way that they are treated as means and not an end in itself. This is the sort of sentiments that is invoked when we are describing the 'corporate'.

The 'corporate' can be reasonably thought of as a group with internal structures that aid decision-making, a decision-making capacity that has created formal rules and regulations which regulate the group(regulate can be thought of preserving the group). The decision-making capacity has created a kind of autonomy for the group as the group can been seen to regulate itself. This kind of autonomy is what the group inherits as an object of moral status. By virtue of this moral status interacting with other moral persons , the corporate impose duties on its members to reciprocate (preserve the group) and its members intuitively feel obliged to when there is interaction because the members know there is some form of autonomy which has to be reciprocated as this be the reasonable case amongst individuals with moral status.

Now that we have introduced the principle of reciprocity in the general sense we now pay closer attention in the free riding context.

Contemporarily, Simmons was probably the first to expound that explicit consent might not be needed to be provided by a free rider and still be considered a free rider of the morally wrong kind when he introduced the concept of 'acceptance'. Again, we define Simmons (1979) acceptance: either 'having tried to get (and succeeded in getting) the benefit' or 'have taken the benefit willingly and knowingly' (p. 327). So, if the free rider accepts the benefit, then by Simmons account is susceptible to the burdens of the group benefit and this acceptance could be construed as implicit consent.

To dig deeper into the concept of implicit consent we use, Das and Teng (2004) work suggest that it has all got to do with 'trust'. Habib (2008) claims that trust makes for social cooperation, so when free riders do not contribute, it breaks trust, which ultimately inhibits social cooperation. But what exact is trust? We use the word probably every single day and in different contexts, so we should know. If you 'Google' the word trust, you will find pages and pages of definitions. Das and Teng (2004) surveyed the various respected definitions of trust to understand trust. From over 45 respected sources they collated and shared their results. They found that trust, while definitions differ when analysed could be broken down into basic concepts; we share with you their analysis.

Concept 1 – Subjective trust is:

a belief, attitude, or expectation concerning the likelihood that the action or outcomes of another individual, group or organisation will be acceptable or will serve the actor's needs. This concept can be further disaggregated into

Goodwill subjective trust

This related to the believability of the Intention found in trustee.

Competence subjective trust

This is related to the believability that the trustee has the ability to perform what the trust is requiring.

Concept 2 – Trust antecedents:

Personal and situational characteristics that lead to subjective trust in other words the quality of trustworthiness found in the individual who is being trusted.

Concept 3 – Behavioural trust:

Reliance or vulnerability in the trustee where this reliance is on the trustee would yield behaviour that would not have been possible without the trust. The trusting party has a behavioural expectation in the trustee when the trust is made.

If we integrate Das and Teng's work into the free rider problem, the acceptor or implicit consenter has an agreement based on trust with the provider of the benefit. The trust is acquired between the implicit consenter and the group because they recognise the autonomy in each other. Each party recognises subjective trust in each other. The group is trusted to behave in a way to deliver the benefits, and the free rider is trusted to deliver on the burdens. In the case of implicit consent, the group have already behaved to provide the expectation, because of the situation where the free rider has accepted the benefit. The group has therefore placed behavioural trust in the free rider on the basis that the group has shown subjective trust by performing their part. So by virtue of the golden rule of reciprocity for parties with autonomy recognising the trust antecedence, the group's has an expectation that its members will respect their vulnerability by contributing to the burdens. Non-contributing to the burdens can be seen as a breach of trust which in turn is a breach of the principle of reciprocity which in turn inhibit future social cooperation.

It is therefore based on the explanation above that when free riders interact implicitly with 'corporate' like groups, that non-contribution by the free rider is deemed immoral as the free rider has not respected the sense of autonomy which requires level of reciprocity for the preservation of the group.

As a parting shot to this section of implicit consent we find it worthy to mention that this reason why non-contribution is deem wrong also applies to groups which are like 'collectives' . This parting shot must not be construed as the primary reason of wrongness in the case of 'collectives' it just adds more weight to the primary argument which as stated above is unfairness. The idea of acceptance is echoed in the writings of others when they argue that if the participation is the benefit, then the mere fact that the free rider includes himself in the group traditions and rituals also implies consent and therefore acceptable to sharing the load of the burden of the group in which participation to takes place. These set of theorists argue that persons actively participating in group traditions and rituals implies consent to the gains and burdens even though an individual may not have explicitly consented. However, some argue that this is too vague because what if the burdens might be too onerous as compared to the benefits received. Also, others wonder how persons who are forced or do not have alternatives to just 'be' in a group can feel they owe the group something.

Unfairness

As a reminder, we list the membership factors under which the context of cooperation took place in which the justification of unfairness can be applied.

2.4 If the group benefit has the following 'open' qualities:

2.4.1 Non-excludability; the cost of excluding a certain member is prohibitive.

2.4.2 Unavoidable: the good provides unavoidable benefits to the consumer

2.4.3 Worth it: the share of the good received are worth the beneficiaries efforts to help provide it.

2.4.4 The group benefits are distributed in a fair manner

2.5.5 The burdens for producing the group benefit is (could be) distributed fairly

3.1 If the person would be unwilling to accept the consequences of generalising free riding to others

3.2 if participation creates the group benefit

One writer who you could say started the contemporary resurgence of free riding literature is Hart (1955). He provides a deontological explanation of wrongness. He argues that the special relationship formed in virtue of being a member of a group creates an obligation which he termed is based on the principle of '*mutuality of restrictions'* (p.185). This special right, as Hart calls it, is juxtaposed to moral rights (which he classes as general and does not have its origins in special relationships), only arises because of the relationship in which we find ourselves. Within a group, some persons have restricted their liberty to produce some good for the group constituents. Hart argues that this restriction creates a duty on the part of other citizens also to restrict their own liberty. This restriction is manifested by the obeying of rules that are created intending for beneficiaries to pay for their share.

Hart laid the foundation for other writers to build a more contemporary and coherent argument which is generally labelled as the argument out of fairness. Rawls (1971) argues that it is from an intuitive sense of justice (as fairness) that leads us to promote co-operate schemes, where all do their share to yield a good (p 271). Rawls claims if any individual does not contribute their fair share to that scheme to produce a good it would be unjust or morally wrong.

The principle of fair play therefore can be formulated as such: that everyone who participates in a reasonably just, mutually beneficial cooperative practice (which has sufficient unity and enduring identity) has an obligation to bear a fair share of the burdens of the practice where obligation is not to group in itself but to each other because the benefits are non-excludable so the burden must also be non-excludable. (Non-excludable meaning the cost of excluding a certain member is prohibitive.)

Now that we have described the principle we turn to describing unfairness. Intuitively we all have an inkling when something is unfair, but how do we describe it, so it may be used in a practical manner? Cullity (2008) attempts to do this, we share with you his work.

Cullity describes all the different types of unfairness we tend to think about:

- distributive (how goods and burdens are distributed);
- procedural (rules and conventions that allow potential conflicts to be distinguished);
- restorative (not restoring a loss to someone when caused by non-restorer);

- retributive(not being punished for a wrong doing); and
- Judgmental (criticism or praise of one another).

Cullity (2008) says all of the above types (not exhaustive list) of unfairness have one thing in common, partiality. Therefore, he deduces that for something to be considered fair, one must be impartial. Impartiality according to this context is the way members of a group are treated so that no one's personal interest outside of the common interest that binds the group supersedes another's and in turn acting out according to these personal interests. Based on his conclusions he succinctly coins unfairness as 'failures of appropriate impartiality' (p. 3). He goes on to say that these failures when they do occur can inform a situation what ought to be done.

While Cullity (2008) implies and assumes that impartiality can be achieved based on specific roles, as is the case of a member of a group, there are many that claims Impartiality is a fiction. One such author is Young, as found in Jollimore (2011) she writes:

> The ideal of impartiality is an idealist fiction. It is impossible to adopt an un-situated point of view, and if a point of view is situated, it cannot stand apart from and understand all points of view. It is impossible to reason about substantive moral issues without understanding their substance, which always presupposes some particular social and historical context; and one has no motive for making moral judgments and resolving moral dilemmas unless the outcome matters, unless one has a particular and passionate interest in the outcome […] when class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and age define different social locations, one subject cannot fully empathize with another in a different social location, adopt her point of view; if that were possible then the social locations would not be different

For Young, if we interpret her correctly, that we should not be too quick to morally adjudicate because there may pertinent information which may only be particular to a single case which allows for an interpretation which leads to different conclusions. Cullity and Young demonstrate the ranges of explanations that exist on the partial to impartial continuum.

Above, we have shared with you the strongest and most persuasive arguments to why free riding is wrong when it is wrong. This is not to state that these are the only reasons; there are others. Below we share with you those other reasons. This is not meant to dilute what has come before but only to demonstrate completeness and thoroughness in the review.

Aside from this aforementioned reason, we believe it most important to share with you these other less persuasive reasons[4] because as already mention by Singer ethical judgement is and in our opinion will always be filled with conjecture because each reader has their own experiences which aids in their adjudication. And rarely in ethical decision-making does it come down 'one' hard cold fact or argument. Ethical justifications could be seen as a load on a camel's back and it takes one argument with the weight of only a straw to break the camel's back or makes us change our mind about a particular judgement. While it is important to share the less persuasive reason we are also mindful of this projects word limit. Therefore we provide only a listing.

[4] If not mentioned specifically, idea from this section of less important reasons comes from van Niekerk (2010)

Less persuasive arguments

- Obligation out of gratitude
- Obligation out of natural duty
- The greater good argument

In this section, we set out to investigate why free riding under the context of cooperation is morally wrong. We have shared three primary justifications to the wrongness of free riding, breaching the principle of reciprocity, promise breaking and unfairness. Depending on the factors under the context of cooperation, we have listed in, our opinion the strongest justification. This does not mean that it is the only justification: we have tried to share with you all the justifications that could apply to the situation of free riding and we have tried to illustrate how the principles could be used to determine breach.

Thus far in stage 2, we have surveyed three of the four elements that is needed to consider any inquiry into free riding namely, the complainant: here we showed what groups are and how groups could have moral status, the grounds for justification: under this element we shared that certain factors have to be present to form a justifiable complaint and we shared with you the reasons why free riding is wrong when justified. All that is remaining in this is the free rider himself.

The free rider

We know that the free rider is an individual and that individual must, at least, if given the title of the free rider must be part of a group. However we have seen that a group can be of two broad types: groups with moral status and groups without. Our concern has always been the former. Thus far we have shown reasons why a free rider should contribute but it natural to ask why do free riders actually free ride. By including this line of questioning we believes gives the free rider the benefit of doubt and provide a more complete picture, a picture from the perspective of the free rider. By giving the free rider the benefit of the doubt we then must ask if there any moral basis for why we free ride.

To begin with we ask the question of why we free ride and thereafter we see if there is any moral justifications to why one may free ride.

Why do we free ride?

There is no doubt in our minds that that what is to be presented is an incomplete list of reasons as to why one free rides. This project discusses four issues. These four issues have been selected out of the review of the literature that seems the most plausible.

Group size

Albanese and Fleet (1985) argue, after reviewing literature that group size is an important variable in the tendency to free ride. They argue that the tendency to free ride increases when the free rider perceives that her free riding will not be noticed. Secondly, they also argue the group size is important to the free rider because is she feels that, as she is not making a perceptible difference then the chances are that she will free ride. Thirdly, they argue that depending on the group output the share of the output will be divided more in a bigger group and this may be a disincentive and thus promote free riding.

Group output

Many (Cullity 1995) writers argue that despite being part of a group the tendency to free ride will increase when the group output can be easily forfeited or has little perceived value to the free rider.

Group cohesion

From the previous section of groups, perhaps it is clear that if free riders do not strongly identify with the group or the group makes very little or unnoticeable attempt to bind the group to create unity, the tendency to free ride increases.

Decision making

Pettit (2007) argues that an individual can make the best decision for the group under certain conditions. However, Green (2002) in his overview of rational choice and McMahon (2000) in his paper of collective rationality argue that the most striking observation to why we free ride is based on the wrong unit of analysis in our decision-making process. They argue that as individuals on how ought to choose is based on the context, be it individual or within groups but the individual neglects this and decision-making in groups is affected. Green further argues the preferences for the group versus the preferences for the individual are not generally commensurable and therefore makes decision-making more difficult and the likelihood to choose based on their own preferences are greater. Green then argues that decision-making, the dimension of time and the consequences of choice (dynamic choice) made now but which may impact the future, is very difficult for individuals to make because as Pettit (2007) puts it, there is no ‘system-level feedback’ (p.496) which shows that the decision made in the past was not optimal, so future decisions will also suffer from the same flawed information because there has been no learning from the mistakes.

Can there be any moral justifications to why we free ride?

Continuing with the perspective 'the free rider' and giving them the benefit of the doubt, we question by surveying the most predominate schools of ethical thought (Deontology, Utilitarianism and Virtue ethics) as to how the individual should choose when part of a group, as justification is usually by the school of thought they have adopted to be aligned with.

Due to the project limits, we only share the results: All schools of thought surveyed agree that there is no basis for free riding holding all things constant.

Summary of findings from the review of the elements

In stage 2 we sought to share the opinions and consideration of other more esteemed writers and thinkers. This was necessitated by our reflective equilibrium approach to this project to answering our overall question of: 'Are people who use *Wikipedia* without contributing free riders?' In stage 2 we discussed the elements of free riding: the complainant, the justification of the complaint, the complaint and the free rider. We shared that groups needs a certain attributes to be considered as object of moral consideration, We shared that there are general circumstances given the context of the situation that other writers felt needed to exist in order for the complaint of free riding to be justified, we then shared the reasons why other writers adjudicate the free riding when justified to be wrong and, finally, we tried to understand the free rider a little more.

As we proceed to stage 3 of our approach, we remind the reader that stage 3 is to refocus on the particular question at hand. We will apply our theoretical results and pronouncements to the question we ask. The outcome of this application will allows us to provide an answer to our overall question. Our application in general will follow this approach: our theoretical considerations have demonstrated that in order to demonstrate a justifiable complaint certain factors about the context of cooperation must exist. If these sub points exists non-contribution can be considered morally wrong. We will then use the factors considered and apply it to the *Wikipedia* context. As a reminder these factors were:

1. The group must possess some form of moral status like that of a 'corporate' or a 'collective'

1.1. If like that of a 'corporate' go-to 2

1.2 If like that of a 'collective' go-to 3

2. A person is a 'corporate 'group member

2.1 If voluntary consent is given to the group OR

2.2 If the group benefit is voluntarily consented to OR

2.3 If the group benefit is accepted OR

2.4 If the group benefit has the following 'open' qualities:

2.4.1 Non-excludability; the cost of excluding a certain member is prohibitive.

2.4.2 Unavoidable: the good provides unavoidable benefits to the consumer

2.4.3 Worth it: the share of the good received are worth the beneficiaries efforts to help provide it.

2.4.4 The group benefits are distributed in a fair manner

2.5.5 The burdens for producing the group benefit is (could be) distributed fairly

3. A person is a 'collective' group member

3.1 If the person would be unwilling to accept the consequences of generalising free riding to others OR

3.2 if participation creates the group benefit

Stage 3 – Refocusing on the question at hand based on our results from the review of elements

Our approach was to share with you our pre-theoretical consideration as a foundational building block and, you could say, a litmus test to where our theoretical pronouncement could lead. Next, we offered the opinions of others which we found in the literature. This was to demonstrate that the conclusions we drew are considered. Within this stage, we still take our pre-theoretical consideration but now we take what we have learnt from others and apply it to the case at hand. We do this by asking a series of questions.

Before we begin with our application of our learning to the case of *Wikipedia* we must state that *Wikipedia* themselves never has accused any user of free riding, our inquiry in this project is to determine how users in general should be conducting themselves in relation to *Wikipedia.* The way we have posed our series of questions is to jolt our thinking around our behaviour towards *Wikipedia*, if *Wikipedia* and we stress if, if they did accuse general users as free riders. This is not to say that this project is futile and only be worthy once *Wikipedia* did in fact accuse the general user, but rather this project is to inquiry how general users should behave. Floridi (2010) argues that the study of moral philosophy must include what he calls both reactive and proactive sub-approaches which reflective equilibrium includes. A reactive approach is one which a writer must argue for conclusions based on prior existing principles. A proactive approach is one deal or concerns itself with how the world is

constructed and improving its development. In this context this project can be seen as a proactive approach.

A series of questions

The refocusing will simply be a series of questions which have arisen from relevant literature and which must be answered to give us an overall answer to the research question: 'Are people who use *Wikipedia* without contributing free riders?' The questions are pointed and underlie the current forks in the path to understanding the free rider.

It seems obvious to us that we have to stage our questioning as the conditions drawn from our theoretical pronouncements in stage 2 suggests we first find our out whether we can use free rider literature in the first place and if so the what type of group is *Wikipedia.* If we answer these questions first then the appropriate line of question can take place about membership. So the questions we ask first are:

A. Does *Wikipedia* have a case to even begin with?

   If *Wikipedia* decided one day that they would somehow enforce contribution or via some mechanism demonstrate the users' moral guilt, would they be justified in using a free rider argument? This question then asks of us: are we even in the ballpark to use free rider literature or its theoretical pronouncements?

B. Can *Wikipedia* and it users be considered a group and if so, a group which can assert its rights? And which type of group is it, a collective or a corporate?

   We then saw the under the grounds for a justified complaint section that the group has to be of a particular type. Depending of the particular type, it informs us on what other grounds we may consider. The question seeks to uncover what type of group *Wikipedia* is.

Does Wikipedia even have a case to begin with?

There is very little doubt to that there will be little objection that, in general most users of the internet have gained benefit from *Wikipedia* in some form or the other.

There is also very little doubt that the greater population of the users of *Wikipedia* has not contributed to the hard costs of the running of *Wikipedia*. This assumption is based on the information on the list of benefactors page found on the Wikimedia website (Wikimedia 2012a), the repeated requests by *Wikipedia* for contributions, and the assumption of relatively small costs associated with the upkeep of *Wikipedia* as opposed to the number of unique visitors per month (which is 4 million - see appendix one) This all fuels the notion that very few, by comparison to users, actually contribute monetarily.

By virtue of the fact that *Wikipedia* has been in existence for over 10 years and our presumptive argument of very few benefactors, it can lead us to conclude that the lack of contribution by the vast majority of those benefitted does not affect the benefit.

This trifecta of reasonable assumptions thus gives us the starting point for building our case as it meets the general definition and properties of a free rider. If you recall we stated that a free rider it can be commonly thought of as someone who benefits from the collective actions of a group without contributing to that benefit while their lack of contribution does not affect the benefit.

On the surface, it seems that *Wikipedia* may have a case; so the next question we seek to answer in our practical approach is this: can the community of users of *Wikipedia* be considered a group? We now have learnt that the members of *Wikipedia* have to be considered a group of the 'free riding kind'. That is why this question needs to answered.

Can Wikipedia be considered a group and if so, a group that can assert its rights?

We know that *Wikipedia* is an institution incorporated in the United States of America with enduring identity, and an internal decision-making structure. And therefore if we appeal to French's definition of the 'corporate' that can assert rights, the answer to the question would be 'yes' and it can assert its rights, but we think it's not as simple as that. While the direct infrastructure is in the control if the *Wikipedia*, the actual value that gets generated is not by *Wikipedia*, they only create the forum for you and me to editorially contribute, so we do not want to put total reliance on the fact that *Wikipedia* is a 'corporate' that gives it rights. The value or content gets generated by participating as a contribution to the site. This can be highlighted by way of an example comparing Encyclopaedia *Britannica* to *Wikipedia*. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is a private organisation, which began with their first published works in 1771. They paid editorial contributors and fact checkers and have yielded 65000 articles in this period to date, whereas *Wikipedia* has 3.8 million articles since 2001(See appendix 2), this is owed to the open system of contributing editors.

So, on reflection we assert that *Wikipedia* is a group that has enduring identity because of its corporate identity, but also in addition it has moral stature because of the strong bonds or unity demonstrated by the participation in the creation of the group benefit. Therefore, moral expectation of the group is generated by its 'corporate' identity as well as the participation of members usually found in a 'collective'.

Now that we have answered these first two questions (A & B) in our application of our practical approach, it seems that the next stage of question must take the form of the following.

C. Can users of *Wikipedia* be considered members of a 'collective' group?

Earlier we have shared Mapel (2005) and Reaume (1988) thoughts on collective group membership. In particular, participation of the creation of group benefits which is the hallmarks of a group like that of a 'collective'. Therefore this question asks in scrutiny, are users of *Wikipedia* really 'participating' in the creation of group benefit.

D. Can the users of *Wikipedia* be considered members of a 'corporate' group?

It is quite obvious in this case that we do not voluntarily consent to *Wikipedia* for usage or to its benefits, but as we have shared earlier in condition 2.3) that membership is deemed if group benefits are accepted and 2.4) if the benefit exhibits any of the qualities of an 'open' good: We explore this further.

Can users of Wikipedia be considered members of a 'collective' group?

Wikipedia, by their own admission (*Wikimedia* 2012b), believes that the larger part of humanity forms part of the community. They state that there are certain types of users:

- Editors
- Ideological supporters
- Current readers
- Potential readers and potential editors

They also acknowledge that sometimes people refer to the community with a more narrow definition being that of editors as they have formalised their membership (have an account of record).

For the purpose of this paper, we categorise the community into two parts

- General users – those that do not editorially contribute but are readers
- Editorial users – those that contribute editorially

And for purposes of this research project question, we put forward the question of free riding in relation to general users.

To us it seems quite obvious that if one is an editorial user then one is participating in the group benefit, therefore you are a group member. However in the case of the 'general user' we argue that participating is less obvious but none the less it is participation. We submit that one can only become a contributing editor if they in fact are readers first. One cannot contribute editorially in a meaningful way if you are

not readers of the content first. So by reading the content of at least one of over 750,000[5] other editorial group participants one is actually participating to the actual value of the topic. The simple action of choosing to use the information of editorial contributions is acknowledgment of the value and choosing not to use the information read is also acknowledgement of level of value on the editorial contribution. It here at this point when acknowledging that the contribution of a less worthy nature, that some potential contributors become actual editorial contributors because they have sufficient interest to change the content. It is for this reason we state that general users of *Wikipedia* are also participating when they just read the content of others.

The other condition which could make a general user a member is by appealing to Mapel's (2005) conclusions. He claims that group membership is determined by asking whether general users of *Wikipedia* would be willing to accept the consequences of generalising their free riding. We believe most internet users if surveyed would say that they are not willing to accept the generalising of free riders to others (this could be a further study). The condition seems to be quite a subjective question that is why we suggest a survey, however for us the writer we will not be willing to accept the generalising of free riding to others.

So, in summary, we believe that using Wikipedia does make you part of the '*Wikipedia* group' because you are the one who participates in the creation of the group benefit, and general users would not be willing to accept the generalising of free riders to others.

Can the users of Wikipedia be considered members of a 'corporate' group?

When you search for something and the search results are presented to you, you click on the link. This action is a deliberate action and no one forces you to select a link and therefore you do accept the outputs of *Wikipedia*. However, *Google* and other search engines have made it very easy so that our deliberate action almost becomes autonomic, like breathing. We do not think about breathing normally (unless asked to), so when a general user surfs to the *Wikipedia* site, can we really say that he accepts the output of *Wikipedia*? Well, we could say that one knows he is on Wikipedia's site when the page comes up and he could leave the site but how practical is that. This is almost like Nozick saying that a neighbour owes the neighbourhood a day on managing the PA system because he opened his window and because the music was flowing in, he decided to put earplugs in his ears. But if you recall what Simmons (1979) response was, a clearer definition of acceptance: 'having tried to get (and succeeded in getting) the benefit' or '...have taken the benefit willingly and knowingly' (p.327). Simmons' response, while accurate and sufficient, still does not satisfy our curiosity. There is something about this, the reason we think is because we are talking about what we called the open nature of the group benefit. In the next paragraphs, we try and satisfy our curiosity.

In the current free rider discussions, if you accept the benefit and you still don't contribute then you are a free rider of the morally wrong kind. We have shown this to be the case with *Wikipedia;* however we

[5] See appendix 2

would still like to discuss this question further since matters are not so black and white and it will satisfy our curiosity. The nature of the benefit as described by our predecessor has been described by using the following labels: worthiness, unavoidability, non-excludability, fairness in benefit distribution and fairness in burden distribution. We will take a closer look at each of these qualities to see if they are found in the benefit of *Wikipedia*.

Worthiness

We start with this property first because sometimes you and we forget what *Wikipedia's* output is. It is a collection and repository for all human knowledge (works in progress, mind you). Now you might get some 'nay-sayers' objecting that it is not knowledge, because it's not accurate and/or it has not been contributed by trained and/or academically inclined people[6]. But is that not an exact description of humanity? We have flaws and are not trained in all disciplines. Now if you start with this systemic view of what *Wikipedia* is about, then to us at least it is very obvious that it is worthy of our contribution which actually pales in comparison to the value *Wikipedia* really has.

If we were to do the math for one moment (more for those analytically minded people), *Wikipedia* reports that their planned expenses for the year 2012 (*Wikimedia* 2012c) is 30 million US dollars. On average they report a count of 4 million unique visitors per month count. Let's take away all the editorial contributors for a moment. That's approximately 750, 000 which leaves us with 3.25 million general users, So now if we divide 30 million by 12 to get a monthly expenditure, that would be 2.5 million USD a month, now divide that by 3.25 million to get contribution needed by general users and you get 0.80 cents. That, in South African rand is approximately 8 ZAR, so, if the math was correct and let's round up, would you not pay R 100 per year to lead you to the sum of all codified human knowledge to be at your disposal?

For some, I agree, this might be too much to pay: however, you can contribute less because at least your contribution says something about what you value.

Unavoidability

It is quite obvious that we can avoid the benefit of *Wikipedia*, and simply not click on the link, and select another or we can go to our public library, for which we pay taxes, and obtain information from there. However, from a more statistical research-oriented point of view, the analytical beasts out there will like this. 'Intelligent Position' reports that, of their 1000 search terms used in their survey to find out how many times Wikipedia appear on page 1 of Google, it is 99% of the time, of that 99%, 56% is ranked as number one and 96% is in the top five returned results. Other results are tabulated below.

[6] You might even get naysayers that say the funds are being misappropriated.

Table 1- Internet search result positioning of links to Wikipedia

Test agency	Top 1	Top 5	Page 1
Intelligent position (2012)	56%	96%	99%
Conductor (2011)	29%	82%	78%
Slingshot (Spyfu 2012)	28%	Could not determine	62%
SpyFu (2012)	20%	Could not determine	69%

What does this all mean?; Well, if you accept what Cornell University (Granka *et al*. 2004) says when they say that 88.4 % of all clicks happen on top five results on page 1 from search engines such as Goggle. And:

- links are clicked in under 5 seconds
- Users click on the first promising link they see
- Users rather reformulate query than scroll
- Task type and difficulty affect viewing behaviour
- Presentation of results affects selection

All this means that *Wikipedia* is difficult to avoid from a historical statistical point of view. It's as if, even if you don't want *Wikipedia*; it is there, more so if you think that search engines bring back snippets for you to read without actually having to click the link just by virtue of surfing - *Wikipedia* is there. Now there maybe those that totally disagree with what we am insinuating here. Can we really draw similarities between the unavoidable quality of, for example national defence programs and the search engines results bringing *Wikipedia's* contents to the first page? We have two responses. Just as if as national you could move to another state to avoid the benefits, so too you could go to another search engine. Even better you could create your own method of crawling and searching the petabytes of information on the web while remembering that your search methodology must exclude *Wikipedia's* content. If you haven't noticed, we are being obtuse because it demonstrates the lengths one would have to go to use the internet. The second response is that even if we did move to another state or another search engine. Who says that the benefits of the country national defence program are not found within those new countries or search engines?

Now consider a more subtle question about unavoidability, even if we can avoid *Wikipedia* and I know we can (with a degree of difficulty), despites our efforts to show you otherwise, the more important question is this: do we want to avoid *Wikipedia*? Our evaluation is no. Given that we know *Wikipedia* is a good starting point (perhaps ending point) for all our informational needs or, in other words 'worthy'

then we would deprive ourselves of benefit. So given 'no' to this section of the question, we conclude that it is in our self-interest to use *Wikipedia*. In fact if we do not use *Wikipedia* we are actually paying a disservice to ourselves and could yield undesirable consequences. In summary, the combination of the worthiness and the ever-present qualities, we conclude that *Wikipedia* output is unavoidable.

Non-excludability

Non-excludability as a reminder from earlier in the paper is the cost of excluding a certain member is prohibitive. We submit that *Wikipedia* has non-excludability as a quality, despite it being very easy (from a technological procedural point of view) to limit the good or exclude certain members. You see, the mission of *Wikipedia* is for worldwide collaboration with easy dissemination (see appendix 1) and the only way to execute on this mission is to create an open system, meaning availability to everybody. If they have to exclude members, then potential editorial contributors will not be able to contribute, and perhaps, addition to the discussion (which we assume to be of value to humanity) would be lost because they do have access to see the content, because if it was a closed system, the results would not appear on search engines' results and with content unavailable with ease on the internet, formal membership procedures would be a high enough barrier for the potential contributor not to overcome.

Fairness in benefit distribution

Earlier, we mentioned that Cullity (2008) states that fairness has something to do with being impartial. *Wikipedia,* in our assessment, is impartial. The openness of the platform means that anybody with a connection to the internet and who reads and contributes to a particular topic illustrates impartiality. We believe no further comment is required to demonstrate fair distribution of benefits.

Fairness in burden distribution

Currently, the distribution of burdens is not fair. There are only a few benefactors as we have already stated. However we have the opinion that burden distribution 'could be' fair if there was an enforcement procedure imposed by *Wikipedia*. Setting aside the enforcement procedure for the moment, if all users understood that there is a moral obligation and by virtue that they ought to share the burden distribution then it could be fair. Wikipedia from time to time request donations to help contribute to the running cost burdens. This coupled with the open platform for benefit distributions leads us to reasonable conclude that *Wikipedia* have a desire (see appendix one) to be as fair and transparent in their dealings with its members.

Summary of the practical approach

To summarise, our application via the series of question asked in particular B), C) and D) we have placed our findings in a table that depict the conditions that are needed for free riding to be wrong and how we have interpreted the case of *Wikipedia*.

Table 2 - Summary of findings

Conditions for valid justification	Condition met	Justification/principles
1.1 Can Wikipedia be considered a group of moral stature like that of a corporate	**Yes**	**Autonomy**
1.2 Can Wikipedia be considered a group of moral stature like that of a collective	**Yes**	**Participation**
2.3 A user is a corporate group member because he has 'accepted' the group benefit	**Yes**	**Principle of reciprocity**
2.4 A user is a corporate group member because the group benefit exhibits the 'open' qualities needed	**Yes**	**Unfairness**
3.1 A user is a collective group member because he will be unwilling to generalise free riding to others	**Yes**	**Unfairness**
3.2 a user is a collective group member because he has participated in the creation of the group benefit	**Yes**	**Unfairness**

5. The answer to the question

Our practical reflective equilibrium approach has taken us on a journey to first consider our own pre-theoretical intuitions to serve as a guiding litmus test to the theoretical consideration we sought. This was the applied to our particular case and we arrived at our findings.

The finding of our endeavours has shown us that users should contribute monetarily to Wikipedia for the development and upkeep of *Wikipedia* and if they do not then they are free riders. By using W*ikipedia* we are members of a group, by virtue of the fact that *Wikipedia* gains moral status as a group on both the 'corporate' and the 'collective' vantage viewpoints and by virtue of the fact that the users are members because *Wikipedia* benefit is accepted and users have participated in the creation of the benefit. This is sufficient in this case to determine that users of Wikipedia are part of a group with moral status and therefore should contribute monetarily. However we have gone further, out of curiosity to see if the benefits have qualities that could be used as justification to deem the free rider of the wrong kind. It seems that the benefit also exhibits these qualities needed (all be it that some may require further research).

Because of our proactive approach which is one deals or concerns itself with how the world in constructed and improving its development. We hope we have shown that contributing can be construed as constructing and improving a better world which we all live in.

Earlier, we provided the strongest justification for each factor if met within context. Table 2 summarises this. If we apply it to the *Wikipedia* case, the justifications for the wrongness are:

- implied consent - principle of reciprocity
- unfairness

However, we also stated that we shared only the strongest within each factor; but this does not mean there is no other justification. It is for this reason that we ask why non-contributors are morally wrong, to aid a more complete picture of the wrongness. Keep in mind that some of the reasoning is weak in some of the justification and that they were not selected as the strongest justification, but nevertheless they are justifications.

Therefore the answer to our question of 'Are people who use *Wikipedia* without contributing free riders?' The answer is a considered 'Yes'.

6. Objections and rebuttals

Given the nature of philosophical writing, it is prudent to consider perceived objections to the outcomes of the inquiry undertaken. The first objection to attend to is the methodology used in this inquiry, thereafter, a defence of some objections to the outcome.

Why this method

The overarching reflective equilibrium approach was opted over what Rachels (1993) calls Moorean Insulation, because Moorean Insulation is considered doing philosophy 'safely' (p.112), as this method only attempts to justify what we may already believe, though Philosophy should rather be more risky because it should call in to question our deep-seated beliefs. The reflective equilibrium approach is said to put those deep-seated beliefs out into the open (p.112). Another reason why this method was chosen is because it includes the allowance of what Floridi (2010) calls a proactive approach (how the world is constructed and improving its development). Far too many times in our limited readings we have noted how philosophers conclude on moral positions only on applied logic without regard of the implications on how one would like to see the world.

Wikipedia is designed for free riding

One objection that we must rebut is where some will argue that *Wikipedia* is designed for unrestricted or free use and so is meant to legitimise a kind of free riding. However, we will argue that this line of thinking is a fallacy of ambiguity: The conclusion is based on a word of phrase which is used in another sense to forward their claim. *Wikipedia* is designed for sharing 'free' content. This means content not under dispute from intellectual property claims. The covering of cost the running *Wikipedia* is often requested by the founders which illustrates that *Wikipedia* wants us to contribute to the burdens however it cannot force its burdens, as it would then create a place of restriction which then is contrary to its open mission and so relies on the morality of users.

Wikipedia cannot burden us fairly

This line of objection may follow: *Wikipedia's* burdens cannot be distributed fairly (refer point 2.5.5 of Maple's conditions). Because of this arrangement it becomes unfair to burden one with an obscure obligation and thus one is allowed to free ride without any moral objection. A rebuttal to this sort of line of thinking is an appeal to the worthiness and to the group's moral status and acceptance of benefits.

The moral force for contributions comes by virtue of the group moral status of being a collective and the acceptance of benefit. *Wikipedia* is a collective by virtue of what Reaume (1988) argued. Reaume argued by referring to the output as participatory, that is what in conjunction with its enduring identity which we believe to be less disputed is what deems *Wikipedia* as a collective. By virtue of this fact alone ensures that contribution is morally necessary. This is further fortified by the users' acceptance as Simmons' describes the free rider as knowingly and willingly seeking out the benefit.

If there is still a lingering objection after what we have said in form of a rebuttal to this line of objection then ask the objector to consider what is at stake, and the worthiness. The contribution for the average Internet user is R100 per year and it is only R100 this year because of infrastructure expansion usually it is five times less than that making that R20 a year. This, compared to what you actually benefit is in our opinion well pales in comparison to the benefit and makes it 'very' fair for you. By the way all these calculations, data and figures came from Wikipedia's website and disclosure all their financial statements can be found, so arguing obscurity of obligation is no longer founded. Given this meagre amount of 5 cents a day (R20/365) as compared to the worthiness and the big picture, the argument that we cannot be unfairly burdened actually becomes laughable.

Exclusivity is easy

Again, others might argue that the cost to exclude free riders from the collective good is nominal and thus, if they don't, they accept that free riders will free ride. A retort to this line of thinking is simply to acknowledge that it is very easy to exclude free riders but this has two effects: first, it will be against the

objective and mission of *Wikipedia*, so it is like saying their purpose is no longer valid and secondly, the actual value of *Wikipedia* is because of its open nature or non-excludability. The participation of all who want to participate makes the entries of *Wikipedia* so valid because opinions from around the world are read. Therefore, exclusivity defeats the purpose and value of *Wikipedia*. In our opinion *Wikipedia* does accept that there are those who are susceptible to free riding but that not the point of this paper, the point has been and actually shows that free riding in context of *Wikipedia* is morally wrong.

Wikipedia does not need to exist

Another set may argue that they can accept the consequences of generalising free riding to others and it does not matter if *Wikipedia* exists or not. This, to us is a very personal question: all we can offer is that *Wikipedia* in our opinion matters to us personally, and if we believe the statistics of usage, this is the case with others also. We cannot elaborate on 'what ifs': what if *Wikipedia* was not in existence how would we, gain benefit like we got from Wikipedia. The simple answer to that is we do not know maybe we would frequent the library more (a public place) or we would buy the online subscription to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*(consent to burdens).

Just monetise

The last objection to be considered is by those that simply say 'why don't *Wikipedia* just monetise?' Meaning it does not morally matter that free riding occurs. Monetise means two things: charge the user or, secondly, create a mechanism where that can earn revenue which does not charge the general user but can still cover their expenses, for example the placement of 'Google ads' on their pages. Let us attempt to address the difference in types of monetising. Charging users will actually exclude users and further widen the digital divide, so all the rebuttals from the earlier objection will apply. As to the second type of monetisation, let us just say that because of the openness of the group there is a page on *Wikipedia* dedicated to this exact question (Wikipedia 2012b). Without wanting to repeat the whole page to you, some of the poignant objections are:

- Privacy violations

  Organisations (advertisement consolidators like ad sense) to which we have given no consent to can gain insight into what we read and inquiry about.

- Diametrically opposed to the goals

  Advertisements by their very nature are biased and sometimes misleading and when ads might appear on an intended neutral page, this will be in conflict with their goals.

- Prior commitments made to donors

> Donors have gifted money to *Wikipedia* on the basis that *Wikipedia* contain no advertising. If they were now to monetise they would be in breach of a past promissory obligation.

At the same time, this also a long list of counter arguments for each rebuttal. We will not list them but however, advise that you take a moment to visit the page because if you really think about it, this page alone demonstrates the value of the openness and unbiased nature as we have many points of view being allowed to be shared and not restricted by what business dictates is best for the profitability.

Despite all this a general user can still free ride and probably get away with his non-contribution, so what's the point. The point is that now we know the free rider is immoral.

7. Conclusions and implications

We have concluded that general users should contribute monetarily to the up-keep and development of *Wikipedia.* Our reasoning is based on the moral agent's intention for action which also must also include elements for creating a better world for all. By contributing to *Wikipedia* general users are making a better world where information is kept in the open domain as opposed to the exclusive few that can afford the right to access information. We have submitted that non-contribution can be deemed unfair and non-contributors are in breach of the principle of reciprocity.

There is no doubt in our mind that an analytical (reductionist) reader will find flaws in every single argument presented in the previous sections. We concede this. However, as the reader who conceptually understands system (holism) theory, realises it is the interrelation of the parts (despite its perceived flaws) which brings the system to the state of equilibrium. It is not just one part. In the same way arguments can be seen as parts, all parts working together which have brought us to our reflective equilibrium. This is why we have spent effort in describing all that we conceptually understand as important to this project.

The very nature of this inquiry has also dictated to a degree the format: because of the varied topics we have made use of a style which includes many headings, some of them posed as provoking questions. Overall, the design of this project was to lay out the boxes that would have to be checked when answering our question. When checking the boxes or not, much of the supporting reasoning is found in other areas of the project hence the use of many headings which helps the readers to more easily retrace sections and re-read concepts found in the argumentation. This all might seem 'stop go stop' or lacking integration to some, but in hindsight it is our hope that you understand why we have adopted this approach: (for intellectually integrity).

So what does this mean for other projects and inquiries? The permutations in events are too many to create strict rules about free riding. However, our practical approach does break down the elements of free riding and the factors of the context of cooperation that may guide others. We believe we have contributed to the discussion on free riding by succinctly offering a version of all the relevant opinions of

the free rider problem. As for the actual claims and the implications for general users of the internet as a whole, we believe it is important to understand who owns the site and their motives for providing benefit. It is important to know that surfing might not be a mere past time but can have moral implications for those who wish to build a better world through social cooperation and for those who wish to lead moral lives.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Facts about *Wikipedia*

Wikipedia is an online encyclopaedia website. Since its inception in 2001, content has grown to in excess of 26 million web pages. These web pages have been contributed by at least 82 000 collaborators, who do not get paid. As of the 31st of January 2012 it is reported on *Wikipedia* website that 10 million web pages are viewed every hour on average and every month there are at least 400 million unique visitors (*Wikipedia,* 2012a).

Wikipedia is owned by the Wikimedia Foundation incorporated as a not-for-profit company based in the United States of America. While this internet site is the sixth most popular website (Google, 2012) in the world today, the costs of running this organisation are met by benefactors contributing an unspecified amount when requested to do so. The appeal to contribute is periodically posted on the website when pages are requested. The request takes the form of a request for donation.

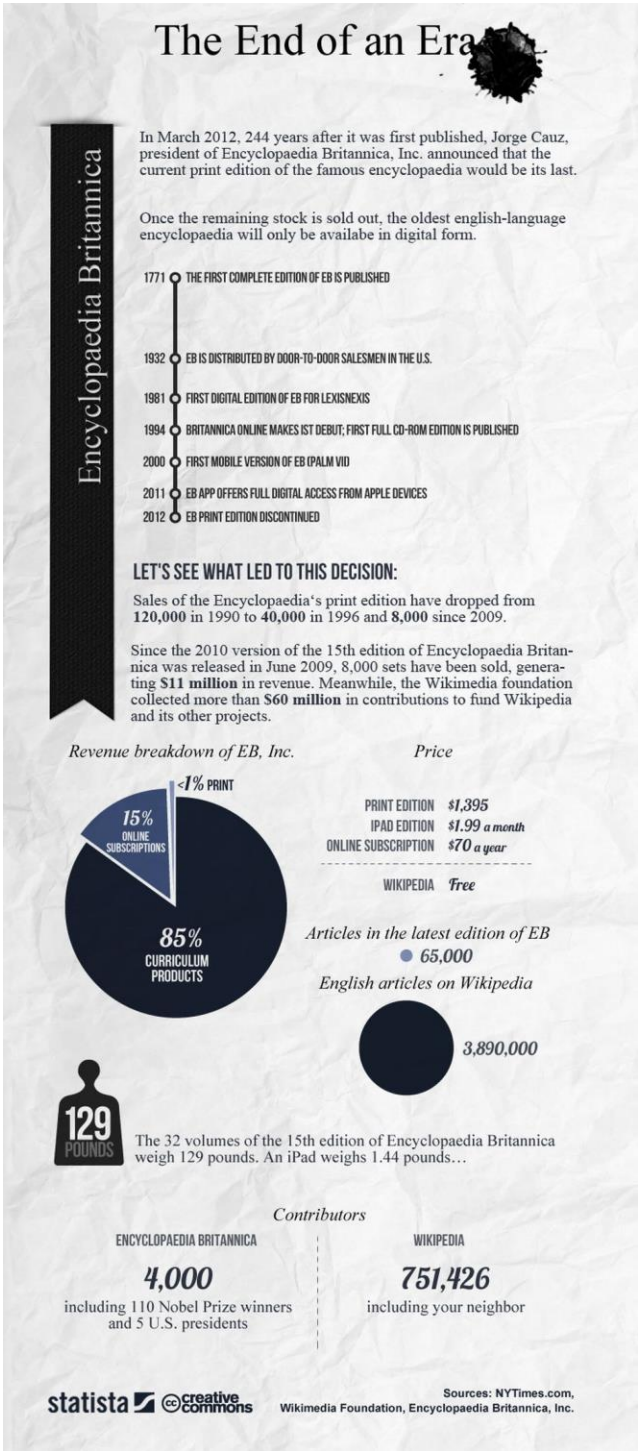
The mission statement or primary purpose of Wikimedia foundation is as quoted from their website:

> *The mission of the Wikimedia Foundation is to empower and engage people around the world to collect and develop educational content under a free license or in the public domain and to disseminate it effectively and globally* (Wikimedia 2012d) Free license meaning (again taken as a quote) *Free content, or free information, is any kind of functional work, artwork, or other creative content that meets the definition of a free cultural work. A free cultural work is one which has no significant legal restriction on people's freedom* (Wikipedia 2012d)

Decision-making takes place through consensus. On *Wikipedia's* website:

> *Consensus refers to the primary way decisions are made on Wikipedia, and it is accepted as the best method to achieve our goals. Consensus on Wikipedia does not mean unanimity (which, although an ideal result, is not always achievable); nor is it the result of a vote. This means that decision-making involves an effort to incorporate all editors' legitimate concerns, while respecting Wikipedia's norms*. (Wikipedia 2012d)

Appendix 2 – Infographic on Encyclopaedia Britannica[7]



[7] M Silverman of mashable.com Wikipedia vs. Encyclopedia Britannica source at http://mashable.com/2012/03/16/encyclopedia-britannica-wikipedia-infographic/ accessed 11/08.2012

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