

## **Insider Corruption at Wikipedia**

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In the introductory lecture of my strategic management course, I suggested a variety of sources of information useful to undergraduates when conducting research for their upcoming term projects. Among those of a general nature I mentioned Wikipedia, the open-access Internet encyclopedia, because of the topical and background information it provides on companies and industries, material regularly employed in strategy analysis and formulation. One day a student politely questioned if Wikipedia was indeed a reliable reference.

The student's misgiving was provoked by reports of abuse at Wikipedia by unscrupulous contributors who doctored entries and even created fraudulent articles to promote their petty interests. These deception problems originated because Wikipedia accepts contributions from basically anyone, most being submitted pseudonymously. Yet this policy is not as alarming as it may seem at first blush, for their radical approach to the collection, redaction, and flash communication of codified knowledge is the key to the astonishing growth of the Wikipedia project and the revolutionary changes that transformed the formerly staid, paper-based encyclopedia industry into a vibrant aggregation of websites. Even tech giant Microsoft, which had secured publishing rights to the contents of three prestigious titles for a fistful of dollars and possessed formidable economic might, was driven to surrender the field pronto to the new interloper in town, one with no cash or formal organization to speak of. Unheard of. Careful there with that rolling tumbleweed, pardner. Prickly.

Moreover, the extraordinarily successful Wikipedia phenomenon presents a serious challenge to conventional economic wisdom, since long-established encyclopedia publishers were quickly snuffed out by a far-flung multitude of incognito volunteers totally unconcerned about pecuniary gain. This form of network collaboration, as of late called *crowdsourcing*, provides a sobering counterexample to proponents of the doctrine that private property and the profit motive are the only viable means of productive organization in open societies. Bronx cheer, guys. Social systems are more complex and nuanced than what economists ever imagined. I have the highest admiration for the achievements of the visionaries and global community of contributors that made Wikipedia a reality, accomplishments that far exceed assembling and

delivering a vast number of articles by the world's largest repository of free information, the modern equivalent of the ancient Library of Alexandria.

Wikipedia, incidentally, is not the only notable counterexample. In his book, *Wikipedia: A New Community of Practice?* (2009, Ashgate Publishing, 2), Dan O'Sullivan prominently cites (1) the Royal Society, which was initiated by "amateurs who spread their message without any commercial motivation" and (2) the Oxford English Dictionary, whose editors "employed an army of unpaid volunteers". He discusses the cases in subsequent chapters.

I acknowledged the student's well-grounded concern before remarking that Wikimedia, the foundation that runs Wikipedia and related wikis, was taking measures to control deceptive practices by rogue contributors. Still, the fact that deliberate falsehoods had easily made it into the text signaled that it was incumbent on the user to ascertain the validity of the information appearing in Wikipedia by cross-checking the contents of its articles with independent sources. Wikipedia was a handy preliminary reference but, taking a cue from the business world, the maxim to keep in mind was *caveat lector*.

Be that as it may, it was not a satisfactory defense to the observant student's indictment. Why bother consulting a reference work people know cannot be trusted? The whole point of resorting to an encyclopedia is to obtain specific facts quickly and confidently. Having to cross-check the information defeats the entire purpose of encyclopedias. Yet there was little else one could do at the time short of blacklisting the site altogether. However, from a pragmatic standpoint, wouldn't such a drastic remedy be worse than the disease? This situation continues to present a quandary to educators and academics.

Among the steps Wikimedia took to thwart deception was the creation of a class of editors selected from Wikipedia's more active contributors. Editors were given certain powers and software tools to police and enforce policy in wikispace. This ameliorated the external deception problem to some extent. I'll come back to discuss in more detail the issue of wikieditors.

As for my own work, I had become disillusioned with massive, office-class word processors because of their cumbersome complexity and bloat. Doing ordinary things is sometimes frustratingly complicated. Startup is always a prolonged tedious wait. And never have I had the need to use their powerful

enterprise features in my personal work. Come to think of it, not even in my office-related work. So why lug around such behemoths, wasting computing resources and degrading my machine's performance, when all I really need is a compact, sensible writing app?

I recalled fondly the good old days with my trusty Mac Classic running the refreshingly brisk and amazingly lean WriteNow, possibly the finest e-writer for personal use to see the light of a CRT screen. At least until the coming of Bean. Maybe. In any event, I returned to a post-DOS world when Microsoft finally got it right, more or less, with Windows XP. Price matters, kid. A lot. Take the strategy course and see why. Besides, XP did not intend to alter my work habits with some insanely avant-garde iLife hook. I realize Apple was in dire need of reinventing itself at the time, but I was not keen on relearning the ropes of newfangled productivity software. If it ain't broke...

Knowing what I was looking for, I embarked on a Web-wide search for the ideal Windows personal writing instrument (IWPWI), bearing in mind that such things don't exist in the real world and that one must be flexible when it comes to indulging one's preconceptions. That being said, there was one nonnegotiable requirement for the software to satisfy: it had to export PDF files. No discussion: no PDF, no dice.

Cognizant of its existence, I first examined Jarte and found it delightful. It has become my word processor of choice for creative writing projects, it's that good. Zero bloat, lots of genuinely useful features, agile, dependable, and gratis! Customizable, too: green text on a black background à la classic IBM PC, if that's your cup of tea, with silver-gray skins that do away with the white glare —just the thing when burning the midnight oil— and much more. A moderately priced upgrade, Jarte Plus, gets you additional features, pretty much a full-fledged word processor. Now, how close does Jarte come to the IWPWI? About 90 percent, I would say. Impressive. Your percentage may vary although not by much once you come to appreciate its stylish user interfaces (three basic flavors, with further options), which leave some folks somewhat flabbergasted: the interfaces are decidedly avant-garde. But they are practicable and spiffy elegant. Acclimation is quick, though, an hour or so. Frankly, I thought Jarte was as good as it was going to get. Fine with me; I was thrilled with the app. Nonetheless, enjoying the search for its own sake (you become a PeeWee-I guru of sorts), I kept on searching.

After much trekking in the wilderness of office-oriented replacements (apps imitating the big boys down to the requisite bloat), I chanced upon PolyEdit and its gratis doppelgänger, PolyEdit Lite. I read product descriptions and reviews here and there. Some, including two posted on PolyEdit's website, categorically affirmed that it supported PDF file export. Others said it did not. What is one to do? Why, check it out at Wikipedia, of course, thought I. An army —well, a platoon— of intrepid information gatherers surely must have resolved this contradiction already. And here is what their article said, on or close to 30 June 2015, concerning PDFs:

*PolyEdit has been criticized by several reviewers for lacking some standard word processing features such as support for footnotes and PDF export.*<sup>[1][2][3]</sup>

—Source: Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PolyEdit>

No dice. I couldn't care less about footnotes —does anyone care for those things anymore?— but PDF export was sacrosanct. At least until something better comes along. That was the end of PolyEdit for me, methought.

Pop quiz: How do you place a footnote on a webpage?  
Answer: As an endnote.

Footnotes are destined to end up as a mere footnote in the history of writing. Now this is important: Wikipedia's article infobox, the summary sidebar at the top right-hand corner of the page, states that the article referred to Stable Release 5.4 of 7 April 2010 and to Preview Release 6.0 Beta 1 of 25 March 2010. (PolyEdit 6.0 Beta 2 was released on 23 July 2010 but the article was not updated to reflect this.) To put it plainly, the «cautionary» sentence cited above artfully conveys —while avoiding saying so outright— that PolyEdit versions 5.4 and 6.0 Beta 1 (5.4 being the regular distribution version of the software) do not support footnotes nor PDF file export, according to certain reviewers we are meant to take as «knowledgeable». Why, one must ask, are these reviewers to be taken as «knowledgeable» when others, presumably no less knowledgeable —particularly the software developer himself— roundly contradict them? Shouldn't this discrepancy have been further investigated or, at least, candidly announced to exist? It's not a good sign when you're told

only half of the story. One should also keep in mind that the seemingly innocuous sentence appears to be noncommittal, as if it were an objective remark, purely factual and devoid of ulterior motives, complete with three authoritative-looking references. Keep in mind chameleons as well.

Continuing with my search, I kept running into reviews lauding PolyEdit as the greatest thing since the Big Bang and insisting it supported PDF export. Enough of reading what others claimed. Time to take the bull by the horns! (Or was it, run just inches away from the horns? The dilemma also arises.) I earnestly downloaded PolyEdit Lite 5.4, installed it on my laptop, and let 'er rip. Alas, I was disappointed to find that under the File menu there were no entries for PDF export. But how could that be? Surely, the developer would not have made the PDF claim if it was not true, for that would only harm his credibility and damage his product's reputation. No one would intentionally want to do that. —*Ahem!*— At any rate, the app looked interesting so I took her out for a spin. Then, lo and behold, I discovered PDF export under the Tools/Export menu. Not the usual place to put it in but, hey, there it was and it worked like a charm. Not only that, PolyEdit had the feel of WriteNow: fast, frugal, and fun. Compact and responsive, like a sleek, stick-shift open roadster hugging tight alpine curves. Loaded with features folks actually use without the darned office bloat. Highly customizable. Intelligently designed. With plug-ins and add-ons and dictionaries galore. Truly a world-class word processor. Gives MS Word a run for its money and tops it where it counts! Mean little critter. IWPWI rating: 97+ percent, and I am being conservative. Download PolyEdit and judge for yourself. This thing blows everything else in its class out of the water. (Jarte survives the barrage due to craftsmanship and originality. Elegance counts, amigo.) The question therefore arises: How is it possible I was unaware of this gem? How could it be so indeed.

### **The Plot Thickens**

I knew that I had to go back to Wikipedia and make clear that PolyEdit did indeed support PDF export, for it was the «innocuous sentence» that had led me astray and spurred me to ignore the software altogether. Tricky sentence. That might have happened to other article readers as well. I felt I had to set things straight. Now, I did not delete the suggestively incorrect sentence but instead merely added the following clarification:

*But in fact, PolyEdit does support PDF (and HTML) export. Instead of appearing under the FILE menu, however, the options are listed under the TOOLS/EXPORT menu. This departure from the usual practice does not seem to have been documented, leading many observers to conclude that PDF export was not available.*

–Source: Wikipedia archive: <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=PolyEdit&oldid=669420382>

I posted that revision on 30 June 2015 at 21:57, as logged by the Wikipedia automated system. Then at 22:26, 29 minutes later, someone who goes by the pseudonym, TheRedPenOfDoom, deleted (undid) my revision, alleging:

*unsourced promotional claim*

–Source: Wikipedia archive: <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=PolyEdit&oldid=669423268>

What! (I also said certain other things, but that is neither here nor there.)

The all but immediate reaction to my post is wrong —and suspect— on so many levels I'll have to discuss this carefully. Let's begin with my response to the vigilante censor on 7 July 2015, sometime after I became aware that he had deleted my clarification:

*Red, hi. Just noticed that you undid my revision (669420382) that makes clear that PolyEdit does indeed support PDF export, which the unrevised WP article strongly implies PolyEdit does not do. That implication is incorrect. I am a user of PolyEdit Lite and use it, in fact, precisely to make PDFs. The feature works perfectly.*

*You stated the following as the reason for undoing my revision: "unsourced promotional claim". First, I am the source of the information, a "primary" source: I have personal, direct knowledge of the fact and made explicit in the revision why it is I believe the article's implication is incorrect. I have no need of citing unreliable secondary sources for my revision, such as the "reviewers" unquestioningly cited in the article itself, the ones who made the mistake to begin with by not properly evaluating the software. Second, my revision is not "promotional". It is a factual*

*correction of incorrect information that appears in the original article, not a promotion for the software. This is important: Wikipedia articles must be, first and foremost, accurate. To leave the article with the mistake untouched is a disservice to Wikipedia and its readers. Correction of errors and invalid information constitutes most of my contributions to WP. Third, my revision is not a "claim", an assertion unsupported by facts, but a factual statement that can easily be proved/disproved by downloading the software, which is freely available on the Web, and following my indications on how to obtain the PDF export option, as stated in the revision. A proven (and readily provable by anyone else) assertion is not a mere "claim". The onus falls on those claiming the contrary (the article's unreliable sources [1][2][3]) to show why it is they believe their glaring mistake to be correct.*

*When I was researching PolyEdit for possible adoption, I read the WP article, of course. On reading that it did not support PDF export, I immediately rejected it. However, I kept running into other reviews that vouched for PDF. So I downloaded the software and checked things out for myself. That very same copy is the one I now routinely use every day, including right now. Having been led astray by the WP article, I'm sure you will appreciate why it is I had to go back to correct it.*

*I have reinstated the revision in the article. Please feel free to make further revisions if you think they might be required. But please, do not remove the correction about the PDFs. It still smarts to look back and think that I would have missed out on this fine piece of software because of errors in Wikipedia.*

— Diego Azeta

–Source: Wikipedia archive: [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=User\\_talk:TheRedPenOfDoom&oldid=670432952](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=User_talk:TheRedPenOfDoom&oldid=670432952) (at end of page)

I reinstated the revision and The Pen of Doom deleted it again in a trice. So much for online civility. He did send me a «Welcome to Wikipedia» canned message and a separate curt response to my note. There was no reason, one would suppose, for Doom to send me a «welcome message», for I've been contributing to Wikipedia since 2006, a full nine years! But according to the «warped logic» so prevalent in many bureaucracies, the «welcome message» was absolutely necessary. For you see, by issuing such a message the issuer marks territory and rank: “I am powerful enough in this g-d place that I can

issue welcomes to insignificant participants like you”, which is the intended message. That is typical behavior of people who have been given a modicum of authority in departmentalized organizations, especially where supervision is minimal. You see this a lot with some clerks at the DMV. I’d rather not go into our federal «public servants» and «brutality» police at this time: far too exasperating and gargantuan a problem to adequately discuss here.

As to his personal response, which was not «personal» at all, it was this:

***How Wikipedia determines article content***

*Wikipedia content is based on what is verifiable as having been published in a reliable source with a reputation for fact checking and editorial oversight and not what Wikipedia editors "know" from their personal experiences. We are not here to provide a promotional platform for products or services.*

-- TRPoD aka The Red Pen of Doom 22:51, 7 July 2015 (UTC)

–Source: Wikipedia User talk:Diego Azeta:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User\\_talk:Diego\\_Azeta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_talk:Diego_Azeta)

We? Since when did Wikipedia editors assume ownership of Wikipedia? Answer: Since being empowered as anonymous editors. Yes, yet another brilliant idea in the annals of *Homo stupendous*. Doom is the designated editor for the PolyEdit article. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=PolyEdit&action=info>. But who is Doom? No one knows. Ah, so!

Crossed a red line there, Doom of the Red Pen. See if you can tell what it is. In the meantime, let’s cross-check your fatuous bombast:

**1. “Wikipedia content is based on what is verifiable as having been published in a reliable source with a reputation for fact checking and editorial oversight...”**

That rant made *The New York Times* pop up in my mind as the indisputable standard of reference for “fact checking and editorial oversight” (in the US, at least). I mean, if we’re going to play the game of righteous appearances, then let’s play for keeps. We now have a touchstone with which to measure up the sources Doom champions. Talk is cheap. Let’s see if Doom lives up to his

bluster by checking out the references he claims are “verifiable” [sic] and “reliable”:

**[1] Zaine Ridling. “Word Processor Review”. Donation-Coder.com. Retrieved 2008-01-16.**

–Source: Wikipedia article on PolyEdit, References, 8 July 2015:  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PolyEdit#References>

–Ridling’s review:  
<http://www.donationcoder.com/Reviews/Archive/WordProcs/>

Retrieved in January 2008? What, seven and a half years ago? Was that old review still valid in July 2015? The short answer is: No. And it has not been valid for at least five-odd years. Recall that the Wikipedia infobox declared that the article referred to Stable Release 5.4 of 7 April 2010 and to Preview Release 6.0 Beta 1 of 25 March 2010. You can’t use outdated reviews to bad mouth more recent versions of the software. Any dumbo knows that, Doom. You have to evaluate every version on its own merits. And your article must stick to the versions announced in the infobox. No switcheroos. Tricky guy. That was flagrantly dishonest, Doom. Abhorrent. Don’t do that in the name of Wikipedia. Despite your telling parapaxis, it does not belong to you.

But the review was old news by 2008, since it was first published on 11 June 2007 and revised on 14 June 2007, according to the author. A crafty Ridling did not say which version of PolyEdit he was reviewing, tricky, but it had to be prior to stable 5.0, according to the published PolyEdit release schedule:

- 23 Jul 2010 - PolyEdit 6.0 Beta 2 released
- 07 Apr 2010 - PolyEdit 5.4 released
- 25 Mar 2010 - PolyEdit 6.0 Beta 1 released
- 18 Jul 2009 - PolyEdit 5.3 released
- 31 Mar 2009 - PolyEdit 5.2 released
- 05 Mar 2009 - PolyEdit 5.1 released
- 28 May 2008 - PolyEdit 5.0 released

–Source: PolyEdit News: <http://polyedit.com/news.html>

So Doom's cited review did not even survey stable version 5.0, which was followed by four other stable releases plus two additional preview releases. This looks real bad, Doom. You should try to avoid making such simplistic mistakes. Makes you look like an incompetent. Not good for your image.

Ah! Here's a couple of interesting items I found posted on the Web:

- *PolyEdit has been criticized by several reviewers for lacking some standard word processing features such as support for footnotes and PDF export.[3][4][5] However, support for PDF export (via third-party software) was added in version 5.2 in 2009.*

–Source: The Full Wiki: <http://www.thefullwiki.org/PolyEdit>

- *PolyEdit has been criticized by several reviewers for lacking some standard word processing features such as support for footnotes and PDF export.[3][4][5] However, support for PDF export (via third-party software) was added in version 5.2 in 2009 and footnotes are supported in their beta version 6.0.*

–Source: Sensagent.com: <http://dictionary.sensagent.com/polyedit/en-en/>

The Full Wiki and Sensagent posts are copies of the Wikipedia PolyEdit article being displayed at the time. No date is given for either posting but The Full Wiki page states that its “related links” were up-to-date as of 16 November 2009. Sensagent's page has a “Copyright © 2012” notice.

There are to my knowledge six other websites with Wikipedia's PolyEdit article (as of 28 August 2015), but they show Doom's doctored version, where the revisions by the conscientious contributors have been deleted.

So other contributors had also caught the PDF export error several years ago and had made the correction in Wikipedia's PolyEdit article, to no avail. For they suffered the same fate at the hands of Doom, the grim, nameless editor. [A piece of cavernous pipe-organ music is appropriate here. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOWi8tOf5FA>, is the traditional favorite. (Amy Turk's harp version and Edson Lopes' guitar variation are superb; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPmKRtWta4E>

and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYHAA-gP6o4>.) Readers may also imagine the swoosh of Doom's cape in the dark. Careful with that frenzy of suddenly disturbed bats. Garlic bulbs, crucifixes, holy water, and apotropaic mirrors are found at the cave's entrance, next to the mallets and stakes.]

Why, one is compelled to ask, is Doom obsessed with feeding patently false information about PolyEdit to Wikipedia (and other sites) readers? Common sense would say that he has a vested interest in doing so. Either that or he is simply nuts. Perhaps both. We'll get to that shortly, but there still are several more aspects of this increasingly curious story to investigate.

Ridling's review compares fourteen word processors, most of which are part of an office suite of some sort. It is evident that the author put a lot of effort into this project. His surveys try to point out the pluses and minuses of each piece of software. Unfortunately, when it comes to rendering a judgment on his findings, things take a questionable turn. Specifically, the criteria he has adopted to evaluate the software are applied capriciously, inconsistently, and arbitrarily. As a result, logical coherence goes down the drain. This can best be demonstrated by comparing actual excerpts from Ridling's review. I will analyze the excerpts by category to facilitate comparisons.

### **First Category: PDF Export**

#### **Software: TextMaker**

- ***What Not to Like: No PDF export.** Perhaps this is too expensive, but this would be a welcome addition to this word processor.*
- ***Conclusion:** By every measure, I would highly recommend TextMaker to anyone.*

Here we see that the absence of the PDF export feature has no bearing at all on Ridling's highly favored opinion of the TextMaker software, as shown by the "By every measure" opening phrase of his conclusion. We can therefore conclude that PDF export was considered unimportant by Ridling in 2007.

#### **Software: Atlantis**

- ***What Not to Like: No PDF export.** Perhaps this is too expensive, but this would be a welcome addition to this word processor.*

No further mention is made of PDF export. It has no effect on the author's conclusion regarding this software. Again, the PDF feature does not appear to be important to the author.

Software: AbiWord

- ***What to Like: Variety of export options.*** ... For PDF, you'll need to rely on a third-party app.
- ***What Not to Like: ... lack of features ... such as PDF export...***

The lack of PDF export is not mentioned in the conclusion about AbiWord. Clearly, it is deemed of little or no importance since third-party apps can, we are told, do the job.

Software: EIOffice

- ***What to Like: PDF export, along with document imaging.***
- ***What Not to Like: No PDF export. Perhaps this is too expensive, but this would be a welcome addition to this word processor.***

What can I say. Quite a lot, actually. This contradiction makes clear that the text of Doom's favored review did not undergo "editorial oversight", much less "fact checking", by anyone at DonationCoder.com. Doom's rant about this site being editorially reliable and reputable is false. No one there is an editor. (See also "Fact Checking and Editorial Oversight Revisited" below.)

Software: WordPerfect X3

- ***What to Like: Enhanced PDF lets you not merely export, but import and edit PDF files, and although it re-exported incorrect colors on my test, the text was fine.***
- ***What Not to Like: Corel is not perfect but this version should not have been sent to manufacturing with the PDF editing problems it has. You can't realistically publish or edit an imported PDF document because of the extensive conversion errors made by WordPerfect.*** [My underlining.]

The error here is much more serious: a clear-cut logical contradiction. (It is possible the previous contradiction was due to writer's oversight. But that is obviously not the case here.) Either you like the enhanced PDF with all the "editing problems it has" or you don't. Can't have it both ways. Once again, the absolute lack of any "fact checking and editorial oversight" at DonationCoder.com is made manifest: no one pointed out this egregious mistake to the author. It goes without saying that this copy would not be fit to print in *The New York Times*. Heads would roll, Doom. It seems therefore that either Doom doesn't know what he's talking about or he is brazenly telling a lie.

Software: Zoho Writer

- ***What Not to Like: PDF Export lacking. While fine for text, Zoho***

*Writer's PDF Export feature tends to drop formatting in tables at times. I'm willing to forgive this because everyone by now has a PDF print program on their system.*

No further comments are made about PDF export. Here we see again that to the author, Ridling, the lack of a functioning PDF export feature is far from important since, he asserts, “everyone by now has a [third-party] PDF print program on their system”. Magnanimously, he is “willing to forgive this” in the case of Zoho Writer. Logical consistency requires that the same rationale be applied to all other reviewed software as well, including PolyEdit. Recall that Doom plays up PolyEdit’s falsely alleged lack of PDF export as a major deficiency that potential adopters must be forewarned about, along with his whine about footnotes. This position, however, is not supported by Ridling’s 2007 review, which Doom still cites in 2015 as the premier reference for his deceptive «innocuous sentence». Doom is not only spreading falsehoods of his own making but distorting Ridling’s published views to fit his maligning agenda. Naughty boy, Doom. Naughty boy. Beware the lump of coal.

#### Software: PolyEdit

- ***What Not to Like: No PDF export.*** *As with other second-tier word processors, perhaps this is too expensive, but this would be a welcome addition to this word processor.*

Ridling has made this general observation with three other apps: TextMaker, Atlantis and EIOffice. None of them offered PDF export support yet all were recommended, effusively or subject to some conditions. Compare that to the shabby treatment heaped on PolyEdit by a suddenly Doomesque Ridling:

- ***Conclusion:*** *PolyEdit exhibits good design, but poor execution. And its faults really stand out, to the point of making it unusable for business and academic use. And let's be frank: without those two groups of users, your word processor is pretty much dead on the side of the road. Most development on PolyEdit was complete years ago, in 2003. Too bad, as this could be an outstanding word processor [Aha!] in its own right with continued work. [My underlining and interjection.]*

Let’s take this by parts. We’ll look into Ridling’s business-use criticism in the following section (Business Use category); his academic-use criticism, which he calls References, in the subsequent section (Footnotes/Endnotes); and his “dead-on-the-road” opinion right after that (Roadkill category).

## Second Category: Business Use

Ridling gave PolyEdit the worst rating among the fourteen word processors discussed in his review, declaring it “unusable” and “dead” for institutional work purposes, the only app disparaged so harshly. Them thar is big words. Let’s see if they are passably correct. Since he could not possibly attribute such a draconian judgment to a lack of PDF export function, having ignored or condoned the matter for several other apps, the «reasons» for his opinion must lie elsewhere. He fails to point out which “faults really stand out”, so I will run through his list of What Not to Like, item by item (save Footnotes/Endnotes, discussed in the next category section, and PDF Export, already dealt with above), and examine each one to see which “really stand out”.

- *What Not to Like: Graphics handling is another glaring weakness of PolyEdit. No wrapping, no editing, no formatting, photos are just plopped in as if you tossed a rock in the soup.* [My underlining.]

Ridling dislikes that PolyEdit does not support the editing and formatting of graphics/images within the app itself. It never crossed his mind, apparently, that such functions properly belong in a dedicated image editor that can do all that and much more, not in a lean word processor where such extraneous features are notorious for increasing complexity and bloat. Fluff such as this is precisely what one wants purged from nimble word-processing apps. The range of stellar image editors goes from the compact yet capable FastStone Image Viewer and IrfanView all the way up to GIMP, the mighty Photoshop terminator, all of them downloadable for free. Heck, even Paint, packaged free-on-board in Windows (pre-10), can do better than many of the graphics bloaters haphazardly tacked on to these office-wannabe e-writers. The idea is simple and sound: ensure your images are decently edited and formatted by using a professional-grade image editor that can do the job right and then plop them into your document. Voilà! KISS is the acronym of the day, mon amie: Keep IWPWI Software Simple. *Mais bien sûr!* Merci. Vous êtes très aimable. *Vous êtes très galant.* Ooh là là! Garçon, deux cognacs! *Oh là là!*

As to the wrapping of text around images/objects, Ridling exaggerates the importance of this rarely used feature in a lean word processor. Here’s how he spins the issue in the AbiWord review:

*Graphics handling is basic, but allows every text-wrapping option around an image or object. This only matters when you need it, and trust me, you'll need it.*

The «trust me» fallacy is a sloppy cop-out for a well thought-out reason in a software review and any piece of serious writing. More so when experience amply demonstrates that most people never employ wrapping. Still, PolyEdit allows the insertion of images/tables/objects anywhere on the page. One can center or side-align them, as in Jarte and WordPad, or use the slidable Insert Columns feature to place an image/object wherever one wants and have text running alongside it, on one side or both. If the sides of the image/object are orthogonally rectilinear, as they overwhelmingly are in practice, the result is identical to that obtained with text-wrapping. No plopping in soups and the such is required. Having no text-wrapping has worked out just fine for me in the last few decades and I foresee no changes on the horizon. (I programmed my own general-purpose text editor before there were any word processors around. A separate program I also wrote handled graphs. Text-wrapping was never an issue.) The same ought to hold true for the majority of writers who, by and large, are not all that fond of having stuff plopped in their soup. For those involved in desktop publishing and the visual arts, a more specialized application would be desirable, certainly. But for the rest of us in everyday-land, where writing, on the whole, means plain simple text (alright, jack that up to RTF), simplicity, like all blessings, is most welcome, thank you.

But here's the clincher: Ridling's very own review, which includes plenty of embedded images, makes no use whatsoever of text-wrapping. Zilch! (As I said, most people never use the thing.) Yet even if he had made use of text-wrapping, since all his images are orthogonally rectilinear, they would have been wrapped perfectly with PolyEdit. In fact, his entire review could have easily, and more efficiently, been done with PolyEdit Lite, no less, wrapped images and all. I do believe that squarely qualifies as “business use” by any conceivable measure. Scratch the «unusable» and «dead for business use» malarkeys. If anything here is unusable and dead, it is Ridling's bunkum.

Recapitulating, since, according to Ridling, “Graphics handling ... only matters when you need it” and in reality most people never seem to need it, given most never use the thing aside from plopping the odd centered image once in a long while, it follows that his strident “unusable for business use” diatribe is untenable insofar as graphics handling is concerned. That phony line must be stricken from the discussion, for tricky Doom-like flam is not acceptable in serious discourse. Once more, the only things that are unusable and dead in Ridling's graphics-handling discussion are his inept treatment of the issue as regards PolyEdit and his fallacious approach to the subject.

For the record, my PDP-11 text editor weighed in at just under 8K words (16-bit storage units), error detection and online help included. The graphics app, too, cleared under 8K. That's kilo, not megs. Fast, full featured, frugal, and fun. Had to be done in those days, for memory was doggone expensive. Now you know why I value efficient programming so highly: it's a mark of personally crafted, top-caliber, premium quality work. Good old-fashioned programming, where optimized algorithms made megaRAM irrelevant. The stuff you get nowadays, corporate software engineered ... meh, bloaty.

*• **Too dependent on Microsoft.** I lodge this as a criticism because while PolyEdit is rarely updated, with every year it remains tethered to the Microsoft-only way of doing things, it has by now become a form of constricting its future development. For PolyEdit, the clock stopped ticking in 2003; Word 2003, that is.*

It's hard to see what Ridling is criticizing here, since he fails to give a single concrete example of what he means by his vague generalities. What does it mean to remain "tethered to the Microsoft-only way of doing things"? Did not Microsoft remain tethered to the WordStar and especially WordPerfect and Xerox Bravo/Gypsy way of doing things when developing its imitative word processors? Put another way, shouldn't the tether go all the way back to the beginning and, if so, why is PolyEdit singled out for culpability? How exactly is this hypothetical tether "constricting [the] future development" of PolyEdit? For if Microsoft can move onward from any one point in Word's development path, why would it be impossible for other developers to do so as well in the course of their product's life cycle, which can include staying put in a niche that serves their customers' needs? What is not possible here is to respond to an ill-defined piece of baloney that is devoid of substance. To borrow from the eminent theoretical physicist and cofounder of quantum mechanics, Wolfgang Pauli, this «criticism» is not even wrong.

As to the allegation that PolyEdit's product development stagnated with Word 2003, an accusation that the above PolyEdit release schedule shows is baseless, it's eye-opening to see that what is billed as a negative for PolyEdit is sold as a positive for other apps. In the case of OpenOffice, for instance:

***Conclusion:** OpenOffice.org seems to taken [sic] the best features of Microsoft Word 2003 ... but left out the bloat; for every feature is not mimicked. So if you're a fan of Word 97-2003, then you already know your way around OpenOffice.org.*

In other words, resembling Word is fine for OpenOffice but not for PolyEdit. Note also that it's okay for OpenOffice to leave out some features because it reduces bloat, but if PolyEdit omits the needless text-wrapping bloater, then it's called a "glaring weakness". One cannot take this review seriously when its criteria are applied so capriciously, inconsistently, and arbitrarily. It fails to abide by the most rudimentary principles of impartiality and truthfulness. In this respect, Ridling's and Doom's biased treatment of PolyEdit, placing it time and again in an unfavorable light and always for picayune or feigned minutiae, is not only censurable and unacceptable but suspiciously similar.

- ***Funky formatting.*** *Importing a modern Word .doc, PolyEdit stripped every bit of formatting for some inexplicable reason. Adding a new paragraph also randomly added wide spaces between paragraphs, despite not making any other changes.*

I have not had either of these problems, or any other difficulty, in PolyEdit Lite 5.4 when importing Word ".doc" documents. The documents load just fine, preserving original formatting and paragraph layout. Importing Word documents is not rocket science for any application. After seeing so many tricks and subterfuges, one wonders if these «problems» ever really existed.

- ***Poor choice of keyboard shortcuts.*** *Keyboard shortcuts are all over the place in PolyEdit, and I blame that on converting the program from Russian to English. Some commands have keyboard shortcuts, such as subscripts, but superscript does not, nor do title and sentence case.*

Once again, it's hard to figure out just what Ridling means by the keyboard [command] shortcuts being "all over the place in PolyEdit". They seem to be placed and to behave like other keyboard shortcuts in any other menu-driven word processor for both menu-toolbar and mouse-based, right-click context menus. The shortcut codes make use of the same keystrokes typical of other software. Neither Subscript nor Superscript has a keyboard shortcut, nor do Title Case and Sentence Case, as in Jarte, LibreOffice Writer and many other well-regarded word processors.

The truth of the matter is that there are no discernible faults in PolyEdit's keyboard command shortcuts. This item is an invented grievance by Ridling, and an incredibly trivial and unimaginative one at that. It seems that Ridling had a hard time finding real faults in PolyEdit and resorted to the fabrication of «shortcomings», ludicrous though these canards turned out to be.

The least the reader expects from any piece of serious writing, including a software product review, is that it be honest. Ruses of this type lead one to question the intent and professional integrity of the author.

And that's it. No more Business Use criticisms. Not one item cited above is worth the toner it wastes on a printed page. Even if true, which I understand is not the case by a mile (aside from the unnecessary graphics bloater), these are hardly "faults [that] really stand out", let alone ones that would render a software "unusable" and "dead". This feeble attempt to portray PolyEdit as "unusable for business" is a thoroughly unmitigated disaster. It fails to prove the point and in a most deplorable manner. Ridling's review would not have made it past *The New York Times* editors simply for being a big fat piece of junk. (Precision in editorial categorizations is paramount.) Doom, you there?

Note: The preceding "editorial categorization" applies only to the PolyEdit portion of Ridling's review. I am not commenting on his analyses of other software. In fact, I am in agreement with him that TextMaker is a fine word processor worthy of praise. (TextMaker forms part of the SoftMaker Office suite but can be installed and operated independently of spreadsheets and presentations. They also provide a gratis version, FreeOffice, which students should look into as a contender for academic work, along with their student-discounted, regular Office suite. TextMaker now includes PDF export.)

### **Third Category: Footnotes/Endnotes**

Ridling also condemned PolyEdit as "unusable" and "dead" for all academic use due to its lack of support for footnotes and, as he construes it, endnotes, a grouping he calls References. I exclude text-wrapping from academic use because universally, ever since time immemorial, all insertions of equations, figures, tables, graphs, drawings, diagrams, flowcharts, sketches, symbolic expressions, images, illustrations, facsimiles, likenesses, renderings, arrays, abstract impressions, pictorial representations, all manner of visual replicas, hieroglyphs and cartouches, schematics, artist's conceptions, holograms, art reproductions, photos, formulas and what have you are invariably centered on the page. Try to get cute with some fancy text-wrapping and you'll have to fetch your stuff from the trash bin. Trust me.

- ***What Not to Like: References.** The lack of either a footnotes or endnotes feature all but eliminates PolyEdit for academic consideration.*

*Wow, now there's one heck of an omission for a desktop word processor.* Is it, though. Let us see. Footnotes are passé, crushed into obsolescence and nigh oblivion by the more practical in-text (parenthetical) citation, basically owing to the self-evident fact that footnotes are a royal pain. The humanities are still a holdout but those people are going extinct. Just kidding, fellas. I'm surprised that Ridling has not kept up-to-date in matters of citation style.

Endnotes are still around, however, and very much used by people in the humanities. Where Ridling missed the boat is that with PolyEdit, endnotes are a snap. (PolyEdit 6.0 features endnote support.) For PolyEdit uses tabs to manage multiple documents at once. So when one needs a reference in one's main document, one types in the superscript number and then switches over to the endnotes file to make the entry. When the project is finished, a quick copy-and-paste will append the endnotes to the main document, if a single document is desired. The tabbed user interface renders the endnotes feature nonessential. This solution is perfectly adequate for the typical term paper, where notes usually range from 10 to 20 entries, a manageable number when doing your own notes. For theses and dissertations, however, one is strongly advised to use a specialized bibliography manager such as Zotero, which is freely available, regardless of whatever endnote feature is or is not included in one's word processor. (Zotero had already been released to the public by the time Ridling was writing his review. Missed the boat.)

Hold on to your boat! Here comes Ridling with another of his trademark, rationally incomprehensible nuggets:

• ***No footnotes or endnotes yet.** Currently, Google Docs does not have an endnote or footnote feature, although endnotes could be created manually, like we did in the old days.* [My underlining.]

I am not going to waste my time—or the reader's—rehashing the same old litany about Ridling's capricious, inconsistent, and arbitrary wiles.

The reality is that PolyEdit performs just fine in any and all academic tasks. And given the tight budgetary constraints most students confront, PolyEdit Lite is a veritable godsend. To deprive them of this opportunity by spreading falsities about the app and thereby scaring them away is a detestable act that harms students everywhere. Shame on you guys. May the Force show mercy on you both. (If mercy has already been shown, please disregard this notice.)

**Fourth Category: Roadkill**

Ridling attempted to depict PolyEdit as “unusable for business and academic use”, arguably the two most important market segments for word processors, as Ridling was well aware of, in order to pronounce it “pretty much dead on the side of the road”. His objective appears to have been to knock PolyEdit out of contention in the eyes of potential adopters. In this regard, he and his confederate, Doom, have been partly successful, for PolyEdit is not a major player in the word processing market despite being one of the best products out there and with an entry-level price of zero dollars. In theory, it should be a most sought-after writing application. So much for economic theory. (That suggests why students prefer business degrees.) This looks suspiciously like a hatchet job, a wretched stratagem. (Yep, business. Not the academic field, mind you.) But Ridling is not in the business of marketing word processors. Au contraire, he is a trained scholar who works extensively with *text editors* and as such has his personal favorites. One would think he would have no interest in disparaging a worthy *word processor*, for these are geared to the general public, not to technical specialists, a different clientele. Something is missing here: a motive for Ridling’s compulsion to utterly destroy PolyEdit.

One can speculate on myriad reasons for why people do underhanded deeds. But that will most likely get you nowhere if you don’t have the ever-crucial “topical and background information” about the person to help you separate the wheat from the chaff. We have little such information about Ridling and essentially none about Doom. So scratch speculating as a promising mode of inquiry. (In science, formalized speculations are called *hypotheses*.)

What we do have is some solid information about the entity being discussed: the app. Let us see if that can help us in deciphering this roadkill mystery.

- ◆ PolyEdit is not just a word processor. It is really a multifaceted text editor, hence *poly edit*, that can perform exceptionally well in a number of practical applications, including software development as a source code editor using configurable syntax highlighting for various programming languages, such as C++. This puts things in a much broader perspective. In addition:
- ◆ PolyEdit functions as an HTML editor, perfect for website development.
- ◆ PolyEdit can perform as your e-mail client and address book.

- ◆ PolyEdit is a secure, personal information manager.
- ◆ PolyEdit provides enhanced security with cryptography features (Blowfish 448-bit and SHA-1 algorithms) built into the app.
- ◆ PolyEdit can spell-check in 13 languages plus 4 English national variants.
- ◆ PolyEdit works seamlessly with MathType equation editor and WordWeb dictionary/thesaurus, both available via PolyEdit's website.
- ◆ PolyEdit indeed exports to PDF. Version 6.0 does footnotes and endnotes.
- ◆ PolyEdit supports letter-spacing and kerning. Desktop publishing, anyone?
- ◆ PolyEdit is readily extensible with an assortment of add-ons and plug-ins.
- ◆ PolyEdit's multiple-document tabbed interface is graceful and unobtrusive. Its six toolbars are elegant, intuitive, dockable, and configurable.
- ◆ PolyEdit handles files of virtually unlimited size in a variety of formats.
- ◆ PolyEdit's user interface is familiar. The app is easy to use from day one.
- ◆ PolyEdit is blazing fast.

PolyEdit Lite lacks some features: e-mail client/address book, support for add-ons/plug-ins, extended syntax highlighting, and footnotes/endnotes.

–Sources: PolyEdit website; Wikipedia articles on PolyEdit, Comparison of Word Processors, and Comparison of Text Editors; personal survey

PolyEdit is powerful and versatile, contrary to what Ridling and Doom have been trying hard to impress on unsuspecting readers. The jig is up, guys. The app works great with both text and formatted files. But take a look at this:

- ◆ PolyEdit 5.4 takes up a mere 3.55 MB of disk space with the US English dictionary provided in the standard download package.

◆ PolyEdit Lite 5.4 uses only 3.4 MB, installed, with US English dictionary.

Compare those numbers to Jarte 5.3's footprint (6.28 MB with US English dictionary plus 1.9 MB for the help files) and to WordPad (4.64 MB with no spell-check dictionary), which by being hamstrung is nowhere near as useful as Jarte or PolyEdit or just about anything else (the WP engine includes code actually used by Word). For the curious, LibreOffice 5.0.2.2 eats up a hefty 454 MB with English and Spanish dictionaries and nonlinear programming solver. Big ol' MS Office terminator. TextMaker Free uses ~31 MB with US and UK English and German dictionaries. FreeOffice download: 58.8 MB.

As for text editors, the download size of EditPad Lite 7.3.8 x64 is 9.07 MB, help/documentation file included. EPL is a subset of EditPad, a competitor of Notepad++ 6.8.6 (3.92 MB download). I did a quick compare of EditPad Lite, Notepad++ and out-of-the-box PolyEdit Lite with an HTML file. EPL and PEL had an identical display structure. NP++ had the edge with color-coded syntax and hyperlinks. But PolyEdit accepts SyntaxHighlighter as an open source add-on (available via PolyEdit's website), matching NP++ in the text coloring. Do some dabbling of your own and convince yourself that PolyEdit is a powerful, integrated text editing and word processing software, notwithstanding its unrivaled, ultra-compact size.

That compactness —combined with PolyEdit's superb versatility, straddling the divide between word processors and text editors, among other divides— may have rubbed some people the wrong way. Excellence breeds envy. But one does not drag a competitor through the mud to destroy it as a contender. (That would get you an automatic F in Strategic Management: “Blasted dork didn't learn a damn thing.”) More so if done fraudulently. That is low. Did Ridling do that? Here's a quote to take into account before answering:

*There are very few things worse than someone who takes a good company or product and runs it into the ground.*

– zridling, 08-13-2003, 04:52 PM

<http://www.wpuniverse.com/vb/archive/index.php/t-10588.html>

There you go. Doomy. The reader is left to decide on the posited question.

**The Two Other References in Doom's «Innocuous Sentence»**

This has to be done for the sake of completeness, but I will do it succinctly. Doom included two other references in his «innocuous sentence»:

**[2] Marty Sems. “Let’s Talk About Text, Baby”. Computer Power User. Archived from the original on 2007-12-28. Retrieved 2008-01-16.**

**[3] “Inside The World Of Betas - PolyEdit”. Computer Power User. Archived from the original on 2008-01-15. Retrieved 2008-01-16.**

We encounter deceit from the outset, in the references. Note that the initial dates refer to when the articles were *archived*, presumably by the publisher for being too old. Rules for citations require the date of *publication*. Doom is at it again with his trickery, deliberately hiding compulsory information from the readers. Article [2] was actually published in May 2005 and [3] in April 2004. Doom has been using references now over a decade old to prop up his duplicitous «innocuous sentence», articles so out of date the publisher has long trashed them from its archives. So *ancient*, in fact, that way back in 2006 they were placed in the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, the Web repository created to preserve the history of the Internet. But you can't read those articles anymore —*Surprise!*— because somebody —*Guess who?*— recently arranged for them to be blocked, even though the sole purpose of the Wayback Machine is to display such archived webpages! Neither page could be retrieved on 7 November 2015, but they still figure prominently as references in Doom's «innocuous sentence», references you cannot refer to! Blocking is done through the robots exclusion standard *if* you are the owner of the page ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robots\\_exclusion\\_standard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robots_exclusion_standard)). But Doom owns neither page. It would seem that he has certain «connections» or perhaps extremely long e-tentacles. Publisher beware.

Note also that the articles were retrieved the day after [3] was archived. That is far too odd to be a coincidence. Recall that Doom deleted my clarification to his «innocuous sentence» 29 minutes after I had posted it. It seems Doom has solid inside information about the publisher's Web activities. This is the guy who's been trusted to edit the world's leading online encyclopedia.

But fear ye not, for Azeta had already downloaded both webpages on 8 July 2015, when they were still available for public perusal, just as they had been for the past nine years. Here are some tidbits from those «forbidden articles» that you-know-who does not want you to read:

**[2] Let's Talk About Text, Baby - Text Editors & Beyond**

Computer Power User, May 2005, Volume 5 Issue 5, 76-78

Software: PolySoft Solutions PolyEdit 5.0 RC Wombat

Rating: 4 out of 5 CPUs (the publication's equivalent of stars)

There is nary a mention of a PDF export feature for this “highly tweakable, feature-rich word processor”. The only reference to the missing footnotes is this neutral statement: “Version 5.0 has no revision tracking or footnotes.” Three paragraphs out of a total of five detail the application's strong points. The reviewer did not like PolyEdit's minimalist “Help file” but completely failed to consider the “Did you know...” tips optionally displayed at startup or the Tip of the Day found under the Help menu that supplement the regular Help feature, as is done in TextMaker. Still, 4 CPUs is a pretty good rating (the article's max for word processors was 4.5 for AbiWord 2.2.5; PolyEdit was evaluated as a word processor, not as a text editor).

That is a far cry from Ridling's condemnatory denunciation. “The thing had to be trashed from the Web. It was asking for it.” Yeah, right. But look at [3]:

**[3] The Bleeding Edge Of Software - Inside The World Of Betas**

Computer Power User, April 2004, Volume 4 Issue 4

Software: PolyEdit 5.0 RC Tamga (beta)

Rating: no CPU-symbol ratings were given in this review

Rubric: Why you should care: Finally, a usable alternative to Microsoft Word.

The rubric says it all. We must give the reviewer space to explain why:

*For starters, unlike a lot of alternative word processors out there, PolyEdit looks professional. Toolbar buttons, menus, and icons look slick, and the entire program feels very spry. In addition, the app doesn't get trapped into trying to duplicate all those silly Word features that only hard-core, document-creation professionals use. Thus, you won't find*

*such things as revision marks, document tracking, an outliner, or bibliographical tools. PolyEdit does import and export Word documents just fine, so long as the document doesn't use some of these features. ...*

*If you can do without such features, PolyEdit feels like a breath of fresh air, mostly because the tools that most people need to complete tasks are actually thought out. ...*

*Similar fresh thinking is evident when looking at multiple documents at once. (PolyEdit uses tabs like those in the Mozilla or Opera browsers.)...*

*There are rough patches with PolyEdit, such as the lack of a Help file. In addition, I was unable to locate a footnotes command, which is a must-have for students. And although there's support for tables, the feature is too rudimentary even for normal users. Still, \$25 gets you a word processor that will probably get you excited to use it. The more you look, the more you'll like.*

There is no mention of the PDF export feature in this review either. Clearly, that was a fabricated issue trumped up by Doom, for even Ridling ignored it. In any case, this review is even more devastating than the former one, from Doom's perspective. After all, PolyEdit outshone mighty Word. My word! (The locution is purely figurative.) It too had to be obliterated. The publisher is probably unaware of what is going on under wraps, but it behooves them to investigate this fast: an intruder is tampering with their information base. Anomalous, to say the least. This applies doubly to the people at Wikimedia.

Oh, lest I forget, this reviewer stated that "PolyEdit does import and export Word documents just fine", as long as no features unique to Word had been utilized. Remember Ridling's dubious complaint about PolyEdit's supposed "Funky Formatting" when importing Word documents? Eat it, Ridling. You have been unmasked, way back since 2004! This guy's no better than Doom.

Now, why on earth would Doom cite these articles as references when what they do is undermine his mendacious maneuver? Unfathomable. But at least we now know why they were blocked in the Wayback Machine. Doom pays a price for pulling this Wayback trick, though: the trickster got caught.

**Fact Checking and Editorial Oversight Revisited**

Recall that Doom had boastfully claimed that “Wikipedia content is based on what is ‘verifiable’ as having been published in a reliable source with a reputation for fact checking and editorial oversight”. This claim applies to both sources of his three references in the «innocuous sentence», of course. But it is not true for the first source, DonationCoder.com, because no one in that online community is assigned to do editing or fact checking. The site is a well-regarded Internet forum where programmers and users get together to share and discuss applications written by the former. The site has three main components: software downloads, reviews and features, and the user forum. Community members can post software reviews as well as messages in the forum. That is great. But no one is editing or fact checking the postings. The site itself does not claim that they edit or fact check the postings. The only one making that claim is Doom, falsely, as per his wont.

What about Computer Power User? Do they have a dedicated editorial staff? CPU is one of many publications of Sandhills Publishing. According to the eponymous Wikipedia article, “Sandhills Publishing Company is a privately held American magazine publishing company that publishes consumer and trade publications for the computer, trucking, agriculture, aircraft, and heavy machinery industries.” The company does indeed have a department devoted to editorial functions, but its purpose appears to be to maintain standards of production quality across its varied, high-grade publications and websites. As to fact checking of content, the company announces the following policy:

*ComputerPowerUser.com provides current information on computer vendors and the products and services they offer. We obtain information from the vendors themselves. However, we do not assume responsibility for, and do not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of, any of the information presented. You should not rely on the information without obtaining direct verification of accuracy and completeness from the listing company.*

–Source: CPU: <http://www.computerpoweruser.com/info/about>

Although articles [2] and [3] are not vendor-supplied, the presumption is, in the absence of any indication to the contrary, that the same policy regarding accuracy of information applies. Consequently, Doom’s claim about “fact

checking and editorial oversight” at CPU is also false. (Note that this is not a rebuke of the articles or of CPU, which are fine, but of Doom’s claim.)

### **Back to the Fatuous Bombast**

So much for part 1 of Doom’s fatuous bombast. Let’s check part 2. (Whoa, amigos, it shall be brief. We’ve already exposed the *bandidos*.)

### **2. “Wikipedia content is based on what is verifiable ... and not what Wikipedia editors ‘know’ from their personal experiences.”**

Doom here is trying to exploit —nefariously, as usual— the standard policy adopted by reference works of not publishing original research: “all material in Wikipedia must be attributable to a reliable, published source”. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No\\_original\\_research](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:No_original_research)

But “original research” is not the same as correcting errors. When an error in an article is determined to exist and contributors demonstrate why it is that the error is known to exist by means of accurate and verifiable clarifications, it is the responsibility of the editor, as fact checker, to impartially investigate the matter and to rectify the situation. This can be done by incorporating the clarifications into the text or by eliminating the erroneous information. What is not acceptable is to brush aside the observations and retain the error. That is patently obvious to any reasonable person. To twist the letter of the policy in order to knowingly continue to present false information in an article, as has intentionally been done for years in the PolyEdit case, is a perversion of intellectual integrity and an appalling lack of respect for Wikipedia readers, especially young ones. An editor committing such flagrant dishonesty has no place in Wikipedia and must be dismissed. No exception to this overarching principle of probity is tolerated in academia, learned societies, or their peer-reviewed journals. If Wikipedia is worth its salt, it must uncompromisingly commit itself to uphold the same principle. Wikipedia articles must be, first and foremost, accurate. If that has not been established as a core principle at Wikipedia, woe is us. (Woe is we?) If Wikipedia cannot rise to the occasion and fulfill its obligation as expected of a publication of stature, then it’s time for the worldwide community of contributors —the authors of Wikipedia— and the sponsors to look elsewhere for another vehicle capable of faithfully accomplishing the mission.

**Strange Case of Dr Ridling and Mr Doom**

On the night of 25 July 2015, concerned by my ever growing doubts about the review written by Ridling, I visited once again the DonationCoder.com site to reexamine the original article. There was something bothering me that nudged me to check it over anew, even though I had a downloaded copy on my hard disk since 8 July. But something prodded me to inspect the original. I did not go into the «original», for the first thing that struck me upon seeing it on my screen was the year it showed on the update notice: 2011. That was not what I remembered seeing on first reading the article. I quickly turned to my saved copy. At the top of the left-hand side column of the page it stated: “Updated June 14, 2007”.

The year 2011 is significant, insinuating that the «updated» review covered all versions of PolyEdit, including the ones in the Wikipedia article infobox. (Recall that Ridling did not identify which version he was reviewing.) Year 2011 serves to counter any lack-of-validity-due-to-being-outdated objection that a critic might raise. The maneuver, had it worked, would have made the reference seem up-to-date. The problem is that the person who had to do the updating was the author, Ridling, who is the site member, not Doom, who is not. But why would Ridling —assuming he had no relation to Doom— all of a sudden revise the year from 2007 to 2011 in 2015? “Dang! Plumb forgot to update the update notice four years ago. Good thing I randomly remembered it now. Isn’t long-term memory amazing? Glory be! Gotta fix that at once.”

Needless to say, that scenario is absurd. And the logical flaw lies squarely in the assumption, which implies that there is a relation connecting Ridling and Doom. The leading candidate is the identity relation, to wit, that Ridling and Doom are one and the same person. But even if each one were an individual, which is not a posteriori likely given the resemblance of their bizarre disdain for PolyEdit —no one else is on record as detesting the app like these two— they would have had to conspire to alter the update entry. Either way, that is pernicious *sockpuppetry*: “using online identities for purposes of deception”. Source: Sue Gardner, the former Wikimedia Foundation Executive Director, writing in the Wikimedia blog on 21 October 2013. Do read her posting at: <http://blog.wikimedia.org/2013/10/21/sue-gardner-response-paid-advocacy-editing/>

Sockpuppetry is sufficient grounds for immediate dismissal from Wikipedia. So far the problem has been associated with unscrupulous contributors who have submitted articles promoting organizations or products in violation of numerous policies prohibiting such actions. But the PolyEdit case points to an even more troubling malignancy: insider fraudulence carried out with the intent to skew articles, in this case to besmirch a product but equally capable of enabling all sorts of propaganda, perpetrated by the very editors charged with rooting out the malignance. Much to the dismay of some alert readers and contributors, these «inside operators» are never caught despite abundant documentary evidence in Wikipedia's archives and the existence of a sizable bureaucracy, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedians>, deployed expressly to control article manipulation and related abuses. I will say more about this fiasco in the concluding remarks. (PolyEdit's revision history file, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=PolyEdit&action=history>, stores its documentary evidence. Doom's arrogant decree that "the developer is not a reliable source for such claims", the claims being product descriptions that belie Doom's sly prevarications, is a peach. Check it out. Now, why should Wikipedia users be obliged to put up with this crook?)

On ascertaining the change of year in Ridling's update notice, I scoured the archives at Wikipedia for more information on Doom, the culprit responsible for the trickery. Hyde drives Jekyll, recall. There is quite a bit of stuff there, but I found nothing revealing Doom's physical identity. I was aware that he could retrace my steps (editors have special software that can provide a trail of a visitor's meanderings in wikispace), but I had to try to find out who he is. On the following night, 26 July, I went back to the DonationCoder.com site to continue my reexamination of the «original» article. Guess what? The update notice had reverted to June 14, 2007. Not a thing had changed in the review. Reminds me of the ending of W.W. Jacobs' "The Monkey's Paw". Doom can teach the NSA a thing or two about real-time cybersnooping.

"We are patriots defending our nation from terrorists, foreign and domestic." Real or imagined. That's the kind of hogwash that Doom himself would say. We've got enough problems with his chicanery as it is. Wish I had a paw.

As to why would Dr Ridling conjure an alter ego to make the evil rounds in the fog of cyberspace, that is beyond the scope of this essay. Perhaps Robert Louis Stevenson might be of fruitful assistance. Or maybe the NSA.

**Concluding Remarks**

We have before us the “iceberg problem”: what you see is merely the tip of what is there. A number of critical questions arise: How many more articles were compromised by Doom’s shenanigans? Which are they? Is the practice of skewing articles limited to Doom? If not, how extensive is it? Was Doom receiving assistance from some fellow insiders, or special treatment, say, by colleagues looking the other way? Why were Doom’s activities not detected for so many years, especially since Doom is such a notoriously troublesome and abrasive character in Wikipedia as well as in other online communities? Is the organizational culture at Wikipedia contributing to the general malaise other critics have observed? And what must be done to correct Doom-class knavery and prevent it from resurfacing under a different guise?

The Royal Society and the Oxford English Dictionary share with Wikipedia the distinction of having originated from enthusiastic network collaboration. But Wikipedia has not matched its forerunners in the universal respect each has garnered in their respective domains. It is instructive to notice that the other two are highly disciplined organizations, where egos are subordinated to the mission of the institution, the dissemination of legitimate knowledge, a mission that is accepted as an estimable, overriding end. The team works for the benefit of their institution and for the people each institution serves. It remains to be seen whether Wikipedians can acknowledge and transcend their lingering embryonic limitations and move onward to the promised land of historical developments that further the advancement of humanity.

*Written with PolyEdit Lite 5.4*

Treat time. Here’s a modern alternative to Bach’s fine organ Toccata. Enjoy:

**Lindsey Stirling - “Phantom of the Opera”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCL94-MsxYc>

Yes, she’s a dish. She is also incredibly talented. Here’s the encore:

**Lindsey Stirling & Debi Johanson - “River Flows In You”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrF814OnFQ4>

Lovely girls. Thanks for reading. Go in peace and be the light of the world.