

# The tension between academic knowledge production and online peer production

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# Peer Production

## ***Mass-online commons-based peer production***

From *Free Software* to *Wikipedia* and beyond

### Main features:

- Producers: users as producers
- Decentralized system – meritocracy
- Copyleft: right for distribution
- Open access and free flow of information
- Scalability
- Quality

# Towards a more open Science?

Science was not intrinsically open in the beginning (i.e. *Secrecy Imperative* )

*Openness* as a historical/contingent outcome of changes in the patronage system (Paul David)

*Open Science Movement:*

- *more open science is desirable*
- *present openness is in danger*

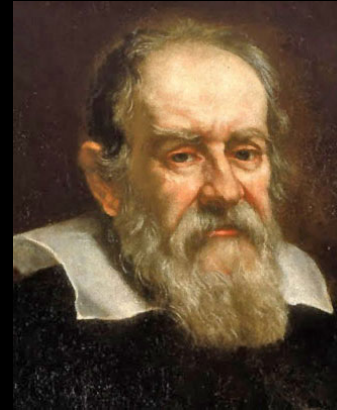
Importing Peer Production mechanisms:

Open publication (i.e. OA journals, arXiv)

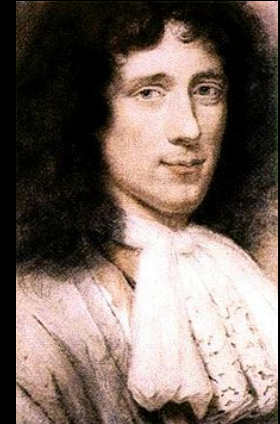
Data sharing / open notebook science

Citizen Science

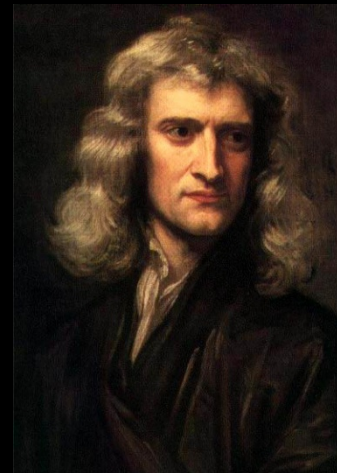
New collaboration tools



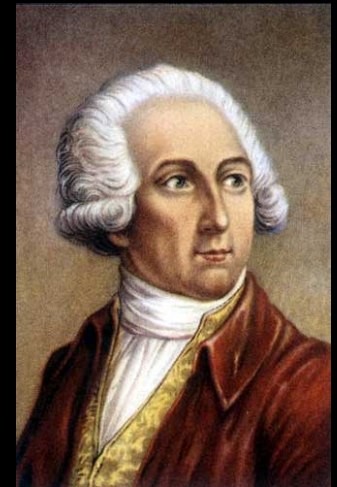
Galileo 1564-1642



Huygens 1629-1695



Newton 1642-1727



Lavoisier 1743 -1794

# Polymath Project



Timothy Gowers (Cambridge University)

## Gowers's Weblog

Mathematics related discussions

« Questions of procedure [Why this particular problem?](#) »

### A combinatorial approach to density Hales-Jewett

By gowers

Here then is the project that I hope it might be possible to carry out by means of a large collaboration in which no single person has to work all that hard (except perhaps when it comes to writing up). Let me begin by repeating a number of qualifications, just so that it is clear what the aim is.

1. It is *not* the case that the aim of the project is to find a combinatorial proof of the density Hales-Jewett theorem when  $k = 3$ . I would love it if that was the result, but the actual aim is more modest: it is *either* to prove that a certain approach to that theorem (which I shall soon explain) works, *or* to give a very convincing argument that that approach cannot work. (I shall have a few remarks later about what such a convincing argument might

arXiv.org > math > arXiv:1002.0374

Search or Article-id (Help | Advanced s) All papers

Mathematics > Combinatorics

### Density Hales-Jewett and Moser numbers

D.H.J. Polymath

(Submitted on 2 Feb 2010 (v1), last revised 25 Apr 2010 (this version, v2))

For any  $n \geq 0$  and  $k \geq 1$ , the *density Hales-Jewett number*  $Sc_{(n,k)}$  is defined as the size of the largest subset of the cube  $\{1, \dots, k\}^n$  which contains no combinatorial line; similarly, the Moser number  $Sc'_{(n,k)}$  is the largest subset of the cube  $\{k^n\}$  which contains no geometric line. A deep theorem of Furstenberg and Katznelson shows that  $Sc_{(n,k)} = o(k^n)$  as  $n \rightarrow \infty$  (which implies a similar claim for  $Sc'_{(n,k)}$ ); this is already non-trivial for  $k = 3$ . Several new proofs of this result have also been recently established.

Using both human and computer-assisted arguments, we compute several values of  $Sc_{(n,k)}$  and  $Sc'_{(n,k)}$  for small  $n, k$ . For instance the sequence  $Sc_{(n,3)}$  for  $n=0, \dots, 6$  is  $1, 2, 6, 18, 52, 150, 450$ , while the sequence  $Sc'_{(n,3)}$  for  $n=0, \dots, 6$  is  $1, 2, 6, 16, 43, 124, 353$ . We also prove some results for higher  $k$ 's, showing for instance that an analogue of the LYM inequality (which relates to the  $k = 2$  case) does not hold for higher  $k$ 's, and also establishing the asymptotic lower bound  $Sc_{(n,k)} \geq k^n \exp(-O(\sqrt{\log n}))$  where  $S$  is the largest integer such that  $2k > 2^S$ .

Comments: 49 pages. To appear, Szemerédi birthday conference proceedings  
Subjects: Combinatorics (math.CO)  
MSC classes: 05D05, 05D10

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# Research Project

***The use of Internet open contents for university education: an empirical study on the perceptions, attitudes and practices of university faculty on Wikipedia.*** Project team: E. Aibar, J. Gomà, J. Lladós, M. Lerga, A. Meseguer and J. Minguillon

<http://oer.uoc.edu/wiki4HE/>

Main research question: Are Peer Production and Science Compatible?

Specific questions: *what do university faculty members think of Wikipedia? Do they like it? Do they use it? Do they like students to use it? Do they find it useful?*

Empirical study: 12 interviews + large survey to all faculty in 2 public universities (5000 people)



WIKIPEDIA  
*The Free Encyclopedia*

Wikipedia: wiki + free

# Peer Production *versus* Science

## Similarities

- Meritocracy
- Results are collectively achieved
- Peer Review
- Open publication of findings
- Objectivity as a goal
- Claims must rest upon reliable data or sources
- [Mertonian norms]

## Differences

- [Science] Only (certified) experts may contribute
- [PP] Anyone can contribute (even anonymously)
- [PP] Not only results but process of production is also published
- [PP] Peer review is open and post-publication
- [PP] Individual authorship diluted

# Some preliminary results

- Most faculty members are themselves frequent Wikipedia users.
- They show wrong ideas about how Wikipedia works.
- They are sceptical about the absence of a formal editorial committee and about the open nature of participation.
- Anonymity is also a source of particular concern.
- Some assume an anti-expertise ethos in Wikipedia.
- They see dangers when students use it as a reliable source. It is assumed that students make improper uses of Wikipedia.
- Though some mention mistakes or poor articles active use (contributing) is scarce.
- Quality is often perceived as very variable. This variability is found more problematic in Wikipedia than in standard academic publications.