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## The Feds Who Edit Wikipedia

By Allan Holmes | Thursday, August 16, 2007 | 02:36 PM

Who is editing most of the entries on Wikipedia, the open online encyclopedia that anyone can edit? For government agencies, NASA wins by a large margin, according to the Web site WikiScanner.

WikiScanner was created by Virgil Griffith, a California Institute of Technology graduate student who is now the talk of the blogging community. Visitors to WikiScanner can search the millions of anonymous Wikipedia edits to find the IP addresses from where the edits originated. You can search by organization name or use a range of IP addresses. You can also search to find the specific edited portion of a Wikipedia entry, but that search function has been disabled for now because the site is experiencing large amounts of traffic.

News articles worldwide have searched the database to show how Wikipedia can be used to edit portions of Wikipedia entries for political purposes and to remove portions of entries that may criticize government programs or policies. Here's one from Toronto's Globe and Mail.

The government agencies that have been cited by WikiScanner for more than 1,000 edits to Wikipedia entries are listed below. The number represents the number of times a computer at that government organization was used to edit an entry on Wikipedia. (What exactly was edited cannot be determined until the WikiScanner edit search function is restored.) Many science-related government agencies make the list, although the departments of Veteran Affairs and Homeland Security and the U.S. House of Representatives rank 2, 3, and 5, respectively.

1. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (nasa.gov) 6,846
2. Department Of Veterans Affairs (va.gov) 4,210
3. Forestry And Fire Protection (ca.gov) 4,148
4. Dept Homeland Security (dhs.gov) 4,081
5. Information Systems U.S. House Of Representatives (house.gov) 3,736
6. National Institutes Of Health (nih.gov) 3,019
7. U.S. Courts (uscourts.gov) 2,869
8. U.S. Dept. Of Agriculture (usda.gov) 2,435
9. City Of New York (nyc.gov) 2,404
10. Salem Public Schools (ct.gov) 2,398
11. U.S. Dept Of Justice (usdoj.gov) 2,189
12. Information Services Division (nd.gov) 2,140
13. U.S. Senate Sergeant At Arms (senate.gov) 1,809
14. Federal Aviation Administration (faa.gov) 1,706
15. NOAA Aircraft Operations Center (noaa.gov) 1,590
16. Dotrspavolpe Center (dot.gov) 1,566
17. Lawrence Livermore Laboratory (llnl.gov) 1,456
18. U.S. Department Of Labor/Employment Standards Admin (dol-esa.gov) 1,449

19. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (epa.gov) 1,449
20. Internal Revenue Service (irs.gov) 1,290
21. National Park Service (nps.gov) 1,214
22. Library Of Congress Information Technology Services (loc.gov) 1,142
23. Social Security Administration (ssa.gov) 1,134
24. U.S. Patent And Trademark Office (uspto.gov) 1,097
25. Virginia Information Technologies Agency (Vita) (virginia.gov) 1,047

WikiScanner provides "Wired's list of salacious edits" on a stand alone page. The list provides some of the more troublesome edits and from where they originated, including some from government agencies such as "FBI removes aerial images of Guantanamo," according to the salacious edits page.

Some of the edits are written with a pre-pubescent sense of humor, such as one coming from the Defense Network Information Center on the New Orleans Jazz Fest.

Then there are the more serious ones, such as the edit from the Federal Trade Commission on former FTC Chairman Michael Powell, who resigned in 2005. "According to someone at the FCC, they 'Tried to balance the article with a more neutral point-of-view.' You be the judge," according to the salacious page.