

# Replacing Extensions

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# About Me

- Live in New Jersey
- Author or co-author of ~20 MediaWiki extensions, most notably Page Forms
- Founder of WikiWorks (since 2009) 
- Author of *Working with MediaWiki* (2012, 2014, 2017)
- Work at Genesys since 2017



# Case 1: FlaggedRevs

## **Purpose:**

Allow for displaying a revision other than the latest one to users.

# FlaggedRevs (cont.)

## **Prognosis:**

Overly-complicated, too many unnecessary features (like a review system for assigning different metrics of quality to each revision)

# The alternative: Approved Revs

- No reviews, just one (or zero) “approved” revisions per page.
- Still somewhat complicated, though I try to keep the complexity manageable.
- [https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:Approved\\_Revs](https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:Approved_Revs)

# Case 2: Nuke

## **Purpose:**

Allows for deleting a large group of pages that were created by the same user or IP address.

# Nuke (cont.)

## **Prognosis:**

Not that helpful? Lots of spam is done via edits from many different IPs/user accounts.

Also, it can lead to accidental mass deletions of good pages!

# The alternative: SmiteSpam

- Doesn't go by IP address or username – it checks the actual text of pages, looking for clues like little or no wikitext.
- <https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:SmiteSpam>

# Case 3: Semantic MediaWiki

(You knew this one was coming...)

## **Purpose:**

Storage, querying, browsing and visualization of data in the wiki.

# Semantic MediaWiki (cont.)

## **Prognosis:**

Good extension! But needlessly complicated to install, set up data structures for, and query.

# The alternative: Cargo

- One extension instead of up to 15 (!)
- Uses standard DB tables, to make storage and querying simpler.
- <https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:Cargo>

# Case 4: PonyDocs

## **Purpose:**

Allows for documenting software and hardware, by separating pages into products, versions, etc.

# PonyDocs (cont.)

## **Prognosis:**

It's poorly implemented, which is part of why you've never heard of it. (Sorry, PonyDocs developers.)

However it's used at my company, Genesys.

# The alternative: unnamed docs extension

An unreleased extension I'm developing that makes it simpler to define pages as products, versions, etc.

# Case 5: Collection

## **Purpose:**

Allow for creating PDF files out of multiple wiki pages.

## **Prognosis:**

Hard to set up, not flexible enough.

# The alternative: DocBookExport

- Just released last month!
- Allows for generating either a DocBook or a PDF file from a set of wiki pages (via wikitext → HTML → DocBook → PDF).
- Offers indexing, figures, etc., plus customization of fonts, etc.
- <https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:DocBookExport>

# Case 6: VisualEditor

## **Purpose:**

WYSIWYG editing of wiki pages.

## **Prognosis:**

Works great! But hard to install (requires NodeJS + Parsoid) and doesn't work with Page Forms. Also can be slow.

# The alternative: TinyMCE

- Just released last week!
- Not a replacement at all, but a lightweight, easy-to-install alternative.
- (VisualEditor may work in Page Forms in the near future.)
- <https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:TinyMCE>



**Bold**, *italic*, [link](#), orange

# Case 7: Flow / "StructuredDiscussions"

## Purpose:

Structured layout of talk pages.

### Talk:MediaWiki

 Browse topics

Recently active topics 

Start a new topic

#### I have a question regarding wikipedia itself and languages

12 comments • 2 months ago

**Ganeshtheone**

Dear all,

I just got an sudden thought, that "Why do we need wikipedia in all languages, instead we have a single pool of all the articles, from all the languages, and just translate them to the requested language.

benefits:

1. all the languages will have the all the articles.
2. less maintance of articles.

 About this board 

 [Edit description](#)

This page is only for discussion of MediaWiki.org's **main page**.

- For help with the MediaWiki software, please consult the [Help overview](#) and the [Support desk](#).
- To discuss issues about the MediaWiki.org site, see [Current issues](#).
- Archives: [1](#) (by 2005-08-19) · [2](#) (by 2005-12-15) · [3](#) (by 2006-03-15) · [4](#) (by 2008-08-29) · [5](#) (by 2010-01-23) · [6](#) (by 2011-09-04)

**Please use the SANDBOX** to see how easy it is to edit a wiki.

# Flow / "StructuredDiscussions"

## **Prognosis:**

An extension as clunky as its new name.

The combination of big fonts, lots of whitespace and "infinite scrolling" makes it very hard to follow long discussions

# Alternative: CommentStreams

- More configurable, less intrusive, more like Facebook-style comments
- Can be included at bottom of pages, instead of talk pages
- <https://mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:CommentStreams>

# When is creating an alternative justified?

- Often, when the current solution is too complicated
- For 3 of these 7 cases (FlaggedRevs, PonyDocs, VisualEditor), the alternative extension does *less*, not more
- Also, 4 of these (FlaggedRevs, Nuke, VisualEditor, Flow/SD) are WMF-maintained extensions, for what it's worth

Are there other candidates for replacement?

# Another possible alternative to Flow/SD

If it's hard for new users to learn the syntax of “:::” and “~~~~”, why not just have some JavaScript that takes care of it for them?

Example mockup, from a regular talk page:

Additions to the "Arts and theater" section. [\[ edit \]](#)

I'd like to propose an addition to the "Arts and theater" section that briefly describes Houston's literary culture. Houston is home to o writing graduate programs, several literary publications, an active poetry reading "scene," and even a mayorally-appointed poet laur book titled "Houston's Favorite Poems." Houston's "Inprint Margaret Root Brown Reading Series" is a major stop on book reading t esteemed authors such as Sandra Cisneros, Anthony Doerr, Khaled Hosseini, and Salman Rushdie. I think there is sufficient notori Houston in the culture portion of the article.

I am new to Wikipedia contributions. I am sorry if this is not the proper manner to go about this.

[Ja0n8 \(talk\)](#) 14:56, 8 March 2018 (UTC)

[Add reply here](#) → Hi Ja0n8:

It seems like you have some detailed information about the Houston literary scene. In addition to the main article on Houston, th article for Houston culture, which already has its own section for literature: [Culture of Houston#Literature](#). I am only a somewhat will be happy to address your questions as best I can. cheers, [Oldsanfelipe \(talk\)](#) 14:54, 13 March 2018 (UTC)

[Add reply here](#) → Good looking out, Oldsanfelipe

I guess I just didn't give the section a thorough look. That's something I'll have to fix before making comments like this in the some sources and get a proposed revision to that section up. [Ja0n8 \(talk\)](#) 13:34, 14 March 2018 (UTC)

[Add reply here](#) → There's no apology needed. Helping out other editors builds future capacity. Please feel free to contact me on my talk pa March 2018 (UTC)