Alternative Interfaces for Deletion Discussions in Wikipedia: Some Proposals Using Decision Factors

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Content deletion is an important mechanism for maintaining quality in online communities. In Wikipedia, deletion is guided by complex procedures[1]. Controversial cases (˜12% [4]) are sent to special community discussions called "Articles for Deletion" (AfD)[2]. Deciding the outcome of these deletion debates can be difficult [3]. Further, deletion seems to be a point of friction, which demotivates new editors without sufficiently informing them about Wikipedia's values and standards.

Even though a complex, multi-tiered architecture of

[1] Based on Wikipedia policy documentation, we created a detailed workflow diagram of the process, available at http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Deletion_process_on_English_Wikipedia_(flowchart).jpg.

[2] http://enwp.org/WP:AFD

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/2012-03-19/Discussion_report

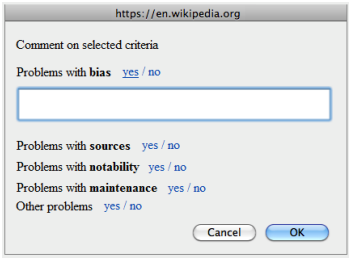

Figure 1: Scaffold commenting, by providing the decision factors.

essays, policies, and guidelines [5] expressing these values and standards are commonly cited in discussions [1], significant simplification is possible. In deletion debates, almost all comments (over 90%) focus on just four factors: Notability, Sources, Maintenance, and Bias [6]. 70% of deletion debates can be completely decided based on these four factors [6].

Based on these findings, we are currently experimenting with alternative interfaces for deletion debates. Our goals are threefold. For newcomers, we would like to support and scaffold increased, and informed participation[4]. For debate closers, we would like to provide summaries and overviews, to aid decision-making. For archived debates, so far, only text archives and visualizations of vote sequencing [7] are available; we would like to show the key issues that need to be addressed before the article is recreated.

At WikiSym, we envision showing several static mockups and paper prototypes of interfaces, and are hoping to get reactions from the community about:

- Visceral reactions to the idea of an alternative interface to AfD, and to our interface proposals.
- What is lost by replacing certain features of the familiar interface.
- What is gained with simplification – and other approaches to simplification.
- Whether our interfaces provide more guidance or better affordances regarding what is important in deletion debates.

[4]Previous research has called for increased socialization of newcomers [2, 3].

Our initial mockups, shown here, will be iterated upon. As shown, our ideas include asking editors to indicate which issues are important in the discussion (Figure 1); we could also to determine factors discussed in a comment without human effort, for instance based on machine learning trained on our annotated dataset [6]. Discussions could then be summarized by decision factor. An overview could show the topics discussed (discussion summary in Figure 2), and comments could be sorted by decision factor (Figure 3).

The audience would benefit by engaging with concrete examples, and we hope for lively discussion.

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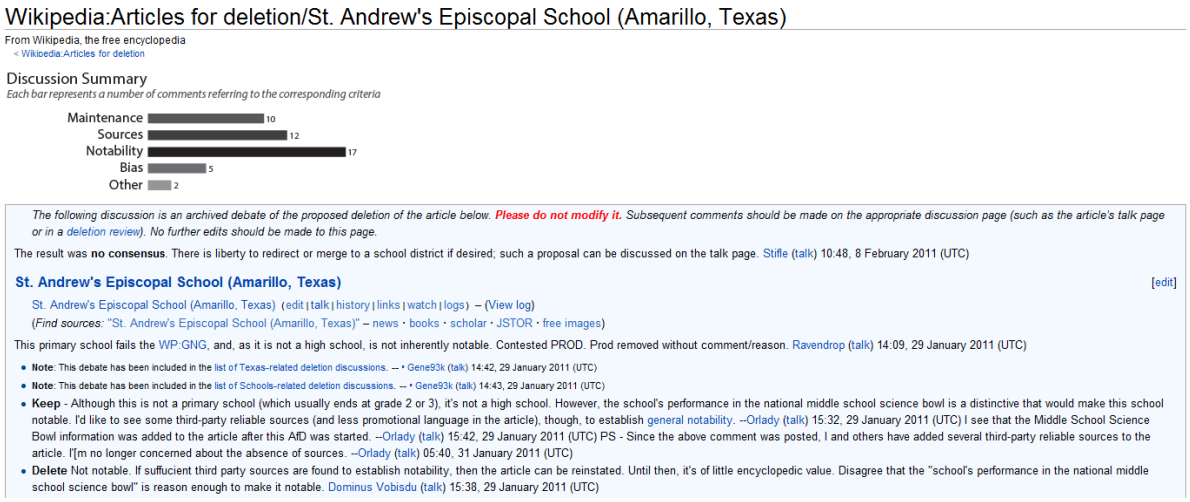

Figure 2: Summarize the decision factors.

International Conference on Supporting Group Work, GROUP '10, pages 165–168, 2010.

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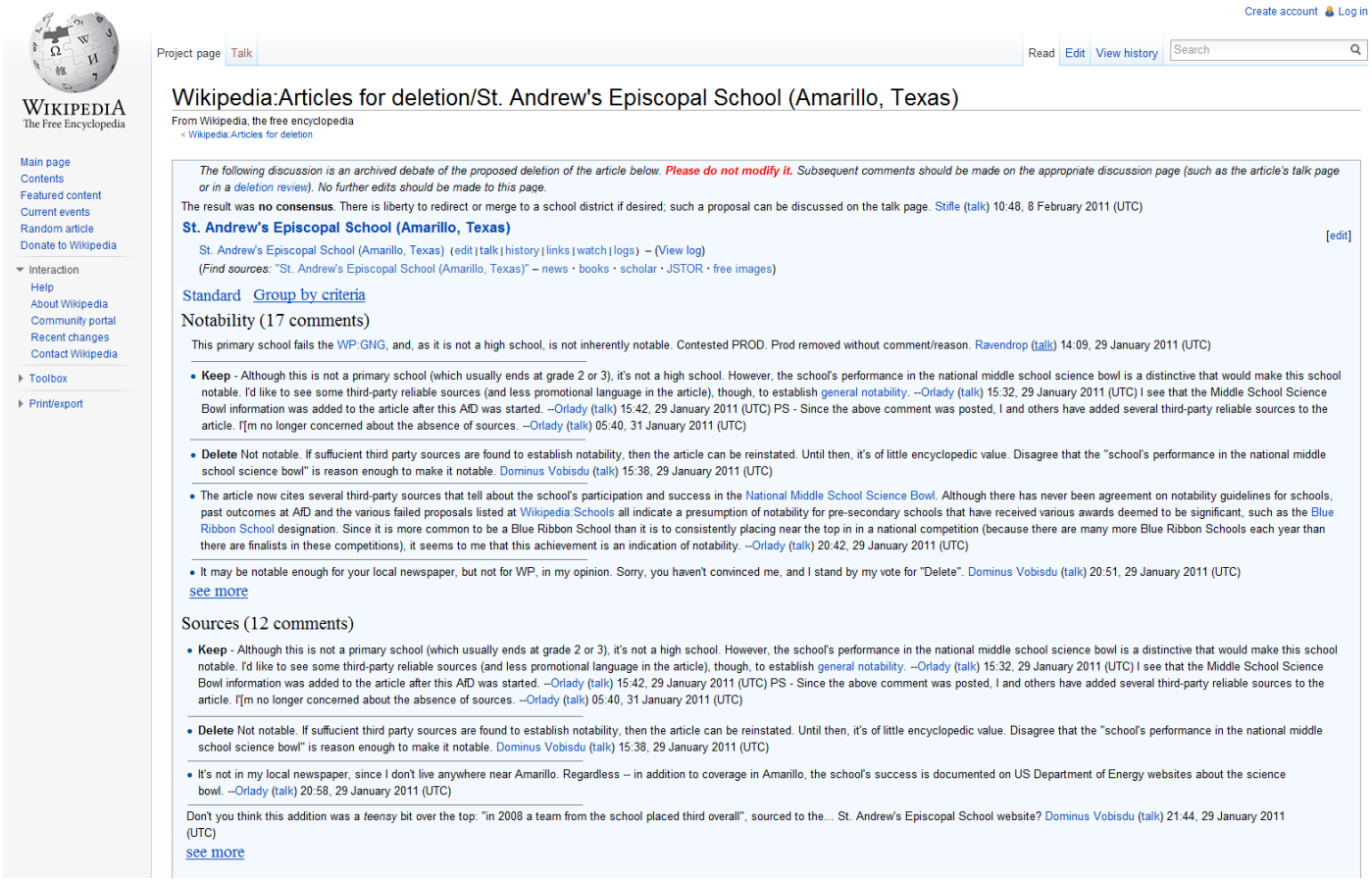

Figure 3: Organize comments by decision factor.
Wikipedians' comments from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Andrew%27s_Episcopal_School_(Amarillo,_Texas) are used.