

Provelt: A New Tool for Supporting Citation in MediaWiki

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ABSTRACT

Provelt is an extension to the Mozilla Firefox browser designed to support editors in citing sources in Wikipedia and other projects that use the MediaWiki platform.

1. INTRODUCTION

Wikipedia as a community values citation, but MediaWiki as a tool does not have features that strongly support citation. We have designed Provelt with the goal of making citation easier in Wikipedia and other MediaWiki projects. It is a software application designed to help the user add and modify MediaWiki references without memorizing complex syntax. It has a rich graphical user interface and automatically integrates into Mozilla Firefox 3. Provelt's main interface is a Firefox sidebar listing all references detected on the current MediaWiki edit page. This is accomplished by scanning the MediaWiki edit box with a flexible regular expressions-based parser. The parser is also capable of determining whether a given reference is valid, by checking whether certain required parameters are present. For each reference, buttons are shown for adding and editing the reference. The "Edit" button creates a popup that allows the user to edit existing fields or create new ones. The "Add New Reference" button allows the user to insert another copy of an existing reference at a new location on the page. Finally, Provelt makes it possible to generate references from scratch using a new reference interface. Options are provided for a variety of source materials, including books, newspapers, and academic papers. Both the new reference and edit dialogs automatically include default parameters (e.g., title and author) so they are not forgotten. Provelt also has built-in support for internationalization, thus extending to the many languages in which Wikipedia and other MediaWiki projects are available. We hope that Provelt can facilitate easy but comprehensive referencing because reliable citation is crucial to any research endeavor.

2. PRESENTER BENEFITS

We have completed an initial prototype of Provelt which we hope the broader MediaWiki community will find valuable. However, we have not yet had the opportunity to test Provelt with a large group of real Wikipedia/MediaWiki editors. We hope to use

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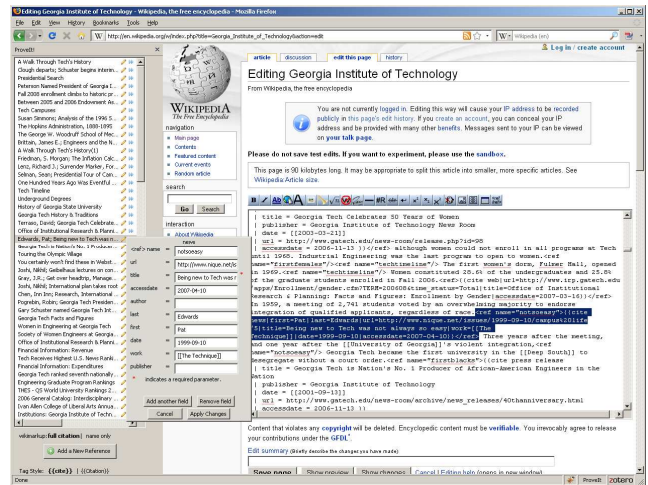


Figure 1. Editing a Wikipedia article in the Mozilla Firefox web browser, with Provelt loaded in the left sidebar.

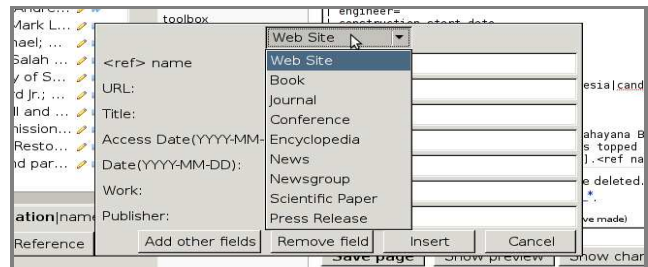


Figure 2. Adding a new reference to a Wikipedia article using Provelt's graphical user interface.

WikiSym 2009 as a forum by which to introduce many potential users to Provelt. We also wish to collect initial (informal) feedback from these users through Provelt demonstrations at the conference. Additionally, we will invite WikiSym attendees to install Provelt on their own computers to use at the conference and afterwards. Ideally, we will attract a critical mass of Provelt users and learn how to make Provelt more useful and usable.

3. AUDIENCE BENEFITS

We will offer WikiSym attendees the option of trying out Provelt with the hopes that they will find MediaWiki references easier to read and edit. We will also provide a free "beta" copy of Provelt to any interested conference attendees so that they may try it out on their own computers and continue to receive any enhancements Provelt provides to their MediaWiki user experience. Finally, we will invite Provelt users to collaborate with us in improving Provelt through an open source software collaboration.