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Wikipedia to add editing safeguard for the living

by Michelle Meyers

Wikipedia will soon be adding a feature to its English-language site that assigns an experienced editor to sign off on any changes to articles on living people, according to Wikimedia Foundation, the nonprofit that runs the user-written online encyclopedia.

Confirming a story **reported Monday by The New York Times**, Wikimedia Foundation spokesman Jay Walsh said the "flagged revisions" feature is **already active on the German site**, but needs some fleshing out before it goes live to the public on the English site.

The plan is to deploy the feature on a test wiki soon so the Wikipedia community can play around with before it goes public. The test wiki is expected to go live soon, but no specific time frame has been established, Walsh said.

The feature **was debated earlier this year** in the aftermath of a **false entry that was posted** by a user, saying Sens. Ted Kennedy and Robert Byrd had died after an inaugural luncheon in January.

It's intended to provide some additional "protection" and to "prevent vandals" from messing with living-person articles, Walsh said. Until approved by the volunteer editor, any changes to such articles will sit invisible to the public on Wikipedia's servers.

This is a big job, Walsh added, and ultimately the community will decide whether to make it a permanent feature. It's bound to be controversial for those who passionately believe in the site's motto as "the free encyclopedia anyone can edit."

Staff writer Daniel Terdiman contributed to this story

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