Taking up the mop: identifying future Wikipedia admins

Moira Burke and Robert Kraut
moira@cmu.edu

A fast, lightweight model to determine which Wikipedia editors will be promoted to administrator status

Method

Parsed contribution history pages for all 1500 admin candidates from Jan 2006 to Oct 2007.

Counted 25 features including edits to each namespace, polite language in edit summary text, vandalism reverts, policy work, and deletion discussions.

Performed a probit regression to determine which features predicted promotion.

Applications

An “admin finder” to identify possible editors for promotion to manage growing backlog of administrator work

A self-evaluation tool for editors considering becoming admins

A dashboard of a candidate’s attributes to aid discussion in request for adminship process

Results

Wikipedia admins

Approximately 1400 administrators with special tools for fighting vandalism, deleting pages, and blocking malicious editors.

Administrator status is granted by peer consensus to editors who demonstrate thorough understanding of Wikipedia policy, the ability to handle conflict, and a need for the tools.

Admins are promoted for policymaking and diverse experience. Mere edit count does not matter. However, editors who had a history of escalating conflict to formal venues such as the arbitration committee were less likely to be promoted. Full details in accompanying paper.

What helped most:

- Edits to policy pages
- Edits to wikiproject organizational pages
- Editing diverse namespaces
- Participating in article discussions
- Commenting/summarizing edits
- Saying “thanks” in comments

What didn’t matter:

- Number of article edits
- Months since first edit
- User/user talk edits
- AIVs, RfPs, XfDs

Human-computer interaction institute
Carnegie Mellon University

Supported by NSF # IIS-0325049 and an NSF graduate research fellowship