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Discussion report

Editors discuss Wikipedia's vetting process for administrators

By Mikehawk10

Requests for adminship (RfA), the process by which potential administrators are vetted by the community, is undergoing a comprehensive review—the first of its kind since the administrator election reform of 2015. The first phase of the review, which seeks to identify problems in the RfA process, opened August 28 and will close September 28. Once this phase is completed, a "one-to-two week" brainstorming period will be undertaken to develop solutions for these problems. After the brainstorming period is completed, editors will have thirty days to discuss whether or not to implement any resulting proposals.

The ongoing first phase has discussed over twenty potential problems with the process. Several dozen editors have participated thus far to provide their insights.

To what extent are editors concerned about the RfA process?

There has been a sharp drop in the number of individuals requesting to become administrators. As of September 11, 2021, a mere nine editors had entered into the RfA process this year, with seven candidates approved, setting a pace for the lowest number of new administrators in any year. This drew concern from several editors who argued that the decreasing number of administrators cannot be sustained.

A minority of editors have stated their belief that there are no issues with the RfA process itself that require addressing. "Currently, it seems like we are mostly keeping up with demand," Jo-Jo Eumerus (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Jo-Jo_Eumerus) wrote, and Chetsford (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Chetsford) wrote that, "while the current uptake of new admins may become an issue, and may become an issue soon, and while this may not be sustainable, I agree that there *is* no issue."

A majority of editors in the discussions, however, believe that the RfA process has issues that need to be addressed. "We have only 24 admins whose first edit was since the start of 2015, that is not good for community cohesion, especially as many from a decade before that were becoming admins in months," wrote WereSpielChequers (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:WereSpielChequers), "We also lose the editor retention benefit of appointing people as admins – new admins do tend to stay here long term. As

for sustainability, if we appoint ten new admins in a year, to maintain a pool of a 1,000 admins half of whom are active at any time, we need the average new admin to remain an admin for 100 years and be active for half of them. Given current human longevity this is an unrealistic scenario."

Goszei (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Goszei) agreed. "Our admin population is well below replacement rate, as evidenced by Wikipedia:Desysoppings by month," the editor wrote, "and the pool of admin tasks is not getting smaller."

What are the problems within the RfA process that editors have described?

Throughout the discussion, there were several issues that editors generally found to be of concern, including the community atmosphere at RfA and the scrutiny faced by prospective admins.

Is a corrosive atmosphere at RfA to blame?

Many editors agreed that the current RfA atmosphere is deeply corrosive. Vami IV (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Vami_IV), who withdrew his candidacy for adminship earlier this year, described his experience at RfA thusly:

> My RfA constitutes the worst four days and several more thereafter of my now six years on Wikipedia. It was absolutely miserable. Aside from being told that you have problems that you need to work on, which is of course never pleasant, but my RfA was also dominated by running battles between the entire planet and Joe Roe for a now-redacted edit desc and his general attitude towards me, stupid opposes that were then badgered to death by my camp, zealot partisans of me, emotional injury to friends of mine, several of which were those zealot partisans. My experience on the whole was that I felt rejected, of course, but also like a humiliated, mistrusted vagrant. It has led me to think that whatever takes as much of the conversation about an RfA out of a candidate's earshot is the best and should be pursued.
>
> —Vami IV (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Vami_IV), 00:33, 4 September 2021

Editors also debated over the benefits and drawbacks of moving to a secret ballot system over the current format, a debate which may carry over into the next phase of the comprehensive review. On this question, the discussion was rather split. Some participants, such as Andrew Davidson (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Andrew_Davidson), argued that the current format requires editors who oppose the nomination to state their reasons publicly, leading to acrimony. Others, such as Nosebagbear (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Nosebagbear), argued that moving to a secret ballot would make the vetting process worse: he wrote that doing so would make it "harder to identify reasons for failure, inherently eliminates Cratchats, would require people who were opposing for a non-obvious feature to note the reason so that others could be aware of it, or risk it going unnoticed."

Are standards for prospective admins too high?

Many editors expressed concerns that the level of scrutiny applied to editors requesting the admin toolset is too high. Ivanvector (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Ivanvector) wrote that "RfA commenters have a pattern of treating any transgression as fatal, no matter how minor or how far in the past, and nobody who has any experience on this project knows if they put themselves forward, what

someone is going to dig up from years in their past and frame in a way that fails their RfA. Most editors actually don't find it very enjoyable to have to defend every action they've ever made, just for the privilege of then having to defend every action they subsequently make."

A few editors argued that the level of scrutiny applied in requests for adminship is generally appropriate. L235 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:L235) stated that "certainly there have been overly scrutinized RfAs, but in my experience, most RfAs face about the right amount of community scrutiny – we have to have **some**; adminship *is* now, under our present policies and norms, a big deal."

Standards for admins are also rising, according to most editors, who say that not enough editors qualify by the current standards. Valereee (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Valereee) wrote that "[s]tandards have risen. Many very reasonable voters want to see at least some content creation, which I understand -- some of these editors have had interactions with admins who have no experience creating content and felt those admins didn't understand what content creators sometimes have to deal with. And many voters want to see an extremely high level of civility; I'm one of those voters. Those things weren't necessary in 2007."

Which aspects of the RfA process are leaving the community most divided?

The community has highly divergent views on several aspects of the RfA process. In particular, editors expressed a wide variety of opinions on whether or not the lack of standardized RfA criteria is part of the problem, the extent to which long-term editors are disadvanaged by the notion that mud sticks, and the extent to which the admin toolset should be unbundled.

Should RfA be the only road to adminship?

Over two-thirds of participating editors expressed a desire for an alternative path to adminship other than RfA.

"There are several other possibilities for mechanisms to get new admins," Rhododendrites (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Rhododendrites) wrote, "there's also the possibility of setting up recall/desysop procedures which would only apply to people who received their rights through that alternative mechanism. Perhaps more than all of the rest, this seems like it's worth an experiment at least."

Since WMF Legal requires community review as a condition of adminship, there was some skepticism among editors for the feasibility of this concept. Worm That Turned (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Worm_That_Turned) stated his agreement that editors should be "pushing for an alternative, as the public opinion of RfA is so low, and has been for so long."

"A completely new process - which meets the WMF scrutiny requirements and which has community buy in", Worm said, "is like to gain potential good candidates who are refusing to run RfA simply because it is RfA."

L235 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:L235), a member of the Arbitration Committee, argued that these efforts were unlikely to yield fruit. "Adminship isn't just some buttons these days", the administrator argued, "we can't deny that adminship comes with a substantial grant of social capital and

influence, and far-more-than-technical authority (e.g. DS authority). As long as that's the case, a pre-adminship community review seems like the only acceptable system that I can think up. I would love to be convinced otherwise, though."

+ Add a comment (https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?editintro=Wikipedia:Wikipedia_Signpost/Templates/Comment-editnotice&title=Wikipedia_talk:Wikipedia_Signpost/2021-09-26/Discussion_report&action=edit&preload=Wikipedia:Signpost/Templates/Signpost-article-comments-end/preload)

THESE COMMENTS ARE AUTOMATICALLY TRANSCLUDED FROM THIS ARTICLE'S TALK PAGE. TO FOLLOW COMMENTS, ADD THE PAGE TO YOUR WATCHLIST (HTTPS://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/W/INDEX.PHP?TITLE=WIKIPEDIA_TALK:WIKIPEDIA_SIGNPOST/2021-09-26/DISCUSSION_REPORT&ACTION=WATCH). IF YOUR COMMENT HAS NOT APPEARED HERE, YOU CAN TRY .

Correction

- @Mikehawk10: KevinL and L235 are the same person. Best, Barkeep49 (talk) 21:05, 26 September 2021 (UTC)
  - Fixed. — Mikehawk10 (talk) 21:15, 26 September 2021 (UTC)

Main issue: toxic, hostile, etc.

The main issue seems to be finally some discussion on the toxic environment at RfA which for years has been largely avoided except by Jimbo Wales and those advocating reform. This statement: For at least the last 15 months or so, and arguably much longer than that, there have been regular discussions at WT:RFA and elsewhere about problems with RfA and possible solutions seems a bit incongruous especially as that particular talk page has been pretty much a desert since before the 2018 seminal trilogy on RfA in *The Signpost*, and has just entered its longest hiatus ever. The WT:RfA with 3,571 editors, 3,702 watchers, and 951 page views in the last 30 days, but less than a handful of posts, Wikipedia's once most popular forum and only 110 takers for Barkeep's survey there does seem to be a general apathy surrounding all things adminship. There are a few days left for the discussion...

The RfC talk page is almost as revealing as the marathon 2-hour questionaire itself and fortunately only takes a few minutes to read. Among the many comments are:

- Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. – The Blade of the Northern Lights

- I've talked to two editors considering RfA in the near-ish future who said that they are hesitant to even comment at this RfC because they're afraid that their opinions, whatever those opinions might be, will get used against them somehow at their RfA. I think that's a pretty clear signal that something is wrong with RfA. Admin candidates shouldn't have to be playing that kind of politics. – GeneralNotability
- if I was planning to run RfA I would stay a mile from this RfC.– Ymblanter
- I'd have to agree that commenting on this RfC might in fact be used to oppose candidacy. – Valereee

Biblioworm's 2015 article in *TheSignpost* was obviously a precursor to his valiant December RfC. The few successful reforms nevertheless did not improve anything for the underlying issues with RfA: the dearth of candidates, and the "horrible and broken process". The 2018 trilogy in *The Signpost*, a light hearted approach to the problems but with some serious undertones, received an unusual number of positive readers' comments.

The first part 'Has the wind gone out of the AdminShip's sails?' began with: *'Wikipedia Talk:Requests for adminship, once the most lively forum on the project with the exception of ANI, is becalmed. The babble of noise at peak times akin to the background din of a noisy Manchester pub on a Saturday night has dropped not just to a whisper, but to a stony silence. It's become an empty space. Walk through it and you'll make conspicuous footprints in the dust gathering on the floor. Your footfall echoes in the deserted room...'*

The second installment 'What do admins actually do?' opened with: *'In last month's Signpost we reported that discussions about adminship had dropped not just to a trickle, but had dried up completely.'* The article which included admins' views on their work and a curious twist on admin abuse produced a massive 70,000 byte river of comment, positive and objective.

Episode 3, 'The last leg of the Admin Ship's current cruise', culminated with a revealing survey on what admins have to say themselves about the process, among them, this gem from Mkdw: RFA has been a safe haven for incivility, disruption, and soapbox.

Bri followed up almost exactly a year later with his special report in *The Signpost* which also brought many comments including the piercingly apt 'I have yet to see anyone present a reason why any sane person would ever want to be a Wikipedia Administrator. First you go through hell at RfA, then you are either constantly attacked for doing your job or you get tired of the constant attacks and become a "deadweight admin". Maybe being willing to accept the position of admin should disqualify you from being an admin on grounds of insanity. Would anyone here like to try giving me one reason why I would ever want to become an admin?' from Guy Macon.

Déjà vu? Kudpung กุดผึ้ง (talk) 22:55, 26 September 2021 (UTC)

> Meanwhile we are down from 500 active admins at the time of my report to 434 today (see bot edit summaries at WP:List of administrators/Active), which appears to me to be an all-time low. ☆ Bri (talk) 22:59, 26 September 2021 (UTC)

>> In reality it's less than that, Bri, much less. The criterion for 'active admin' is ridiculously misleading. Kudpung กุดผึ้ง (talk) 23:13, 26 September 2021 (UTC)
>> Rick Bot seems to have something against u-z. I think some of those users would be surprised to know they're inactive Eddie891 *Talk* *Work* 21:44, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

- Comma: "Some participants, such as Andrew Davidson argued" – comma required adter Davidson. deisenbe (talk) 23:00, 26 September 2021 (UTC)
- I think it's hypocritical that Vami IV talks about the hostile environment and negativity at RfA given the reasons why their RfA failed. I'll only mention the former candidate's onwiki activity, such as stereotyping editors from the "Indian subcontinent" in their CCI bingo on their userpage. [1] (https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=User:Vami_IV&diff=1026886089&oldid=1025350115) Given that the candidate wanted to work in copyright, a success without any scrutiny would mean we'd be in a situation right now where an admin who openly stereotyped Indian editors could be reviewing them at CCI. What kind of atmosphere does that create for editors from the Indian subcontinent? That would certainly be a "corrosive" atmosphere. Chess (talk) (please use {{reply to|Chess}} on reply) 02:40, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

    > @Chess: And the irony goes beyond just Vami IV's RfA. In my experience the vast majority of oppose votes are motivated by a fear that the candidate, for reasons of attitude, experience, or whatever, will use the tools badly and in doing so alienate other editors. It's hard to phrase these concerns in a constructive way, even though they're legitimate, and even if you do there is a good chance you will be jumped on by upset supporters and blamed for a "hostile environment" anyway. – Joe (talk) 06:00, 27 September 2021 (UTC)
    > @Chess: Your accusations of racism, veiled as they are, are unfounded and deeply offensive to me. And as for your question, nothing, because I work at CCI with an Indian editor, who was among those editors also hurt by my RfA, and who was one of the few with which I was in contact in the bitter immediate aftermath. I want you to stop talking about me, or at the least to stop casting the aspersion that I am a blight on this project. – ♠Vami _IV†♠ 06:13, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

        >> @Vami IV: I said that it's stereotyping Indian editors and that it would create a corrosive atmosphere for editors from the Indian subcontinent. While I was 100% willing to stop talking about you and leave the issues at the RfA at that RfA, if you're going to make public statements several months after the fact calling out the opposes at your RfA I don't see how it's fair to get mad that people who opposed at your RfA are telling their side of the story. Chess (talk) (please use {{reply to|Chess}} on reply) 16:12, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

    > Your comment is also wrong because the reasons why their RfA failed were that consensus was made that I am neither mature nor competent at copyright. Strike your comment. – ♠Vami _IV†♠ 06:18, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

        >> The direct reason why your RfA failed was because you withdrew. Because of this, Bureaucrats didn't evaluate any consensus in the opposes. There were a lot of people who opposed based on copyright competence but there were also a lot of people who opposed based on other reasons. The "Indian subcontinent" entry at CCI bingo was one of the reasons why some people opposed. Chess (talk) (please use {{reply to|Chess}} on reply) 16:22, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

    > Note that being an admin does not make you a copyright clerk, similar to SPI clerks, non-admins can and do close/open CCIs as well as dealing with issues at the Copyright Problems board. — **_Berrely_** • ^{Talk}/_{Contribs} 06:42, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

- Vami IV is understandably upset by his negative RfA experience, but since his quoted account of events mentions me by name (posted there, and repeated here, without a courtesy ping), I have to point out that it isn't actually what happened. – Joe (talk) 05:50, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

That is not correct. – ♠Vami_IV†♠ 06:23, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

I don't have a "general attitude" towards you, Vami. I barely recognised your username before the RfA. I *do* have a "general attitude" towards fascists. The more you defend your past use of fascist imagery, the more you prove that you should not be an admin. – Joe (talk) 06:32, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

That is one of the most rotten, evil, and misbegotten things ever said of me. I am **not** defending the display of that eagle. In fact, I think that I should have been indefinitely blocked for displaying it. I was and am just angry and very, very hurt that the very fact of my change has been rejected and that I was and have been identified as a pathogen. Your "general attitude" towards me is the unearned hostility with which you treated me and those who tried to testify to my changed character and/or explain the inappropriateness of that edit summary. And if you think I am still a fascist, then you can go and ask the editors with whom I am working at Léon Degrelle. – ♠Vami_IV†♠ 06:59, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

You're defending it when you whine about yourself being an RfA martyr; when you point to my comment (which merely said that we should think about the consequences of electing to give someone who used to be an open fascist the bit) as an example of "hostility"; and when you call those who voted against you because of it "stupid". And you do that a lot. There are real problems with hostility in this community—ones that systematically exclude whole swathes of people—but I'm afraid a shortage of white American kids with a penchant for 'edgy' humour in the admin corps is not one of them. I'm glad that you've realised how reprehensible your former views were, but changes in the way we see ourselves are not automatically reflected in how others see us, and your inability to see that is yet another sign of immaturity. Your RfA failed because you would not be a good admin. Get over it. – Joe (talk) 07:59, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

I think you will find that its the white British kids in the admin corps with a penchant for edgy humour. The American ones have a penchant for edgy humor. Personally I prefer dry to edgy and all I can say is that I hope you know a good glazier. Horse Eye's Back (talk) 07:30, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

The RfA was headed towards failure because a significant minority community thought that Vami wouldn't make a good admin, not because editors *knew* that Vami wouldn't make a good admin. I can think of at least one recent RfA that generated significant opposition and barely passed, yet the editor is a perfectly fine admin. —Danre98(talk^contribs) 22:52, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

- Did anyone involved in the writing of this article check with Vami before using that rather large block quote? It's the only quote that's large enough to be offset (it's about 10% of the article's length by word count), and it seems to call particular attention to him in a way that's now resulted in comments dredging up issues from the RfA, as if that hadn't already been done to death *at the RfA*. I'm sure that is not what the author intended, but perhaps it's something to be considered for the next piece. ♠PMC♠ (talk) 07:38, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

This. And if someone is going to be criticised by name in that quote, it would be nice if they were also asked to comment, or at least notified. – Joe (talk) 07:49, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

This isn't about you, Joe, and in any case the lack of a direct notification doesn't seem to have impeded your ability to make unnecessary bad-faith comments. ♠PMC♠ (talk) 07:56, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

That's what "and" means, PMC. *And* I thought we'd already had our conversation about "unnecessary bad-faith comments". – Joe (talk) 08:01, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

I seem to recall it ending with you saying you wanted to steer clear of drama going forward, and yet here you are stirring it up again. ♠PMC♠ (talk) 08:05, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

I will again point to the above, Google-indexed article in which I am the only named person blamed for creating a "corrosive atmosphere" at RfA. I think it is reasonable that I respond to that. On the other hand, I can't see any reason why you would show up here other than because your Discord protégé is throwing another tantrum. – Joe (talk) 08:11, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

Again with the bad faith accusations and uncollegial attitude. I don't think it will be productive for me to respond any further. ♠PMC♠ (talk) 08:24, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

(Redacted)

— (Redacted), (Redacted)

uncollegial attitude

— Premeditated Chaos, September 2021

– Joe (talk) 08:32, 27 September 2021 (UTC) Discord logs are to be treated as IRC logs, per RFC. If you do not have consent to publish them they should not be here. Sennecaster (Chat) 12:13, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

"This isn't about you" when Joe Roe is directly mentioned in the blockquote as an example of the corrosive attitude. Chess (talk) (please use `{{reply to|Chess}}` on reply) 16:05, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

For transparency, I have removed and oversighted the above (Redacted) content. Discord logs are not permitted, per the result of this RfC. I accidentally removed the content `{{Blockquote|uncollegial attitude|{{u|Premeditated Chaos}}, September 2021}}`, which I have restored in this edit. Many thanks ~TNT (she/they • talk) 12:38, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

(edit conflict) I was going to say that PMC is welcome to ask me to remove the quote if she considers her hypocritical Discord rant about me "personal private information", but I see TheresNoTime has already oversighted it. Interested readers can see it for themselves by

logging on to the public Wikipedia Discord server, channel `#english-wikipedia`, and scrolling up to 5/6/2021. Sorry for the inconvenience, but I assume there's a very good reason that we have this rule. –Joe (talk) 12:44, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

> I'm sorry, but what are we to find there? – Anon423 (talk) 14:50, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

- Wow . . . Even report about RfA has started war in comment section. How will RfA experience become better then ??? -- Parnaval (talk) 14:15, 27 September 2021 (UTC)
- Hmmm. My 2015 failed RfA was part of the impetus for some of the subsequent 2015 reforms too. The number one problem with the entire process is that a small group of disgruntled users can derail the process, particularly for long-time, experienced editors. In parallel, people who manage to fly under the radar sometimes can be too easily approved without an adequate track record. I have considered RfA2 from time to time since then (I think the stats were that I had the most total support votes of any failed RfA in quite some time), but I have to find several weeks of my life I will never get back, as it is not only the Wikipedia RFA process that is a problem, it is also the off-wiki doxxing (I had contacts that indicated people had even found my home address and an employer) and attacks that come from assorted users who, yes, will find decade-old posts, find out of context diffs, and then flood the field with them. Basically, the candidate and their friends have to not only watch the RfA itself, but also patrol everything from certain WP criticism sites to Yelp, Google, and so on. In terms of reform, I think the first step is that the bureaucrats need to be assigned to these candidacies with round-the-clock coverage to remove personal attacks, comments that have been edited without acknowledgment of having been changed, and to move arguments on the voting page over to the discussion area as quickly as possible. I also think that while off-wiki attacks cannot be stopped by WP, it wouldn't hurt if the WMF could reach out to some of the criticism sites based in the USA and have a frank discussion about the difference between criticizing Wikipedia and going after otherwise private individuals in real life. Montanabw(talk) 15:41, 27 September 2021 (UTC)
- Second point: The toxicity of the desysop process is also a problem, and easily manipulated by a small number of disgruntled trolls, as one can see from the actions taken against admins such as RexxS and worst of all, Flyer22reborn. Montanabw(talk) 15:41, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

> Montanabw, nobody nowadays wants to be an admin and be expected to work at the drama boards. The Sword of Damocles is just too dangerous. There are too many vindictive users out there including Arbcom members themselves, who will blow a case up out of all proportion by taking things cleverly out of context as if butter wouldn't melt in their mouths, and the result is a desysoping. Kudpung กุดผึ้ง (talk) 05:36, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

>> Montana, I think it is simplistic thinking to label people who present evidence in a desysop case as trolls. If only it were that simple, trolls can easily be ignored, evidence cannot. These cases are no fun for anyone involved, but it is perhaps one of arbcom's most important functions. Making the workshop phase optional was something I proposed specifically to make desysop cases less horrible. Does the committee always arrive at the correct conclusion? No, it doesn't, but blaming that on trolls is not correct either. (I'm also not at all sure what you mean by bringing up Flyer22, who was never an admin) Beeblebrox (talk) 01:28, 10 October 2021 (UTC)

- One only needs to look at this RfA to understand how high the expectations of voters are sometimes: the RfA failed because the candidate had a pool of GIFs on his/her talk page which randomly changed and that GIF which was displayed the day of the RfA was found to

be chocking by the voters. Also, this one was refused because the candidate, to quote a user, made "not one but two sides of poor judgement at AfC" recently. Veverve (talk) 05:51, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

- That first one seems to have an at least as much opposition based on the extremely low percentage of mainspace work by the candidate, which is a perfectly valid concern. Beeblebrox (talk) 01:35, 10 October 2021 (UTC)

On removing names from this article and these comments

Mikehawk10 has asked me to look at a request by a user to have their name removed from this article. The request IMHO applies to another user as well - if one name is removed, so should the other. In general I am not averse to removing the names of innocent bystanders who are innocently included in a *Signpost* article. But in examining the article, I don't see anything extraordinary in the mentions of the names. Neither seems to be an innocent bystander. Rather there are 2 people who like to argue mentioned a total of 3 times in the article. These folks seem to have argued at an RfA, and then at the RfC about RfAs, and then here in the comments page (a total of about 20 times here). The problem is not in the article, Mikeh seems to have described the situation very accurately. Folks who don't want to be described in *The Signpost* as disagreeing, shouldn't disagree so much. We won't be removing the names in the article, Those who want to remove their names in the comments section here should remove all their comments as well as redacting their names in other's comments - remove just your name and replace it with "[redacted]". That's all I can say about people who seems to be trying to be disagreeable. *The Signpost* won't be taking any action. If you want to appeal this decision - well there are many admins on this page - take it to one of their pages but do not continue to discuss it here Smallbones(smalltalk) 22:34, 27 September 2021 (UTC)

In support of RfA

My own RfA was in late 2007. Most of the editors who participated were reasonable people who were deciding for themselves whether or not I could be trusted with administrative tools. That's a fair description of RfAs I've seen for subsequent nominees in the years since then: the only basis participants have for an opinion is the body of **the nominee's contributions and associations**, so that's what they evaluate.

There were a few editors who had taken a dislike to me, and some of their opposes were lengthy. One assumes in good faith that they were sincere. That some of it was unpleasant was **not the fault of the RfA process**, which is a public discussion of the merits of a nominee. It just attracted anybody who cared to express an opinion or hoped to influence the outcome, which is **what posting an RfA is supposed to do**.

It's unfortunate that this Signpost report spotlights Vami_IV's RfA experience as if it had been typical. It was not, and framing RfA as gruesome is not helpful. – Athaenara ✉ 19:40, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

Athaenara, this is a report on the community discussion; are you saying the *reporter* "framed RfA as gruesome" or the *community* did? By my review the phase 1 discussion had more comments on E. Corrosive RfA atmosphere than any other topic, and the response to the proposition The atmosphere at RfA is deeply unpleasant. This makes it so fewer candidates wish to run and also means that some members of our community don't comment/vote. was overwhelmingly in support of that

statement (45:3 currently). In other words, the reporter did their job correctly in focusing on this issue. ☆ Bri (talk) 21:11, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

> I guess it's helpful as a stimulus. My point is that it's not the RfA process itself that is to blame, but the degree of tolerance of disruption. For example, there's a some yardage of abusive crosschat (most of it in Oppose sections) which should properly be moved to RfA talk pages. – Athaenara ✉ 21:41, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

>> I'm scratching my head over this. If as you say the process is tolerant of a degree of disruption that makes the process ineffective at bringing new sysops to the project, then in my view the process is broken. Maybe you are distinguishing between the current administration of the process and some ideal administration that has yet to exist. Even so, again, the discussion has to occur to determine what that ideal administration is. ☆ Bri (talk) 21:53, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

> Moving distracting sideshows from main RfA to RfA talk pages isn't a matter of administration, it doesn't need someone stepping down from on high, it just needs participants willing to do it, and they often do. I couldn't give you statistics on that without devoting days or a week to checking every RfA which ever ran. Stray examples:
>
> - screenloads of argument at Wikipedia talk:Requests for adminship/GreenMeansGo
> - discussion of opposes at Wikipedia talk:Requests for adminship/Hog Farm
> - discussion of an oppose moved to Wikipedia talk:Requests for adminship/Ashleyyoursmile
> - screenloads of hairsplitting Wikipedia talk:Requests for adminship/BusterD 2
>
> I'm *not* saying this *proves* anything, just saying that it's easy to do and doesn't require supervisory intervention by someone with more powers outside the discussion. – Athaenara ✉ 22:28, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

>> Athaenara, *...it's not the RfA process itself that is to blame, but the degree of tolerance of disruption.* This is correct. For decades RfA has been the one venue where editors can break every sense of propriety with impunity and they will vote down any attempt to have their playground placed under supervision. The 'distracting sideshows' however, are a fairly recent phenomenon - a trend (one dosen't need to 'to checking every RfA which ever ran'.). And of course RfA just gets worse, even if it's down to less than a dozen a year. Kudpung กุดผึ้ง (talk) 00:07, 7 October 2021 (UTC)

The swing of the pendulum?

So now we feel standards at RfA are *too high* ... how long ago was (or wasn't?) it that far too many people thought they were too *low*? Daniel Case (talk) 22:21, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

> Speaking as someone with only relatively recent wikipedia experience whenever I've had an interaction with an admin that leaves me going "How the F did they ever become an admin?" its been an admin who became an admin in the early days (sometimes within a year of signing up, a feat which would be herculean if not entirely impossible today). Never run into that with a post 2010 or so admin. I can't tell you when the standard changed, but I am almost certain that at one point it was much lower than it is currently. Horse Eye's Back (talk) 22:35, 28 September 2021 (UTC)

Some of us accomplished a lot within our first year. I built a Wikipedian signature gallery while I was learning wikipedia formats and markup (and exasperating more experienced editors [my own sig was downright grotesque for awhile then]), wrote several articles and learned the ins and outs of citing reliable sources without making a page unreadable, got involved in the Third Opinion Project to help editors who were in conflict, helped out at the Biographies of living persons noticeboard, got involved in the then-brand-new Conflict of interest noticeboard which turned out to be a huge help in fighting spam and spammers (I remember breaking my mouse from archiving over there when the traffic just exploded because the forum's utility became so obvious so fast and demand mushroomed). Once in awhile another editor would say hey, you should do RfA and I'd be all gaaah, all this responsibility piling up and you want me to take on more? ... a lot can happen in a year. – Athaenara ✉ 11:10, 29 September 2021 (UTC)

> Many wikipedia editors accomplish a great deal within their first year. In 2007, the year in which you became an admin, 408 new admins were minted (an all time high). Last year it was 17, not 170 but 17. Do you really think thats because modern editors fail to accomplish as much in their first year as your class year did? Horse Eye's Back (talk) 01:26, 30 September 2021 (UTC)

>> I make no such assumptions about "modern editors" and I don't know why you'd infer that from my post. An admin void at the time needed filling because there was more to do. For example, there were backlogs such as a now-defunct "Temporary Wikipedian userpages" category with thousands of pages awaiting deletion, and vandals accustomed to fewer consequences did more damage with impunity when we had fewer admins to block them. – Athaenara ✉ 05:40, 30 September 2021 (UTC)

>>> So you're saying standards were lowered at the time but it was justified by a pressing need? Horse Eye's Back (talk) 06:01, 30 September 2021 (UTC)

>>>> No, and I don't know why you'd infer that either. – Athaenara ✉ 06:22, 30 September 2021 (UTC)

>>>>> So if the amount accomplished within the first year has nothing to do with it and the admin void has nothing to do with it why bring them up? Are you just getting defensive because you feel that I am challenging the validity of your adminship specifically (I am not, you currently seem like an excellent admin)? Horse Eye's Back (talk) 15:59, 30 September 2021 (UTC)

- Fifteen years ago, administration and ideas of the proper functions of administrators were still somewhat unclear. Now most editors take the existence of adminstrators for granted as a natural part of the usual scenery. In the timeline, it's clear that the community woke up to the idea that it needed more administrators and guidelines for what to expect of them: it tackled both those issues with a whole bunch of RfAs and lots of discussions of what should be expected of them. It was part of the oganic development of the encyclopedia anyone can edit, not a watershed that needs repeating. – Athaenara ✉ 19:37, 10 October 2021 (UTC)

IN THIS ISSUE

IT'S YOUR *SIGNPOST*. YOU CAN HELP US.

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