

A day without Wiki

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Till today, I had no idea how much I rely on Wikipedia for my day-to-day work. I imagine I'm not alone in this realization. No, the online encyclopedia is never the endpoint of serious research, but it's become the best *starting* point for exploring pretty much any factual question that comes up.

I laughed this morning when I heard an NPR reporter [talking about an alt wiki](#) for those who feel lost today, the day Wikipedia and other sites have gone dark in protest of federal legislation that would strike a blow to the freedom of information online. It seems, I thought, that between Google, regular old encyclopedias and, you know, waiting till tomorrow, we should be able to make it through the day all right. After about the sixth time I absentmindedly tried to Wiki something, I'm not laughing at the alt-wiki idea anymore.

[This article by Rob Fischer](#) gives a nice overview of the objections Wikipedia and other tech-sector companies have to the bills before Congress (which appear at this point to be [beyond long shots passage-wise](#)). Fischer also highlights the OPEN Act, a less draconian alternative.

And yes, just now I nearly headed for my Wiki search bar to learn more about the OPEN Act. It's easy to forget that we didn't used to be able to do this, and that there's no guarantee that we always will.