

Wikimedia

Wikimedia Opens a Window into High-Profile Projects with Nimsoft WatchMouse for Website Monitoring

Challenge

Wikimedia Foundation needed to provide 24/7 availability across globally accessible user-built projects, while providing performance and availability metrics to its user community.

Solution

Wikimedia deployed Nimsoft WatchMouse to gather availability data from multiple services across a network of over 60 stations in more than 30 countries, and display the information to the public on a free status page.

Results

- Provides visibility needed to enhance the end user experience for site visitors and contributors.
- Improves site transparency to build credibility and foster good will within the user community.
- Enables proactive problem mitigation, reducing downtime and enabling cost and time efficiencies.
- Improves service levels for users, editors and developers by increasing access to information.

The Foundation's User Community Benefits from Improved Uptime and Transparency

Background

Wikimedia is a non-profit foundation with the mission to bring knowledge to people all over the world. Wikimedia operates Wikipedia, the most popular wiki online today, and its sister projects. These projects are accessed by a global audience of more than 470 million people, in 282 languages. The company has grown from a base of volunteers to 90 employees and an active community of more than 90,000 volunteer editors, developers and infrastructure support staff. The organization's loyal community makes regular, free contributions of content to Wikimedia projects.

Challenge

With almost half a billion unique visitors, providing continuous, reliable service is extremely important to earning the trust of Wikimedia's community of users and contributors. "We want to reach as many users as possible, all over the globe," said CT Woo, Director of Technical Operations at Wikimedia. "Serving a global audience is challenging—we have a very complex infrastructure with many moving parts that must be up and running at all times."

Millions of people rely on the information they receive from Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects. If Wikipedia is down, or slow, research being conducted by professionals and students all over the world can come to a halt. Availability is also critical to the volunteer community, because access is necessary for making contributions to content.

"If the site is down, our editors can't edit, and no new content can be added or updated," said Woo. "Moreover, our developers can't access the API services they depend on to create applications that enable visitors to extract information from us."

"Historically, we have been using our own deployed monitoring services to alert us of any issues with our services and infrastructure. With WatchMouse, we now have a more complete solution."

—CT Woo
Director of Technical Operations
Wikimedia

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Woo realized that 24/7 monitoring of every piece of the infrastructure was the only way to ensure the projects remain available. Additionally, monitoring capabilities would allow service performance and availability information to be published easily, providing greater transparency to help build and retain the trust of contributors and visitors.

“Transparency is a big part of who we are as an organization,” said Woo. “We have an obligation to make information about how we operate available to our user community. To do this, we need a monitoring tool that can keep track of everything 100% of the time and provide complete visibility into performance and availability metrics.”

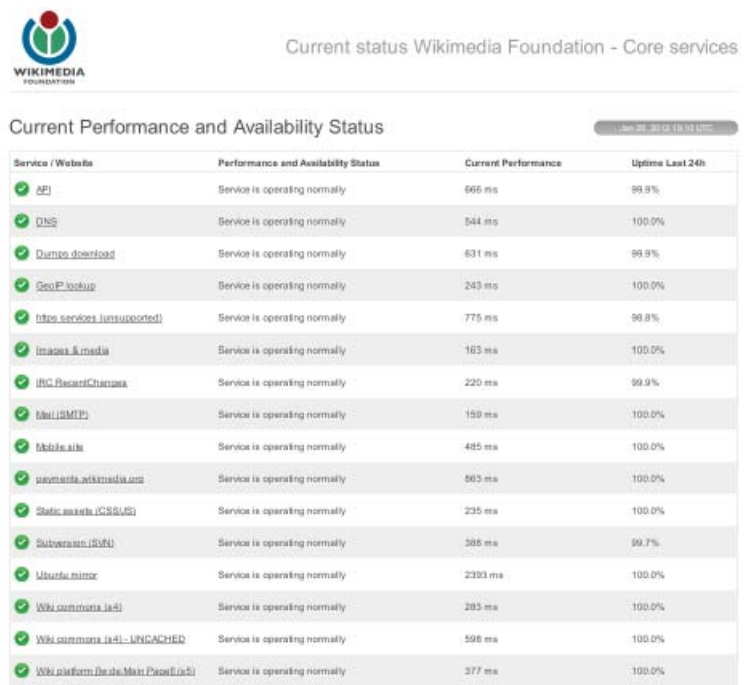
Services that Wikimedia operates communicate with each other across many different servers, creating complexity that makes the infrastructure difficult to monitor effectively. Finding a solution that could handle the task was challenging. They also needed to work with a vendor partner that understood and supported Wikimedia’s non-profit vision, which only exacerbated the challenge.

“It’s important for us to find partners that support our mission and goals,” said Woo. “Because we are a non-profit, our funds are limited. Even though we are running an enterprise-grade system and require enterprise-grade solutions, we often don’t have the funds to adopt them. As a result, we rely on vendors’ understanding and look for partners that understand our needs, and can work with us to deploy the correct solution.”

Solution

Woo’s team discovered Nimsoft WatchMouse, a software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution that makes it easy to proactively monitor Web applications, websites and cloud service performance from around the globe. Nimsoft enabled Wikimedia to monitor and report on uptime and availability across its array of user-built projects.

Today WatchMouse gathers availability data for Wikimedia across a network of over 60 monitoring points of presence in more than 30 countries and displays the information to its public site at <http://status.wikimedia.org/>. This public status page clearly displays the current status of core services and performance and availability history of Wikimedia projects. At any time, users can visit the site to find out if such



Current status Wikimedia Foundation - Core services

Current Performance and Availability Status

Service / Website	Performance and Availability Status	Current Performance	Uptime Last 24h
API	Service is operating normally	666 ms	99.9%
DNS	Service is operating normally	544 ms	100.0%
Dumps download	Service is operating normally	631 ms	99.9%
GeoIP lookup	Service is operating normally	243 ms	100.0%
lites services (unsupported)	Service is operating normally	775 ms	99.8%
Images & media	Service is operating normally	163 ms	100.0%
IRC RecentChanges	Service is operating normally	220 ms	99.9%
Mail (SMTP)	Service is operating normally	159 ms	100.0%
Mobile site	Service is operating normally	485 ms	100.0%
wikimedia.wikimedia.org	Service is operating normally	663 ms	100.0%
Static assets (CSStatic)	Service is operating normally	235 ms	100.0%
Subversion (SVN)	Service is operating normally	386 ms	99.7%
Usable name	Service is operating normally	2393 ms	100.0%
Wiki commons (id)	Service is operating normally	283 ms	100.0%
Wiki commons (id) - UNCACHED	Service is operating normally	596 ms	100.0%
Wiki platform (beta:Main Page (id))	Service is operating normally	377 ms	100.0%

The Wikimedia public status page

services as the API, GeoIP Lookup, or images and media are working normally; check performance metrics; and see what percentage of uptime a service has experienced in the past 24 hours. The pages are hosted by Nimsoft in the cloud using Amazon’s S3 and EC2.

If there is a problem with any of Wikimedia’s services, WatchMouse alerts Woo’s team via multiple communication channels. These alerts have enabled a more proactive problem resolution approach, helping Wikimedia keep services up and running. Prior to deploying WatchMouse, Woo’s team had to rely on the community to report problems, either directly or in chat rooms. Since the notices were received after the fact, the team’s ability to respond to and resolve issues was slower, resulting in service being down sometimes for hours.

“Historically, we have been using our own deployed monitoring services to alert us of any issues with our services and infrastructure,” said Woo. “With WatchMouse, we now have a more complete solution.”

With Nimsoft WatchMouse, Wikimedia is able to improve performance and uptime using tangible, objective and detailed monitoring data that helps the development team to pinpoint



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and eliminate bottlenecks and provide a better user experience. Administrators can quickly determine the source of an issue and address it.

Additionally, Wikimedia’s developers can get an accurate picture of the performance that end users experience with a new service or application before they roll it out. Helpful dashboards and reports deliver additional transparency to Wikimedia staff.

“People in our community are very smart; many are coders, developers and engineers,” said Woo. “Being able to see the status of the services reassures them we’re doing all we can to keep them available.”

Results

With Nimsoft WatchMouse, Wikimedia’s team has the visibility they need to not just understand, but improve the end user experience. In addition, according to Woo, providing self-service access to performance and availability information reduces customer service contacts and fosters good will among the Wikimedia community of users and contributors.

“WatchMouse enables us to minimize gaps in access to essential information, so the information we gather and disseminate can continue to be used worldwide to help people expand and share their knowledge and conduct critical research.”

—CT Woo
Director of Technical Operations
Wikimedia

“WatchMouse keeps us on our toes,” said Woo. “We’re fundamentally a transparent organization, and our community expects us to be that way. It makes us unique, inspires our community to keep contributing, and allows Wikimedia to continue to grow its knowledge base.”

The WatchMouse public status page has helped the organization strengthen its brand and credibility

as a reliable information source with the media as well. “The media knows about the status page and that it’s a significant part of our communication strategy with users,” said Woo. “It demonstrates that we are committed to doing all we can to live up to our mission.”

Most importantly, WatchMouse has helped Woo’s team to more quickly resolve issues that interfere with that mission. “WatchMouse enables us to minimize gaps in access to essential information, so the information we gather and disseminate can continue to be used worldwide to help people expand and share their knowledge and conduct critical research.”

About Nimsoft

Nimsoft provides integrated, IT management as service solutions for businesses and service provider customers globally, including 1&1, CDW, SoftLayer, SunGard Availability Services, Sur La Table, TriNet, and Virgin America. The company’s Nimsoft Unified Manager is an industry-leading solution that helps organizations easily monitor and manage IT services in increasingly complex business environments. Nimsoft solutions integrate with existing resources from the data center to the cloud, and are available on a pay-as-you-go basis. For more information, visit www.nimsoft.com.

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