

# Study finds major U.S. newspapers are warming up to Wikipedia

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Major newspapers in the United States are referencing Wikipedia more often and framing the online encyclopedia more positively in stories, according to a study by a pair of faculty researchers in the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Mass Communications.

In the study, published in the April issue of *Journalism Practice*, researchers analyzed the framing of [Wikipedia](#) and its use as a news source by five U.S. national newspapers over an eight-year period. A content analysis of 1,486 Wikipedia references in The [New York Times](#), The [Washington Post](#), The [Wall Street Journal](#), USA Today and The Christian Science Monitor found that Wikipedia is predominantly framed neutrally or positively in stories and that it is increasingly used as a news source.

“The main finding of this study is the notion that journalists do not use Wikipedia is debunked,” said Marcus Messner, Ph.D., assistant professor of mass communications. “Wikipedia is used by journalists in news stories on a regular basis and it is not considered a negative.”

The researchers said their study found the journalists’ acceptance and use of Wikipedia developed over time.

“Early stories debunked Wikipedia, throwing cold water on Wikipedia as an accurate source of information. And in 2004 and 2005, a number of media reported on Wikipedia hoaxes,” said Jeff South, associate

professor of mass communications. “But over time, negative references faded into the background and the number of references sourcing Wikipedia became more prominent.”

The researchers said by framing Wikipedia as credible and accurate, the newspapers help legitimize the use of the [online encyclopedia](#). By allowing Wikipedia to influence their news agendas as a source, the newspapers confirm the growing reliability of Wikipedia.

Provided by Virginia Commonwealth University

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