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Wikia: Between Documentary Simulacra and Documented Fictions

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Abstract

Wikis are digital community spaces that have attracted high traffic but virtually no study as socio-communicational platforms. These platforms offer individuals the possibility of engaging in unique writing activities by defining a distinct material configuration and imposing a protocol of enunciation. Wikis are platforms developed through the contributions of anyone, and constitute collaborative encyclopedias dedicated to a cultural topic. This article more specifically examines the Harry Potter Wiki, which is devoted to the literary universe of J.K. Rowling. Our semio-communicational analysis concerns the structure, the authors and the contents of the French and Anglo-Saxon versions of this wiki. First we explore the writing space in which get involved cultural objects that compose the world of Harry Potter. The semiotic content of this apparently unlimited space reveals an unpublished scriptural universe that articulates fictional regime and documentary regime. This tension brings us secondly to detail the space of normalization that configure these wikis. This principle of standardization is updated, both through the writing standards they define and by the pyramidal structure of intellectual authority that manage them. Our study seeks to qualify the "invisible borders" set up by the media device wiki in order to define these singular writing objects between documentary simulacra and documented fictions.

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