

12 December 2005

By: Adrian Stanciu, Sci-Tech News Editor



WIKIPEDIA

[Wikipedia Prank Goes One Step Too Far](#)

The dark side of freedom...

Although it was all supposed to be just a prank from one colleague to another, the joke plotted by a guy named Brian Chase turned into something much more serious which left everybody surrounding the Wikipedia project with a bitter taste. Brian Chase, age 38, who until Friday was an operations manager at a small delivery company in Nashville, Tenn. was trying to pull a prank on a colleague and posted false information into the Wikipedia directory of John Seigenthaler Sr., a former editor of The Tennessee newspaper in Nashville. All of a sudden, the respected journalist appeared to have been involved in the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy. This was possible because of the very indulgent update system this online encyclopedia offers, which enables any user to update modify any article without having someone first check the reliability of the information submitted and without having to make any proof of qualification in the area of the updated subject. Seigenthaler recently discovered the false information posted on the Wikipedia website and immediately published an article in the USA Today newspaper, in which he expressed his disappointment with what had happened and with the fact he had no way of tracking down the person who wrote such lies about him. This task was picked up by Daniel Brandt, age 57, of San Antonio, Texas, who is a book indexer. Using information in Seigenthaler's article and some online tools, Brandt traced the computer used to make the Wikipedia entry to the delivery company in Nashville.