With

The Power of 'Open Source', 'Drive' (extract), Daniel Pink, (2009)

"Imagine it's 1995 - Blair's New Labour is on the rise, Princess Diana delivers the famous line about 'there being three people in this marriage' in her Panorama interview; Oasis and Blur are top of the pops, 'Gladiators' is Saturday night viewing, mobile phones are starting to appear, and The Bosnian War is dominating the news... "

From that context, imagine two new encyclopaedias – one just out, the other to be launched in a few years...

The first is from **Microsoft** – a powerful, profit driven company. As you know, Microsoft is already a large and profitable company. And with this year's introduction of Windows 95, it's about to become an era-defining colossus. *Microsoft will fund this encyclopaedia: it will pay professional writers and editors to craft articles on thousands of topics. Well-compensated managers will oversee the project to ensure it's completed on budget and on time. Then Microsoft will sell the encyclopaedia on CD-ROMs and later online.*

The second encyclopaedia won't come from a company. It will be created by tens of thousands of people – a ragtag band of volunteers - who write and edit articles for fun. These hobbyists won't need any special qualifications to participate. And nobody will be paid a dollar or a euro or a yen to write or edit articles. Participants will have to contribute their labour – sometimes twenty and thirty hours per week – for free. In fact, it will probably cost them money each time they take part, in loss of earnings...

"Now, think forward fifteen years: in **2010**, one of these encyclopaedias will be the largest and most popular in the world and the other will be defunct. Which is which?"

Well, we know how things turned out. On October 31, 2009, Microsoft pulled the plug on MSN Encarta, its disc and online encyclopaedia, which had been on the market for 16 years. Meanwhile, **Wikipedia** – that second model – in August **2025** – has 65,394,359 articles in some 340 languages, including over 7 million in English alone.