Creating an Open Access Bibliographic Database for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusiveness Philosophy Literature

Abstract
The “demographic challenges” faced by philosophy have attracted considerable attention in recent decades, generating a rapidly expanding literature on equity, diversity and inclusiveness (EDI) issues in Philosophy. These resources are, however, widely distributed and sometimes difficult to find. Crucial empirical reports, analyses of the issues, and recommendations for action are at risk of being ignored, past efforts duplicated, and gaps in previous work persisting in new studies.

To improve access to these resources we have developed a comprehensive online bibliography of English-language publications on EDI issues: the Philosophy Exception website. This project builds on this initiative; our aim is to reconfigure this website as a searchable database with robust filtering and sorting features so these resources are easily discoverable. The web-based platform will be designed to ensure long-term sustainability and to be easily scalable to include an expanded range of EDI resources.

Basic Information

Project Coordinator(s)
Alison Wylie, Matthew Smithdeal, Jasper Heaton

Steering Committee
- Alice Everly, graduate student in the Masters of Archival Studies and Library and Information Studies at UBC; PhD candidate (ABD) in Philosophy at McGill University
- Will Engel, Strategies, Open Education Initiatives, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, University of British Columbia
- Erin Fields, Open Education and Scholarly Communications Librarian, Digital Initiatives, Walter C. Koerner Library, University of British Columbia

Funding Amount Requested
$4,981.85

Expected Project Completion Date
July 2022

Project Description
In the COVID-19 summer of 2020 we set about assembling a bibliographic database of English-language publications on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) issues in philosophy. The work of
searching out EDI-Philosophy sources was our primary focus through the academic year. To date we have identified over 250 articles, chapters and reports on these issues, two-thirds of them published since 2010. The tempo of recent publication seems a hopeful sign that the tide is turning, even if a number of problematic gaps are clearly evident. To ensure that this literature is readily accessible to anyone who wants to understand the current state and the history of EDI work in philosophy we created the Philosophy Exception website, a bibliographic resource organized provisionally into four broad categories: “Calls to Action” that name the problems and take stock of them; “Documentation” of their varied forms and effects; efforts to understand them, “Theorizing the Philosophy Exception”; and recommendations for taking action to address them, “Interventions.”

In anticipation of publicly launching the website, we solicited feedback from a network of over a hundred colleagues working on EDI issues in philosophy, many of them authors and editors who have contributed to the EDI-philosophy literature. We asked those we contacted to advise us not only about missing or incorrect entries but also about functionality and accessibility and, looking ahead, we requested feedback on a preliminary meta-data structure that we linked to the website. Early in this process we learned that Helen Beebee and colleagues she works with in the U.K. were interested in this project so we have collaborated with them in its development. The website, as circulated for comment, can be found here:

https://philosophyexception.squarespace.com/

pword: exception!2021

In the course of developing the current (static) Philosophy Exception website we have laid the groundwork necessary for the more ambitious database project we propose here through outreach to the EDI-Philosophy community and to colleagues and relevant experts at our home institution, the University of British Columbia. Those who have reviewed the website enthusiastically endorse it as a valuable resource and have provided ample suggestions for increased functionality. One common point of feedback has been the suggestion that allowing users to easily manipulate the list of resources would increase the utility of the resource considerably. As such, the primary aim of this project is to reconfigure this static bibliographic website as a bibliographic database with robust search, filter and sort functions.

In the process of reconfiguring the Philosophy Exception bibliography as an open access online bibliographic database, a priority will be to ensure its long-term maintenance and sustainability. To this end another goal of the project we propose is to transfer the existing website to, and build the proposed database on, a UBC-based WordPress platform. This will provide us with free hosting services and ongoing technical support. Additionally, we have set up the current website with a Creative Commons license, and we plan to publish the new site and database as an open access resource with a copyright license that will allow others to reuse information and resources created by this project.

Two steering committee members, Erin Fields, Digital Initiatives Librarian, in the Koerner Library, and Will Engel, Open Education Initiatives in the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology,
have played a crucial role in helping us conceptualize the project we propose here by providing advice about database design and UBC resources for building and hosting the type of online resource we propose. They have provided us invaluable guidance in developing the technical aspects of this project and identifying areas in which we can count on UBC support given the university’s commitment to digital initiatives. Having advised on the development of current website they are familiar with the resource and have generously agreed to support our aims moving forward.

We seek funding to cover five primary costs related to these aims:

1) transitioning our existing website and its content to a UBC-based Wordpress platform;
2) designing the new website and database;
3) developing a metadata system for the database;
4) entering bibliographic data and abstracts for all sources into the database;
5) promoting and marketing of the resulting resource.

In the course of developing the initial website we have benefited greatly from advice and support from a number of contacts at UBC. These include, for example, an Anthropology PhD candidate, Eric Simons, who created the graphics we incorporated into the site and worked with us on its overall design; he will advise on the redesign as needed. By utilizing the existing design work and continuing to work with Eric on this project, we will minimize the time and expense of (2).

Additionally, Alice Everly, in the UBC graduate program in Library and Information Studies, has helped envision how an online database could work and drafted the initial meta-data schema mentioned above as a coursework project. We are continuing to work with her on the proposal for an independent for-credit project to refine and operationalize the database design available to graduate students in Library and Information Studies. Making use of the hands-on learning program will enable us to minimize the expense of (3).

**Project Impact**

With a growing recognition that academic philosophy is “demographically challenged,” as Alcoff put it in her 2013 APA Presidential Address, there has been an outpouring of studies documenting the demographic contours of philosophy as a profession, exploring a range of hypotheses aimed at explaining how and why philosophy should find itself so challenged, and advocating a variety of strategies for change. Many also consider the reciprocal implications of limited demographic diversity for the intellectual breadth and methodological richness of our field. These are invaluable resources, but they are widely dispersed, often appearing outside the ambit of mainstream philosophy publications, in danger of being overlooked and marginalized by the very patterns of disciplinary exclusion that are cause for concern.

This project will enhance the ability of the EDI-Philosophy community to identify and access literature related to cross-cutting themes. For example, the functionality we envision will build in a
meta-data structure designed to enable targeted searches for studies that focus on specific demographic categories – race and ethnicity, non-binary gender, disability, for example – or on specific issues and interventions – like student retention, teaching practice, professional experience or publishing success – that are currently distributed across the categories we have used to organize the Philosophy Exception website. Reconfiguring the Philosophy Exception as an online database will also make possible an on-going (moderated) process of crowd-sourcing new entries as the EDI-Philosophy literature continues to expand.

Our hope is that by assembling these resources into a single, unified, easily accessible database, both current and future members of the academic philosophy community can access these resources, more easily assess the current state of the literature, and conceptualize contributing to the literature. Additionally, the robust searching and filtering features of the database will more easily allow researchers to identify and address gaps in the literature and to build on existing research and data while avoiding duplication.

Ultimately, we expect that the development of this resource will encourage and support members of the community working to address the diversity and equity issues that are so persistently enduring in the field. We share Schwitzgebel’s conviction that “philosophy should be among the most diverse of the academic disciplines, not among the least diverse” (June 2020) – an exception with respect to diversity and inclusiveness among humanities disciplines and, indeed, among all but the most technical STEM fields. We hope that building on the Philosophy Exception website project will help realize this EDI vision for our discipline.

**Project Goals**

- The primary aim of the project is to reconfigure the current static bibliographic website as a database with robust search, filter and sort functions. In order to achieve this, the project team will work with members of our steering committee and their respective units to develop a meta-data structure to tag and categorize the currently accumulated resources. We will then be able to hire student support to aid in the construction of the database and data entry.
- We also aim to ensure that the bibliographic database is sustainable and maintained in the long-term. While working to build and populate the bibliographic database, a new website will be constructed on UBC-based servers that will allow a seamless integration of the database with the resulting website. This will provide us with free hosting services and ongoing technical support, not only from UBC IT units (university-wide and in the College of Arts) but also from the “open learning” and “digital initiatives” offices of the UBC Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology and the Koerner Library (respectively).

**Project Timeline**

We plan to complete the proposed project in six months, from January through July, 2022. The sequence of work on the five components of the project outlined above is as follows:

1st two months:
- transition the existing Philosophy Exception website and its contents to a UBC-based Wordpress platform;
  - design the database and a system of metadata.

2nd two months:
  - build the database;
  - enter bibliographic data and abstracts for all sources into the database;
  - test functionality through community outreach.

3rd two months:
  - launch the reconfigured Philosophy Exception website and database
  - promote and market it.

**Project Outreach**

An expanding circle of colleagues and graduate students active on EDI issues in Philosophy have been informed about the initial website development project through the process of soliciting feedback described above. In addition, we drafted an article on the Philosophy Exception website project that has been accepted for publication in a special issue of the Journal of Social Philosophy on Excellence, Diversity, and the Philosophy Exception (co-edited by Amandine Catala and Fiona Jenkins), that we anticipate will reach a wide philosophical audience when it is published.

When we launch the database project, we will send out notices to our existing list of contacts and expand on this by compiling as comprehensive a list as we can of philosophy listservs that reach philosophers committed to EDI initiatives. We will also draft posts for broad spectrum philosophy blogs such as the Daily Nous, and the APA blog, as well as blogs maintained by colleagues who are active on EDI issues, such as Eric Schwitzgebel’s Splintered Mind.

For long-term dissemination and discoverability, we will ensure that the Philosophy Exception website/database is included in a range of Open Education Resource repositories and other distribution channels that provide for wide accessibility. Our UBC library and CTLT advisors have suggested a number of these that would be appropriate for our website/database project.

**Accessibility Plan**

We undertook several accessibility audits in the course of developing the current Philosophy Exception website and we are committed to following accessibility best practices when we reconfigure it to support a searchable database. Although the new website will be primarily text-based we want to ensure its usability for all who are want to learn about and address EDI issues. Thus far, Matthew Smithdeal has served as the point person responsible for coordinating with local resources to ensure the resource in its current form is accessible and will continue to serve as such.
Two of our steering committee members, Will and Erin, are available to be consulted on accessibility resources and are able to connect us with additional resources in their units.

- Will Engel, Strategies, Open Education Initiatives, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, University of British Columbia
- Erin Fields, Open Education and Scholarly Communications Librarian, Digital Initiatives, Walter C. Koerner Library, University of British Columbia

**Evaluation Plan**

One process that we put in place at the outset and will maintain is ongoing documentation of our collective work on the Mendeley bibliography and the Philosophy Exception website. We will continue this practice and will use these records as the basis for developing a qualitative report on what worked, and what we would do differently, when we’re in a position to reflect on the project for which we seek APA support.

In addition, before launching the new database and website we will solicit feedback from those active on EDI-philosophy issues on its functionality and content, as we did with the current website. This will be an additional (initial) basis for assessing the project.

Finally, we will build into the reconfigured Philosophy Exception website and database usage-tracking metrics so we can determine which aspects of the site and its search functions draw the most traffic. Although we will have only a short run of data to draw on within the reporting period, this will allow us to assess the immediate response to the new website and patterns of use for the database.

In the longer term, the database will feature a function allowing database users to recommend new entries and search terms, in addition to providing us general advice about the accessibility and functionality of the site. This, in addition to usage statistics, will provide us a basis for continuous assessment of the functionality and success of the project.

**Online Presence**

The current version of the website is temporarily hosted on Squarespace; however, the final form of The Philosophy Exception website/database will be hosted on UBC servers, an option recommended by the UBC Library and CTLT advisors we consulted because it will be free of charge and will ensure that we have substantial ongoing technical support.

The current version of the resource is available here:

[https://philosophyexception.squarespace.com/](https://philosophyexception.squarespace.com/)
pword: exception!2021

The final website URL will not contain squarespace.

[https://philosophyexception.squarespace.com/](https://philosophyexception.squarespace.com/)
**Budget Narrative**

We seek funding to cover five primary costs related to these aims:

1) transitioning our existing website and its content to a UBC-based Wordpress platform;

2) designing the new website and database;

3) developing a metadata system for the database;

4) entering bibliographic data and abstracts for all sources into the database;

5) promoting and marketing of the resulting resource.

We have consulted with Erin Fields and Will Engel from our steering committee to arrive at the estimated number of hours for each item in the budget. They have been extensively involved in supporting numerous projects of this size and involving these tasks.

The rates listed for each position are based on standard rate codes used across the institution as stipulated by union regulations.

**Salary for graduate student project management/coordination:**

Approximately 100hrs @ $34.44/hour [Graduate Rate Code 1]

($1000 has been committed to supplement this funding from Canada Research Chair fund (Alison Wylie))

A considerable amount of time will need to be spent coordinating, guiding, and instructing new employees working on the project, managing communications with external colleagues, completing necessary paperwork, and other administrative/management tasks.

**Salary for data entry:**

Approximately 50hrs @ $20.33/hr [Undergraduate Rate Code 1]

$8/hour to be subsidized through UBC Work-Learn

All of the bibliographic data and abstracts from currently accumulated sources will need to be input to the database once constructed. Additionally, entries will need to be tagged and categorized appropriately based on the meta-data structure that is developed for the database.

**Salary for graduate student to do graphic design:**

Approximately 15hrs @ $30/hr [Graduate Student Graphic Design Rate Code]

We expect the number of hours for graphic design to be minimized as we can use much of the design work from the current website; however, graphic design work will need to be performed to adapt the current design work to the new website and develop new work for the database.
Salary for undergraduate to construct new website and database on UBC servers, including migration of current content:

55hrs @ $20.33/hr [Undergraduate Rate Code 1]

$8/hour to be subsidized through UBC Work-Learn

Salary graduate student to develop and support the implementation of promotion plan:

30hrs @ $34.44/hr [Graduate Rate Code 1]

$8/hour to be subsidized through UBC Work-Learn

**Other Funding Sources**

Alison Wylie has committed to cover the costs of the domain name registration and, as needed, the Squarespace hosting services for the Philosophy Exception website from discretionary research funds that she is able to access as a Canada Research Chair, Tier 1. She will also draw on this fund for complementary support of the project manager/coordinator position, for which she has already committed an initial $1000.

Additionally, we are working with Alice Everly, a graduate student in the Masters of Archival Studies and Library and Information Studies at UBC to develop “For-credit Hands-on Learning” project, making use of the MLIS program’s provisions for “experiential learning.” This will allow her to build on her previous work with the project and develop the meta-data structure for the database, while earning course credit towards her degree. This will require no funding from the project.

As we have indicated, by Erin Fields and Will Engel will continue to advise on this project, in their capacity as professional staff in the UBC Library and CTLT who have a mandate to nurture open education and digital initiatives.

Finally, we will utilize UBC’s Work-Learn program when recruiting graduate and undergraduate student support for the project. This will minimize the number of hours needed for the project coordinator to recruit additional student support and the Work-Learn program will subsidize $8/hour of the student wages.