10 September 2017
American Philosophical Association
Small Grants Program

Dear Grants Committee:

I am writing to issue a final report on the progress made possible by our recently concluded APA grant for the project entitled “An enduring platform for the Online Bibliography of Environmental Thought (OBET)”. First, I am grateful to the Society for funding this project, and am excited about the recent redeployment of OBET on its new platform (located at www.isee-obet.org); I and my team are proud to recognize the support of the APA in getting this off the ground. The International Society for Environmental Ethics (ISEE) was also generous with funding the project in its first incarnation between 2009-2014.

The plan of the project as represented in my grant application had seven features, plus a promise of outreach and advertisement.

1. withdraw OBET from its previous host
   This was accomplished, as mentioned in the first year report.

2. acquire programmers and develop a plan for a new platform
   This was accomplished, as mentioned in the first year report.

3. consult with PhilPapers about integration and arrival at an agreement
   This was accomplished, although (as mentioned in the first year report) the result of the consultation is that PhilPapers integration is on hiatus indefinitely because they no longer aid in data entry.

4. develop the software platform and acquire a webserver
   This has been accomplished, as mentioned in the second year report.
(5) deploy OBET
OBET was successfully deployed in May 2016, as mentioned in the second year report, at 75% functionality. In July 1 of this year OBET was successfully redeployed at 100% functionality.

(6) obtain interns for data entry and begin enlarging the database
In 2016-2017 we retained 9 interns for data entry. They have made possible the growth of the database from 0 references when the project began in 2015, to 14,370 today, making OBET the second largest database in the world for research and thought on the interaction between humans and nature, second only to PhilPapers which has 14,929 references. A further 8,500 references are ready for data entry, which will be accomplished in the present academic year; this will make OBET the largest such database in the world. It is already the broadest in scope, incorporating philosophy, ethics, theology, conservation, ecology, sociology, anthropology, psychology, education, art, literature, economics, politics, history, and lifestyle issues as these relate to environmental issues and ideas.

(7) integrate with PhilPapers
As mentioned above, this is on indefinite hiatus because of unforeseeable changes in PhilPapers’ policies. We do not depend on such integration for the future success and utility of OBET. Integration might happen in the future but would require funding.

To recap the major accomplishments made possible by this grant in historical context: Before our application to APA, OBET had been housed on a rented platform whose cost was increasing regularly, was not ideally suited for our purposes, and had recently informed us that they were going out of business. As of our APA application, OBET had gone on indefinite hiatus due to these issues—we needed an independent platform that was catered to our needs and did not require steep rental fees. Thanks to the APA grant, we were able to program OBET from scratch, from the back-end database to the graphical user interface. Also thanks to the APA grant, we were able to populate OBET with all of its current 14,370 references dealing with the interaction between humans and nature. The “About” page in OBET credits the APA in perpetuity for making all of this possible—the next . The benefits of the APA grant will continue, as the remainder of this report will outline.

We have changed plans for outreach and advertisement. In our application for the APA grant, this was to be accomplished during the granting period. However, given that the platform was developed from scratch, we have decided to delay advertising until a 6-month Beta testing period is complete. Thus in June 2017 we notified several parties, including the entire leadership of the International Society for Environmental Ethics,
and asked them to report on any bugs and suggest improvements to OBET. In response to this we have already created new features on the site, such as creating “About” and “History” pages, paginating results, individualizing sort and display preferences, and enhancing browse capability. Other improvements are forthcoming, including a user guide, duplicate screening, and improved formatting for exports. By December of this year, we will conclude the six month Beta test, and then enact the three planned means of outreach and advertisement (at least): (1) Facebook advertising (the Facebook page is already up and has 1,054 followers without any advertising), (2) search engine optimization, and (3) notification of relevant parties, especially academic units and organizations involved in environmental philosophy, science, education, or awareness.

In addition, references included in OBET will continue to increase substantially, in three main ways. First, the substantial backlog of references in the pre-2008 ISEE Bibliography will continue to be processed and entered into OBET manually, as we have been doing ever since 2014. At current rates of data entry, this process will be complete by 2021. Second, additional environmentally relevant periodicals (referred to as “envirojournals” in OBET) will be added to the list of those whose full contents are annexed to OBET each year. Currently the full contents of 21 journals and magazines are in this list; 23 others are on the docket to be added. We will continually be on the lookout for new periodicals that are appropriate for OBET. Third, we will keep up continuously with the annual contents of both the ISEE newsletter bibliographies (whose entries are submitted by ISEE members) and all current periodicals included in OBET’s envirojournal list.

In summary, the grant from APA to establish OBET has been vitally successful. I and my team are very grateful to APA for enabling the rejuvenation of the Online Bibliography of Environmental Thought.

Sincerely,

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OBET
Online Bibliography of Environmental Thought
The internet gateway to ideas on the relationship between humans and nature
A free, cooperative resource.