2 October 2015
American Philosophical Association
Small Grants Program

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to report on the progress of my current APA grant for our 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 upcoming redeployment of OBET on its new platform; I and my team will be proud to be able to recognize the support of the APA in getting this off the ground. I should mention that the International Society for Environmental Ethics (ISEE) was also generous with funding the project in its first incarnation between 2009-2014. I am also grateful for the recent extension of the grant to 6/30/2016, for reasons I’ll describe below.

The plan of the project as represented in my grant application was, in chronological order, to (1) withdraw OBET from its previous host, (2) acquire programmers and develop a plan for a new platform, (3) consultation with PhilPapers about integration and arrival at an agreement, (4) develop the software platform and acquire a webserver, (5) deploy OBET with its current database of >23,000 entries, (6) obtain interns for data entry and begin enlarging the database, (7) integrate with PhilPapers, and (8) administer an outreach and evaluation plan.

So far we have completed #1-4, and we expect #5 to be completed over the next week or two (see attached picture of the new front page with search box). Our timeline was protracted compared to our original projections because the programming, originally estimated by the programmers at 4 months, took 12 months. Consequently we are eight months behind on completing #6-8, which is why I requested the extension. The reasons for the delay include the programmers’ miscalculation as to how much code would be required to create full functionality, and my own insistence on some advanced functions such as customizeable views, advanced
search and sort options, scope for integration with professional journals, and scalability such that the database could increase over an order of magnitude with no compromise in efficiency. I also have been committed to keeping OBET free of charge for users, so I have required all tools to be programmed from scratch rather than using existing tools that can be rented or bought (such as membership registration protocols and security measures to protect both the database and users). I am very pleased with the “beta” result we have now, and believe it is quite suitable for deployment. After initial deployment within two weeks, additional, nonessential features will be added piecemeal over the next few months. As this project is operating under the aegis of CUNY’s Center for Computational Infrastructure for the Sciences (CCiS), any required additional security measures or other updates can be added in the future by CCiS staff (mainly computer science students), and so I expect this truly to be an enduring platform for OBET as the title of my APA grant indicates. I expect to remain the Curator of OBET indefinitely.

The plan for integration with PhilPapers has also become more complicated than I originally anticipated. The PhilPapers team (1) no longer does data entry and so would require that we either set up an automated system or enter OBET references into PhilPapers ourselves with tools they provide, (2) requires subcategorization to a greater extent than we provide in OBET, which likewise would have to be done by us before integration, and (3) are only interested in the explicitly philosophical entries in OBET (not policy, conservation, lifestyle, and other sorts of entries) and so we would not be able to integrate the database as a whole. We will deal with these hurdles, but integration might be delayed till after the APA grant period is complete.

The plans for acquiring interns for data entry, outreach, and evaluation, all remain substantially as they were presented in my APA grant application. We have solicited interns and will utilize them as soon as OBET is deployed, and the outreach and evaluation plans will be carried out in 2016.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

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