Report to the APA board

Award: $1000 from the Berry Fund

Awardee: Sarah Wieten


I am writing a history of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, both as an important effort in public philosophy and as an example of a long-lasting internet institution. The SEP was started in 1995 at the Center for the Study of Language and Information, and continues to be updated today. The CSLI in turn was founded in 1983 by researchers from Stanford, as well as SRI International and Xerox.

The history of the SEP provides an interesting foil to other kinds of contemporary academic information sharing. A contrast that I am particularly interested in, given my work on meta-research, is academic scientific journals, which, though they have in recent years migrated online, tend to function as if they were still print journals, avoiding many possibly beneficial modifications afforded by the online medium.

I have reached out to members of the Center for the Study of Language and Information, where SEP was housed until recently and they are enthusiastic about such a project. I have also spoken to many other early subject editors including David Chalmers and Sally Haslanger.

Work on this project is on-going. I travelled to Stanford in spring of 2023 to complete a first round of interviews, including Ed Zalta, Emma Pease and Uri Nodelman, and archive research.

As this award was made relatively recently (June 20, 2023), the award funds are not yet spent on this project. Additional interviews and work on the draft manuscript will take place during my research leave Jan-May of 2024, and the Berry Fund award will go towards project related expenses during this time including travel, accommodation, transcription services and archive costs. I expect that the funds from the Berry award will be spent before Sept 30, 2024.

In addition to the Berry Fund, I have received £2000 from Durham University Philosophy Research Support fund, and have applied to other APA funds for additional support.