Planning 2017-2020

www.scholarlyhub.org

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Introduction

Stichting ScholarlyHub [SSH] seeks to redefine scholarly social networks. It will fund, promote and stimulate a new digital environment [the Hub] that will be member-run, a non-profit portal for sharing and improving scholarly communications among scholars and between scholars and the public at large. It thus seeks to provide a dynamic, multidisciplinary, peer-to-peer, open-access environment that combines traditional and innovative quality control procedures, pre- and post-publication services, and opportunities for network-based collaboration, publication, mentorship, learning and debate. Its successful development will make scholarship across disciplines visible and accessible, foster the sustainable preservation of research and protect scholars' independence from conglomerate publishers' market-oriented needs on the one hand and myopic government agendas on the other.

While the actual configuration of the Hub will be determined through an ongoing discussion among its members, its ethos is that of an open, not-for-profit global learned society, supported by modest, sliding-scale membership fees. All members have an equal voice and enjoy the site's full range of services, including personal websites, data storage, in-mail, job and conference wikis, mentorship programs, teaching aids and access to a variety of review protocols. The Hub will not sell users' data and will be run for and by its community, not for profit.

1.   Mission/vision

Human curiosity and creativity flourish in a safe but critical space, for the benefit of all. At present, however, such spaces are the dwindling right of the few, while intellectual merit, equal opportunity and straightforward efficiency decreasingly define the scholarly effort. Ostensible solutions, such as the major academic social networking sites, are mostly repositories backed by venture capitalists, whose commitment is above all to profit, not science or repairing an unjust academic system. They also have a limited social-network element at best. At the same time, scientific publications are increasingly produced, managed and sold by a small group of large conglomerates whose agenda is dictated by profit margins and performance indicators meant to satisfy shareholders, not improve the quality of science and its dissemination or the wellbeing of society. In this reality, the price of publishing has risen dramatically (though not its actual production costs), further depleting research budgets, saddling taxpayers and academic institutions with a far larger bill than necessary, limiting access to scholarship by placing it behind expensive paywalls and promoting a hierarchy of publication venues based on questionable metrics. Last, populist local and regional politics have been forcing research agendas in certain directions by reallocating funding. In doing so they have impoverished the notion of scientific relevance, narrowed the horizons of science and rendered vulnerable numerous scientific fields.

1.2   Goals

To counter these trends, SSH will promote a sustainable alternative for bringing scholars closer together in an otherwise fragmented and often biased academic world, whose pressures are too often unrelated to the pursuit of quality research and teaching. Above all, it will put members (and not metrics or money or agendas imposed from the political top down) in charge of determining what quality scholarship is, thereby providing society at large with the broadest and most accessible panorama of current research.

1.3   Strategy

SSH will fundraise and coordinate efforts to build the Hub and attract a consistent membership for it.

The Hub's users will be able create personal, thematic, project-related, associational or institutional profiles and populate them with scholarly content they have generated as they see fit. These are stored in a searchable open-access archive, and are directly viewable and downloadable from the portal by anyone. Members can join existing networks and/or create new ones, and engage in any and all activities on the platform, from recommending articles and creating events, mentoring, following and contributing to conference wikis and discussion boards, to peer-reviewing and publishing articles, to curating journals and—crucially—setting up new virtual research platforms and initiatives.

2.   Current situation

At present, SSH is registered in the k.v.k. (70017492) and operates a basic portal (www.scholarlyhub.org) that communicates about our plans, the people involved and our fundraising efforts. SSH is present on social media through Facebook and Twitter, both of which are used to communicate about our goals and activities, and promote our fundraising campaign.

2.1   Activities of the organisation

Phase 1) January to November 2017
SSH's first activity was to person its advisory board, create a basic design for the future Hub, budget it, and onboard the basic staff that will help launch it, plan the media and funding campaign, and create the communications infrastructure necessary for it.

Phase 2) November 2017 to June 2018
The main goal of SSH, once the basic website has been launched, is to draw attention to the Hub in the NGO, media and research worlds and encourage people to donate to the establishment of the digital infrastructure it will require. The basic development plan is envisaged as costing around Euro 500.000, an amount needed for writing the code for the website and creating some organisational infrastructure that will be stable throughout the next phase (office space, basic salaries, travel allowance and equipment).

Phase 3) June 2018 to June 2019
Once the is a strong indication that the required funds can be secured, SSH will begin reaching out to possible collaborators among NGOs, and across academic and educational fields, including learned societies and research projects, whose specific needs we want to identify and address through the portal. This will be the basis of our coding brief. Furthermore, the onboarding of a sufficient amount of members will become the most crucial aspect of making a sustainable Hub. This onboarding will become our key activity, and will go hand in hand with developing the Hub's basic infrastructure.

Phase 4) July 2019 to September 2020Further features will be premised on stable and further onboarding of members. It is up to the members to decide how to run the Hub. SSH will be managing it accordingly and coordinating the relevant discussion between communities and infrastructures developers. It will therefore be at this phase too that the governance and organization structure of the Hub (but not of SSH itself) will be determined.

3.   Future

The future of SSH is dedicated to providing scholars around the globe with a new, non-profit, diverse, inclusive and critical environment in which to thrive. It will continuously seek to develop or appropriate the best sustainable technologies for doing so, and to protect science and scholarship from becoming vulnerable to any external threats. It will also seek to expand the circle of collaborators in the world of education and academe and answer the needs of any science-using community.

4.   Organisation

Stichting ScholarlyHub is registered in the k.v.k. (no. 70017492), RSIN 8581.05.330, and is applying for ANBI-status. It is overseen by a board of six people and currently has one director. It can be contacted by email: open@scholarlyhub.org or mail: Daniel Stalpertstraat 14-III, 1072 XE Amsterdam.

4.1   Management

At present there is one director running SholarlyHub: Prof. dr. Guy Geltner
His activities are overseen by a board of six members, as listed in the memorandum of association and the k.v.k registration.

4.2   Employees
SH currently has no regular employees. It relies on volunteers as well as people carrying out ad hoc assignments. If and when the fundraising campaign provides the relevant resources, it will seek to hire employees to deal with its administration, communications, IT, marketing and finance needs, as well as onboarding members and organizations.

5.   Finances

Management and the use of funds
The foundation currently has no funds but intends to raise Euro 500.000 in the first instance to create its scholarly communications infrastructure (the Hub). It will require further funds to maintain its own administration. All funds are intended for maintaining and developing the site and members' activities, and not for making profit.

Obtaining funds
Stichting SH will obtain funds to create ScholarlyHub through donations from individuals and philanthropic organisations. The hub itself, once created, will be sustained by modest membership fees.