

About the Knowledge Standards Foundation

The encyclosphere will be the universal network of encyclopedias—an ownerless, leaderless, centerless knowledge commons. Like the blogosphere, it will be a decentralized series of “feeds,” but feeds of encyclopedias and individual articles posted anywhere online. Data from these feeds can be aggregated by different services, then developers will use the aggregated data to build encyclopedia reader apps, with none being privileged or “official.”

What Is an Encyclosphere? ~ Redistribution of information & removal of gatekeepers has become a moral imperative. An encyclosphere (this word is our neologism) is a decentralized Internet network of encyclopedias. Think of how blogging works. Whole blog farms, individual blogs, and individual blog posts are organized in useful ways in a network called the blogosphere and its defining technical standards, RSS and Atom, right? So also, we propose to organize collections of encyclopedias, individual encyclopedias, and individual encyclopedia articles in an encyclosphere, defined by brand new technical standards. There is more to it, but that is it in a nutshell. The Knowledge Standards Foundation, a non-profit, is busy organizing OSS code and studying how to design an encyclosphere.

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Knowledge Standards Foundation (KSF)

Description:

The Knowledge Standards Foundation was founded in September 2019 by Wikipedia ex-founder Larry Sanger and a growing team. We are located in central Ohio and are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We are very serious indeed about our founding principles.

Stakeholder(s):

Donors :

We will take donations only from individuals and foundations (not for-profit corporations or governments), and we will carefully review the sourcing of any large donations. We are also committed to keeping the encyclospere every bit as politically neutral as the blogosphere or the DNS (website naming and locating) system.

KSF Alpha Crew :

Encyclospere.org (the website of the Knowledge Standards Foundation) is in pre-alpha. We are looking for alpha testers and volunteers to help us build this. Nobody, including Larry, is getting paid to work on this at this point. Here are some people who have volunteered (we'll add names as new people arrive, and remove names as they fail to engage). This list hasn't been updated in a while, and there have been many additions. Please stand by for an updated version.

Larry Sanger :

Founder | Executive Director ~ Dr. Sanger is Executive Director of the Knowledge Standards Foundation. His Internet career has been inspired by the thought that we can massively benefit humanity by coming together to share knowledge—we need only discover the best way to do so. He is also very much concerned about preserving freedom of speech and the digital autonomy and democracy that defined the early days of the Internet. A self-styled “online knowledge organizer,” Dr. Sanger grew up in Seattle and Anchorage and began his career by earning B.A. (Reed College) as well as M.A. and Ph.D. (Ohio State), all in philosophy. His professional specializations were early modern philosophy and epistemology (the theory of knowledge). But instead of becoming a professor, he became co-founder of Nupedia and then its successor, Wikipedia. He then went through a long series of mostly nonprofit projects, including a stint of teaching at Ohio State, theorizing for the Digital Universe Foundation (leading to the Encyclopedia of Earth), designing and co-founding the educational projects WatchKnowLearn and ReadingBear, both widely used by teachers and parents. He spent some time on a for-profit news summary project, Infobitt, advising the encyclopedia of American politics, Ballotpedia, and from late 2017 until September 2019, as CIO of Everipedia, the blockchain encyclopedia. Dr. Sanger is invited to speak around the world on a variety of Internet-related topics, and his writing has appeared on TheNextWeb, Wired, and other outlets, but especially the LarrySanger.org blog, where he talks about topics ranging from Internet theory, to pure philosophy, to education. The Sangers are homeschoolers. Larry taught his two boys to read at a very early age and made them many educational PowerPoints (later made into videos). Larry is also an avid fiddle player in the Irish traditional style.

John Hampson :

PM, Marketing

Terrence Yang :
Advising, Legal

Dave Erasmus :
Video

Jon W. :
Advising

Andrei Vizi :
Design

Henry Sanger :
Tech

Mike Elias :
Advising

Nicholas Resendez :
Tech, Social media

J.-François Gariépy :
Social media, Writing, Legal, Advising

Prospective KSF Alpha Crew Members :
Expressed interest, should be here (or if not, soon):

Tim Francisco :
Advising (e.g. identity)

Agah S. :
Design

Anatoly Rosencrantz :
Tech

Edward Martins-Berki :
Advising, Writing/Editing

Panos Vasilopoulos :
Tech

Iranjeet Singh :
Tech

Tom Siebert :
Advising, Writing/Editing

Peyman Razaghi :
Tech

Youssef Sabry :
Tech

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Stakeholders (continued)

Patrick Durusau :
Writing/Editing

Alonzo Zabel :
Social media, Tech

B. :
Tech, Social media

Vision

Redistribution of information & removal of gatekeepers

Mission

To help bring the encyclospHERE into being

Values

Standards: What we want to build is not a product, but a centerless network, a public knowledge commons defined strictly by standards, that will, like the internet itself, hit critical mass and take on an independent life of its own.

Empowerment: This will empower the ordinary person and undermine tyrants.

Principles: Founding Principles ~ Everyone has the right to contribute to our information landscape. The encyclopedia network we aim to create will be so potentially powerful—articulating what are the most credible views on every subject—that it is unusually important to ensure that the enterprise is as upright and incorruptible as possible. Therefore, the Foundation will declare from the outset that we are committed to the following principles.

Independence: We will not be beholden to any publisher, government, corporation, religion, or other organization. All our work will be done with nothing less than the general public service in mind. There will be no special favors done for big donors.

Neutrality: We will take proactive and extensive steps to ensure neutrality in all respects. As to politics, we will not favor the left or the right; as to religion, we will favor neither atheism, nor Christianity, nor any other religious attitude; as to popularity, we will not favor mainstream views over minority views; and we will not favor any nationality or language, with the standards explicitly designed to support fully international efforts from the very beginning.

Credibility: We strongly wish to support the most trusted and distinguished institutions and experts, from societies around the world, in their desire to communicate clearly to the public about what is known, and about which articles they deem to be most credible. This is why a rating system is necessary.

Free Speech: Ordinary, undistinguished scholars will be able to post whatever they like to their article feed, just as anyone can publish a blog. Of course, app makers may judge the work of the public in whatever way they deem best. Ratings and category metadata should help.

Responsibility: The standards will allow governments, corporations, and others to identify to the public any content they regard as illegal (copyright infringement, privacy violations, sedition, hate speech, etc.), directing publishers in their jurisdiction to take it down. Of course, publishers in other jurisdictions will be able to ignore directives that do not apply to them.

Openness: Our deliberative work will always be out in the open and the standards documents will be in the public domain.

Decentralization: Our primary mission is focused on providing tools for a decentralized network of independent actors, not to serve as a central hub of activity. In this way, we want the encyclospHERE to resemble older Internet networks.

Technical Standards

Get publishers and developers to agree on a set of technical standards for article formatting and metadata

Stakeholder(s)

Citizens :

Risky But Necessary: A Citizen-Funded Foundation ~ The Foundation faces a difficult task: to get publishers and developers to agree on a set of technical standards (concerning article formatting and metadata) that will make it possible for the encyclosphere to come into existence—but, most importantly, to do so while remaining free of undue influence by any corporation or government. For this reason, we will not permit participation in our Board of Directors by publishers, government agents, or any others known or discovered to have a conflict of interest. Over time we intend to recruit board members from communities of technologists, retired editors, writers, academics, and perhaps others, as long as they have no such conflicts of interest.

Editors

Writers

Academics

Developers

Publishers :

Publishers might still, of course, become members of the Foundation in some capacity (formal or informal), because the Foundation will be serving them as well as the public. But permitting them to hold positions of leadership, or to have significant influence over the decision-making apparatus of the Foundation threatens to create a dynamic that would once again centralize epistemic authority. Therefore, the Board will not allow that.

a. Articles

Post encyclopedia articles.

Stakeholder(s):

Writers :

start writing. Post encyclopedia articles on your blogs, an existing encyclopedia site (if they allow it), or wherever.

Funders :

But what about funding? He who pays the piper calls the tune, and while it seems it might be possible to get funding from a number of different competing corporate sources, those sources might seek to privilege their own needs over those of the general public. For this reason, the Foundation will reject all funding from corporate and governmental sources. We will accept funding from individuals, to be sure, and we hope individuals will form a solid base of financial support of the KSF.

Encyclopedists :

Join In! We want to get everyone to work as soon as possible in what we hope will be an ever-growing encyclosphere community. On what? On activities that will move us from the initial announcement in August 2021 to a mature, constantly updated, and completely distributed and decentralized system of exhaustively catalogued and rated encyclopedia articles (the encyclosphere). But what activities would those be? What can you do? We have ideas for lots of different sorts of participants. Let's not call these participants "volunteers" because that implies a central nonprofit project. The Foundation is not-for-profit, and it does have volunteers, but the encyclosphere will have participants, or enthusiasts, just as the blogosphere does. You wouldn't call a blog writer a "volunteer" for the blogosphere, so you shouldn't call an encyclopedia article writer, who posts articles to a public feed, a "volunteer." Such people are encyclopedists. Anyway, we do need to get organized so we can get to work on many things.

b. Ratings

Rate encyclopedia articles.

Stakeholder(s):

Experts :

start rating encyclopedia articles (and publish your ratings on social media). If you really want to do this

and to help, let the KSF know and we'll give you feedback about requirements, things to try out, etc.

c. Promotion

Share and promote using #encyclosphere.

Stakeholder(s):

Social Media Users :

Whenever you are sharing anything related to this whole movement on social media, use the hashtag to build familiarity.

d. Interviews

Invite Larry on news programs.

Stakeholder(s):

Media Golks :

interview Larry, invite him on your news program, video series, or blog. He promises to be interesting.

e. Databases

Create databases of encyclopedia articles.

Stakeholder(s):

Developers :

Then let's share both the code and the data generated (both as a downloadable database and a queryable

API). Let us know if you'd like ideas for requirements. If you already have such a database, please get in touch and let's talk next steps.

f. Outreach

Conduct outreach to experts.

Stakeholder(s):

Connectors :

Connectors of all sorts: outreach to experts. If you know interested people, reach out to them and introduce them to the project and encourage them to

contact the KSF. Have them subscribe to our announcement list.

Experts

g. Questions

Address questions about every aspect of this endeavor.

Stakeholder(s):**Thinkers :**

discuss, discuss, discuss. We're going to do this right. There are many deep, difficult, and important questions about every aspect of this endeavor. For this reason, the main method of deliberation about the

standards will be via our forum. Our seminar will drive activity on this forum. Mutual respect and staying on-topic will be requirements for participation.

h. Contact & Advancement

Get in touch and consider what can be done to advance the cause.

Stakeholder(s):**Encyclosphere Enthusiasts :**

also get in touch. We'll try to give you some pointers depending on what you might want to do. Write to the KSF.

Administrative Information

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