Organization Identifier Project: A Way Forward

Summary

There is a community need for an independent, open, non-profit organization identifier registry. This framing document, prepared by the Executive Directors of Crossref, DataCite, and ORCID, suggests a way to move forward. We propose forming a Working Group to develop a plan for the operation and governance of a registry. In developing this document we pulled from our own experiences in building and maintaining open identifier registries and recent thinking on the topic of open infrastructure.[1] We are committed to working with the community on this initiative, starting with forming a Working Group to explore the requirements for an independent, sustainable, non-profit registry. This paper will be circulated among community stakeholders prior to the PIDapalooza meeting in November. It will be open for feedback until mid-November after which the Working Group will be established to take on responsibility for the project.

The Organization Identifier Project

The project is intended to be community governed and to serve the research and scholarly community by providing open, unique and persistent identifiers for organizations involved in research. We recognize that there are many existing providers in this space, but there is no solution available today that provides resolvable, persistent and unique identifiers for organizations involved in research that can be used to describe researcher affiliations[2]. Among the gaps that have been identified during our consultations this year are transparent, non-profit governance and the ability for organizations to manage their own records. We describe use cases and a proposed scope of services in a separate document. The Working Group will be tasked with refining this gap analysis and determining project scope along with a sustainable business model and governance structure.

Draft Framing Principles

We propose the following draft framing principles   as a starting point for the Working Group in articulating the plan for an organization identifier registry. The Working Group will be responsible for reviewing,refining and revising these draft framing principles.

1. The registry will support reliable, open, permanent, and unambiguous identification of organizations with whom researchers are affiliated.

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[1] See for example, *Bilder G, Lin J, Neylon C (2015) Principles for Open Scholarly Infrastructure-v1, retrieved [date], http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.1314859*, and Haak L (2015) We Won't Be Sold.
[2] *Demeranville, Tom; Brown, Josh; Fenner, Martin; Cruse, Patricia; Haak, Laure; Paglione, Laura; Bilder, Geoffrey; Lin, Jennifer; Pentz, Ed (2016): Organisation Identifiers - Minimum viable product requirements*, https://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.3479141.v1

2. The registry will not be limited by institutional, stakeholder, corporate entity type, business, geographic, or national boundaries.
3. Participation in the registry and access to its services will be based on transparent and non-discriminatory terms of use.
4. The identifier and metadata supporting the disambiguation of organizations will be available as Open Data using a CC-0 license.
5. The registry will have a sustainable business model based on revenue generation consistent with its mission to ensure its long-term openness, persistence, and reliability.
6. All software developed for the the registry will be publicly released under an Open Source Software license approved by the Open Source Initiative. For the software it adopts, the initiative will prefer Open Source.
7. The registry will be governed by representatives from a broad cross-section of stakeholders drawn from the community it serves, the majority of whom represent not-for-profit organizations, and will strive for maximal transparency by publicly posting summaries of all meetings and provide financial reports.
8. The registry will have an explicit living will and, if acquired, it will continue to operate under these principles.

Governance and Operational Options

The Working Group will be responsible for developing a plan for the project that will address how to establish sustainable registry operations with a governance structure informed by the principles outlined above. In addition, the Working Group will define the scope of a minimal viable product (MVP) for the registry and how to move with efficiency to launch. We recognize the challenges and costs of forming a new organization and the importance of transparent governance, and recommend the Working Group consider a range of possible options for operations and governance, including sharing operational resources with existing organizations or forming a new organization.

Start-up Funding

Crossref, DataCite, and ORCID are strongly committed to supporting an independent registry informed by the principles outlined above. We will donate staff time and/or financial resources to the Working Group to move the initiative forward.

- **Initial resources and funding:** The Working Group is charged with developing the initial support plan for the registry. The Working Group should consider whether dedicated resources (e.g., legal and project management) are needed to supplement volunteer efforts, and whether community donations are needed to support Working Group administration and communication.
- **Start-up funding:** The Working group is charged with detailing what start up funding will be needed to move the project from planning stages to an operational service, and making recommendations on how to fund this phase of the project.We note that

repayment of any start up loans should only be expected to start after there is a comfortable surplus/net income and some cash reserves for stability which based on experience with Crossref, DataCite, and ORCID would be after 10-15 years of operation.

- **Ongoing funding:** The Working Group is charged with defining a business model for how the registry will sustain operations for the long term. For example, this could be through membership fees or by partnering with existing organizations. The break-even revenue target may be after a minimum of 5 - 7 years of operation.

Next Steps

To move the initiative forward we will form a community Working Group in time for the group to have its first meeting before the end of 2016. The Working Group's main charge is to develop a plan to launch and sustain an open, independent, non-profit organization identifier registry to facilitate the disambiguation of researcher affiliations.

- **Working Group Remit**: To develop a plan to launch and sustain an open, independent, non-profit organization identifier registry that focuses on disambiguating researcher affiliations. This will include a business, governance and operations model, scope of an MVP, start up funding requirements and a plan to raise the required funds. The initial term of the Working Group is one year. Working Group members will be volunteers and when possible their organizations will provide in-kind and/or direct financial support for the planning phase. The Working Group will establish appropriate sub-groups when needed to address specific issues.
- **Working Group Membership**: We recommend the group be comprised of 10-12 people representing a broad range of stakeholders who endorse the principles and processes outlined in this document and are prepared to contribute to moving the initiative forward. The group will include Crossref, DataCite, and ORCID as existing open persistent identifier infrastructure providers. In addition, we suggest the group include a broad cross-section of stakeholder groups involved in organization identifiers. Initial group membership will be decided by the executive directors of Crossref, DataCite, and ORCID, and thereafter will be transferred to the Working Group chair, who will be elected by its membership.
- Expressions of interest to be on the Working Group should be sent to oi-project@orcid.org by November 21st 2016 with a short explanation of why they want to join the Working Group and their perspective on the issues outlined in this framing document.

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