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TCA Letter to the Editor

Author:
Heather Morrison

Email:
heatherm@eln.bc.ca

Organization:
British Columbia Electronic Library Network

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Update to Review on the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

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Update to Review on the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

by Heather Morrison & Mike McIntosh

As we mentioned earlier, SEP is very much a work in progress. Since our review appeared, several changes have been made to SEP which address the concerns we raised. The authors were very impressed with the editor's desire to improve SEP based on the review, and subsequent discussions with the authors. If only all publishers were this responsive!

A bug was discovered in the Webglimpse search interface which affected the search results discussed in the review. The bug was repaired and the need for using capitalized boolean operators was also eliminated. Searching SEP with Webglimpse will be more transparent for new users and better results are returned.

SEP has commissioned an article on Philosophy of Language, and is in the process of arranging one on Philosophy of Mind, addressing our comment about the shortage of such articles in the Encyclopedia.

With respect to the lack of general articles, SEP editor Ed Zalta provided an interesting explanation. When SEP was first written, it was designed for professional scholars. it came as a surprise to find how many others were interested in using this open access tool - high school students, undergrads, and the general public.

It is primarily this new, unintended audience which is most likely to want to read the general articles. There may be a lesson here for the open access movement as a whole. Perhaps the reasons many have not sought out this kind of resource in the past is not lack of interest, but rather lack of access. This underscores the authors' belief that this resource is useful for libraries of all types, and it would make sense for all to participate in the funding effort.