Appendix 1a: Humanities Commons Charter
DRAFT -- last updated 23 May 2014

*Humanities Commons* is a federated network of Commons In A Box (CBOX) based scholarly networks, operated as a project of the Modern Language Association (MLA). Its purpose is to provide a platform for communication and collaboration among scholars across the humanities, as well as to support innovative practices, publications, and projects in and across their fields.

**Membership**

Membership in *Humanities Commons* is open to any organization with a primary (though not necessarily exclusive) interest in the humanities. Member organizations share in the ongoing responsibility for maintaining a robust and innovative network, both through financial contributions and through shared governance.

Membership is available to scholarly and professional associations, college- and university-based networks, publishers and other organizations engaged in scholarly communication activities, and independent projects. Members have the option to make use of a range of services provided for *Humanities Commons* by the MLA. Services available to a particular member type may be limited.¹ Such services include but are not limited to:

- **Full hosting and support:** the MLA installs, hosts, and maintains the member organization’s instance of CBOX and any modifications or customizations.
- **Hosting and limited support:** the MLA installs and hosts the member organization’s instance of CBOX and maintains the functioning of the core software, but the organization manages and maintains any modifications or customizations.
- **Federation:** the member organization installs, hosts, and maintains its own instance of CBOX and any modifications or customizations, but uses the authentication and other federation mechanisms hosted by the MLA in order to connect its instance with those of other *Humanities Commons* member organizations.

Annual member fees are determined by a schedule established and maintained by the Advisory Board, which may take into account the type and size of member organization and the service level selected.² Founding members may have such fees subvented for a limited time if external foundation support is successfully obtained.

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¹ For instance: college- and university-based networks, such as the CUNY Academic Commons, will be eligible for the “federation” level of service only, and their host institutions must remain responsible for all hosting and support.

² See Appendix 1b for an example of such a fee schedule. Note that this schedule has not yet been discussed or approved by the Advisory Board.
Membership in *Humanities Commons* is a voluntary arrangement, and organizations may choose to leave the network if they no longer wish to participate. In these cases, departing organizations may choose to maintain their independent CBOX instance. All content within the environment remains under the member organization’s control, and all content or data is owned by the creator of that content (whether the organization or a member). Content and data that are shared with other organizations will remain within and controlled by *Humanities Commons*. Proprietary software or functions developed by the MLA on behalf of *Humanities Commons* will remain the property of *Humanities Commons*.

**Governance**

Governance of *Humanities Commons* is conducted by two bodies:

A *Member Council*, to which each participating organization may name a representative. The responsibilities of the Member Council include receiving annual reports on the network’s operation and recommending actions to the Advisory Board regarding the network’s future. The business of the Member Council may be conducted primarily or entirely electronically.

An *Advisory Board*, convened by a representative of the MLA and consisting of 6 additional members nominated from and elected by the Member Council for 3-year terms. The responsibilities of the Advisory Board include reviewing and approving policies for the network, discussing and acting on requests and recommendations issuing from the Member Council, making recommendations for new and revised services, and ensuring the financial sustainability of the *Humanities Commons* network. The business of the Advisory Board may be conducted primarily or entirely electronically, but may be supplemented by an annual in-person meeting if the Board determines it to be necessary.

**Amendments**

As the network grows and evolves, changes to the charter may become necessary. Changes may be proposed by representatives of the Member Council or Advisory Board, and should be thoroughly discussed by both bodies. The Advisory Board will make the final decision regarding modifications to the governance structure.

**Dissolution**

In the event that *Humanities Commons* is supplanted by other structures or otherwise becomes unnecessary or unsustainable, the Advisory Board may decide to dissolve the network. In this case, no further financial contributions will be required from participating organizations. Participating organizations may choose to separately maintain their instance of CBOX if they wish. All content within the proprietary environment remains under their control, and all content or data is owned by the creator of that content (whether the organization or a member).
Content and data that is shared with other organizations will be archived, but will no longer be maintained in an active environment.