

Suggestions for TO DO items (please add +1, or your name to show support) and please log in so that comments are not anonymous.  
Anonymous comments and shows of support do not count

1. Send a [complaint email](#)
2. [Action: Give your availability to build capacity](#) AND DRAFT [SECOND LETTER TO THE BOARD](#) (by Paola, open)
3. [Start drafting a request for pro bono legal advice?](#) (by Paola)
4. Establish facts and chain of events then [Report possible unlawful conduct to authorities and funders?](#) (by Paola)
5. Planning Ronin Task List [See task sheet](#) (by Paola)
6. Continue to make attempts to connect to Jon to help keep existing Ronin email, website, slack channel up and running (added by Jorrit inspired by group discussion)
7. Propose bylaws that reflect the spirit of the Ronin organization facilitated by (virtual) meetings with defined roles, goals, agenda, meeting notes etc - in progress
  - a. Expectations: 4 or more volunteers to sign up by May 28th and willing to discuss in open forums and commit 1-2 hours a week.
  - b. Participants: Ruth, Jorrit , ?Elena (part time), Rami, Jovita, Carolyn Sealfon (>late June), Anne T., Daniel Mietchen, Thomas Buckholtz, Nick J., Rebecca Koskela [additional volunteers please add your name]
  - c. Next meeting: August 27, 5 pm Mountain time via Zoom
  - d. [Google Drive](#) for all our notes, resources, etc.
  - e. Ongoing [Virtual meeting notes document](#)

New Motto:

*In Veritate Speramus*  
*(motto candidate 1.)*  
*Veritas Super Omnia*  
*(motto candidate 2.)*

**Status:** open consultation and discussion notes

This document is used to gather inputs from stakeholders concerning the facts as stated, it is intended for internal use not for public disclosure

a redacted statement will be drafted at the end of the consultation for public disclosure

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Information in this document is gathered for the purpose of shedding light on facts and events of pertinence, and is for internal purpose only until a public version is released .

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## Additional Goals

AG1. Retaining community

AG2. Retaining services

AG3. Retrospective

AG4. Formulating long/short term plans to continue to foster independent scholarship.

AG5. Setting up structures for the long term

## Open space

Appendix A. Resignation Letter of Ronin Board of Directors

Appendix B. Ronin Bylaws

Appendix C. Data Breach Email

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Appendix D: Ronin Institute most recent Tax Returns?

Appendix E: Participatory Governance Based on Consensus

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Appendix H. Ronin Institute NSF Awards

Appendix I: Cease and Desist Letter Claimed to be from Ronin Board Members

## About this document

(Note: see version history)

On 2024-04-05, the Ronin Board of Directors sent an email to announce their decision to dissolve the Ronin Institute, along with their intention to resign. With this document, Ronin Scholars are collaborating to (Immediate Goal - IG0) explore how to (Additional Goal AG1) retain the community, (AG2) retain the services, (AG3) do a retrospective of what led to the resignation (AG4) formulate a short/long term plan to foster independent scholarship. For things not fitting this structure, there is the [Open Space](#) section.

The overall goal is to make an effort to connect and share ideas on what is next for those associated with Ronin Institute.

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*.(note: it not for public disclosure, only for ronin scholar internal use, there may be a conflict to the cc by license and the limited disclosure)*

Note that versioned snapshots of this document are available via

<https://github.com/jhpoelen/ronin> as well as

[https://archive.softwareheritage.org/browse/origin/directory/?origin\\_url=https://github.com/jhpoelen/ronin](https://archive.softwareheritage.org/browse/origin/directory/?origin_url=https://github.com/jhpoelen/ronin) .

**History of the document:** Jorrit Poelen and Daniel Mietchen (Ronin scholars with no official role at the Institute) started this document on 2024-04-08. They invited anyone who is a current Ronin scholar to comment/add to the document.

## Communication Channels with Scholars

How can we make sure that Ronins can stay in touch ?

Join the [Google group](#) and the new [Ronin Scholar slack](#) not controlled by the outgoing board


Joining the [Discord discussion space](#)

## Related Working Documents

[Ronin infrastructure](#)

 The New Ronin?

 Consensus based participatory GOVERNANCE PROCESS AND TOOLS

 Letter to the Board (not editable)

[Letter to the Board Editable version](#) (*written by all*)

[Revised Letter to the Board](#) (*written by Tom, not reflecting the content of this document nor the views of the scholars who have drafted this document*)

Please request write access to add your comments and edits

## Contributing to this document

If you are a Ronin Scholar, we'd like to invite you to contribute to this document.

**When making contributions, please enable "suggest mode" or use "comments" to share your ideas.**

Suggested contributions will be left in suggestion mode for a certain amount of time (until it gets too messy to understand the doc) so that others get a chance to see who wrote it and any related comments. Exceptions are formatting suggestions, which should be cleaned up as soon as possible.

Document editors will have the role of accepting suggestions and resolving comments.

Please do *not* delete content unless you get permission from the original author, or feel confident that the change doesn't change the intent of the text.

## Editors (proposed)

Daniel Mietchen (not a Ronin board member)

Jorrit Poelen (not a Ronin board member)

The role of an editor is to help facilitate contributions and structure the text.

If you are interested in being a document editor please let Daniel or Jorrit know.

## Contributors

[Please add your name if you'd like to be acknowledged for contributing to this document.]

Daniel Mietchen (not a Ronin board member)

Jorrit Poelen (not a Ronin board member)

Arika Virapongse (not a Ronin board member)

Paola Di Maio (adding a link to governance doc started 7th april) and related documents  
(not a Ronin board member)

Evangelos Roussos (not a Ronin board member)

Brandon Whitehead (not a Ronin board member)

Rami Saydjari (not a Ronin board member)

Tom Lawrence (not a Ronin board member)

Hilmar Lapp (not a Ronin board member)

Nick Jackson (not a Ronin board member)

Anne Thessen - I have fairly extensive non-profit experience and I can help in that capacity  
(not a Ronin board member)

John Kunze (not a Ronin board member)

Laure Haak (Board member / Treasurer Oct 2023 - Jan 2024) – happy to help with  
organizational structure and operations discussions.

John LaRocco (Not a Ronin board member)

Ruth Duerr (not a Ronin board member)

Keith Tse (not a Ronin board member)

Carolyn Sealfon (not a Ronin board member)

Graham Wilson (not a Ronin board member)

## Open Questions

### Tier 1

- What issues have caused the Board to decide that dissolving the institute is necessary?
- What is the current legal status of the Ronin Institute?
  - by Laurel Haak 2024-04-11: "Ronin is incorporated in NJ, and has been granted 501(c)3 status by the US IRS. As such, upon cessation of activities, any of the accounts etc. must be transferred to another non-profit entity.  
<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/life-cycle-of-an-exempt-organization>"

- “Section 15. Vacancies” of [RI's bylaws](#), state that "No director may resign if the corporation would then be left without a duly elected director or directors in charge of its affairs, except upon notice to the office of the attorney general or other appropriate agency of the state."
- Has notice been given to the office of attorney general (or other appropriate agency) of the Board's resignation? If so, when did this happen?
  -
- What are the available paths forward for any current Ronin facilitated grant holders?
- Why are folks claiming to be Ronin Board members attempting to silence our discussion by sending a "[Cease and Desist](#)" letter by email? What is the legal status of such a letter? See [Appendix I: Cease and Desist Letter Claimed to be from Ronin Board Members](#) for details on the letter.

## Tier 2

- Does the dissolution resolve the issues in any way or do they persist, and if so, how?
  - per Laurel Haak 2024-04-11 - "Issues are not resolved. There is an open NSF desk audit. There is an open tax filing (will confirm). Even if the organization decides to shutter there is a process it should go through to do so, including transfer of grants to other entities."
- What was the nature of the data incident - an act of sabotage, an attempt to help or something else entirely? (what data incident??) See [Appendix C. Data Breach Email](#)
  - See in the Appendix notes about the data incident. Two people confirm that it was “an attempt to help” by a volunteer.
- According to 501(c)3 regulations, RI's assets or liabilities (digital or otherwise) of the Ronin Institute (e.g., internet domain registration, logo copyright, taxes, bank account, outstanding grants) should be transferred to another non-profit entity. This should be carried out by the Board [Laurel Haak, confirmed by Jonathan Rees on 2024-04-12]. Usually the receiving entity is named in the articles of incorporation. [Jonathan Rees on 2024-04-12]. Have these successor or transferee organizations been decided for RI's assets/liabilities? What items are being transferred to them, on what timescale?
- What are alternative not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organizations that will permit you to have PI status and accept Ronin's 10% de minimis Indirect Costs or 25% overhead [citation needed] with NSF?
  - by Laurel Haak on 2024-04-11: "To be able to support grants, I strongly recommend that Ronin request a higher ICR. We should be able to qualify for at least 18%. Happy to help with this." Per Arika Von 2024-04-15 who worked on grants at Ronin in 2022: "I agree with and confirm the comments that Laurel makes."

## Answered questions

Scholars have provided (at least partial) answers to the following.

Q. What is the current legal status of the Ronin Institute?

A. Ronin is incorporated in NJ, and has been granted 501(c)3 status by the US IRS. As such, upon cessation of activities, any of the accounts etc. must be transferred to another non-profit entity.

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/life-cycle-of-an-exempt-organization> [Laurel Haak 2024-04-11]. It still has Directors in place as of 2024-04-18 (see below).

Q. What is the current capacity of the (former?) Board of Directors? Do they still legally represent Ronin as an Institute?

A. They emailed us on 2024-04-18, signing themselves as the “Board of Directors”. This indicates they are still in post. The email set out that they were busy with trying to wind up RI and that they “will keep you posted on a regular basis”.

Q. Who has ownership of/control over Ronin’s email servers and Slack account?

A. Jon Wilkins has ownership of these [Arika in Discord]. He has the admin password for both and the most recent Board has password access [Laure in comment on letter to Board (“my understanding is...”)].

Q. How can Grant awardees access their grant funds? Where are the grant funds held?

A. PIs with grants are set up in a payroll system. There is/was a process in place for existing PIs to file timesheets and request payouts/reimbursements. Any new grantee would need to be set up in payroll to start getting grant payouts. Funds are held in the Ronin bank account. [Laure in comment on letter to Board]

Q. How much grant money is currently under management? How is this managed and by whom?

A. As of February, there were some grants in progress. Typically Ronin is reimbursed for expenses, rather than holding funds for a grant. There are two exceptions and Ronin was holding something on the order of \$35k for those two grants. In theory, the grant PI could move their funds, but in reality RI needs someone authorized on the bank account to do that. Historically, grant funds are held in the Ronin bank account. The accounting side of grant management was managed by an external firm. There is/was a payroll system in place for PIs, and accounting procedures for managing account payouts and balances. [Laure in comment on letter to Board]

Q. What accounting documents are accessible to scholars and the wider public?

A. Financial data can be found online in 990s, filed with the IRS. These are available from the founding of the Institute up until Financial Year (FY) 2021, which ended on 30th September 2021. FY2022 and FY2023 are pending finalization of the FY2022 fiscal audit. The audit has been completed and the Board needs to sign off on it before the FY22 and FY23 books can be closed and financials reported to the IRS. [Laure in comment on letter to Board]

Q. To dissolve RI, would dissolution paperwork need to be filed with the IRS?

A. No, it would be filed with the state in which Ronin was incorporated, which is New Jersey. [Laure in comment on letter to Board]

### Action Items (who is working on what)

1. (Jorrit/Daniel, **done**) Propose a framework to collaborate on ways to reframe Ronin and learn from this experience. Note by Jorrit: This current "Reframing Ronin" document was created to help encourage discussion in the short term. It appears the next step is to set up a Governance WG to enable decision-making on important things like: infrastructure, communication channels etc.
2. (**ongoing, see associated doc for more info**) Set up round of meetings, step by step request members to vote on decisions see also [☰ CONSENSUS GOVERNANCE PROCESS AND TOOLS](#) .  
(Tom Lawrence, **done:** [☰ Letter to the Board](#) ) Draft letter to the board expressing a sense of our opinions as Ronin Scholars regarding the current status of our community, and especially our need for information about why the decisions were made.
3. (**Rami Saydjari/Ongoing**) We should endeavor in any contact with the board to obtain the latest backup of the website and member database. A great deal of sweat equity, and frankly intellectual property were invested in its creation. Any Ronin members with back channel access to the current board members are encouraged to advocate on our behalf for release of this intellectual property.

### Immediate Goals

IG0. Appreciate all the work that went into Ronin - the countless hours spent on keeping the organization alive, the effort put into resolving conflict, dealing with massive amounts of paperwork, and carrying the weight of unprocessed events and miscommunication. Despite all our differences, I believe we have many things in common, especially the pursuit of independent scholarship. (I am feeling a bit cheesy now, but I think I mean it. . . ). In short - figure out how to hit the "pause" button, thank each other and reflect.

IG1. ~~Confirm with the Board their decision to resign~~ Determine the next steps for having formal leadership in place to make crucial decisions. An "interim board"?



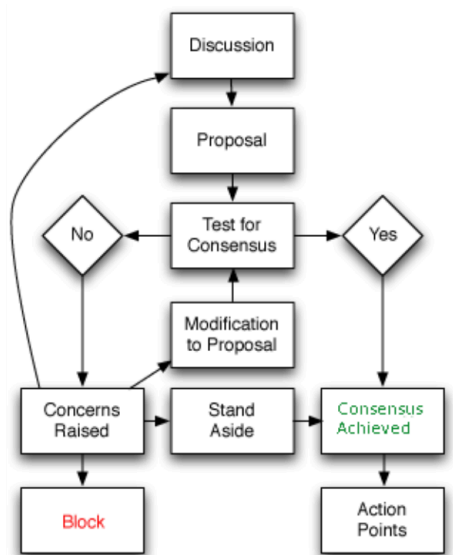
- Do we need to issue an acceptance of resignation letter and get as many scholars as possible to sign it? Also, find out who owns /controls the digital resources (entered a to do item in the consensus doc)
  - The Ronin Bylaws (see [Appendix B. Ronin Bylaws](#)) appear to give full power to the Board of Directors to do whatever they want, regardless of the desires of other members of the Ronin Institute. Hence, non-officers accepting (or not accepting) the Board's decisions is at most symbolic in meaning, and not of any legal consequence.
- We'd like to see/know the dissolution plans of the current Ronin Board
  - Agree a deadline for editing [Letter to the Board](#) - perhaps end of Monday 21st April, US Pacific Time? Develop it up to this deadline. Agree what should be done with it after that, for example, mark it "final" and notify the Board of it by email, Slack and/or any other appropriate channels.

IG2. Understand what the scope of the problem is, and why the Board thinks that dissolving the institute is a necessary step.. Host a listening session with the current board and any former Advisory Board members who are willing to attend. This will help us decide if we can reform the current institute or need to create a new one.

IG3. Organize ourselves (highest priority), decide a governance structure and process, [document the process](#) P

IG4. Follow an agreed upon decision-making approach:

- Participatory Governance based on Consensus Model for Decision Making
  - [Consensus based participatory GOVERNANCE PROCESS AND TOOLS](#) .



- Study various models of group process and decision-making. Articulate a clear process with clear definitions. Note that “consensus” has divergent meanings - in

some professions it means a large majority and emerging sense of the field; in others it means a decision to which everyone agrees now, after a careful process. Be clear about process and language. The appended document

Consensus based participatory GOVERNANCE PROCESS AND TOOLS advocates the large-majority model.

- 
- Establish communication channels (suggest to cross-post announcements across slack/discord/google groups for the time being as all three channels appear active)
  - candidates:
    - Slack <https://app.slack.com/client/T0990TU4V>
    - Discord (a dedicated discord server is available at <https://discord.gg/hEZNGvVV> )
    - [Google Group started on April 7th](#) please join!
- (inspired by Paola/Brandon/Evangelos comment thread) Create Voter Roll (who can vote? how to register to vote?) and establish a method to create, distribute, and publish resolutions to vote on.
  - Use Loomio? ([Demo \[LINK\]](#); general invite link sent to google group and posted on to the general channel on Discord for those who want to help trial)
  - Use slido?
  - Google Forms — 100% free survey tool.
  - SurveyPlanet — Best for unlimited question types and responses.
  - - (Paola) have Governance WG facilitate voting for the time being.

It is not just a question of voting, it is a question of setting up a consensus governance process that members can be part of . Voting is part of a governance mechanism that has been missing from Ronin Institute (there was an intention of having it was never implemented) Here is a [doc containing a suggested way to to about it](#), please contribute by asking edit access (so that only logged in editors can make edits)

- Note that a consensus process is not identical to a parliamentary or voting process. See comment above about divergent meanings of consensus. Consider using a term like participants, members, or contributors rather than voters; and polling or contributing rather than voting.

(Evan) How cash strapped are we? (Laurel Haak answered on 2024-04-11: "In Jan [2024 ed.] there was about \$30K in the bank account.") I'm trying to gather information about possible voting/polling platforms and some of them come at a cost for teams of over 100 participants (of the order of, say, \$60 per month). But they promise a more professional experience. Should we only aim at open source/free solutions? I'm unsure as to how developed they are at the moment, I must say... someone suggested google forms, free, reliable. Transparent, I'd consider that. Yes, I am researching that one too.

- Set up an organizational structure, formulate and distribute tasks
  - Who's doing what?

- What needs to be done?
  - In regard to legal obligations, according to Bylaws only the Board of Directors is responsible for Ronin as an organization, meaning Ronin scholars are not expected to share legal responsibility if legal issues or liabilities were to have been discovered. Response by Laurel Haak on 2024-04-11 - "Yes, and -- as a non-profit there is also a liability shield for members and directors. So, yes, there is responsibility and accountability but financially the members and directors are protected. Ronin also has a Directors and Officers insurance policy."

## Additional Goals

### AG1. Retaining community

How can we make sure that Ronins can stay in touch ?

Answer 1: By joining the [Google group](#) and the new [Ronin Scholar slack](#) not controlled by the outgoing board

Answer 2: By joining the [Discord discussion space](#)

Answer 3: Continue with the Ronin Slack workspace for now, since every time you change infrastructure in a community, you lose people. At this point, we need to stick together.

Answer 4: LinkedIn

Answer 5: Create a membership database by (or get control of the current one which exists as the newsletter.

Answer 6: Josh Grunske's Scholar Finder, LLC (for profiles, sharing research, and blog potentially)

### AG2. Retaining services

Here are the services that the Ronin Institute provides:

1. Sponsored Research Office Note from LH: Having received over \$750K in a single year from the US NSF (see [Appendix H. Ronin Institute NSF Awards](#)), Ronin met the requirements for a *desk audit* of our grants processes (not a financial audit, but an audit of our financial processes). My understanding is that this audit has some remaining unresolved items.
2. Human Subjects Research ethics review (via Rutgers U.)
  - a. Background: Exempt review was offered at Ronin without a cost to membership for about a year up until March 2023. , but it was a cost to Ronin and only provided benefits to the few people who used it. This program still officially exists, so a scholar can still pay Rutgers to

do the reviews (Ronin still has this relationship with Rutgers active). But without a qualified and formally appointed HSR chair, Ronin can no longer review protocols for in-house "Exempt" designation. These are guidelines set by the U.S. Federal Health and Human Services.

3. Affiliation and membership (via the website). This affiliation has allowed members to obtain discounts on software, physical library access, qualify for leadership positions in other non-profits and professional organizations such as the Earth Science Information Partners federation (the Ronin Institute is a member and currently 2 members of the ESIP board are eligible for their positions because of their membership in the Ronin Institute), submit papers for publication, attend conferences, etc. This includes use of the Ronin institutional postal address and use of the Ronin logo.
  - a. Current status: Website is owned by Jon Wilkins (previous Ronin Institute President). Admin is Dana Cohen and possibly others. [This claim is supported by publicly available information related to domain name registration information in Appendix F. : roninstitute.org domain was last renewed on 2024-03-09 via <https://inmotionhosting.com> , registered to organization "Jon Wilkins" and expires on 2025-03-19,] Attempts have been made over the last year to transfer the website to the new board (or Ronin controlling members/email alias address), but without success.
  - b. re: postal address as Laurel Haak per 2024-04-11 " The Ronin Institute is incorporated in New Jersey with Jon's home address listed as the physical address. For any future effort, we should ensure the physical address is not person-dependent." . This is particularly important given that this address is sometimes used as the contact address in journal submissions.
4. Communication with each other and self-organization (via Slack)
  - a. Status: Owned by Jon Wilkins; Admin: Alex L., Dana C., Arika V., and Ronin alias.
  - b. Attempts have been made over the last year to transfer the website to the new board (or Ronin controlling members/email alias address), but without success.
5. Promoting the successes of our membership (via Newsletter and social media)
6. An email account for most members. As we ran out of disk space in 2022, we made it optional for members to have an email account.

### AG3. Retrospective

What led up to the board's decision to dissolve?

What led to Jon Wilkins and Arika to suddenly resign in 2023?

AG4. Formulating long/short term plans to continue to foster independent scholarship.

(existing or proposed plans to continue to foster independent scholarship)

[please feel free to add additional goals or reformulate existing ones]...

Here are some proposals that has come up so far:

1. Nick Halper, Executive Director of [Neuromatch Inc.](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in the United States that can and does receive federal funding offers to host Ronin Scholars. More can be read about their organization, values, and decision making processes on their openly accessible documents and wiki [here](#).
2. Merc Fox, Executive Director from [CODATA](#) offers to host the Ronin Institute to help preserve the current grants.
3. Gavin Taylor (global board member) and Rebecca Willen (founder) from [IGDORE](#) propose that Ronin becomes a US-IGDORE arm or an institutional affiliate, and they may be able to help provide some basic resources to help get us started. Please note that IGDORE has specific requirements for applicants - for more information on the IGDORE application process see <https://onscienceandacademia.org/t/applying-for-igdore-affiliation-advice-q-a/2091>.
4. Scholars are evaluating and proposing different options, including that the community of the Ronin Institute re-organizes into a new nonprofit cooperative (with an entirely new name and branding) which initially aims to preserve/prioritize the community and stabilize the infrastructure/governance. It should separate itself completely from the Ronin Institute, and in time may be able to administer grants again. Importantly, in the organizational structure of a cooperative the members (research scholars) would cooperatively own the corporation, which is substantially different to the current organizational structure of the Ronin Institute.
  - a. Note from Laurel Haak: 100% agree. There is no need for the new org to take on the debris of the old one. My recommendation is to start anew, rebrand (either an entirely new name or perhaps something like Ronin Insti2te), build on the founding principles of Ronin, and completely re-do the incorporation/registration, bylaws/management principles, membership principles, accounting practices, grants management policies, and some (more) clarity on policies for compensation of key staff (e.g., accounting, grants management, IT). Jon put his heart and soul into Ronin, and we can acknowledge that through the similar name and principles. And, we all learned many things through our participation with Ronin over the last decade, and redoing the governance etc. acknowledges and builds upon that experience. Also, note that co-ops are for-profit entities; I think a co-op model would be eminently suitable

for Ronin 2 (whatever we call it), but we will need to check with granting agencies on their policies for making awards to co-ops. I am also kinda excited about the possibility of a co-op DAO.... All that said, one of the big benefits of a non-profit is that it is a known structure for granting organizations and you qualify for all kinds of discounts on things like.... Google Workplace, Slack, etc. :) See also related discussion in [Open space](#) section.

5. The formation of a new entity was proposed by Paola Di Maio in an email to all on 5th of March
6. Options 1, 2, and 3 are primarily science organizations. Neuromatch and IGDORE (see <https://onscienceandacademia.org/t/applying-for-igdore-affiliation-advice-q-a/2091>) also welcome social scientists. All three options would exclude current Ronin members who work in the humanities. A “reframed” organization should be clear about which scholars and disciplines it will include.

If proposals No. 4 or 5 are finally selected, application for a new 501(c)(3) legal status will be probably needed. What is the cost, and how do we plan to raise this initial amount?

Options may include:

- Crowdfunding (This could use a popular crowdfunding platform, and could include a one-off appeal to members and the wider public. In the longer term, it could be used for regular appeals, sponsored events, etc.)
  - Per Laurel Haak on 2024-04-11 - "There are legal requirements for crowdfunding.... we should understand this more fully before going this route. For example:  
<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/some-things-to-know-about-crowdfunding-and-taxes>".
- Philanthropic funding (We could make contact with other organisations which receive funding from foundations etc and learn what works from them. Ronin's aims and ethos could be a good match for many foundations. However, they may have their own criteria for governance of recipients.)
- Member contributions

The Law Firm for Non Profits can do this a lot cheaper than that: <https://www.lfnp.com/>  
They set up my non-profit, and helped redo the ESIP non-profit.

Note that, as Gary McDowell clarified, if proposal No. 3 is selected, Ronin/IGDORE-US members can also be members of the umbrella IGDORE organisation.

#### AG5. Setting up structures for the long term

Bylaws or articles of governance should ensure ultimate accountability to the scholars. This could include:

- Annual General Meetings (AGMs), to include reports on a) accounts and other financial matters, b) membership (scholars), c) IT matters. Scholars to be treated as members with voting rights at AGM. Note from LH: Agree on accountability and reporting. Meeting summaries should be posted on the website. Board members should be elected by the membership. There should be an annual budget, quarterly financial statements, and a public annual report (in addition to the IRS 990 filing) — all available on the website. We can also add the decentralized voting capabilities of a DAO, which could be very effective for a decentralized scholarly community, for the Board vote and other items that come up.
- Accountability mechanisms for IT administrators/safeguards against misuse. LH: YES!!!! Not just IT – I'd recommend we have some more clarity around values → policies → process and regular reporting to Board and members. Also would suggest that key staff are compensated for taking on this responsibility and risk.
- Ensuring all scholars have access to all meeting papers of the Board (a right currently given to “members” in the [Bylaws](#), Section 4 c)). Note from LH: In general, effective practice is for Boards to publish meeting agendas and also a summary for each meeting – a short narrative plus a list of the MOTIONS made during the Board meeting. It is important to enable the Board to have closed session meetings but these should be for things like personnel reviews and similar.

It could be helpful to identify roles which require regular work of 0.5 FTE or more, and how we will fill these (for example, start with call for volunteers, then if still vacant, recruit).

Bylaw/articles of governance should ensure that the people in these posts have necessary authorisation to fulfill these duties.

Note from Laurel Haak 2024-04-11: my recommendation for compensated positions (at least 0.3FTE each) is (i) accounting, (ii) grants management officer, (iii) IT / webmaster. Ideally there would also be a program officer / executive director, as such a position is generally needed for things like bank accounts, contract signatures, and similar. The elected Board should be oversight not in the weeds.

Consider requiring some kind of active engagement – e.g. voting or volunteering – as a condition of membership. Details TBD. Note from Laurel Haak on 2024-04-11 Agree. This kind of thing is part of how a co-op is set up – what are the requirements for participating/equity/membership. Voting for sure. Also wondering about requiring anyone who intends to apply for a grant to first sit on the grant review committee or similar.



## Open space

If you have thoughts or ideas that do not fit into the document's structures above, feel free to put them here.

[John L] A few ideas here:

-A new structure of potential interest to collaborating scholars is the Focused Research Organization (FRO). These are partway between startups and academic research in going for more focused (often engineering or biotech or AI) areas.

-Consider possible suitable legal structures for the Ronin Institute. An example would be a co-operative. Another option would be a social enterprise, part way between a nonprofit and a startup. (This could be appropriate for an organization whose members have a wide range of research topics, including interdisciplinary interests.)

There's an event "[Governance in international organizations: Potentials and pitfalls for digitalization](#)" on 25 April which might be useful

From Paola via email on 2024-04-16 - Candidates nominations or self nominations to act as President of the Board, Board Member if we manage to get the board to resign instead of closing the institute (Lauriel Haak suggested this, she may be available [ed.], as well [ed.] as others).

C. Sealfon: The seed of an idea, please add/revise/critique:

How might we manage a large do-ocracy of the size of Ronin?

I wonder if we could create a dashboard to show what is being done. (I picture a cross between a car dashboard and the learning dashboards from learning analytics.) Everything that is being done and being done sufficiently is in green. If something starts to slip, it goes into the yellow, and then if it goes into the red, we (as an organization) simply stop doing it. As noted on the [webpage](#) linked in the [governance doc](#), some of the issues with do-ocracy include burnout, complacency, resentment, incompleteness, etc. The people doing the work may not have time to communicate with everyone about what they are doing, and if they reach burnout, they may not have capacity to invite others to step in. It also may be hard for newcomers or others in the community to see what needs to be done. The idea of this dashboard would be to make this transparent. We could all see if key tasks started slipping, and we could step in to help. We could see where our time might be most urgently invested. I imagine anyone could add a dial or task, so we could start doing new things. While we are doing things related to a specific dial, we'd manually send updates to the dashboard to keep the dial in the green. If updates are missing, the dial moves away from green, altering the community that things are not being done (but hopefully not in a way that places undue burden or guilt on any volunteer, just to allow others to step up). If a dial drifts to red, then we stop doing that thing, and the dial is removed. And if all dials drift to red...well then we close. But we could all see why we would be closing.





## Appendix A. Resignation Letter of Ronin Board of Directors

On 2024-04-05, the Ronin Board of Directors wrote the following email:

----

Dear Ronin Scholars,

It is with great sadness and regret that we announce the intended resignation of the Board of Directors and the concomitant closure of the Ronin Institute.

We joined the Board to make a difference and serve the community. Unfortunately, we inherited many serious issues, some of which cannot be resolved. These burdens have resulted in a situation that has become untenable.

We have done everything that we possibly can, having had to carry out our roles as almost full-time jobs for the last 2-3 months. Unfortunately, things have now come to a head, and continuing is no longer feasible. This is an extremely unfortunate situation, but we are unanimous that there is now no other option.

All things considered, knowing what we do now, it would likely have been best if the Institute had closed several months ago rather than establishing a new Board to address all the previous problems.

Sincerely,

Dana, Cheryl, and Jens

----

## Appendix B. Ronin Bylaws

[https://web.archive.org/web/20240408161800/https://ronininstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Ronin\\_Institute\\_Bylaws\\_2012.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20240408161800/https://ronininstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Ronin_Institute_Bylaws_2012.pdf)

## Appendix C. Data Breach Email

The following email was sent from the "board of directors" email address [board@ronininstitute.org](mailto:board@ronininstitute.org) on 2024-03-28 .

Note that Arika V. refuted the claim by commenting on 2024-04-08 in this google doc "I can also assure you that it was NOT a data breach. It was a miscommunication--simply someone internally doing a back up of the system."

---

Dear Ronin Scholars,

Regrettably, the Board is writing to inform you of a data breach on the Ronin Institute server. An unauthorized download of the website, email accounts, and databases from the Ronin Institute server to a personal computer and subsequently to a private, remotely hosted server account has come to our attention. These were carried out without authorization or knowledge of the Board of Directors.

We learned only on Sunday March 25 that, for a whole month from, we believe, February 24, data from the cpanel of the Institute's web server was backed up and downloaded onto an individual's personal home computer. The data contained the website, its databases, and also the personal email accounts of the entire Ronin Institute membership. The individual who carried out this unauthorized activity was immediately notified to remove all data from the home computer, and any other Server, remote or otherwise, and to then send email confirmation that permanent deletion was complete. This confirmation was provided to us on March 26. A day later, on March 27, we subsequently learned by accident that these data have also been migrated to a Namecheap Hosting server account, privately owned by this individual. Until that time we had no knowledge of this, we were never informed, and the new server account cannot be accessed by the Board. Bluntly, this is a full breach of records on the Ronin Institute server.

The Board acknowledges its obligations to swiftly and directly address this matter. Accordingly, the individual concerned has been removed from their post in the Institute, appropriate authorities have been informed of this breach of personal data, and Namecheap Hosting is being informed of this activity, and that they are to delete all information related to the Ronin Institute from their servers.

All Ronin Scholars must realize that these data are not only personal (e.g. private Email addresses) but may also include personal financial information, contracts, including government contracts, connections with government projects and agencies, and details of (federal) grants that are confidential, and may also be sensitive in nature. In addition, administrative email accounts include company data such as invoices, payroll, retirement, and financial accounting. Simply put, this unknown and unauthorized download from the Institute server to personal or other computers/devices/servers in any form whatsoever, should not have taken place. We have been

assured (March 28) that all the data have been deleted. Having said this, since this Board has no access to the private computer, or hosting server with the clone of the Institute website and database, we cannot say what may have been done with the data, nor whether access/permission has been given for others to make copies of the data as well.

Please be patient as we await word from authorities on how to proceed. We will keep you informed as we learn more.

Respectfully,

Dana, Cheryl, Jens

- The Board of Directors

## Appendix C1. Scholar discussion about data breach

Please see [comments in Slack](#) about the data breach, also copied below for convenience, or in the event Slack goes away unexpectedly...

Actually it was never hacked and there was no real data breach. The board didn't understand that there wasn't enough disk space on Ronin systems to run a backup and the volunteer who had been doing that made a backup on his own system and went out and got a new server space off his machine to hold it until Ronin could get a bigger disk space; but when he told the Board that, rather than thanking him they sent out that ridiculous email and canned him.

So of course, there is no one maintaining the infrastructure at the moment. And how you even can fire someone who is volunteering, especially when there are no standard operating procedures and one of the very first rules of conduct for Ronin is to "Act in Good Faith and Assume Good Faith from Others" I do not know; but the moment I saw that email, I knew the organization was probably dead.

On the other hand, given that he followed their instructions to delete stuff off his machine, etc. the only data breach I can think of is that it isn't clear to me that the Board has a clue how to manage the main copy of the data on the Ronin servers, especially now that they all have resigned... Now that is very, very concerning (speaking as someone who has run several grants and contracts through Ronin).

## Appendix D: Ronin Institute most recent Tax Returns?

Form 990s filed with the IRS can be looked up online at <https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/details/>. The EIN for the Ronin Institute is 45-4524080 and can

be used for unambiguous lookup. The most recent form 990 available in this way is for tax year 2021, meaning the form 990 for 2022 is not yet posted. However, according to Laurel Haak, "tax filings were in order" as of January 2024, and the latest filing was in process at the time, suggesting that the 990 form for 2022 had either been filed or was in the process of being filed at that time.

I (Nick Jackson) am not familiar with financial aspects of a 501c3 but I note that the last tax return listed is in 2021 (for the 2020 tax year). My reading is that not filing a return for three consecutive years leads to revocation of tax-exempt status.

[https://apps.irs.gov/pub/epostcard/cor/454524080\\_202109\\_990\\_2022082920302841.pdf](https://apps.irs.gov/pub/epostcard/cor/454524080_202109_990_2022082920302841.pdf)  
<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/automatic-revocation-how-to-have-your-tax-exempt-status-reinstated>

Arika: I'm pretty sure that taxes were filed in 2022, since an extensive financial audit was conducted during that year, so that would have covered tax year 2021. Nick: I see that as well, and that is good news. I grabbed information from here, and it is listed as Tax year 2021 (dated August 15, 2022): <https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/details/>

—

Paola: shared on Discord and emails

[https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/view\\_990/454524080/0a793383b80305e7ccfb5bcd012520ac](https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/view_990/454524080/0a793383b80305e7ccfb5bcd012520ac)

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/454524080/202022309349303707/full>

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/454524080>

[https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/view\\_990/454524080/0a793383b80305e7ccfb5bcd012520ac](https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/view_990/454524080/0a793383b80305e7ccfb5bcd012520ac) for 2018

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/454524080/202022309349303707/full> for 2020

<https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/454524080> for 2021.

## Appendix E: Participatory Governance Based on Consensus

Setting up and testing the [consensus governance model](#) for the New Institute (which includes testing

A polling facility and issuing a recommendation for adoption)

## Appendix F: Ronin Institute Domain Name Registration

On running a "whois" command on 2024-04-09, the following information was retrieved

-

```
$ whois roninstitute.org
```

Domain Name: roninstitute.org

Registry Domain ID: aad9c20d31a8423abe2d54e772bd2fe7-LROR

Registrar WHOIS Server: whois.tucows.com

**Registrar URL: <http://www.tucows.com>**

**Updated Date: 2024-03-09T13:29:12Z**

Creation Date: 2011-03-19T04:51:07Z

**Registry Expiry Date: 2025-03-19T04:51:07Z**

Registrar: Tucows Domains Inc.

Registrar IANA ID: 69

Registrar Abuse Contact Email: domainabuse@tucows.com

Registrar Abuse Contact Phone: +1.4165350123

Domain Status: ok <https://icann.org/epp#ok>

Registry Registrant ID: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Registrant Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

**Registrant Organization: Jon Wilkins**

Registrant Street: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Registrant City: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Registrant State/Province: NJ

Registrant Postal Code: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Registrant Country: US

Registrant Phone: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Registrant Phone Ext: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Registrant Fax: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Registrant Fax Ext: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Registrant Email: Please query the RDDS service of the Registrar of Record identified in this output for information on how to contact the Registrant, Admin, or Tech contact of the queried domain name.

Registry Admin ID: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Admin Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Admin Organization: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY

Admin Street: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Admin City: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Admin State/Province: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Admin Postal Code: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Admin Country: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Admin Phone: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Admin Phone Ext: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Admin Fax: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Admin Fax Ext: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Admin Email: Please query the RDDS service of the Registrar of Record identified in this output for information on how to contact the Registrant, Admin, or Tech contact of the queried domain name.  
Registry Tech ID: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Name: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Organization: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Street: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech City: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech State/Province: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Postal Code: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Country: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Phone: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Phone Ext: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Fax: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Fax Ext: REDACTED FOR PRIVACY  
Tech Email: Please query the RDDS service of the Registrar of Record identified in this output for information on how to contact the Registrant, Admin, or Tech contact of the queried domain name.  
**Name Server: ns.inmotionhosting.com**  
Name Server: ns2.inmotionhosting.com  
DNSSEC: unsigned  
URL of the ICANN Whois Inaccuracy Complaint Form: <https://www.icann.org/wicf/>  
>>> Last update of WHOIS database: 2024-04-09T14:25:10Z <<<

## Appendix G. Board members, Advisory Board members, Employees

### **Board members:**

#### **Founding of Ronin in 2012 until March 2023**

Rich Murray  
Steven Orzack

Jon Wilkins (also President)

**March 2023-around Nov 2023**

Steven Orzack (President)

**Nov 2023 to current**

Steven Orzack (left Jan 2024)

Laurel Haak (left Feb 2024) (Laurel writes in the comments: she resigned on 4 Feb 2024.and ws treasurer for six months) (Laurel writes that she resigned 6 Feb, and was treasurer for 6 weeks.)

Dana Cohen (President)

Cheryl Sundberg

Jens Coorsen

**Administrative Employees (all fractional roles):**

Jon Wilkins - President (not sure start date - Jan 2024)

Arika Virapongse - Community Director (March 2020-March 2023)

**Advisory Board (disbanded in March 2023)**

Arika Virapongse - Governance

Jon Wilkins - Governance

John Paulas - Membership

Tanja Pelzmann - Membership

Alex Lancaster - Infrastructure

Keith Tse - Communication

Heather O'Connor - Communication

Jeni Huniecutt - Events

Syb De Clark- Events

Michelle Sudbury Hill - Research

Herbert Bernstein - Research

**Others who held posts in the Advisory Board (March 2020- Dec 2022)**

Emily Monosson - Communication

Rami Saydjari - Infrastructure

Vesta Korniakova - Infrastructure

Gloria Montebruno - Events? (may have had a different name or was part of a different WG)

Victoria Costa - (before the WGs were really formed)

Sheilamae Reyes Ablay - Membership



## Appendix H. Ronin Institute NSF Awards

as retrieved via "download as text" functionality at

<https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/simpleSearchResult?queryText=%22Ronin+Institute%22>  
on 2024-04-15:

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Award Number: 1639652

Title: Earthcube Building Blocks: Collaborative Proposal: Polar Data Insights and Search Analytics for the Deep and Scientific Web

NSF Org: RISE Div of Res, Innovation, Synergies, & Edu

Initial Amendment Date: September 16, 2016

Latest Amendment Date: September 16, 2016

Award Instrument: Standard Grant

Program Manager: Eva Zanzerkia

Start Date: September 01, 2016

End Date: August 31, 2019

Awarded Amount to Date: \$129,571

ARRA Amount: \$

Investigator(s): Ruth Duerr [ruth.duerr@ronininstitute.org](mailto:ruth.duerr@ronininstitute.org) (Principal Investigator)

Organization: Ronin Institute for Independent Scholarship Incorporated

127 HADDON PL, MONTCLAIR, NJ 07043-2314, (973)707-2485

NSF Directorate: GEO

Program(s): Polar Cyberinfrastructure EarthCube

Program Reference Code(s): 7433

Program Element Code(s): 540700, 807400

Abstract: This project develops an NSF EarthCube Building Block focused on Polar Data Science. The system will build upon work in Information Retrieval and Data Science and upon existing investment from NSF Polar, EarthCube, and from DARPA and NASA in this area. The system will collect, analyze, and make interactive the wealth of textual and scientific Polar data collected to date across the Deep web of scientific information -- scientific journals, multimedia information, scientific data, web pages, etc. The system builds upon fundamental research in text analysis, search, and visualization. Its primary goal is to unlock unstructured scientific data from 90+ data formats and to scale to 10s-100s of millions of records using the NSF XSEDE supercomputing resources. The system will perform information retrieval and machine learning on data crawled from the Polar Deep and Scientific web. Crawling will be informed by science questions crowdsourced through the EarthCube and Polar communities. The project is a collaboration with NSIDC, Ronin Institute, and the broader community including the newly funded Arctic Data Center led by NCEAS, to build our proposed system. The result of periodic and regular crawling will be a Crawl Data Repository (CDR) of raw textual data e.g., web pages containing richly curated dataset abstract descriptions, news stories tied to datasets, ASCII note files and dataset descriptions, and other textual data available on or pointed to by Polar repositories as well as scientific data (HDF, Grib, NetCDF, Matlab, etc.). The CDR

will be made available for historical and future analysis by the broader EarthCube and Polar communities. In addition, an extraction pipeline will generate an Extraction Data Repository (EDR) of machine learning features not previously present (geospatial, temporal, people, places, scientific publications and topics, etc.) that will be the basis of interactive, visual analytics over the Polar data resources. Information collected will assist in answering scientific questions such as these derived from the President's National Strategy for the Arctic Region. To date, the team has also crowd sourced 30+ questions from the Polar community represented on CRYOLIST <https://goo.gl/4dDyIS> and will continue to solicit this feedback and use the information collected to aid science as prioritized by the community. They will also engage the community to assist in validating our system. This is not a predictive tool per-se ? though it can help to enable such predictions. Its focus is on building an operational and core capability for textual scientific data analysis, both retrospective, and prospective.

Award Number: 1558192

Title: INTEROP: International Network of Arctic Knowledge

NSF Org: OAC Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure (OAC)

Initial Amendment Date: July 07, 2016

Latest Amendment Date: July 07, 2016

Award Instrument: Standard Grant

Program Manager: Robert Chadduck

Start Date: July 01, 2015

End Date: September 30, 2016

Awarded Amount to Date: \$25,598

ARRA Amount: \$

Investigator(s): Ruth Duerr [ruth.duerr@ronininstitute.org](mailto:ruth.duerr@ronininstitute.org) (Principal Investigator)

Organization: Ronin Institute for Independent Scholarship Incorporated

127 HADDON PL, MONTCLAIR, NJ 07043-2314, (973)707-2485

NSF Directorate: CSE

Program(s): Polar Cyberinfrastructure

Program Reference Code(s):

Program Element Code(s): 540700

Abstract: Award: 0956010<br/>PI: Mark Parsons<br/>Project Title: <br/>Community-based Data Interoperability (INTEROP)International Network of Arctic Knowledge (INAK)<br/><br/>Rapid Arctic change has critical implications for global climate, biodiversity, geopolitics, international transportation, and local society. To understand and respond to this change and its implications, it is necessary to understand the Arctic as a system. The International Polar Year (IPY) was a huge international effort to improve our interdisciplinary understanding of the Arctic and Polar Regions, how they are changing, and their impact on the Earth system and human society. IPY produced a large, diverse array of data that increases the challenge of interdisciplinary data discovery and use. The data is enriched, but the challenge is increased, by the explicit inclusion of social science research and local and traditional knowledge of the Arctic. Yet, IPY and the rapid change in the Arctic have generated considerable international resolve and formal collaboration that can be

harnessed to improve the semantic understanding and interoperability of Arctic data.<br/><br/>NSIDC, working with domain and community-building experts at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and elsewhere, use the opportunity of IPY and the developing Polar Information Commons to improve the knowledge and interoperability of sea ice and related Arctic data through the extension and enhancement of an international data management network. Through focused workshops and broad community interaction, a formal, sea-ice ontology, and an expansive interdisciplinary knowledge framework for the Arctic are developed. Proven and maturing semantic web methodologies and ontology creation tools, including visual tools like concept maps, are used to develop the underlying infrastructure. The support and ongoing evolution of this infrastructure relies on the engagement of the people and communities who use, enhance, and maintain that infrastructure?the INAK. The need for interdisciplinary understanding of the Arctic system (driven by the profound changes in the Arctic) motivates the network, and the occasion of the IPY provides a unique opportunity and mechanism to develop the network, but ultimately, the network is sustained when members see how their network activities benefit their immediate scientific and practical science needs. The project engages the diverse Arctic community, including Arctic residents and indigenous people, to contribute to and use the INAK. Ultimately, the ontologies go beyond direct data user needs and grow the INAK and Arctic semantic insights into the future.

Award Number: 2034493

Title: Broadening the Academic Data Science Community

NSF Org: IIS Div Of Information & Intelligent Systems

Initial Amendment Date: September 10, 2020

Latest Amendment Date: March 30, 2022

Award Instrument: Standard Grant

Program Manager: Sylvia Spengler

Start Date: October 01, 2020

End Date: December 31, 2022

Awarded Amount to Date: \$60,000

ARRA Amount: \$

Investigator(s): Micaela Parker [micaela@academicdatascience.org](mailto:micaela@academicdatascience.org) (Principal Investigator)

Organization: Ronin Institute for Independent Scholarship Incorporated

127 HADDON PL, MONTCLAIR, NJ 07043-2314, (973)707-2485

NSF Directorate: CSE

Program(s): IIS Special Projects

Program Reference Code(s): 7364 7556

Program Element Code(s): 748400

Abstract: The Academic Data Science Alliance (ADSA) was created to enable the broad dissemination of new approaches and best practices in data science to colleges and universities nationwide. ADSA?s goals are to provide community resources and events for academic data scientists at any level to share research advances and educational approaches. ADSA also provides a collaboration space for university leadership to share their challenges and success stories around programs for data science. ADSA supports a

peer network of early career academic data scientists to forge collaborations and implement novel training approaches on their campuses. This project supports the ADSA Annual Meeting and the Data Science Leadership Summit. <br/><br/>The ADSA Annual Meeting provides an opportunity for academic researchers at any level (graduate students, postdocs, staff researchers and faculty) to collectively address common issues in data science research, education and training, program administration, and advocacy for data scientist career paths in higher education. The Data Science Leadership Summit convenes heads of current and nascent data science programs, and faculty interested in creating new initiatives on their campuses: to form an academic community for data science; to share best practices where they face similar challenges and opportunities; and to take collective responsibility in preparing next-generation data scientists to contribute in the best interests of society. The ADSA Career Development Network provides a peer-network for early career academic data scientists to support each other in their professional development. Outcomes from these meetings are provided online for public consideration.<br/><br/>This award reflects NSF's statutory mission and has been deemed worthy of support through evaluation using the Foundation's intellectual merit and broader impacts review criteria.

Award Number: 2135830

Title: Identifying Assets and Collaborative Activities to Support Student Success in Environmental Data Science at Minority Serving Institutions

NSF Org: DUE Division Of Undergraduate Education

Initial Amendment Date: August 24, 2021

Latest Amendment Date: August 24, 2021

Award Instrument: Standard Grant

Program Manager: Mike Ferrara

Start Date: October 01, 2021

End Date: May 31, 2023

Awarded Amount to Date: \$99,909

ARRA Amount: \$

Investigator(s): Micaela Parker [micaela@academicdatascience.org](mailto:micaela@academicdatascience.org) (Principal Investigator)

Krystal Tsosie (Co-Principal Investigator) Kari Jordan (Co-Principal Investigator) Talitha

Washington (Co-Principal Investigator)

Organization: Ronin Institute for Independent Scholarship Incorporated

127 HADDON PL, MONTCLAIR, NJ 07043-2314, (973)707-2485

NSF Directorate: EDU

Program(s): IUSE

Program Reference Code(s): 102Z 7556 8209 9178

Program Element Code(s): 199800

Abstract: This project aims to serve the national interest by increasing capacity in environmental data science through improved access to training and workforce development resources for diverse student populations. Racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States are under-supported and under-represented in data science programs and careers. Multiple challenges, including the affordability, access to new technologies and the lack of educational opportunities for diverse students, have led to a digital divide

that demonstrates inequities in access to data, technology and educational opportunities. Data science education at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) can narrow this divide by engaging diverse student and faculty populations who have the knowledge and skills required to address issues of social and cultural relevance. MSIs have proven to be effective at recruiting, retaining, and preparing under-represented students for the STEM workforce. This project seeks to bring together representatives from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and professional organizations to build resource networks, identify barriers to data science education, and co-create a set of recommendations focusing specifically on environmental sciences, thus empowering and supporting equitable data science education and training opportunities that ameliorate the digital divide.

The focus on environmental data science springs from two factors that indicate strong workforce needs nationwide: a significant increase in large ecological datasets and environmental synthesis projects over the last decade and the growing national awareness of critical environmental challenges. The project team includes representatives from the Academic Data Science Alliance, Native BioData Consortium, Atlanta University Center Data Science Initiative, the SCORE-UBE Network, The Carpentries and the National Environmental Observation Network and the project will engage a broad collection of additional academic and community partners. This project will organize monthly HBCU and TCU working group meetings and a series of mini-workshops to meet the following goals: 1) identify the unique assets that HBCUs and TCUs bring to environmental data science education; 2) analyze barriers to adoption of data science in teaching relevant courses; 3) identify and raise awareness of resources available to support equitable data science education; 4) promote relationship-building among faculty and partner organizations, forming the basis of a network for future resource sharing and curriculum development with peer support; and, 5) collaboratively develop a living document with recommendations that will enhance student success in environmental data science. Project activities will allow participants, with support from a Leadership Committee and community partners, to identify institutional assets and challenges, and how to best leverage partnerships to enhance data science capacity at HBCUs and TCUs. The project will build relationships and concentrate activities on identifying shared solutions that can be adopted within a variety of contexts and scales. Information gathered during all workshops and the project evaluation will be incorporated in a living document with recommendations that will be disseminated to all network partners and to the wider data science community. The NSF IUOE: EHR Program supports research and development projects to improve the effectiveness of STEM education for all students.

This award reflects NSF's statutory mission and has been deemed worthy of support through evaluation using the Foundation's intellectual merit and broader impacts review criteria.

Award Number: 1934649

Title: Research Data Alliance Ideate Incubator (RDA-I2) : Conceptualizing an Interdisciplinary Research Framework for Strengthening Community Impact and Advancing an Innovation Platform

NSF Org: OAC Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure (OAC)

Initial Amendment Date: February 20, 2020

Latest Amendment Date: August 26, 2020

Award Instrument: Standard Grant

Program Manager: Alejandro Suarez

Start Date: February 01, 2020

End Date: November 30, 2023

Awarded Amount to Date: \$2,202,049

ARRA Amount: \$

Investigator(s): Rebecca Koskela rebecca.koskela@rda-foundation.org (Principal Investigator) Leslie McIntosh-Borrelli (Former Principal Investigator) Lynn Yarmey (Co-Principal Investigator)

Organization: Ronin Institute for Independent Scholarship Incorporated  
127 HADDON PL, MONTCLAIR, NJ 07043-2314, (973)707-2485

NSF Directorate: CSE

Program(s): CYBERINFRASTRUCTURE

Program Reference Code(s): 7231

Program Element Code(s): 723100

Abstract: The Research Data Alliance (RDA) is a global organization providing a community infrastructure of researchers, data scientists, librarians, practitioners who work within and across disciplines to identify and solve grand challenges of data sharing and interoperability. This project augments the RDA infrastructure with an incubator framework that can be used to accelerate data sharing and data-driven innovation, by providing targeted community support and strategic dissemination of community outputs. The goals are to establish mechanisms to integrate and link work across different RDA working groups and improve the discoverability and usability of RDA outputs.<br/><br/>The project includes a pilot facilitation training program for RDA group chairs, to share strategies and tactics for building better connections across efforts. In a quickly-scaling organization, the chairs are uniquely placed as a consistent, visible leadership presence for all group participants. By equipping chairs with skills to lead more inclusive session discussions that give space to the knowledge of the many participants, RDA can better leverage the Plenary meetings to connect groups. A second goal of the project is to increase the intelligibility and discoverability of RDA outputs, to prepare for broader adoption of the RDA work. RDA's current process of documenting and tracking approved and supported RDA outputs makes it difficult to capture the full array of work associated with RDA, including publications, posters, lectures, webinars, white-papers, and adoption stories. Developing a strategy to better track output development and adoption would enhance the capability to support all group work and to monitor, measure, and disseminate the impact of RDA group outputs within the wider scientific community. In addition, enhancing the documentation of organizational outputs would improve the ability of group collaboration and cross-fertilization of ideas, as outputs are reused and adapted to additional purposes, methods, and audiences.<br/><br/>This award reflects NSF's statutory mission and has been deemed worthy of support through evaluation using the Foundation's intellectual merit and broader impacts review criteria.

Award Number: 2213732

Title: Microstructure Research Data Workshop at the South Big Data Innovation Hub

NSF Org: OAC Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure (OAC)

Initial Amendment Date: April 04, 2022

Latest Amendment Date: April 04, 2022

Award Instrument: Standard Grant

Program Manager: Plato Smith

Start Date: May 01, 2022

End Date: June 30, 2023

Awarded Amount to Date: \$50,000

ARRA Amount: \$

Investigator(s): Eva Campo [eva.campo@ronininstitute.org](mailto:eva.campo@ronininstitute.org) (Principal Investigator)

Organization: Ronin Institute for Independent Scholarship Incorporated

127 HADDON PL, MONTCLAIR, NJ 07043-2314, (973)707-2485

NSF Directorate: CSE

Program(s): NSF Public Access Initiative

Program Reference Code(s): 7556

Program Element Code(s): 741400

Abstract: This workshop will bring together experts to advance public accessibility and interoperation standards for microstructural material science datasets, a category of data that has broad utility for many areas of materials science research. The workshop builds on previous workshops, which succeeded in identifying targeted gaps in microstructure descriptors commonly used in manufacturing to correlate synthesis and macroscopic properties that determine structural performance. This workshop aims at identifying metadata needed to enable interoperability of distributed and federated microstructure data worldwide. The identification and adoption of these metadata standards will have widespread practical impacts in manufacturing, and be pursued through community engagement and consensus building. The results of this workshop will have the potential to dramatically advance manufacturing industries; efficiently developing synthesis strategies towards targeted structural performance, that could include resilience to extreme environments such as nuclear reactors and wind farms, to extreme weather conditions (coastal erosion), to fatigue in bridges, and to earthquake damage.<br/><br/>This workshop will focus on FAIR principles-oriented specifications for data management issues that were deemed crucial to the data science enterprise in previous gatherings, including: 1) metadata curation, 2) data ownership, provenance and sharing, 3) ontologies and schema, etc. The workshop will include a number of tracks: Data Science Education and Workforce, Manufacturing, Team Science, Smart Cities, Data Sharing, and Health Disparities. In addition, the materials track will reach out to the other tracks and will: 1) connect with experts in resilient cities and ask what properties in cement, steel, etc. they are concerned with and incorporate those in the case studies, 2) connect with experts in Team Science for advice on how to efficiently execute the actionable items identified in the workshop, and 3) connect with experts in Workforce development for help in crafting a training program for data technicians in this realm (e.g. how much data science and how much materials science would a technician, researcher, etc. need to know to work in this

space).<br/><br/>This award reflects NSF's statutory mission and has been deemed worthy of support through evaluation using the Foundation's intellectual merit and broader impacts review criteria.

Award Number: 2115108

Title: I-Corps: Leveraging the computational power of a quantum annealer to optimize the methods and technologies in the logistics and supply-chain industry

NSF Org: TI Translational Impacts

Initial Amendment Date: March 31, 2021

Latest Amendment Date: March 31, 2021

Award Instrument: Standard Grant

Program Manager: Ruth Shuman

Start Date: March 15, 2021

End Date: February 28, 2022

Awarded Amount to Date: \$50,000

ARRA Amount: \$

Investigator(s): Vesselin Gueorguiev [vesselin.gueorguiev@ronininstitute.org](mailto:vesselin.gueorguiev@ronininstitute.org) (Principal Investigator)

Organization: Ronin Institute for Independent Scholarship Incorporated

127 HADDON PL, MONTCLAIR, NJ 07043-2314, (973)707-2485

NSF Directorate: TIP

Program(s): I-Corps

Program Reference Code(s): 7203

Program Element Code(s): 802300

Abstract: The broader impact/commercial potential of this I-Corps project is the development of technology to increase efficiency and reduce the costs incurred in decision-making that involves multiple variables along with several possible combinations of such variables. This technology leverages the power of a Quantum Computer (QC) for a faster and more efficient computational potential, which helps businesses in rapid decision making. This proposed technology may be applied to several industry segments such as finance, logistics and supply chain, and drug discovery. In particular, logistics and supply chain companies may benefit significantly from this technology by making faster and more efficient decisions on route to optimization, warehouse management, inventory management, and last-mile delivery. This may allow companies to reduce fuel emissions, spend less on energy, and improve customer service. Companies also may save on resource management and reduced errors in judgment, where a small fraction of cost savings result in large savings. Commercializing this technology may have an economic benefit as well as a positive impact from an environmental perspective.<br/><br/>This I-Corps project is based on the development of a set of algorithms to solve complex distribution problems. Based on a COVID-19 vaccine distribution model, the solution targets advising and monitoring a safe reopening process by suggesting measures to be implemented by businesses within cities and counties. The algorithms will also suggest effective supply distributions patterns to optimize impact on limited resource and to develop and enhance mitigation procedures and supply delivery processes for potential large-scale



disasters. This proposed technology has the potential to help address critical elements relevant to emergency and disaster mitigation as well as better and more efficient distributions of goods. The goal is to develop a full-fledged software product to be used by a variety of businesses.<br/><br/>This award reflects NSF's statutory mission and has been deemed worthy of support through evaluation using the Foundation's intellectual merit and broader impacts review criteria.

Award Number: 1639675

Title: EarthCube Building Blocks: Collaborative Proposal: Polar Data Insights and Search Analytics for the Deep and Scientific Web

NSF Org: RISE Div of Res, Innovation, Synergies, & Edu

Initial Amendment Date: September 16, 2016

Latest Amendment Date: September 16, 2016

Award Instrument: Standard Grant

Program Manager: Eva Zanzerkia

Start Date: September 01, 2016

End Date: August 31, 2020

Awarded Amount to Date: \$294,999

ARRA Amount: \$

Investigator(s): Siri Jodha Khalsa khalsa@colorado.edu (Principal Investigator)

Organization: University of Colorado at Boulder

3100 MARINE ST, Boulder, CO 80309-0001, (303)492-6221

NSF Directorate: GEO

Program(s): Polar Cyberinfrastructure EarthCube

Program Reference Code(s): 1079 7433

Program Element Code(s): 540700, 807400

Abstract: This project develops an NSF EarthCube Building Block focused on Polar Data Science. The system will build upon work in Information Retrieval and Data Science and upon existing investment from NSF Polar, EarthCube, and from DARPA and NASA in this area. The system will collect, analyze, and make interactive the wealth of textual and scientific Polar data collected to date across the Deep web of scientific information -- scientific journals, multimedia information, scientific data, web pages, etc. The system builds upon fundamental research in text analysis, search, and visualization. Its primary goal is to unlock unstructured scientific data from 90+ data formats and to scale to 10s-100s of millions of records using the NSF XSEDE supercomputing resources. The system will perform information retrieval and machine learning on data crawled from the Polar Deep and Scientific web. Crawling will be informed by science questions crowdsourced through the EarthCube and Polar communities. The project is a collaboration with NSIDC, Ronin Institute, and the broader community including the newly funded Arctic Data Center led by NCEAS, to build our proposed system.<br/><br/>The result of periodic and regular crawling will be a Crawl Data Repository (CDR) of raw textual data e.g., web pages containing richly curated dataset abstract descriptions, news stories tied to datasets, ASCII note files and dataset descriptions, and other textual data available on or pointed to by Polar repositories as well as scientific data (HDF, Grib, NetCDF, Matlab, etc.). The CDR

will be made available for historical and future analysis by the broader EarthCube and Polar communities. In addition, an extraction pipeline will generate an Extraction Data Repository (EDR) of machine learning features not previously present (geospatial, temporal, people, places, scientific publications and topics, etc.) that will be the basis of interactive, visual analytics over the Polar data resources. Information collected will assist in answering scientific questions such as these derived from the President's National Strategy for the Arctic Region. To date, the team has also crowd sourced 30+ questions from the Polar community represented on CRYOLIST <https://goo.gl/4dDyIS> and will continue to solicit this feedback and use the information collected to aid science as prioritized by the community. They will also engage the community to assist in validating our system. This is not a predictive tool per-se ? though it can help to enable such predictions. Its focus is on building an operational and core capability for textual scientific data analysis, both retrospective, and prospective.

Award Number: 1639753

Title: Earthcube Building Blocks: Collaborative Proposal: Polar Data Insights and Search Analytics for the Deep and Scientific Web

NSF Org: RISE Div of Res, Innovation, Synergies, & Edu

Initial Amendment Date: September 16, 2016

Latest Amendment Date: September 16, 2016

Award Instrument: Standard Grant

Program Manager: Eva Zanzerkia

Start Date: September 01, 2016

End Date: August 31, 2019

Awarded Amount to Date: \$514,999

ARRA Amount: \$

Investigator(s): Chris Mattmann [mattmann@usc.edu](mailto:mattmann@usc.edu) (Principal Investigator)

Organization: University of Southern California

3720 S FLOWER ST FL 3, LOS ANGELES, CA 90089-0701, (213)740-7762

NSF Directorate: GEO

Program(s): Polar Cyberinfrastructure EarthCube

Program Reference Code(s): 7433 8048

Program Element Code(s): 540700, 807400

Abstract: This project develops an NSF EarthCube Building Block focused on Polar Data Science. The system will build upon work in Information Retrieval and Data Science and upon existing investment from NSF Polar, EarthCube, and from DARPA and NASA in this area. The system will collect, analyze, and make interactive the wealth of textual and scientific Polar data collected to date across the Deep web of scientific information -- scientific journals, multimedia information, scientific data, web pages, etc. The system builds upon fundamental research in text analysis, search, and visualization. Its primary goal is to unlock unstructured scientific data from 90+ data formats and to scale to 10s-100s of millions of records using the NSF XSEDE supercomputing resources. The system will perform information retrieval and machine learning on data crawled from the Polar Deep and Scientific web. Crawling will be informed by science questions

crowdsourced through the EarthCube and Polar communities. The project is a collaboration with NSIDC, Ronin Institute, and the broader community including the newly funded Arctic Data Center led by NCEAS, to build our proposed system.

The result of periodic and regular crawling will be a Crawl Data Repository (CDR) of raw textual data e.g., web pages containing richly curated dataset abstract descriptions, news stories tied to datasets, ASCII note files and dataset descriptions, and other textual data available on or pointed to by Polar repositories as well as scientific data (HDF, Grib, NetCDF, Matlab, etc.). The CDR will be made available for historical and future analysis by the broader EarthCube and Polar communities. In addition, an extraction pipeline will generate an Extraction Data Repository (EDR) of machine learning features not previously present (geospatial, temporal, people, places, scientific publications and topics, etc.) that will be the basis of interactive, visual analytics over the Polar data resources. Information collected will assist in answering scientific questions such as these derived from the President's National Strategy for the Arctic Region. To date, the team has also crowd sourced 30+ questions from the Polar community represented on CRYOLIST <https://goo.gl/4dDyIS> and will continue to solicit this feedback and use the information collected to aid science as prioritized by the community. They will also engage the community to assist in validating our system. This is not a predictive tool per-se ? though it can help to enable such predictions. Its focus is on building an operational and core capability for textual scientific data analysis, both retrospective, and prospective.

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## Appendix I: Cease and Desist Letter Claimed to be from Ronin Board Members

On 2024-04-15, Jorrit Poelen (a contributor to this document) received the following email (redacted to hide email addresses). Note that emails are easily spoofed, and this may be someone trying to impersonate Ronin Board members. So, please take this email with a grain of salt.

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Return-Path: <xxx@xxx>  
Delivered-To: xxx@xxx  
To: xxx@xxx  
Cc: 'The Board of Directors' <board@ronininstitute.org>  
From: Cheryl Sundberg <xxx@xxx>  
Subject: Open Letter  
Date: Mon, 15 Apr 2024 20:59:54 +0000 (UTC)

[...]

Dear Jorrit,

The Ronin membership (and other individuals) are notified to cease and desist any plans to publish an 'open letter' containing personal details, including names and email addresses, including those associated with the Ronin Institute, on any public forum, platform, or medium.

We also point out that much of the posted information is incorrect. Please remove the material from any forums.

Sincerely,

Cheryl and Dana

---

Jorrit replied about 30 minutes after receiving the suspicious email above:

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Hello Cheryl,

Thanks for your message!

If you are acting in official capacity, please use the [board@ronininstitute.org](mailto:board@ronininstitute.org) email address and resend this email.

Also, please provide an itemized list of the "[...] We also point out that much of the posted information is incorrect [...]". Also, please include proper citation of the document you extracted this from.

thx,

-jorrit

Please be specific.

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At time of writing, 20 April 2024, no reply was received by Jorrit to his request for clarification.

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From: Graham Wilson (23/05/2024)

I feel that it is really valuable to have a collaborative home for independent researchers (I am from the UK and the term 'scholar' doesn't really have much traction here). It is sometimes used for academics at the pinnacle of their career, but not otherwise. When I have used it in the past with colleagues they have wrinkled their noses up and laughed.

The ethos and activities of the Ronin Institute seemed to be pretty much what we all wanted. So I would begin by recreating those.

I think that we are likely to be viewed better by external entities if we have a name that they can relate to, that implies an infrastructure that is 'safe' and not threatening. This is why I prefer 'Institute' rather than an acronym that means nothing.

Personally, I'm a strong believer in the principle of Keep It Simple. I realise that, when members begin to seek funding through the entity, we shall need policies, constitutions etc, but for the time being I would prefer us to get a body of like-minded souls up and running rather than creating a bureaucracy. Having done such things in the UK quite satisfactorily in the past, I have found that many 'should's are really 'could's.

NB In the UK, it costs less than £200 to create a Community Interest Company and it takes anything between 3hrs and 3 weeks to get it fully registered. While you can easily do it online yourself, this can be a bit nerve-wracking for the first time. I assume that there's an equivalent in the US?

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