

## H-Net Charter

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### **I. Preamble**

The mission of H-Net is to assist humanities scholars worldwide to make use of new advances in electronic communication and information technology.

At the core of H-Net are electronic discussion lists catering to specialized areas of scholarly interest. These lists have national, and in many cases international, editorial boards and many are affiliated with other professional organizations. H-Net provides the computer resources necessary for all of these various lists to operate. H-Net also trains list editors and provides them with essential technical assistance concerning the internet and its resources, listserv, gopher, various mainframe systems, and personal computer hardware and software. H-Net provides the various discussion lists with listings of jobs, fellowship opportunities, and conferences, and a wide variety of other valuable information to disseminate to the lists. H-Net undertakes fundraising to support the activities of editors and enable them to increase the services that their lists offer. Collectively, H-Net provides the various lists with a central position in the rapidly developing academic arena of electronic communications. As an umbrella organization working to bring scholars into a new age of electronic communication, H-Net benefits from the breadth and diversity of these lists.

The vision of H-Net is expansive and inclusive. In addition to sponsoring discussion lists, H-Net provides hands-on training to acclimate scholars to the vast range of resources opening up with advances in computing and electronic communication. H-Net also assists scholars to incorporate new technologies into their teaching. H-Net is also eager to assist in making additional research and teaching resources available through electronic means.

Given the rapid evolution of new technologies and the various interests of H-Net members, the organization will continue to evolve and change. This governing document, therefore, is designed to preserve democratic decision-making, a pluralist structure which tolerates diversity and development in many different areas, and flexibility. As an international organization open to all humanists, H-Net recognizes no boundaries among class, gender, race, or nationality in its organizational procedures. H-Net welcomes all discourses and communities associated with recognized and authentic scholarship.

### **II. The Governance of H-Net**

1. H-Net is organized to run democratically with policy set by a committee known as the H-Net executive committee.
2. All members of the staff of H-Net shall have an opportunity to participate in decision making.
3. H-Net is designed to be responsive to its constituency. Continuous consultation with subscribers to all H-Net lists and participants in other H-Net programs is an essential aspect of H-Net's governance.

### **III. H-Net Staff**

1. The voting staff shall consist of all list editors of H-Net lists, all H-Net officers, and other persons active in H-Net operations who are designated by the executive committee as voting staff. The editorial board of each H-Net subject-area list may, if they so desire, designate a representative to participate as a non-voting ex-officio member in all staff discussions.

2. Issues under consideration by the executive committee shall be made known to the staff via a list called H-Staff. Decisions made by the executive committee shall be disseminated on H-Staff.
3. The editor of H-Staff shall be elected by the staff for a one-year renewable term each April. The editor shall appoint an assistant editor to handle the list during brief absences or indisposition of the H-Staff editor and during election campaigns when the current editor is a candidate for reelection. The assistant editor shall serve as a temporary replacement for the H-Staff editor under the terms of Sec. IV (C) of the charter. In the case that both the assistant editor and the editor are announced candidates for H-Net office, the executive committee shall select a noncandidate staff member to serve temporarily as H-Staff editor during the campaign.
4. The executive director, associate director, and executive committee members of H-Net shall be elected by H-Staff following a procedure that allows for thoughtful consideration over the span of two weeks. Individuals may be nominated by themselves or other staff members. All candidates must distribute a statement on H-Staff explaining their candidacy and respond on H-Staff to questions posed by other staff members about their candidacy. The election process will be overseen by independent officers appointed for the purpose of ensuring fairness, due procedure, and a closed ballot. Voting itself will take place over a seventy-two hour period in all elections. Each member of the voting staff may cast one vote for each seat up for election. (In the annual elections for the executive committee, this means that each member of the voting staff may vote for up to seven different candidates.) The executive director and associate director must be elected by a majority of the votes cast. If no candidate gets a majority of votes on the first ballot, then a run-off shall be held after a three day period of further discussion. For the executive committee, one ballot shall be held and the top seven vote getters will be elected.
5. Decisions made by the executive committee may be appealed to the entire voting staff if and only if thirty percent of the voting staff petition the executive committee within two weeks. Executive committee decisions can be rescinded only by a sixty percent vote of those participating in the election. Such votes shall be held on a day set by the executive committee with notice of one week to all subscribers of H-Staff.

#### **IV. The Executive Committee**

1. There shall be twelve voting members on the executive committee, each having one vote. Nine members shall serve three-year renewable terms. These positions will be staggered with three committee members elected annually each April by the voting members of the H-Net staff. The H-Staff editor shall serve as a voting member ex-officio. The executive director and the associate director of H-Net shall also serve as voting members of the executive committee.
2. The treasurer and secretary of H-Net shall serve as non-voting ex-officio members of the executive committee.
3. In case of hardship, any officer or member of the executive committee may take a leave of absence for up to three months. In such instances, the executive committee will select a temporary replacement for fulfill the duties of the person on leave. A member of the executive committee or an officer may be removed from office upon the recommendation of the executive committee by a majority vote and the approval of sixty percent of the voting staff.
4. The executive committee shall make all policy decisions for H-Net. The executive committee shall govern long-range planning, staffing, financing, and advertising. The executive committee shall approve the mandate for each H-Net list and control the admission, suspension, and abolition of all H-Net lists. The executive committee shall approve all H-Net committees and all H-Net list editors and editorial board members. In all decisions affecting the subject-area lists, the executive committee will consult thoroughly with the editors and editorial boards of the affected lists.

5. The executive committee shall conduct an annual review of H-Net.
6. The executive committee shall endeavor to nurture and provide support for the various H-Net subject area-lists. In determining policy for these lists, the executive committee shall take into consideration the inevitable differences in constituency and mission among the various lists. This task will necessarily involve consulting with the editors and editorial boards of each subject-area list and, where necessary, with the scholarly and/or professional organizations which have affiliated with said lists. Every effort shall be made to make decisions that are in line with the publicly acknowledged disciplinary contours and modus operandi of said subject areas.
7. The executive committee shall elect a chair and organize itself. No officer of H-Net will serve as the chair of the executive committee. At the request of any one member of the executive committee, a formal vote shall be taken on any matter before the executive committee. A minimum of seven affirmative votes is necessary and sufficient for the executive committee to pass any measure.

## V. H-Net Executive Officers

1. The officers of H-Net shall be an executive director, an associate director, a treasurer, and a secretary. The executive director and associate director shall be elected by a majority vote of H-Staff. The treasurer and secretary shall be selected by the in-coming executive committee after annual elections are concluded. Applicants for these positions will be openly solicited on H-Staff and all applicants will be given a fair and equal consideration.
2. The executive director shall serve a renewable three-year term. The executive director is charged with day-to-day operation of H-Net activities, writing grant proposals and obtaining funding for H-Net, organizing H-Net training programs, and representing H-Net in dealings with all other organizations. The executive director is responsible for implementing the policies and decisions set by the executive committee. The executive director, in consultation with the associate director and committee chairs, appoints all members of committees created by the executive committee with the approval of the executive committee. The executive director, in consultation with the associate director, the executive committee, current list editors and the editorial boards of subject-area lists, solicits nominations for subject-area lists editors and forwards the nominations and his\her recommendations to the executive committee.
3. The associate director shall serve a renewable two-year term. The associate director serves as editor-i-chief for H-Net. The associate director is responsible for coordinating the development, oversight, and support of new and existing H-Net networks; establishing and monitoring support services for editors and subscribers; and advising the executive director on relations with outside organizations. The associate director is also responsible for establishing and maintaining such other internal H-Net service lists as may be necessary to promote the internal operations and governance of H-Net. The associate director, in consultation with the executive director and current editors, nominates internal service list editors for the approval of the executive committee.
4. The treasurer of H-Net shall serve a renewable one-year term. The treasurer is charged with managing all H-Net funds in a prudent and timely fashion, in accordance with policies of sponsoring agencies and under the direction of the executive board. The treasurer shall work with the executive director and designated members of the executive committee in crafting a budget for H-Net. After the executive committee approves a budget, the treasurer is responsible for following its guidelines and for making monthly reports to the executive committee on the financial status of H-Net.
5. The secretary of H-Net shall serve a renewable one-year term. The secretary is charged with recording and maintaining records of all decisions made by the executive committee. The secretary is responsible for ensuring regular two-way communication exists between the executive committee and all of the

various constituencies of H-Net, including the staff, editorial boards, and subscribers. The secretary shall post all executive committee decisions on H-Staff and inform H-Staff of issues under consideration by the executive committee.

## VI. H-Net Lists and Their Editors.

1. H-Net subject-area lists shall work within the policies established by the executive committee in consultation with the list editors, editorial boards and (where applicable) the organizations with which the subject-area lists have affiliated.
2. Subject-area lists may, with the approval of the executive committee, also affiliate themselves with other professional or scholarly organizations.
3. All H-Net subject-area lists shall have their own editorial boards. List editors shall query their subscribers for nominations and volunteers to serve on their editorial boards. Board members shall be chosen by the list editors after consultation with the executive director and must be approved by the executive committee. Editorial board members serve renewable staggered two-year terms. Each editorial board may, if it so desires, designate a representative to participate as a non-voting ex-officio member in all staff discussions.
4. List editors and co-editors are selected by the executive committee in consultation with the editor applying for the position, the current editor (if there already is one), and the list's editorial board. All new editors shall serve a trial four-month period, after which they are appointed for two-year renewable terms.
5. H-Net editors are responsible for moderating their lists, including managing subscriptions, screening and posting messages, commissioning book, software, and film reviews, and placing items on the H-Net file servers and gopher area associated with their lists. In managing their lists, editors shall consult regularly with their editorial boards and their subscribers.
6. Disputes raised by a subscriber shall be adjudicated by the list's editorial board in a timely fashion according to written procedures prescribed by the editorial board. In disputes raised by members of an editorial board or a list editor, the executive director shall consult with the list's editorial board and editors and recommend a course of action to the executive committee. In disputes between different lists, the executive director shall consult with the editors and editorial boards that are involved and recommend a course of action to the executive committee.
7. H-Net respects the copyrights of authors whose material is posted on its lists and/or stored in its logs, file servers, and gopher. Authors who post items to H-Net lists convey to H-Net only the right to electronically reproduce their work on H-Net lists and in H-Net files.
8. H-Net owns the name of each subject-area list, its roster of subscribers, its on-line files, and its gopher and related files. All funds raised by advertisements and fees charged by the subject-area lists belong to H-Net and are under the control of the treasurer. H-Net's assertion of ownership is meant only to protect the rights of H-Net and shall not infringe on the copyrights of authors regarding any files or documents they may have made available to H-Net.
9. All issues of copyrights on H-Net material shall be determined by policy established by the executive committee in accordance with international copyright conventions and the copyright laws of the United States of America.
10. H-Net may grant affiliated status to existent scholarly lists. The executive committee, in consultation with the H-Net subject-area list editors, shall determine guidelines for this arrangement and ensure that affiliated lists are represented on the voting staff of H-Net.

## VII. Ratification, Interpretation, Amendment, and Review

1. To take effect this document must be ratified by a majority of the current (as of March 1, 1994) H-Net editors and officers by March 25, 1994.
2. The executive committee is charged with interpreting the Charter subject to the oversight provisions in Section III.E.
3. This Charter can be amended or replaced by action of the executive committee when ratified by a sixty percent vote of the H-Net voting staff, and/or by petition from thirty percent of the voting staff when ratified by sixty percent vote of the H-Net voting staff.
4. The executive committee should undertake a formal review of this Charter no later than eighteen months after it is adopted and at three year intervals thereafter.

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