Building a large-scale, decentralized academic social network with WordPress and ActivityPub

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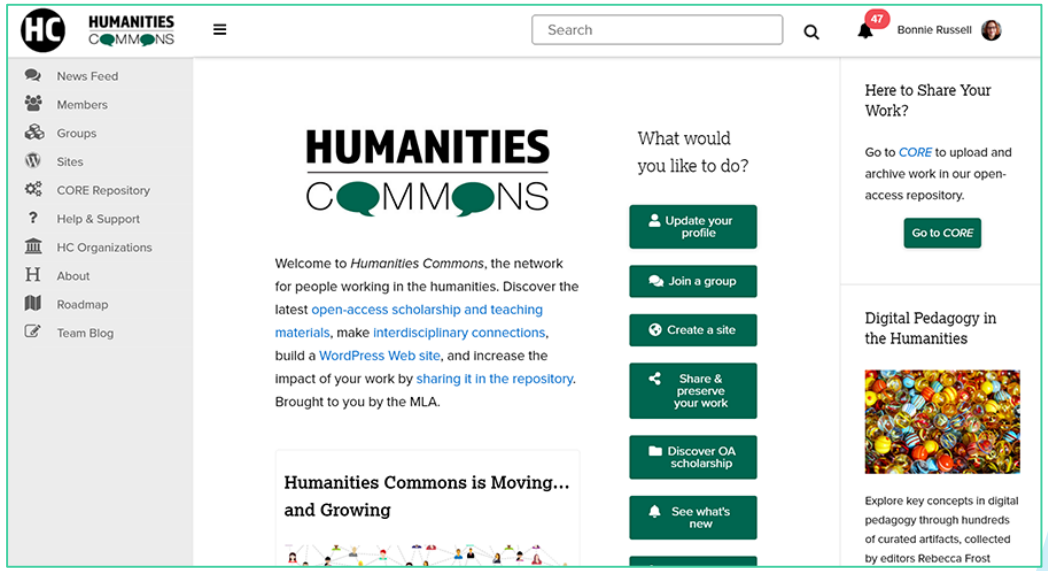
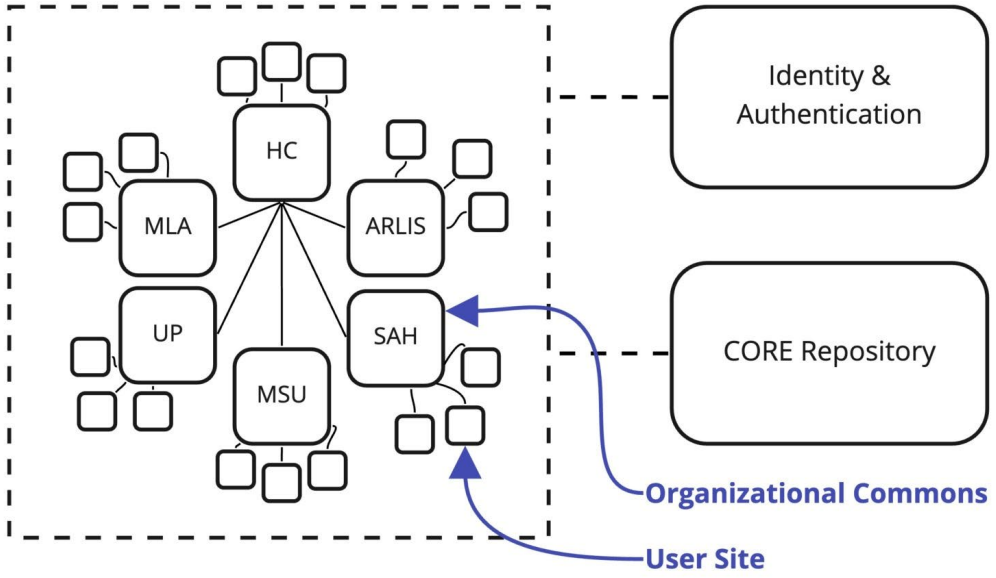
HUMANITIES COMMONS



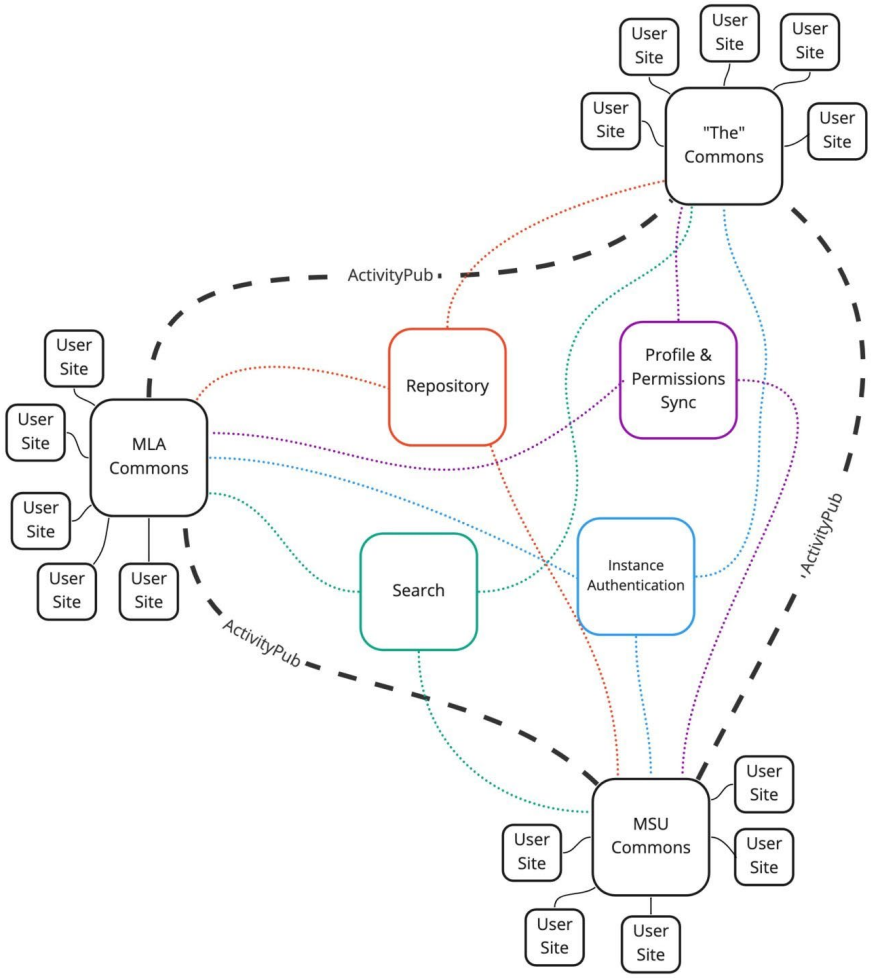
What is Humanities Commons?

- Created in 2016 as a social network and collaboration space for scholars and students
- 7 nodes including MLA, AUPresses, and MSU
- 52,000+ members
- CORE repository includes 22,000+ deposits in 33 languages

Current Architecture



- A single multisite multi-network installation
- The good:
  - Updates run on one site
  - User permissions set in one place
- The bad:
  - Commons team is responsible for all maintenance and administration
  - Hard to scale



Planned Architecture

- Sites will be split into separate instances
- Users on their “home” Commons would interact as they always have
- ActivityPub will be used to interact between sites AND with other ActivityPub-compatible clients
- Federation allows organizations and institutions to control their own instances

What's Next?

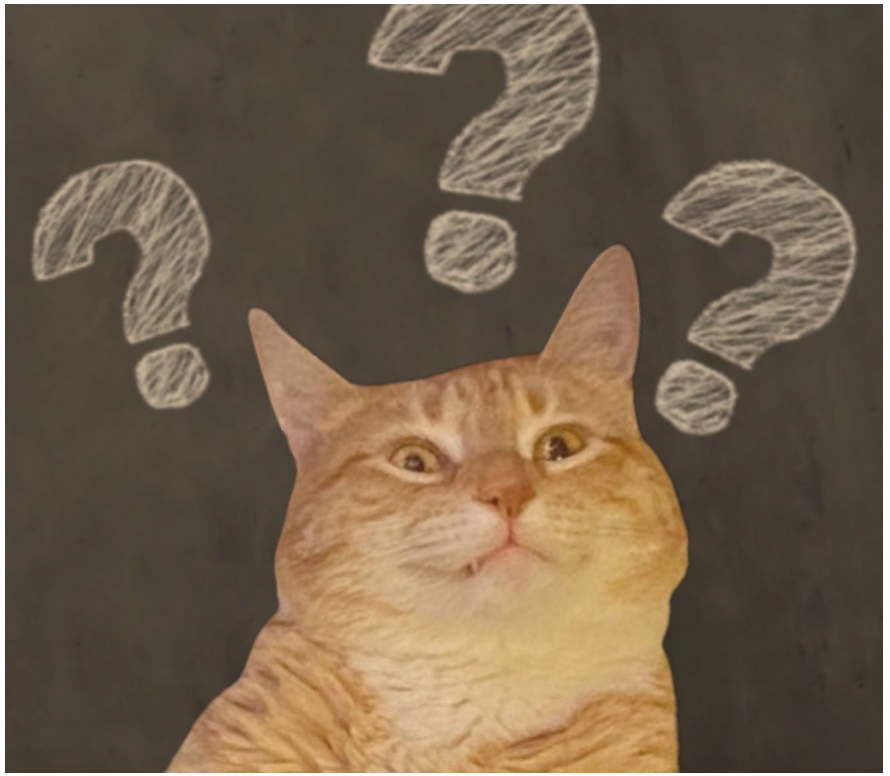
Commons API

Groups and profiles rebuilt to use the ActivityPub protocol

Expect to see the phasing in of our new federated model over the next two years

Keep up to date on changes by visiting our Building the Commons blog at https:/building.hcommons.org/

Questions?



- Email me at bonnie@msu.edu
- Follow me on Mastodon at BatsInLavender@hcommons.social
- Find more information on our team, site governance, and our values and mission statements on https://sustaining.hcommons.org

Thank you!