Making scholarly blogs permanently accessible

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Scholarly blogs are an essential part of scholarly communication. They can be started and maintained without major technical or financial hurdles, making them a good platform for publishing Open Access content. But they also typically lack important features common to other formats of scholarly publishing.

In order for scholarly blogs to become a bigger part of Open Access publishing, we decided to identify the major shortcomings, and implement an initial solution.

INTRODUCTION

Scholarly blogs have been around for about 20 years and have become an essential part of online communication. They have not (yet) become an official part of the scholarly record.

The technology to run a science blog is well-established and based on open source software and commercial hosting platforms. The user interfaces are mature support publication within a few hours. Technically, operating a blog is cost-effective and typically doesn't cost more than €10-20 per month or 1€ per blog post.

OBJECTIVE

To identify essential features that are missing in scholarly blogs, and to implement solutions to address these gaps. With the overall goal to increase the availability and useability of Open Access scholarly content.

USE CASES

Science blogs are a good fit for some scholarly publishing use cases, but don't work so well for others.

Good

- Articles focussing on storytelling
- Front matter content, e.g. news, announcements,, letters, interviews
- Small or single-person publisher

Bad

- Data-intensive science
- External peer review
- Advanced typesetting needs, e.g complex tables or figures

SHORTCOMINGS

We identified these key shortcomings with regards to Open Access publishing of scholarly blogs.

- **Long-term archiving**
  Scholarly blogs typically have no policies or workflows implementing long-term arching of content.
- **Use of standard open licenses**
  The majority of science blogs don't use standard open licenses for their content such as Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY), limiting reuse.
- **Use of persistent identifiers**
  Scholarly blogs typically don't use persistent identifiers for content (DOI), publishing platforms (ISSN), authors (ORCID), or affiliations (ROR) that facilitate linking with the scholarly record (other scholarly resources, scholars and their institutions)
- **Central discovery services**
  With the exception of blog aggregators, scholarly blogs typically don't integrate with central discovery services.
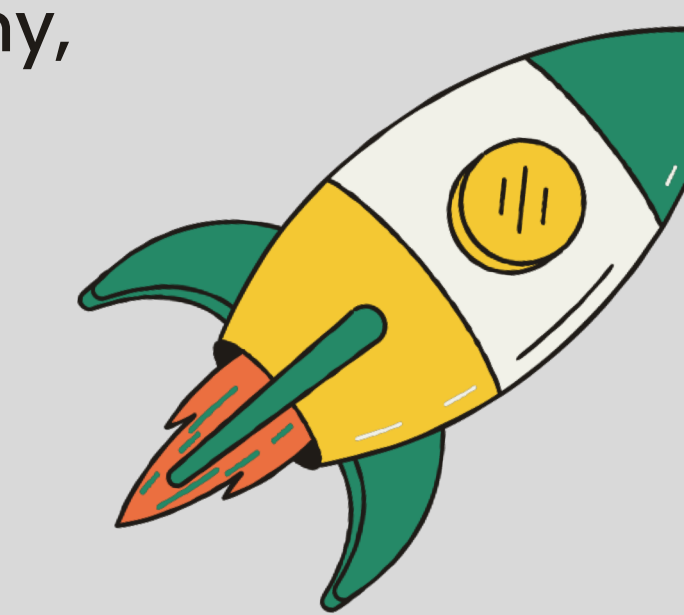
INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Our initial implementation to address these shortcomings is the Rogue Scholar blog archive at https://rogue-scholar.org that launched in April 2023.

As of August 25, 2023, Rogue Scholar has 42 participating blogs, with about 2,600 blog posts and about 2,500 DOIs registered . These blogs use nine different blogging platforms, Wordpress is the most popular platform with 18 blogs.
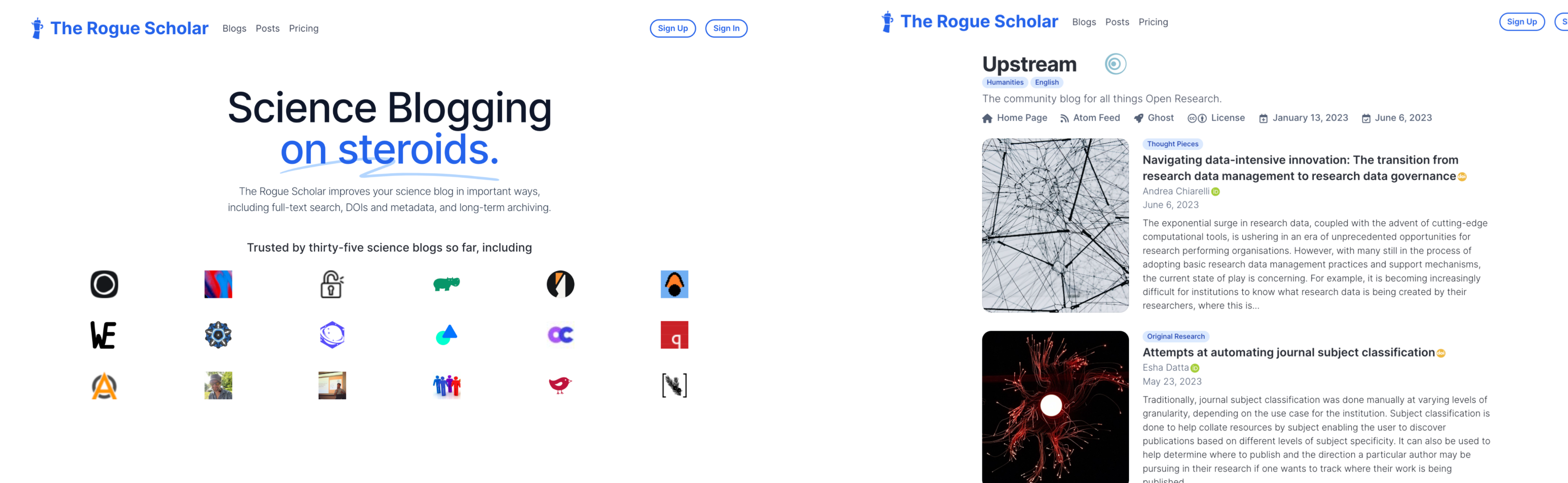
Rogue Scholar comes with these features:

- **Long-term archiving**
  Rogue Scholar archives the full-text content and metadata of all participating blogs.
- **Use of standard open licenses**
  All blogs participating in Rogue Scholar make their content available under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY 4.0) license.
- **Use of persistent identifiers**
  Rogue Scholar registers DOIs for all blog posts. The metadata registered with all DOIs include author name and optional ORCID ID, abstract, language, license, and references, and are open and machine-readable.
- **Central discovery services**
  Rogue Scholar offers a full-text search of all blog posts of participating blogs.

CONCLUSIONS

Scholarly blogs can address important ise cases in Open Access publishing. We identified a number of key shortcomings and provide a first implementation to overcome them. The Rogue Scholar blog archive is a promising approach to improve the discoverability, reuse, and permanent access of Open Access science blog content, complementing other initiatives such as publishing preprints, research data and software.
In order to promote discussion and facilitate the alignment of relevant stakeholders, a project proposal titled 'Cooperative Information Infrastructure for Scholarly Blogs (Infra Wiss Blogs)' was submitted in spring 2023.

Poster presented at the Open Access Tage 2023. ConfiDent ID: https://doi.org/10.25798/4q3n-7937