

## five principles

**1** | **DEFEND OPEN ACCESS** People used to talk about the web being democratic and making information available to everyone. Now, more and more sites are locked down by subscription fees and other charges—especially scholarly tools. We aim to support the original promise of the internet as an open-access resource. That’s why Phylo will stay free and open to all researchers.

**2** | **EXPLORE CONTEXT** Many histories highlight big names and seminal works, but they only give you half the story. To really tell the history of an idea, you need to know why *it* caught on while another died out, why *this* person working at *this* time with *these* people was able to come up with it and someone else wasn’t. We think this need applies to everyone, not just historians. Phylo lets you explore context in ways that might make your research richer, even more accurate.

**3** | **MAKE THE SOFTWARE DO THE WORK** Think about the last time you searched some scholarly tool. How many tries did it take? Two? Three? Ten? Or maybe you just couldn’t find the right keywords at all. A lot of current tools force users into the way *they* think. We believe there are better ways to interact with data. Phylo’s visual approach is centered around networks and maps, timelines and places—everyday ideas we’re all used to using. This puts the software, not you, to work in finding data.

**4** | **TRUST USERS** Most research tools are controlled by a handful of people who decide what information belongs and where to get it. This guarantees information will grow slowly but accurately. We think there’s a better way to expand and it starts with trusting users. We trust them, as experts in the field, to upload information on themselves and others. We also tell them the source for every piece of information in Phylo—supported, flagged, verified—and trust them to judge for themselves how reliable that information is. This places responsibility back among the community of scholars.

**5** | **START SMALL, THINK BIG** There’s a tradeoff between a tool that’s narrow and complete and a tool that’s broad but gappy. The narrow tool does what it does really well, but it doesn’t do very much. The broad tool does some really impressive things, but not all the time. We think there’s a balance to strike here, and it starts with a core of relevant, verified data. It has to be immediately useful for a lot of research, but it doesn’t have to be *everything* that’s out there—after all, our users can help with that. This frees up our resources for the big picture: feeling out new kinds of data, finding flexible ways to represent it, discovering new uses for Phylo—in short, keeping the project alive and growing.

**the phylosofhy project** explores the origins of contemporary philosophy by looking at historical relationships between individuals, institutions, and ideas. These relationships are extracted from a database of primary and secondary documents and rendered using information visualization tools.

Phylo was created by David Morrow and Chris Alen Sula in the PhD/MA Program in Philosophy and the New Media Lab at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The project is maintained by our many users who upload data.