

## Proposal to History of Economics Society New Initiatives Committee

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## **Project Narrative:**

In an effort to improve the visibility and impact of the HES, and of the field of history of economic thought, especially within the realms of digital and social media, we propose to produce a podcast series dedicated to discussing and disseminating research in the field. Notwithstanding the recent excellent efforts to improve its online visibility, the Society's digital-media presence remains limited mainly to the community it represents. A podcast series made publicly available through iTunes, Stitcher, and other such outlets, will expose the field to an audience wider and more varied than has ever been available to historians of economic thought. The potential benefits of such a project to the Society are virtually without limit.

We hope to begin with a monthly production schedule (to be expanded, eventually, assuming adequate audience interest). Each month, the three hosts will invite a HET scholar to discuss their research (past, present, and future), its relevance to contemporary economics, and its significance for today's society. For example, we might invite Maria Pia Paganelli to discuss her interest in Adam Smith and her thoughts on Smith's contemporary relevance, or we might invite Brad Bateman to do the same for Keynes, Bruce Caldwell for Hayek, Roger Backhouse for Samuelson, etc. In addition, the hosts will review and discuss new research published in the major outlets in the field (JHET, HOPE, EJHET, RHETM, etc.). We would also like to offer a forum in which issues related to historiography and the practice of HET can be raised and debated. Such a forum is largely absent from contemporary HET, but our experience, especially working with younger scholars, indicates a need for an ongoing discussion about how and why to do history of economic thought. In any case, the structure of the episodes is open to modification and will be revisited once the podcast series is active.

For an example of how the podcast might work, we encourage the committee to consider a somewhat similar podcast series the success of which is guiding much of our thinking here: <https://partiallyexaminedlife.com>

In keeping with the Society's interest in promoting the work of younger members – an interest we share – every six months, the podcast will feature a scholar who is no more than two years beyond completion of their PhD. Thus, the podcast series will provide another outlet for promising graduate students and newly-minted PhDs to promote their research, and receive feedback from more senior scholars. Each of these episodes will especially emphasize the issues mentioned above concerning the attitude of younger scholars toward the historiography of HET: What have these scholars learned from their mentors about the practice of HET? What is their attitude toward the future of contemporary themes and methods, and the place of HET as a scholarly endeavor?

The most immediate goal of the podcast series will be public outreach and expansion of the audience that typically receives new research in the field. We believe that an entertaining podcast, which uses plain language and humor to communicate complex ideas, will find an audience among the sizable intellectual laity interested in the history of economic and social analysis. Moreover, there are many scholars involved in HET around the world who, for various reasons (personal, social, geographic, economic), do not or cannot participate in official settings, and who thus have little

opportunity to engage with the professional community. A podcast series available internationally to anyone with an Internet connection would offer a means of communicating with this audience.

From a longer-term perspective, a podcast series that successfully communicates to a broader audience the vitality of contemporary HET will contribute to improved prospects for the field, attract more graduate students, and perhaps serve even to draw additional funding to the Society (as well as various departments and research centers in the field).

We anticipate a six-month lead time in order to coordinate all of the technical details. During this time, we will set up a website to serve as the series' home, and find space on a server with the capacity necessary to store the large MP3 audio files that will constitute each episode. We will also make arrangements to ensure that the series is featured prominently on various podcast directories (iTunes, Stitcher, etc.). We will arrange guests for and schedule the recording of the first six episodes, and make preliminary arrangements for the next six episodes of the series. Thus, by the time the first episode is produced, we should be prepared to develop a full year's worth of episodes.

We aim to produce and publish the first episode by 31 December 2017, and hope to publish at least one episode per month from that point forward. No travel will be required as all contributors, guests included, will be able to participate electronically from the comfort of their own homes or offices. .

Once the series is active, we ask that a link to the podcast be added to the Society's website. However, neither the Society's website nor server will serve as electronic host of the podcast, as such.

The project requires that each host have access to a computer. However, our existing equipment should suffice in this regard. The project will require microphones suitable for spoken-word recording, a hosting platform, and space on an internet server adequate to house large MP3 audio files (this site is ideal for our purposes: <https://www.libsyn.com>). We have also budgeted several hundred dollars to cover any unanticipated miscellaneous expenses.

We propose to evaluate the success of the project according to the following benchmarks:

- On or before December 31, 2017: **first episode** publicly available
- June 2018 (HES Annual Conference 2018): **six** episodes publicly available; number of **total downloads** at least equal to size of HES membership as of June 2018.
- December 2018: **twelve** episodes publicly available; number of **regular subscribers** at least equal to size of HES membership as of June 2018.
- June 2019 (HES Annual Conference 2019): at least **18** episodes publicly available; number of **regular subscribers** at least **twice** size of HES membership as of June 2019.
- June 2020 (HES Annual Conference 2020): at least **30** episodes publicly available; number of **regular subscribers** at least **three times** size of HES membership as of June 2020.
- June 2021 (HES Annual Conference 2021): at least **42** episodes publicly available; number of **regular subscribers** at least **four times** size of HES membership as of June 2021.
- June 2022 (HES Annual Conference 2022): at least **54** episodes publicly available; number of **regular subscribers** at least **five times** size of HES membership as of June 2022.

Our budget covers five years of funding. We will supply to the committee and the President of the Society reports at each annual conference detailing the manner in which monies have been spent to that date, funds left unspent, and the progress made toward the above benchmarks. Assuming a positive evaluation of the project after five years, at that time, we may request from the Society the funds necessary to produce the podcast for five additional years. In the mid-to-long run, there is a possibility of monetizing the series by seeking out corporate sponsorship. Whether this is something that the Society would like to pursue, as a means either of funding the podcast series or of supplementing the Society's coffers, is something that can be considered if / when it becomes appropriate.