

The Socratic Web Roadmap

Contents

1. [Development of the AskSocrat.es System](#)
2. [Concurrent Activities](#)
3. [Past Steps Already Completed](#)

Development of the AskSocrat.es System

1. **Write articles critical of all current approaches to misinformation problem. Develop reputation and respect within the industry.**
 - a. Editorial vs Platform approaches
 - b. Memetic competition vs echo chambers
 - c. Socratic Web and Critical Thinking
2. **Crowdfund registration of nonprofit, development of website, visual designs and explanatory animations.**
 - a. Crucial to present a professional image. So visual design of a new organisation website is key to this step.
 - b. Registration of non-profit
3. **Build team of high profile advisors and partners to complete full credibility package.**
 - a. Aine Kerr, Alexios, Craig Silverman, Claire Wardle, Dan Whaley, Jimmy Wales, Tim Berners Lee, etc
4. **Raise Funding for development of AskSocrat.es system and non-profit organisation. Goal: \$280,000**
 - a. ASAP: Reach out to every grant giving philanthropic organisation which has indicated its interest in fighting fake news, promoting critical thinking and quality journalism. Develop relationships with these organisations. Raise money from them.
 - b. Apply for all appropriate grants which are available.
5. **Create Non-Profit organisation and start hiring key staff**
 - a. I would prefer to create the organisation in Australia, but open to create it wherever it needs to be to get the funding and/or support it needs.
 - b. I will be using a lawyer to aid in this step, including some guidance on the potential risks of operating the system - can the organisation be held accountable for defamation etc when none of the content is actually held by the system? We have a unique situation, so I want to get some guidance.
 - c. With guidance from Craig (co-founder and CTO of rbutr), I will hire a developer to start work on the new system. They will first familiarise themselves with the rbutr system, and attempt to learn from the mistakes we made building that.

- d. Outsource development and design of a new website for AskSocrat.es. Produce some high quality animations and imagery which explain how the system works, and why it is necessary.
- 6. Create consortium of the web's largest platforms and publishers to guide iterative development of the new system**
- a. I have contacts with people at Facebook, Google, Twitter, Mozilla, Snopes and more - The goal will be to get their explicit participation in this process, allowing us to identify them as partners, and guiding our work to ensure it meets their specific requirements.
 - i. Those unwilling to be identified as official 'partners' of the project will still be included in Q&A and iterative feedback as much as possible in an effort to ensure the system does what they need it to do. This project is worthless if we produce something Facebook/Google/Twitter/etc can't use because of some flaw in design.
- 7. Work with smaller platforms and websites to test AskSocrat.es as we go**
- a. We already have relationships with several other organisations attempting to improve journalism, fight misinformation, or otherwise improve the quality of the content on their website. We will continue to work with them via rbutr during this process, and then convert to the AskSocrat.es system as soon as it is ready to do so.
- 8. Increase the number of publishers adding their rebuttals to the system while also increasing the number of platforms broadcasting the rebuttals**
- a. Having already solved the cold-start problem with rbutr and our active base of True Fans, this step is a simple process of ratcheting up each side of the equation to support the other. Every platform which publishes rebuttals from the database increases the reach and impact of a rebuttal added to the system. We can use this network-wide-reach metric to attract more publishers to submit all rebuttal-type content to our system, which in turn improves the quality of data in the database, allowing us to attract larger platforms, etc.
 - b. Any progress towards integration with Facebook, Google, Twitter, Mozilla etc will also be a huge point for attracting buy in from large publishers of fact-checking / critiquing /rebuttal material. The mere possibility that rebuttals will be published to the Facebook Newsfeed in the near future would be enough to motivate nearly every rebuttal creator to get on board and immediately submit all of their rebuttals to the AskSocrat.es system.
- 9. Secure additional funding for the next steps**
- a. As more platforms use the system to serve rebuttals to their users there will be more pressure on AskSocrat.es to guarantee quality content delivery. Especially in preparation for the next step we will need to hire more engineers to begin the ongoing process of algorithm refinement
 - b. We will need more money here than the original amount in order to cover the increased costs of extra staff and increased overhead costs. However, I expect

there will be more opportunity to raise the money on the back of the successful execution of the plan to date.

10. Constant improvement of the rebuttal sorting algorithms

- a. As the daily reach of AskSocrat.es increases, the incentive to start gaming the system will naturally lead to an increase in spam. We will need to have a team of engineers working full time on staying ahead of the arms race here. Just as Google has constantly tinkered with and refined their search results algorithm, so too AskSocrat.es will need to continually refine its algorithm to ensure it always delivers “the best critique” of a given URL. This team will certainly need to be in place before AskSocrat.es is integrated into any major platform or interface.

11. Integrate AskSocrat.es into one (then all) of the major platforms and web interfaces.

- a. Iterative development, iterative growth and constant communication with the major platforms leads us to the ultimate goal of integrating rebuttals directly into the Facebook/Twitter/etc newsfeeds, the Google/Bing/etc search results, and the Chrome/Mozilla/etc browsers.
- b. The goal is to make critical responses available from any content, anywhere, all the time. So, universal implementation is the ultimate goal. However, any partial implementation will still be a marked improvement on the current situation. I expect that that fact will become clear after any partial implementation, and thus universal implementation will naturally follow. However, at this point, exactly how it will play out is just speculation. My approach to this process is to simply continue to attempt to get the major platforms to see the value in the system, and continue to build it around them until they can't avoid it anymore themselves.

12. Maintenance

- a. Continue to meet the needs of all large platforms and interfaces.
- b. Ensure the code and system stays up to date with current technology, is not-vulnerable to hacking etc.
- c. Maintain rebuttal-sort algorithm such that it keeps spam out and punishes any attempts to game the system.
- d. Ensure financial needs are met - source majority of funding from the key platform companies who most benefit from this system.

Concurrent Activities

1. Continue to develop rbutr as a stand-alone platform, integrated into the AskSocrat.es system

- a. Rbutr will continue to be a public interface for the database, displaying rebuttals, submitting rebuttals, and otherwise working on improving user-interfaces with the AskSocrat.es system, acting as a prototype system for others to learn from and improve upon.
- b. Rbutr Browser extension improvement

2. **Continue to advocate for, and pursue research around the consequences of widescale implementation of this system.**
 - a. Impact on critical thinking?
 - b. Impact on accuracy of beliefs?
 - c. Ability to discern true information from false information?
 - d. Impact on skepticism towards claims?
 - e. Does engagement with information increase or decrease?

Past Steps Already Completed

1. **Build database and rebut browser plugin**
 - a. Beta plugin built and released within 1 month in 2012. Iterative development continued until mid 2013, with occasional development after that mostly through volunteer efforts.
2. **Build active community of plugin users**
 - a. Peak at around 20,000, currently around 8,000 after 2-3 years of inactivity on the project.
3. **Build connections with supportive organisations and advocates**
 - a. RDFRS, JREF, Skeptic.com, Australian Skeptics, European Skeptics etc.
4. **Grow database of high quality rebuttal connections**
 - a. Currently ~ 30,000 rebuttal pairs.

~~punished~~