

10 Questions You Should Ask About Annotation Providers and Platforms

Does it work everywhere?

Users don't want to have to use a different tool to annotate just your content. Hypothesis offers [browser plugins for use anywhere](#) on the web.

Is it standards based?

Does the platform support [the W3C's formal recommendations for web annotation](#)? Hypothesis helped write them. It's also important to note that supporting the standard in one specific area is not enough. You should to ask whether there is an organizational commitment to interoperability more generally and whether they work actively towards it. Ask for examples that demonstrate it.

Is it open source?

Is the platform fully available as an open source codebase? Anyone can use and contribute to [the open technologies developed by Hypothesis](#). We support many active contributors, and we develop some of our most important features in partnership with other organizations.

Is it permissively licensed?

Does the platform's open license enable the widest scope of use? Hypothesis typically uses the very open [2-Clause BSD License](#) (aka the "Simplified BSD License" or the "FreeBSD License").

Are you locked in?

If you don't need or want annotation-as-a-service, could you deploy and maintain the platform using only your own resources? Are you free to make that decision at a later date? Anyone can take and run the full [Hypothesis open source annotation platform](#) on their own hardware. Your interoperable, standards-based annotations are available via [the Hypothesis API](#).

How long will they be around?

Is the platform provider a commercial organization that could go out of business, or be bought by an entity that won't continue support? Do they have venture partners that are expecting an "exit" in the next few years? [Hypothesis is a nonprofit organization](#) that no one can buy, supported by well known and respected scholarly institutions. We're here for the long haul.

Full support across HTML, PDF, EPUB?

Does the platform enable annotation on the most widely used digital formats? And can annotations made on one format be discoverable on the others? Hypothesis supports annotations on web pages and PDFs today and is part of [a collaboration to support annotation on EPUBs](#). Our innovative [fuzzy anchoring](#) implementation that enables cross-format annotation is widely used.

Can you create and manage your own layers?

How much control will you have over annotations on your content? Hypothesis supports [public and private groups](#) so you can shape your users' annotation experience. Further, our new Publisher Groups capability lets publishers run their own authoritative, branded layers over their own content that they control and moderate. We also can connect to your existing user accounts so that users don't need to login separately to annotate.

Do they foster community?

Annotation on your content becomes more valuable when more researchers and scholars are using annotation as a part of their daily workflows — and when more publishers are using it across their content. Hypothesis launched [the Annotating All Knowledge coalition](#) that now includes over 70 of the largest scholarly publishers and platforms, and hosts [I Annotate](#), the industry conference on annotation now in its sixth year.

Does it have the best feature set?

Don't settle for anything but the best product with the absolute best capabilities, and an easy-to-use, beautiful interface. Hypothesis has pioneered nearly every key innovation in open annotation, and continues to lead in new enhancements. [Our future vision is embodied in our roadmap](#).

hypothes.is

[Get answers](#) to all your questions about annotation.