

Guidelines for LTER Web Site Design and Content

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This document was created by the LTER Web Site Design Working Group and reviewed by the LTER Information Management Committee. It was vetted by the LTER Network Community, and presented to the LTER Network Information System Advisory Committee and Coordinating Committee for approval in spring of 2006. The Review Criteria for LTER Information Management Systems states that site's web pages "should conform to LTER Network recommendations" [1]. Information Management Teams and National Science Foundation Reviewers use the Review Criteria in formal reviews of LTER sites. The Review Criteria and these recommendations may also be used by sites for informal self-assessment and planning, redesigning existing web pages and developing new web pages. The community of LTER Information Managers may need to review and update these recommendations in the future to reflect changes in web and other information technologies, as well as data synthesis and delivery strategies within the LTER Network. The primary goals of these recommendations are to improve access to site information and to emphasize membership in the LTER Network on site web pages.

The Working Group's recommendations cover three areas of websites: (1) design elements that portray the site as part of the LTER Network, (2) organizational schemas that facilitate easy navigation to information and data at the site, at other sites and across the LTER Network, and (3) access to current and important data and content.

• LTER Network Identity

- 1. Display the standard LTER Network Logo (http://www.lternet.edu/gallery/view_photo.php?set_albumName=graphics&id=NET_010008) with a link to the LTER Network Homepage (<http://www.lternet.edu/>) and following text on the home page. (*This Site is a Member of the LTER Network*).
- 2. Display a link to siteDB, which is an All LTER Site Characteristics Database (<http://www.lternet.edu/sites/>). This gateway will link to profiles and homepages of all other LTER sites.
- 3 The LTER network domain, lternet.edu, Domain Naming System (DNS) alias (site_acronym.lternet.edu) may be used to reach a site's homepage in addition to the local URL.

• Navigation

- Develop a hierarchical navigation system with links and pull down menus or another menu system for the website.
- Repeat the navigation menu on all public pages of the web site.
- The web site should be searchable.

• Content

- Data Access: every site shall implement the following data access functionalities:
 - On the site's home page provide a direct link to the site's data catalog, prominently displayed as a one-click url
 - On the topmost data catalog page: (example at http://intranet.lternet.edu/im/files/im/LTER%20Data%20Page%20Elements%20Example_0.txt)
 1. identify signature data sets that best represent the site's research goals;
 2. provide a capability to search datasets by LTER core area, by owner, and by keyword;
 3. provide a capability to browse datasets by LTER core areas;
 4. provide a prominent link to the LNO MetaCat system (a Network-wide database of metadata, <http://metacat.lternet.edu>);
 5. provide a prominent link to network-wide databases (ClimDB/HydroDB (<http://www.fsl.orst.edu/climhy/>), SiteDB (<http://www.lternet.edu/sites/>), Remote Sensing Archive (<http://www.lternet.edu/technology/sdw/sitelist.html>), and;
 6. provide a prominent link to the EcoTrends website (<http://ecotrends.info>)
 - The terms to be used to describe core areas are:
 1. primary production
 2. organic matter
 3. disturbance
 4. inorganic nutrients
 5. populations
- Create links that reach content in few mouse clicks and use evocative and straightforward words that reflect the content that will be displayed.
- We recommend sites include these links from the home page:
 - Site contact information, including information as to how to contact the main administrative staff at the site, including the mailing address, fax number, etc.
 - Searchable site personnel directory for all people involved in the project.
 - Site data from which data and metadata are **downloadable**.
 - Searchable site bibliography, including searchable citations from publications including peer reviewed articles, theses, dissertations, abstracts, book chapters, technical reports and others. Check with your home institution(s) as to whether PDF files of publications may be downloadable.
 - Progress reports and proposals, including documents that are **downloadable**.
 - Research news, nuggets and major accomplishments or links to digital newsletters, RSS web feeds, etc.
 - Network resources, including websites and databases in the Network Information System (NIS), such as siteDB, climDB, etc.
 - Research Description, including information about the LTER project and its research foci.
 - Education and outreach, including, for example, information about education and outreach activities, or downloadable resources for teachers and students.

- Include Information Management as an integral part of the LTER site and research program. This is a place to highlight IM projects, innovations, and information system specifications.
- Include the site's data access policy.
- Other suggestions for content within the website:
 - List or identify core and long term datasets explicitly
 - Calendar of events
 - Information about equipment and facilities, which will communicate an invitation to conduct research, create opportunities for other scientists and give instructions for doing research at the site
 - Field and/or lab manuals or protocols required by site personnel
 - Software, analysis, and modeling tools
 - Research policies and applications for conducting research
 - Opportunities for employment or volunteers, etc

REFERENCES

[1] Review Criteria for LTER Information Management Systems

See LTER Intranet (http://intranet.lternet.edu/im/im_requirements/im_review_criteria) for current version.