

QUESTIONS FOR IM COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE USER INFORMATION TO THE WEB DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP:

SUMMARIZED RESPONSES FROM 12 SITES (1/05):

1. Have you designed your website to serve specific target groups (e.g. local researchers, outside researchers, organized outreach program, general public, school kids, etc.)?

If so, please list those groups here:

Most sites that responded have identified different user groups. Some sites have identified which user groups they would like to prioritize. In most cases, this group consisted of researchers and graduate students. Some basic information is made available for the general public as well, but the aforementioned group is emphasized. One site designed three separate websites for different user groups. The web sites were designed for as outside users, with a focus on researchers and reviewers, privacy for site members, and data access for site members and partners. Of the sites that responded here is a list of users that were identified:

Local Site PI's, Local Site Grad Students, Visiting Researchers, General Public, GK-12 Educators and Students, Undergraduate Students, Partners, Reviewers, LTER Researchers, Outside LTER Researchers, International Researchers, Natural Resource Managers, and NGOs.

Examples of successful websites designed for specific groups include:

Information for the general public:

Lake information (NTL): <http://microbes.limnology.wisc.edu/outreach/index.htm>

Information for researchers and grad students:

Researchers often search publications (HBR): <http://www.hubbardbrook.org/research/pubs/hbrbib.htm>

Tools for graduate students (CWT):

http://coweeta.ecology.uga.edu/tools_graduate_students/graduate_tools4.htm

Information for visiting scientists (CWT): <http://coweeta.ecology.uga.edu/visiting.html>

Access to data (GCE): http://gce-lter.marsci.uga.edu/lter/asp/db/data_catalog.asp (and linked detail pages)

Species lists (GCE): http://gce-lter.marsci.uga.edu/lter/asp/db/all_species_lists.asp (and linked list pages)

Information about study sites for researchers: <http://gce-lter.marsci.uga.edu/lter/asp/studysites.htm> (and linked site pages)

Information for educators and students:

Teachers access on-line videos (HBR): <http://www.hubbardbrook.org/research/current/video/calciumvideo.htm>

Education (GCE): <http://gce-lter.marsci.uga.edu/lter/education/education.htm>

Course and grad program info (NTL): <http://lter.limnology.wisc.edu/slrecent.htm>

Do you have any feedback as to whether the design and content is serving each group successfully? If so, please list html addresses for examples of especially successful web pages.

Feedback generally comes at the time of a review of proposal submission. Some sites have received general comments from different users, including local site researchers.

2. Have the users at your site been involved with planning the function and content of your website?

If so, how (e.g. meetings and discussions, requests from users to publish specific information, queries out to users from web site developer, surveys, etc.)?

LTER sites have had very different experiences getting feedback from their web users and have had their users involved at very different levels. Web site development Staff has

communicated about general website themes with PIs through meetings and e-mails. Some Staff query PIs for feedback after the initial design and implementation work. Another site schedules discussion of their website as a regular agenda item for project management meetings.

Some sites have formed web site design committees that include both IMs and PIs. One site used supplemental funding to develop a new web site with an outside contractor providing support. This process took place over 4 months.

Other sites seek more focused involvement from different groups. They seek involvement from specific groups in the design and implementation of specific sections of their website. One site created a focus groups of users that meet regularly to design and monitor relevant sections of their website. A few sites have used surveys to get feedback, especially prior to a review.

3. Are you using an intranet with login protection?

Most sites that responded are using password protected websites to serve specific tasks. A few sites are interested in developing such tools.

If so, for what functions (e.g. discussion groups and internal communication, metadata/data gathering, data access?)

The functions of these tools vary between the sites. Some examples include protecting sensitive data, metadata and data entry tools, communication (i.e. listservs, webmail, e-mail addresses), tools to update personnel information in the database, access to a calendar of events, field work schedule, etc., downloadable presentation and other media files, private web applications, software and code distribution, and sharing draft documents and data. Most common functions are data and metadata entry, sharing draft data and information, and access to view and update administrative information, such as personnel information. Few sites are logging access to password protected sites.

Do you know how much is it used by researchers at your site? Is it a meeting the needs of your organization?

Most feedback comes from casual e-mails. Many of these tools are developed when a need arises. Most responses indicated that the tools are well-used, probably because they were implemented upon request to serve specific needs.

4. What do you know about your users and how you know it (anecdotal, complaints, comments, visitor logs, user information forms, surveys)?

Sites interact with their users in a number of ways and value feedback as to what kind of information users are accessing. Most correspondence is through e-mail as people request data and other information and through comments during casual conversations.

5 sites use some type of on-line form to collect information about people downloading data. 5 sites use web use reporting tools to summarize what pages are being viewed by users. Hits by visitors can be grouped by domain, OS, browser, etc. Tools included in PostNuke websites also may summarize data from web visitors.

5. Does your site require registration for data access?

If so, what information is gathered and how is it used?

10 sites track registration of data usage and 2 sites are interested in developing such tools. These forms collect information and allow downloading of data, when required fields are completed. The information entered into the forms is never verified. This all functions on the honor system,

mostly. This information is used by sites to summarize data users and which datasets are most popular.

The most common information collected:

Name

Organization/Affiliation

E-mail

Purpose for data download

Other information requested:

Telephone Number

Preference for notification of data changes

Usage agreement acceptance

Some sites have implemented a web tracking application, which provides additional information:

Session id

Resource downloaded

Date/time

IP address

Web browser