



**ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EARTH  
AUTHOR  
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Context**

1. The Encyclopedia of Earth (EOE) will be the first fully operational, publicly accessible initiative of the Earth Portal. The goal of the Earth Portal is to build a free, comprehensive, science-based, online environmental information resource hub that will educate millions of citizens around the world about the state of the environment, empowering them to make informed decisions. From air pollution to zoology, from backyards to oceans, visitors will be able to find clear, science-based information designed to help them make sense of the issues. When fully developed, the Earth Portal will encompass a wide variety of resource types on thousands of environmental topics.
2. The EOE will be one crosscutting component of the Earth Portal. The goal of the EOE is to create a comprehensive, highly credible, constantly updated, web-based environmental encyclopedia. The EOE will be built from the bottom-up through the use of wiki software that allows users to freely create and edit content using any Web browser. Unlike other wiki-based online encyclopedias, the EOE requires that authors be approved by a committee of experts prior to being granted writing and editing privileges on the wiki, and that all articles are approved by topic editors before becoming visible to the public.
3. The Earth Portal is governed by the Environmental Information Coalition (EIC), which is composed of environmental scientists, educators, and professionals drawn from academic and government institutions, private research bodies, civil society and corporations, and elsewhere. The National Council for Science and the Environment serves as the secretariat for the EIC.

**AUTHORS**

***Approval***

EOE Authors are individuals with expertise in an area within the scope of the Earth Portal who have been approved to contribute and edit articles in the Encyclopedia of Earth. Author approval is overseen by the Stewardship Committee of the EIC. Individuals interested in becoming Authors should send a CV and either a completed EoE response sheet or a statement (based on the list of topics below) noting the areas in which they would like to contribute to Lauren Pidot at [lpidot@ncseonline.org](mailto:lpidot@ncseonline.org).

It should be noted that all contributions, and edits to existing articles, must be approved by an EoE Topic Editor before they are published to the public site. Topic Editors are individuals with significant, relevant expertise who have been chosen to oversee specific parts of the Encyclopedia of Earth.

## ***Author Responsibilities***

Specific Author responsibilities are as follows:

- Contribute articles on topics within the scope of the Author's area(s) of expertise. The use of pre-existing materials is permissible, consistent with any copyright restrictions. While there is no set time commitment or article quota for Authors, all Authors are expected to contribute, or substantially add to/edit an existing article, within a few weeks of approval, so as to develop a facility with the wiki-based system.
- Add to and edit articles within the scope of the Author's area of expertise. While Authors are strongly encouraged to edit and add to appropriate articles, it is expected that substantial revisions will be explained in the relevant article's discussion area.
- Notify appropriate Topic Editors of inappropriate Author behavior (i.e. posting of offensive or otherwise blatantly inappropriate materials).

## ***Topics***

The top level of categories covered in the EoE are as follows:

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|---|--|--|
| ▪ Air Quality                                   | ▪ Environmental and Resource Management    | ▪ Industrial Ecology                     |
| ▪ Agriculture and Food                          | ▪ Environmental Chemistry                  | ▪ International Environmental Issues     |
| ▪ Animals                                       | ▪ Environmental Crime/Enforcement          | ▪ Land Use and Land Cover Change         |
| ▪ Animal behavior (behavioral ecology)          | ▪ Environmental Decision-making            | ▪ Materials                              |
| ▪ Algae   | ▪ Environmental Education                  | ▪ Media and the Environment              |
| ▪ Aquaculture                                   | ▪ Environmental Engineering                | ▪ Minerals and Mining                    |
| ▪ Biodiversity                                  | ▪ Environmental Ethics                     | ▪ Natural Resource Management and Policy |
| ▪ Business and the Environment                  | ▪ Environmental Health                     | ▪ Natural Hazards                        |
| ▪ Clean Technology (Green Engineering)          | ▪ Environmental History                    | ▪ Oceans                                 |
| ▪ Climate Change                                | ▪ Environmental Impact Assessment          | ▪ Ozone Depletion                        |
| ▪ Conservation Biology                          | ▪ Environmental Indicators                 | ▪ Parks and Protected Areas              |
| ▪ Consumer Issues                               | ▪ Environmental Journalism                 | ▪ Plants                                 |
| ▪ Ecological                                    | ▪ Environmental Justice                    | ▪ Pollutants/Toxics                      |
| ▪ Anthropology                                  | ▪ Environmental Law                        | ▪ Pollution Prevention/Source Reduction  |
| ▪ Evolutionary Biology                          | ▪ Environmental Literature, Art, and Music | ▪ Population                             |
| ▪ Ecological Economics                          | ▪ Environmental Monitoring                 | ▪ Public Lands Policy and Management     |
| ▪ Ecology                                       | ▪ Environmental Movements and Philosophies | ▪ Recycling                              |
| ▪ Ecotourism                                    | ▪ Environmental Policy                     | ▪ Remote Sensing                         |
| ▪ Ecotoxicology                                 | ▪ Environmental Security                   | ▪ Soils                                  |
| ▪ Energy  | ▪ Environmental Sociology                  | ▪ Sustainable Development                |
| ▪ Environmental Archaeology                     | ▪ Fisheries and Aquaculture                | ▪ Transportation                         |
| ▪ Environmental Assessment                      | ▪ Forestry                                 | ▪ Urbanization                           |
| ▪ Environmental Economics                       | ▪ Globalization                            | ▪ Waste Management                       |
| ▪ Environmental and Natural Resource Accounting | ▪ Human Ecology                            | ▪ Water Resources                        |
|   |  | ▪ Wilderness                             |
|   |  | ▪ Other Country/State/Region             |

## ***Meetings***

Authors may be asked to participate in occasional conference calls.

## **EOE Personnel**

The **Editor-in-Chief** will lead the creation of the Encyclopedia of Earth. The initial Editor-in-Chief is Cutler J. Cleveland, Ph.D., Professor of Geography and Environment and Director of the Center for Energy and Environmental Studies at Boston University. Dr. Cleveland is a past recipient of an American Library Association award and Editor-in-Chief of the *Encyclopedia of Energy* (Elsevier, 2004), the *Dictionary of Energy* (Elsevier, 2005), and the journal *Ecological Economics*.

The **Senior Editor for Policy and Governance** is Larry Sanger, a co-Founder of Wikipedia. Dr. Sanger is also Director of Distributed Content Programs for the Digital Universe Foundation

## **Addendum I: The Content Review Process**

Quality control is essential if the *Encyclopedia* is to be a trusted and authoritative information resource. Many contributors to the *Encyclopedia* are familiar with the traditional peer review process in which one's peers critically judge journal articles, research proposals, and other scholarly activities, often anonymously. Traditional peer review is the cornerstone of modern science. However, it is not nimble or flexible enough to handle the huge volume of information covered in the scope of the Earth Portal and the *Encyclopedia*. Nor is traditional peer review designed to handle the complex and dynamic social culture of a wiki with thousands of participants.

The content review process for the *Encyclopedia* is defined by several interconnected policies and procedures:

- First, and most importantly, access to the Author's wiki is restricted to individuals who have applied to, and been approved by, the Stewardship Committee of the Environmental Information Coalition for the Earth Portal. The Stewardship Committee will review the credentials of applicants and approve them based on their expertise on specific topics and on their ability to communicate jargon-free technical information with sophistication and clarity.

The Environmental Information Coalition (EIC), in turn, is governed by its own set of bylaws, a Board of Directors and an International Advisory Board with renowned scholars from diverse fields (see Addendum II)

- Second, the actual content of an article is determined by groups of experts working together on the wiki. An article may start with an individual or small team, but once up in the wiki, the content can, and will, be edited by other contributors who have an interest in the subject and the motivation to improve the article. An article eventually will have many more authors,

contributors, and copy editors than when it began. This process will produce an article that is far superior to what any single individual could possibly create.

- Third, a Topic Editor must approve an article before it is released to the public. A Topic Editor reviews an article for general content, accuracy, clarity, and adherence to *Encyclopedia* guidelines. A Topic Editor also resolves content-level disputes authoritatively and coherently, though with input from the contributors, and determines the appropriateness of deleting mediocre work.
- Fourth, all work in the *Encyclopedia* is attributed to an individual, not an IP address or a user name. This will motivate individuals to do their very best work, as it does in traditional scholarly work, and will discourage the explicit acts of sabotage that plague other electronic resources where anonymity is the norm.

## **Addendum II: Earth Portal International Advisory Board**

- **Rita Colwell**, Chairman, Canon U.S. Life Sciences, Inc., former Director of the National Science Foundation, USA
- **Robert W. Corell**, Chair of the Steering Committee for the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment
- **Robert Costanza**, Director, Gund Institute for Ecological Economics, University of Vermont, USA
- **Mohamed H. A. Hassan**, President, African Academy of Sciences, Nairobi, Kenya
- **Thomas Homer-Dixon**, Director, Trudeau Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University College, Canada
- **Andrew J. Hoffman**, Holcim Professor of Sustainable Enterprise, Ross School of Business, The University of Michigan, USA
- **Steve Hubbell**, Distinguished Research Professor, University of Georgia, USA
- **Simon A. Levin**, Moffett Professor of Biology, Director, Center for Biocomplexity, Princeton University, USA
- **Bonnie J. McCay**, Distinguished Professor of Human Ecology, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, USA
- **David W. Orr**, Chairman, Environmental Studies Program, Oberlin College, Ohio, USA
- **Rajendra K. Pachauri**, Director-General, The Energy and Resources Institute, India
- **F. Sherwood Rowland**, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, University of California - Irvine, USA
- **B. L. Turner**, Director, School of Geography, Clark University, USA