



Environmental Health News Siderean Seamark Illuminates the Web of Data Linking Environmental Issues and Health

WEBSITE

www.environmentalhealthnews.org

CHALLENGE

- Content was dispersed among 3,200+ sources
- Keyword search was inefficient, left relevant information undiscovered
- Edit summarization process was too slow
- Users wanted to share content focused for communities of interest

SOLUTION

- Daily aggregation from heterogeneous sources
- Dynamic categorization to automate editorial process
- Relational navigation reveals what's available by category and calls out unseen content interrelationships to facilitate discovery
- RSS feeds allow users to syndicate content based on relational navigation discoveries

RETURN

- Editing time cut 90%
- Daily summaries increased tenfold
- Improvement in visitors' ability to discover and share information exceeded expectations
- Syndication has grown to 100+ communities of interest

"Users like being able to zero in on articles that pertain to areas of known interest, then discover related information by following links, and have been much more successful in finding relevant articles."

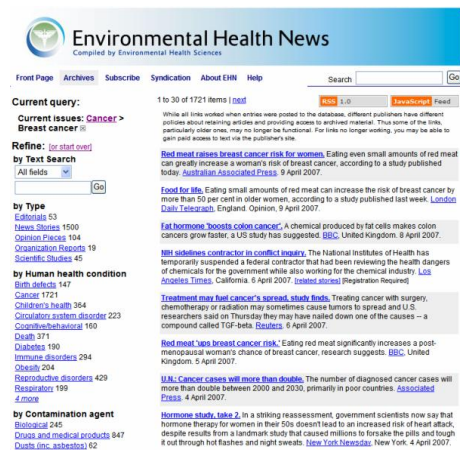
-- Todd Koym, Edgerton Foundation

Environmental Health News (EHN) is an online resource refreshed daily by Environmental Health Sciences, a not-for-profit organization founded in 2002 to help increase public understanding of emerging scientific links between environmental exposures and human health. EHN's Website serves a growing audience of readers and subscribers with daily summaries of breaking news and newly published scientific research and reports. Topics covered include issues in environmental health, including: climate change, bioengineering and Genetically Manipulated Organisms, chemical contamination, immune disorders, hazardous products, water quantity and quality, air pollution, sewage, and biodiversity stories with a health dimension.

Editors Couldn't Converge Enough Sources, "Tag" Efficiently, Or Feed All Communities Of Interest

Content on the site comes from a variety of scientific journals, government institutions, environmental groups, and the mainstream press. One significant issue was the manual effort required to add new summaries. The labor-intensive editorial process limited summaries to 30 or 40 a day, a major impediment to extending EHN's scope and audience. Breaking through that barrier was required if EHN was to realize its ambition of becoming a primary resource for activists, scientists, media outlets and the public and share information easily.

To address EHN's goals, a solution based on Siderean's MAPP and Seamark Navigator was built. At its heart is the encoding of the site's metadata tags in RDF (Resource Description Framework), based on the WorldWide Web Consortium (W3C) standards developed for the Semantic Web.



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Specifically The New Solution:

- Aggregates content about health and the environment from distributed, heterogeneous sources.
- Supports the flexible and efficient application of metadata about the content (i.e., tagging with EHN's taxonomy of categories).
- Provides effective and flexible navigation and search over a growing repository of content via dynamic signposts and cross-links based on the associated metadata.
- Enables the creation of customized feeds (RSS- or JavaScript-based syndication) for delivery to a variety of media platforms.

"With the new Seamark-based application, time saved by the editors approaches 90%."

"Feedback from users on the new relational navigation functionality has exceeded expectations."

-- Todd Koym, Edgerton Foundation

EHN Users Needed More Than A Blank Search Box And Unfocused Result Lists They Couldn't Share

EHN's search capabilities were unsatisfactory. Keyword search was insufficient to enable users to understand the scope and categories of information available or to find articles of interest quickly and effectively. Search was also too imprecise to power syndication; even sharing one-time result sets was clumsy. EHN wanted users to discover and establish feeds of new content focused for particular communities of interest. For example, activists and scientists interested in Endocrine disruption should be able to define a focused feed of all the news, studies, and advocacy relevant to them.

Speeding Illumination Of The Links That Power Relational Navigation

EHN editors relish the editing environment. Rules automatically tag new submissions with metadata properties from the taxonomy. Editors review and approve results. But they are not limited to inflexible guided navigation, which is based on a predetermined hierarchy that empowers drilldown only. Instead, editors can edit the taxonomy directly to add, change, or remove terms and properties, edit the rules that automatically classify articles, and otherwise illuminate and optimize the content interrelationships that provide the guidance of relational navigation.

Users Master Discovery Easily

Relational navigation has significantly improved EHN's user experience, eliminating the guesswork involved in traditional "hit or miss" approaches to search. A rich taxonomy reduces the need for users to be experts. They don't guess about the scope of information or the count of content sources in each category, quickly drill down on what they were looking for, follow interrelationships across content to new discoveries, and easily share the results via the now ubiquitous RSS standard.

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