

HistoryDB



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Organizational history requires a facility to manage, archive and present event details as well as narratives that provide perspective to the events. While events form a historical thread, storied narratives weave these threads together into a retrospective. The LTER Information Management Committee has recognized that working collaboratively to understand their history is a tool for exploring how they function within the LTER organizational structure. Such a tool provides valuable input to the development of governance procedures for community-level efforts.

The Information Management Committee Governance Working Group is designing and developing HistoryDB as a platform to record and publish significant events related to the development of Information Management within the LTER network. This work is prompted by the recognition of how our future **may be well informed** if we are able to remember and discuss our past.

The HistoryDB stores specific, discrete events and narratives that provide a context in which these events can be examined. Events, narratives and the connections between them can be tagged to provide additional information about their nature and scope.

HistoryDB is a community tool in support of shared memory assistance. As such HistoryDB leverages the strength of Communal Content Creation, **and Curation** and all community members are encouraged to contribute.

Events

Events form the basis for any timeline. An event represents a discrete ‘happening’ and are described textually and categorized using a controlled vocabulary, **which is organized as tags in the database**.

1. Events are tagged. Tagging provides for multidimensional and extensible organization of events and includes tags describing the type, subject, and sponsor of events within the database.

2. Events contain a textual description. The details of the event, such as it’s location or the overarching theme of the event can be displayed interactively on a timeline.

3. Events can be added to the system without an associated article, allowing for quick and frequent submissions.

4. Articles may be submitted and contain links to several events along a timeline.

5. HistoryDB leverages Community Content Creation and Curation. Once an event is submitted it can be referenced by articles and timelines, as well as related events.

Articles & Timelines

Articles tell a story and provide a nonlinear presentation of events with greater context than the events alone.

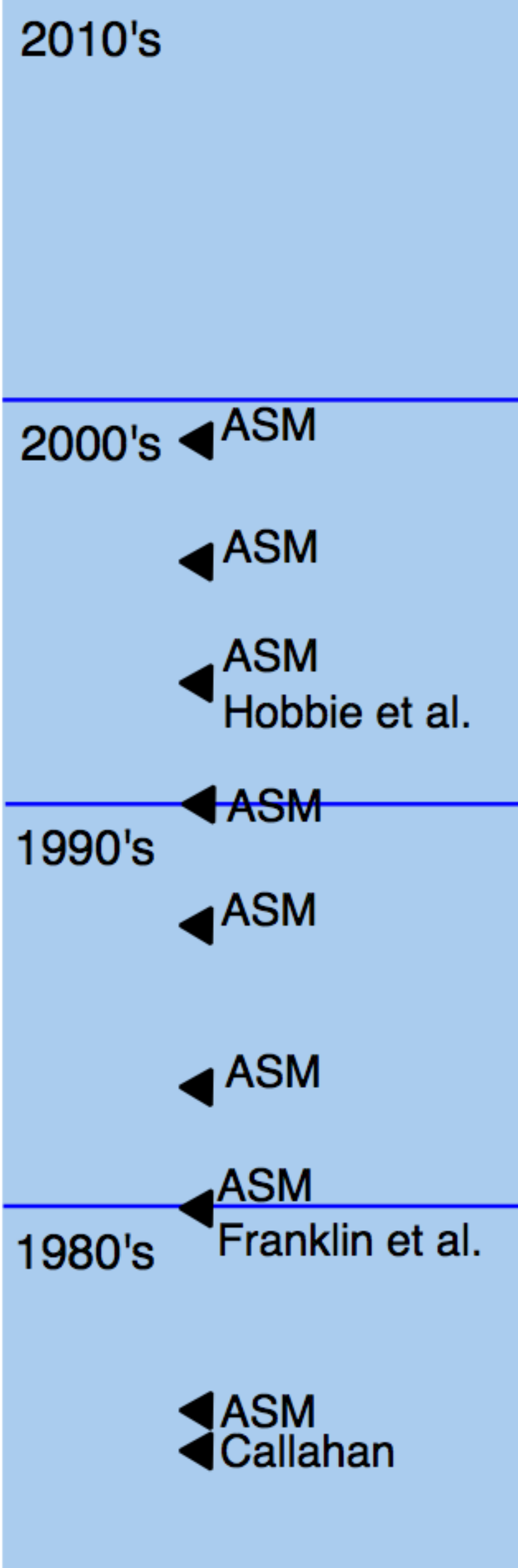
LTER, A Network of Sites

The Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) program was established in 1980 by National Science Foundation funding of six initial sites[Ⓐ]. Historically, the program was informed by biological and ecological activities associated with previous large-scale sampling programs such as the International Geophysical Year[Ⓐ] and the Internations Biological Program[Ⓐ] LTER sites today range from the poles to the Tropics, from rain forests to tundra and desert, and from offshore marine to estuarine and freshwater habitats, from unbuild to urban areas. Each site addresses fundamental and applied ecological issues that can be understood only through a long-term approach to collaborative study of a particular biome. Each site addresses different ecological questions; even the scale of research differs across sites. Projects in the network are linked by the requirement for some research at each site on five core areas, including primary production, decomposition, and trophic dynamics, and by cross-site comparisons facilitated by shared data. To facilitate work with data and data practices, there is an information manager at each site[Ⓑ]. Many species and environmental variables are studied using a variety of methods. A wide range of synthetic results continue to be generated.

Sites were added through competitive NSF calls for proposals. Funding sources varied by directorate with some sites funded via the Directorate for Biological Sciences[Ⓕ] the Office of Polar Programs[Ⓖ] and Geosciences/Oceans[Ⓖ]. Funding was discontinued for three sites[Ⓒ].

Communication strategies and coordination mechanisms include periodic All Scientist Meetings (ASM)[Ⓔ]: 1985[Ⓓ], 1990[Ⓓ], 1993[Ⓓ], 1997[Ⓓ], 2000[Ⓓ], 2003[Ⓓ], 2006[Ⓓ], 2009[Ⓓ]

Background and overviews of the LTER network are provided in publications, e.g. Callahan 1984[Ⓓ], Franklin et al. 1990[Ⓓ], Hobbie et al. 2003[Ⓓ].



Clicking an event link aligns the associated event on the time line with the text in the article.

Article links act as traditional hyperlinks allowing the reader to navigate to related documents.

Timeline links allow the user to navigate to collections of events organized into a timeline

The timeline widget is interactive allowing readers to move through different periods and find events

Central Storage / Universal Access

Events, timelines (collections of events) **and** articles are stored centrally and are made available using standards base methods. In addition to supporting community content creation, HistoryDB, supports community publishing by making it easy to include information on external websites. The timeline widget can be added to any site, regardless of server-side technology through the inclusion of a JavaScript file, much like Google Maps. The look and feel of the widget can be customized to suit the style of the hosting pages. Through this widget visitors can explore a representative timeline and continue their exploration of associated information on the HistoryDB site.

HistoryDB Website

The website provides a clean interface for interacting with the event, timeline and article data. The navigation bar on the left acts provides the user with an overall context for each page they visit. Pages for authoring, searching and viewing data intentionally provided a limited number of decision points. The act of creating an article with associated timeline and events does not follow a prescribed workflow and authors are free to add events, create timelines and write articles in any order and over a period of time that suites them.

