



Faculty Review of Open eTextbooks

The [California Open Educational Resources Council](#) has designed and implemented a faculty review process of the free and open etextbooks showcased within the California Open Online Library for Education (www.cool4ed.org). Faculty from the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California were invited to review the selected free and open etextbooks using a rubric. Faculty received a stipend for their efforts and funding was provided by the State of California, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Textbook Name:

General Biology



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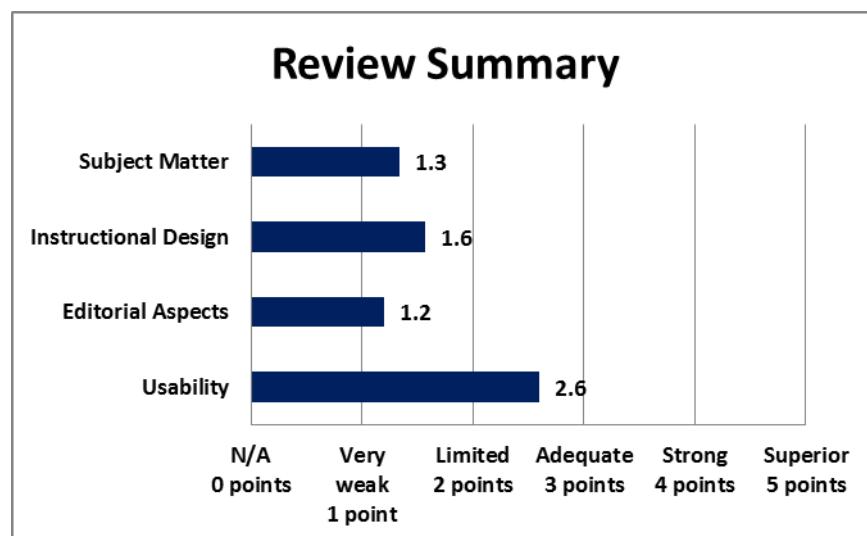
Professor

Format

Reviewed:

[Online](#)

A small fee may be associated with various formats.



Date Reviewed:

August 2015

California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: no C-ID

Subject Matter (30 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the content accurate, error-free, and unbiased?		X				
Does the text adequately cover the designated course with a sufficient degree of depth and scope?		X				
Does the textbook use sufficient and relevant examples to present its subject matter?		X				

Does the textbook use a clear, consistent terminology to present its subject matter?		X				
Does the textbook reflect current knowledge of the subject matter?		X				
Does the textbook present its subject matter in a culturally sensitive manner? (e.g. Is the textbook free of offensive and insensitive examples? Does it include examples that are inclusive of a variety of races, ethnicities, and backgrounds?)				X		

Total Points: 8 out of 30

Please provide comments on any aspect of the subject matter of this textbook:

- This is a bulleted resource. It reads more like a set of lecture notes specific to one instructor's class. It does not read like a textbook.
- In the section on natural selection in the "Evolution of Life" chapter, the author includes the following: "Note: In our lab computer simulation lab experiment, we relax the H-W restriction against natural selection, resulting in simulated evolution. When not all phenotype fitnesses are equal, selection occurs, allele frequencies change, and evolution results." It is unclear what computer lab experiment is being referred to here. The text in this section uses an odd Question/Answer format that is unprofessional and unclear. Natural selection is a topic of critical importance in ANY biology course and is definitely not covered in adequate detail.
- In the section on Animal Evolution, there is an entire section on the "Tuning Fork" Model. I have never heard of this and the text does not help me understand what is being discussed. I am sure the author simply shared his course lecture notes, and I'm sure these are great notes. But this is in no way a substitute for a textbook in an Introductory Biology course.
- I am also uncomfortable with the treatment of the scientific method, in which science is described as being carried out by people with "an "imaginative preconception" of what the truth is." There are sections on the body systems, which are very incredibly sparse.
- There are no resources for teachers, other than the images already embedded in the text.

Instructional Design (35 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Does the textbook present its subject materials at appropriate reading levels for undergrad use?		X				
Does the textbook reflect a consideration of different learning styles? (e.g. visual, textual?)		X				
Does the textbook present explicit learning outcomes aligned with the course and curriculum?		X				
Is a coherent organization of the textbook evident to the reader/student?				X		
Does the textbook reflect best practices in the instruction of the designated course?		X				
Does the textbook contain sufficient effective ancillary materials? (e.g. test banks, individual and/or group activities or exercises, pedagogical apparatus, etc.)		X				
Is the textbook searchable?				X		

Total Points: 11 out of 35

Please provide comments on any aspect of the instructional design of this textbook:

- Images are used inconsistently throughout the text. In a biology course, images are extremely important.
- There are no explicit learning outcomes associated with each "chapter."
- The organization makes sense.
- The text is searchable, although unless you access the PDF version, you cannot search the whole text at once. Instead, you have to search page by page, which would be tedious if you were a student and didn't know what you were looking for.

Editorial Aspects (25 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the language of the textbook free of grammatical, spelling, usage, and typographical errors?		X				
Is the textbook written in a clear, engaging style?		X				

Does the textbook adhere to effective principles of design? (e.g. are pages laid out and organized to be clear and visually engaging and effective? Are colors, font, and typography consistent and unified?)		X				
Does the textbook include conventional editorial features? (e.g. a table of contents, glossary, citations and further references)			X			
How effective are multimedia elements of the textbook? (e.g. graphics, animations, audio)		X				

Total Points: 6 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- Oh dear. Here is an example of a sentence pulled from the section on Natural Selection: "Examples of adaptation due to natural selection Skin color of the Australian Death adder: brilliant orange skin very unusual in an animal but quite similar to the local soil color. Likely that the snake moved towards this color over time as snakes with brownish and then orange coloring experienced higher survivorship than other-colored snakes." This is unacceptable.
- Additionally, there are too many bullets and the text is not written in complete sentences.

Usability (25 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the textbook compatible with standard and commonly available hardware/software in college/university campus student computer labs?				X		
Is the textbook accessible in a variety of different electronic formats? (e.g. .txt, .pdf, .epub, etc.)			X			
Can the textbook be printed easily?				X		
Does the user interface implicitly inform the reader how to interact with and navigate the textbook?				X		
How easily can the textbook be annotated by students and instructors?			X			

Total Points: 13 out of 25

Please provide comments on any aspect of access concerning this textbook.

- The pdf file can be printed. The website has breadcrumbs that keep you attached to the beginning of the book, so you can easily navigate through the different chapters. It isn't easily annotated, unless you have special software for the task.

Overall Ratings	Not at all (0 pts)	Very Weak (1 pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3 pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
What is your overall impression of the textbook?		X				
How willing would you be to adopt this book?	X					

Total Points: 1 out of 10

Overall Comments

If you were to recommend this textbook to colleagues, what merits of the textbook would you highlight?

- I would never recommend this book. The only merit is that it is free...and as a WIKI, maybe someday it will be excellent. Today is not that day.

What areas of this textbook require improvement in order for it to be used in your courses?

- The content and quality of this book is unacceptable. It needs a complete overhaul and needs to actually be written in complete sentences. It really isn't a textbook...it is a set of lecture notes for one person's class. It is awesome that this person shared his stuff...but it is not textbook quality.

We invite you to add your feedback on the textbook or the review to [the textbook site in MERLOT](#)
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For questions or more information, contact the [CA Open Educational Resources Council](#).



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