



## Faculty Review of Open eTextbooks

The [California Open Educational Resources Council](http://www.cool4ed.org) 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](http://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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Textbook Authors:

Wikibooks

Reviewed by:

David Stronck

Institution:

California State University, East Bay

Title/Position:

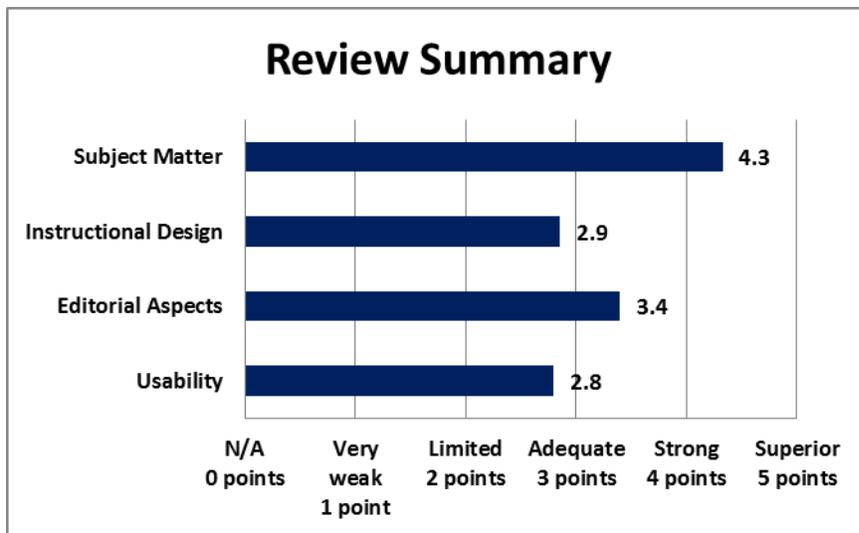
Professor

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: 26 out of 30

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

- This textbook is an on-going project open to revisions and up-dating. It includes many excellent external resources, e.g., Biology in Wikipedia, EvoWiki, wepapers, Wiktionary, etc. The topics are comprehensive and complete for introductory biology. At the beginning of the book, the topic of the Big Bang leads the reader to the Cosmology Portal. There is an enormous wealth of details and data in this portal. Similarly this textbook has many other references leading to more details.
- This textbook has some current problems, e.g., EvoWiki and we papers are not available. Some of the topics are treated superficially while others are done with great depth. For example, the article on Hydrogen is beyond the depth found in an introductory chemistry course. The section on evolution includes a discussion and use of the Hardy-Weinberg principle -- a topic not found in this place in most introductory biology textbooks. The topic of Human Evolution is not available in the current version.

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: 20 out of 35

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

- This textbook seems to be a series of articles more than a coherent textbook done by one or a few authors. Some of the topics have a narrow vision, e.g., the explanation of the scientific method emphasizes the formation of a hypothesis. However, the discussion includes describing the work of Charles Darwin, who did inductive descriptive science through his observations, and arrived at his conclusion of natural selection. The textbook omits that Darwin did not test a hypothesis in an experiment but rather did descriptive science.

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: 17 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- This textbook includes a Gallery of Biologists. For example, "Lynn Margulis . . . transformed current fundamentally-framed current understanding of the evolution of cells with nuclei . . . perhaps the most important and dramatic event in the history of life . . .by proposing it to have been the result of symbiotic mergers of bacteria. . . . Richard Dawkins [said] endosymbiosis theory is one of the greatest achievements of twentieth century evolutionary biology." Nevertheless, endosymbiosis theory is not found in this textbook's discussion of evolution.

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: 14 out of 25

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

- This textbook confuses some readers by including the option of editing. Some students will have difficulty in using this textbook because of missing sections and unavailable resources.

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		
	Not at all (0 pts)	Strong reservations (1 pt)	Limited willingness (2 pts)	Willing (3 pts)	Strongly willing (4 pts)	Enthusiastically willing (5 pts)
How willing would you be to adopt this book?			X			

Total Points: 5 out of 10

## Overall Comments

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

- This textbook strives to be extremely current in providing the most up-dated information from experts.
- There are many excellent and detailed references and links to resources. A professor could use these resources as a way to engage students in doing advanced searches for in-depth analysis.
- Many of the topics are presented with more details and data than are commonly found in other textbooks.

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

- The unavailable sections and resources discourage the use of this textbook.
- Some of the sections seem to be mostly superficial outlines.
- There is a lack of consistency in chapters.
- The authors do not provide adequate guidance on the use of the book and its resources.

We invite you to add your feedback on the textbook or the review to [the textbook site in MERLOT](#) (Please [register](#) in MERLOT to post your feedback.)



For questions or more information, contact the [CA Open Educational Resources Council](#).



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