Terminology Services

Access and Transparency

Terminology Services helps EPA better manage its environmental vocabularies and improve the Agency's capacity for future semantic management.

Environmental protection is a multi-disciplinary endeavor that relies on input from the fields of science, health, economics, policy, and law. When conducting core Agency activities, these disciplines are often brought together to write regulations, conduct research, make decisions, and manage environmental information. The many disciplines involved have distinct vernaculars across which individual terms may have multiple meanings. Therefore, understanding context and content is essential for interpreting the environmental information upon which much of our environmental protection efforts depend.

Terminology enables information access. Managed vocabularies provide terms used to index, catalog, and tag information resources so that they can be located and retrieved. EPA's Web Taxonomy (WBT) is a managed vocabulary that is used to tag EPA Web pages to help enable search and retrieval. The WBT is managed in Terminology Services.

The objective of Terminology Services is to provide terminology management tools and services in support of EPA's environmental protection mandate.

Terminology Management

Terminology Services provides a repository of environmental vocabularies; e.g., glossaries, acronym lists, taxonomies and thesauri. The repository contains over 350 active and archived vocabularies that collectively include over 20,000 terms and acronyms. These vocabularies include terms from EPA programs as well as from federal laws and regulations, and international and state partners.

Terminology Services employs Synaptica™, an enterprise tool for creating, maintaining, and publishing vocabularies. Synaptica™ uses the ANSI/NISO Z39.19 standard for developing hierarchical terminology structures. This tool can be used to develop and maintain different types of vocabularies, from simple keyword lists to more complex structures that include definitions and describe relationships between terms.

Accessing Terminology Services
Terminology Services URL:
www.epa.gov/ts

Stewards may manage their vocabularies by selecting the Login for EPA and Partners.

For More Information
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Automated Services

Terminology Services provides Web services which can automatically update:

- glossaries displayed on EPA program Web pages,

- taxonomies used for indexing enterprise content, and

- thesauri used to enhance enterprise search.

Collaborative Stewardship

Terminology Services provides a framework for vocabulary management across the EPA. It can manage multiple vocabularies and supports distributed stewardship, a key requirement for the way EPA does business. The central repository supports enterprise-wide use of current terminological assets, encourages the creation and management of new vocabularies, and can help minimize redundant development of terminology management tools and term sets in the future. A Terminology Services wiki has been developed to enable collaborative development of glossaries. OEI provides training for Synaptica™ and the Terminology Services wiki to those looking to develop and manage terminology.

Future Activities

Terminology Services will continue to provide more and better functionality by implementing new releases of Synaptica™, and by augmenting that tool with others. We will continue working with content owners (i.e., stewards) to enhance the quantity and quality of repository content. Beyond these core activities, we will help EPA meet future semantic management needs. For example, search engines are evolving so that they can infer context and produce more relevant results. Such inferences require concept management. In the coming years, repository content will be enriched by establishing relationships between terms and mapping terms to concepts.