Appropedia:A history of collaboration

Appropedia began in April of 2006. In the earliest stages it was a collaboration between passionate people from the United States and Australia, and quickly expanded to become a global project.

A number of other similar sites have "joined with" Appropedia since its inception, bringing many content pages, readers and contributors, including:

- Sustainable Development Wikia
- WinWinWiki
- Wikigreen.org
- Village Earth’s Appropriate Technology Wiki Project
- HowToLiveWiki, home of the Hexayurt
- The sGoals Wiki, a.k.a. the Sustainable Goals Wiki (sustainable business)

Contents

1 Background
2 Collaborations
3 Notes
4 See also

Background

After years of other online and offline sustainable collaboration projects, Lonny Grafman started Appropedia in April 2006 with a focus on appropriate technology, defined very broadly. He was assisted by Aaron and Goodsignal in the decision to use the mediawiki engine for Appropedia.

In May 2006 Lonny started a conversation with Chris Watkins via his Wikipedia userpage.[1] Chris was focused on appropriate technology articles in Wikipedia,[1] but by June 2006 he was convinced to join forces at Appropedia. Appropedia now more explicitly covered broader issues of international development and sustainability - a logical combination due to the large amount of overlap and synergy between these topics. It also developed a policy of complementing Wikipedia, referencing encyclopedic material there, and focusing instead on project information, original research, how-tos, networking and other material not suitable for Wikipedia.

A note left on another site[3] led Curt Beckmann to join Appropedia, bringing energy, new ideas and different perspectives. He put a lot of energy into gaining permission to port quality content from other sites, leading to an acceleration in Appropedia’s content growth and profile. Likeminded people and organizations were happy to give permission to use their material (see below).
Gabriel Krause worked away in the background since September 2006, doing important technical work.

Contact with WikiGreen in late December 2006 led to an enthusiastic response from Eric Blazek[4], and a very quick decision to join forces. (Chris Watkins logged on one day to find that the merger, which he had supported, had been agreed upon and implemented by those on the other side of the planet, largely while he was asleep.) It was decided to use the name Appropedia, at least for the time being. This brought an enormous amount of content, the work of Eric Blazek and Roy Dent, ported with permission from various publications, including some content from CD3WD.

Collaborations

Since then Appropedia has made connections with more and more people and organizations:

- International Rivers Network gave permission for several pages worth of content.
- Practical Action gave permission for over 100 articles
- The Erssons, a family in Portland, Oregon, provided articles
- Demotech, an organization in the Netherlands have built many, many pages
- A long-running discussion with Village Earth led to their wiki merging in March 2007. This was the original wiki on appropriate technology.
- Discussions with Architecture for Humanity, who have set up the Open Architecture Network. Their website serves a different purpose to Appropedia, and the exact form of collaboration is still to be decided, but we have agreed to support each others' efforts.
- Sustainapedia, a planned website by a group of people with a similar vision and much ambition, led by Ryan Legg, and Jim Harris of Cleantech[5].
- The How To Live Wiki, the site of Vinay Gupta, known for the Hexayurt, merged much of its material into Appropedia in March 2007, and Vinay joined the Appropedia team.
- The Sgoals wiki (managed by Appropedia user Sgoals), focused on Sustainable Business practices, joined shortly after Howtolivewiki
- Students for Global Sustainability Wiki merged in January 2008.
- CCAT, the Campus Center for Appropriate Technology, partnered with Appropedia to move their project pages to Appropedia in April 2008.

Other exciting conversations are ongoing, with highly regarded organizations on the verge of joining this collaborative community. We look forward to being able to mention them here soon!

Notes
1. In the late 90's, Chris envisaged a collaborative site where people would share ideas and build rigorous arguments, and the focus would be on facts rather than opinion, constructive dialog rather than attacks, focusing on the key issues that made a difference in the world. It was to be called *Roots of Change* but it never got past a vague idea. When he learnt about Wikipedia he saw this as the realization of his earlier dream - someone had figured out how to make collaborative website. David Bartecchi of Village Earth pointed out, however, that certain types of content and collaboration are not suitable for Wikipedia. Appropedia, Wikipedia, and to an extent related projects like Wikibooks, are the realization of this earlier dream.

**See also**

- Appropedia Foundation
- Appropedia: Wiki origins
- Appropedia: About
- Appropedia: Mission
- Category: Appropedia press releases