

Interdisciplinary Communication and the Astrobiology Primer Project

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The purpose of the Astrobiology Primer Project is to develop a short, portable reference for Astrobiologists to use in preparing for and understanding conference presentations outside their area of primary expertise. It is also intended to help graduate students and others entering Astrobiology to conceptualize the broad sweep of basic knowledge.

The Primer does not aim to be either definitive or comprehensive as a stand-alone document. Rather, it is intended to be both a table of contents for the literature and a ready reference. It will be a short work (100-150 pages), comprised of brief segments organized hierarchically to facilitate use when going to and from conferences and between talks. There will also be a section of tables and charts, including a tree of life, a geologic timescale and a star sequence. Another unique feature of the Primer will be its construction method. The Primer is based on two basic questions posed of conference participants: (1) What do you want your audience to know before you talk? and (2) What would you like to know before going to talks outside your field?

In addition to the hardcopy, we will also produce an online version, a “living document,” that can grow with the field. The Primer Project is an outgrowth of graduate student collaborations within the NASA Astrobiology Institute (NAI) and currently involves 10 editors and over 70 contributors.

Note that the final product, while supported by the NAI, is not an official representation of NASA/NAI research, positions, or goals.