

# The Tree of Life flourishes on the Web

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Scientists say The Tree of Life -- a Web-based database of the relationships and characteristics of all groups of Earth organisms -- is growing.

Although originally started as a way for scientists to share data, project organizers now want members of the public to also contribute to the Tree of Life Web site.

The project, a collaboration of the world's scientists, is fundamentally a genealogy of life on Earth coupled with information about the characteristics of individual species and groups of organisms, said David Maddison, creator of the project and a professor of entomology at the University of Arizona-Tucson.

"My dream is to be able to do grand-scale analyses of patterns of life across all of life," said Maddison. "You need to think about the evolutionary tree along which genes have flowed in order to explain why organisms are as they are."

Katja Schulz, managing editor of the Tree of Life Project at the university, spoke Monday during the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, explaining plans to allow the public to contribute.

She says she determined to "make this cool science available to the public."

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