How to Read the SEBoK

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The SEBoK is implemented as a *wiki* with more than 200 articles about various systems engineering (SE) topics, such as emergence and system requirements. Those articles are grouped into 26 knowledge areas, which are further grouped into 8 parts. The underlying engine for the SEBoK wiki, Mediawiki, is the same engine used by Wikipedia (see http://www.wikipedia.org), but many customizations have been made for the SEBoK. This article explains the special features of the SEBoK wiki implementation and also suggests how you can navigate the SEBoK to find SE information of interest.

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Contents

Wiki Features
    Breadcrumbs
Finding Information
Article Format

Wiki Features

Most of the SEBoK features are self-evident to anyone familiar with normal website navigation mechanisms or who has ever used a common wiki such as Wikipedia (see http://www.wikipedia.org). Nevertheless, it is worthwhile highlighting the content on the left-hand side of each page, which is always the same and always has four sections:

- Quicklinks
- Outline
- Navigation
- Tools

Quicklinks

The nine quicklinks are hotlinks that are likely to be of main interest to new SEBoK users. You are now looking at one of them, *How to Read the SEBoK*. The purpose of most of the quicklinks is self-apparent, but of special note is Copyright Information, which explains what you may do with the information found on the SEBoK. All of the information contained in the SEBoK is copyright protected, but can be accessed and viewed without cost by anyone through the Internet. On the other hand, there are restrictions on what you can do with that information beyond access and viewing. Please look at the Copyright Information article for complete information.

Outline

The SEBoK is divided into eight major *parts*, each of which is further divided into *knowledge areas*; these are in turn divided into related *topics*. The hierarchical structure of the SEBoK is represented in the outline. Conveniently, the outline auto-expands to show the article you are currently reading.

Navigation

A webpage containing each of the structural elements of the SEBoK can be accessed by clicking the element name; e.g., clicking on Glossary of Terms takes you to a webpage containing all glossary entries.

Toolbox

The Toolbox contains two features. *Cite this page* provides full information to cite the specific article that you are currently viewing; this information is provided in various common citation styles including APA, MLA and Chicago. *What links here* takes you to a webpage that shows all the other pages within the SEBoK that link to the page you were just viewing. Readers should rarely need to use the toolbox links.

Breadcrumbs

In addition to the features listed above, the wiki also contains a feature for tracking the path you navigate. As you move through the wiki, the last 5 pages you have visited will be listed at the top of the page. These "breadcrumbs" provide an easy way for you to return to articles you've recently viewed.

Finding Information

If you are new to SE, we suggest you begin by visiting Part 1: SEBoK Introduction. It provides an excellent overview of the SE discipline, the history of SE, and other useful insights. Note that every topic has one or more primary references, which are those generally available readings the SEBoK authors believe have the best coverage of that topic. For example, the topic Systems Engineering Overview suggests the INCOSE Systems Engineering Handbook as an excellent introduction to SE, and the topic Economic Value of Systems Engineering recommends three articles by authors Boehm, Honour, and Valerdi as "must reads". Each primary reference has its own webpage which provides full citation information, indicates all the articles that cite it, and in many cases, elaborates on its content. You can browse through the entire set of more than 200 primary references at Primary References. Similarly, the SEBoK defines more than 340 important glossary terms, such as architecture and verification. When you read an article that uses one of these terms, it will generally be a hotlink that will take you to a separate webpage which contains one or more definitions for the term, the source for each definition, and other places in the SEBoK that also link to that webpage. If you keep your browser arrow over a hotlink, a popup window will also show you the definition without having to leave the page you are on. You can browse the entire glossary at Glossary of Terms.

If you are already familiar with SE and want to look for a specific topic, you have several options available. First, you can type the word or phrase in the search box at the top right hand corner of any page, hit "Go", and view the results to see where in the SEBoK you can find the sought after information. You can also use the outline structure of the SEBoK, shown on the left-hand side of every page, to select a specific part, knowledge area, or topic. Still another approach is to read the use cases called out in SEBoK Users and Uses in Part 1, which suggest ways in which you might find valuable information for different purposes.

Article Format

Each article has the same basic structure.

At the top is an introduction to the article content, followed by the table of contents of the article, followed by sections containing the main body of information in

the article. To promote readability, articles are generally no longer than 2000 words. Most articles contain hyperlinks to other articles, glossary terms, primary references, and even to external websites outside the SEBoK.

Towards the bottom of each article are the references, which are divided into *works cited*, *primary references*, and *additional references*. Works cited, as the name implies, are simply the full citations for articles, books, and websites found in the article. As described earlier, primary references are works that the SEBoK authors recommend anyone who wishes to know about the topic read. Finally, additional references are works that the SEBoK authors think are worthwhile for you to read beyond the primary references if you want to learn about the topic in greater depth. *Works cited* may also appear in the *primary references* or *additional references.* When that occurs, it signals to the reader that they are encouraged to read beyond the actual cited portion of the work. Citation formats largely follow the Chicago Manual of Style; however this manual does not provide a format for citing standards. Because of this, standards are formatted as reports with the standard number replacing the report number.

At the end of each article is a DISQUS segment where you can enter comments about the article, such as possible improvements or corrections or where you can simply state your opinion about what you read. Because DISQUS supports threaded comments, you can also reply to previously posted comments.

You can also vote whether you *like* the article, using the familiar Facebook interface.

The SEBoK editors will monitor all of your comments and suggestions to use when planning periodic updates to the SEBoK.

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