

Extending the Message of Soil Quality in the Mobile Device Era

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In this day and age, where everyone is time poor, making information easily and quickly available is paramount. However, with a topic as complex and as multi-dimensional as soil quality, a new approach to packaging information that is evidence-based and relevant to the local environment is required. Apple multimedia digital books provide a platform capable of delivering layers of information on mobile devices. Furthermore, once installed, the books can be viewed independently of internet connection, making them accessible anywhere, anytime. SoilsWest with co-investment from the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) is producing the Soil Quality series of eBooks which, when complete, will comprise ten stand-alone books. Each book will cover a specific area related to soil quality. The first layer of information is the key messages, delivered in summary points, images and captions. The second layer presents the main narrative supported by interactive widgets. Widgets can be movies, presentations, animations, interactive illustrations, simple calculators and image galleries. Deeper learning is delivered through 'learn-more' popups which may be technical information, tutorials and videos providing 'on-site' experiences throughout the south-western agricultural region. These popups are activated by keen readers and students via strategically placed buttons, enabling an uncluttered interface to be maintained. A further feature of the books is the comprehensive glossary, which is accessed by selecting the word of interest to summon additional information without leaving the current page. The series is focused on evidence-based aspects of soil quality relevant to dryland farming in Western Australia. Each book is authored by experts in their field with additional specialist pieces by guest authors. Case studies of on-farm trials, industry and farmer experiences support the technical information. The user interface and examples of the layers of information from the first four books: 1. Constraints to Plant Production, 2. Integrated Soil Management, 3. Soil Organic Matter and 4. Soil Acidity, will be demonstrated. Future topics include: Soil Biology, Soil Compaction, Soil Water Repellence, Sodic and Alkaline Soils, Nutrient Management and Gravel Soil. The eBooks can be found on Apple Books by searching for 'Soil Quality' and are available as free downloads.