February 8, 2017

EDGI

Environmental Data and Governance Initiative

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Changes to DOE Energy Information Administration (EIA) Kids Educational Pages

In the Energy Information Administration (EIA) office of the Department of Energy, there have been significant changes to information on Energy Kids educational pages regarding coal, oil (petroleum), and biomass, as well as some less significant modifications to content on other pages.

Description

There were several changes to the EIA's Energy Kids educational pages on the effects of coal and oil on the environment, as well as changes to the pages on hydrogen, energy saving, and electricity. Some content was completely removed, while other content was slightly reworded or moved. The most significant changes are removals of links to information about greenhouse gases and removal of sentences describing the environmental impact of non-renewable energy sources. There were also several minor changes to pages on hydrogen and electricity that do not significantly alter content, and these pages are included for completeness.

The most notable changes to this site are summarized here:

1. A pattern of changes in wording, across three EIA Kids pages, from using the word "impact" to the word "effect" when describing the relationship between non-renewable energy sources and the environment:
    a. From screenshot 1.1, on the EIA's "Energy Kids - Coal" page
    b. From screenshot 2.1, on the EIA's "Energy Kids - Oil (Petroleum)" page
    c. From screenshot 3.1, on the EIA's "Energy Kids - Biomass" page
2. On the EIA's "Energy Kids - Coal" page (1), the removal of sentences and links describing the relationship between non-renewable energy sources and the environment, such as "In the United States, most of the coal consumed is used as a fuel to generate electricity. Burning coal produces emissions that adversely affect the environment and human health." (screenshot 1.2).

3. On screenshot 1.2, on the “Energy Kids - Coal” page, the removal of a graph depicting the relationship between US energy production, coal uses, and greenhouse gas emissions.
4. On the “Energy Kids - Oil (Petroleum)” page (2), language changed about hydraulic fracturing from “there are environmental concerns” to “has some effects on the environment”.
5. On the “Energy Kids - Biomass” page (3), removal of two sentences highlighting the effects of burning wood and municipal solid waste (MSW) on air pollution, but with the addition of clause about the effect of burning garbage.
6. On the “Energy Kids- Biomass” page (3), sentence change from “... chemicals and metals that would contaminate groundwater” to “... chemicals and metals that could contaminate groundwater” (emphasis added).

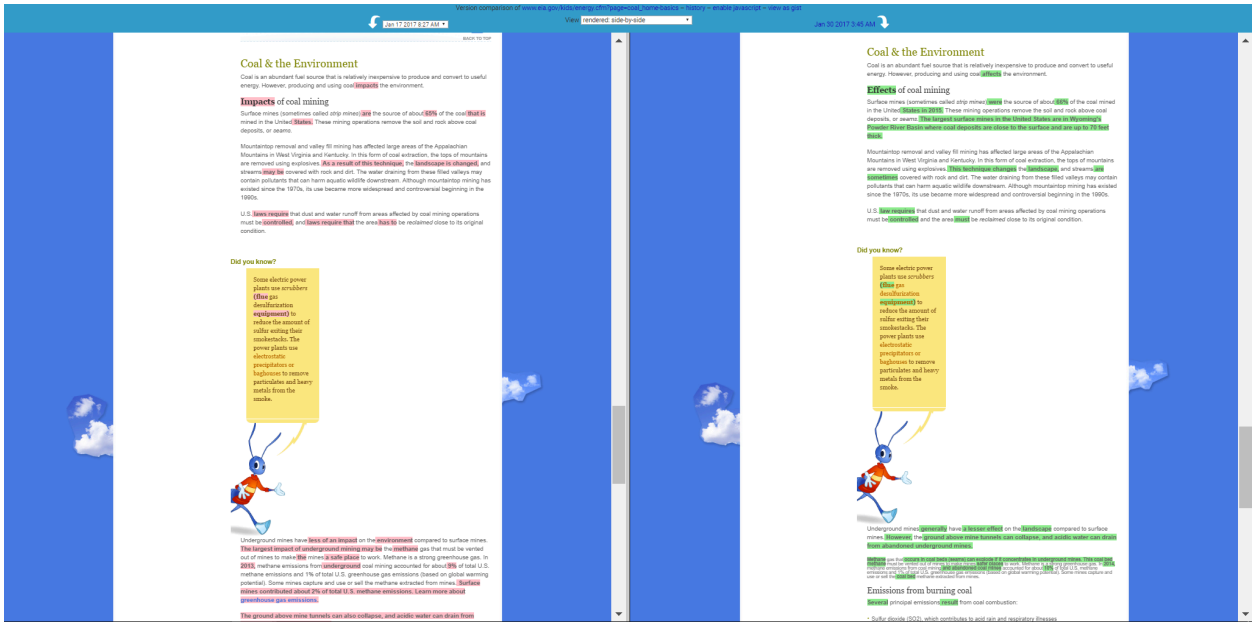
Page 1: EIA Energy Kids - Coal

- URL: http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=coal_home-basics
- Side-by-side View: 1/17/2017 to 1/30/2017

Screenshot 1.1

(1.1a) Change from “impact” to “effect” on entire page, such as changing the phrase “impacts of coal mining” to “effects of coal mining”

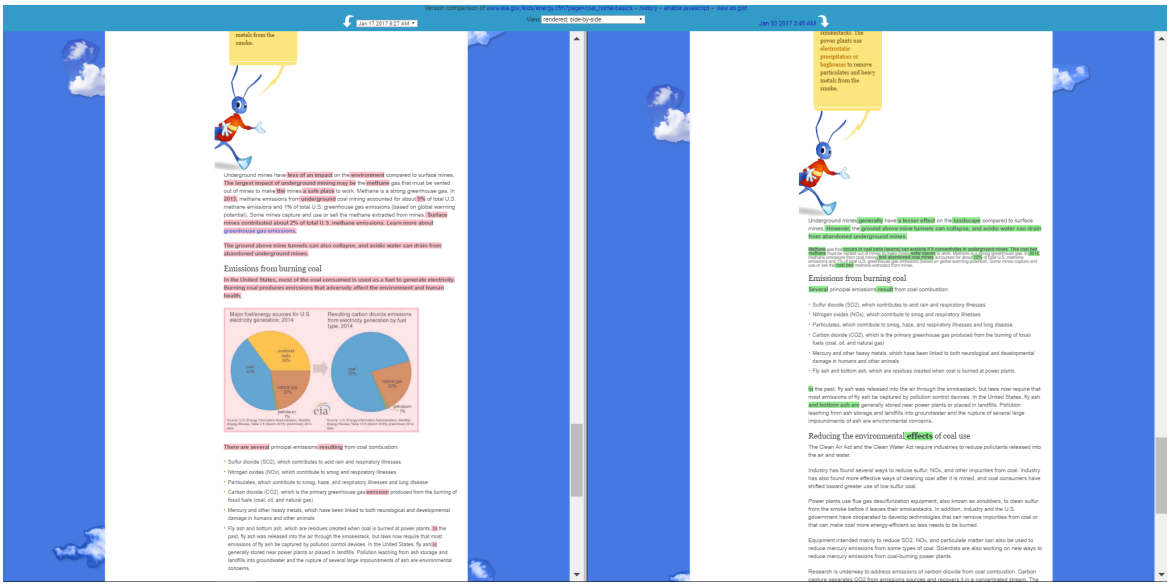
(1.1b) Removal of link to “learn more about greenhouse gas emissions” from end of 4th paragraph under heading “Impacts of coal mining”



Screenshot 1.2

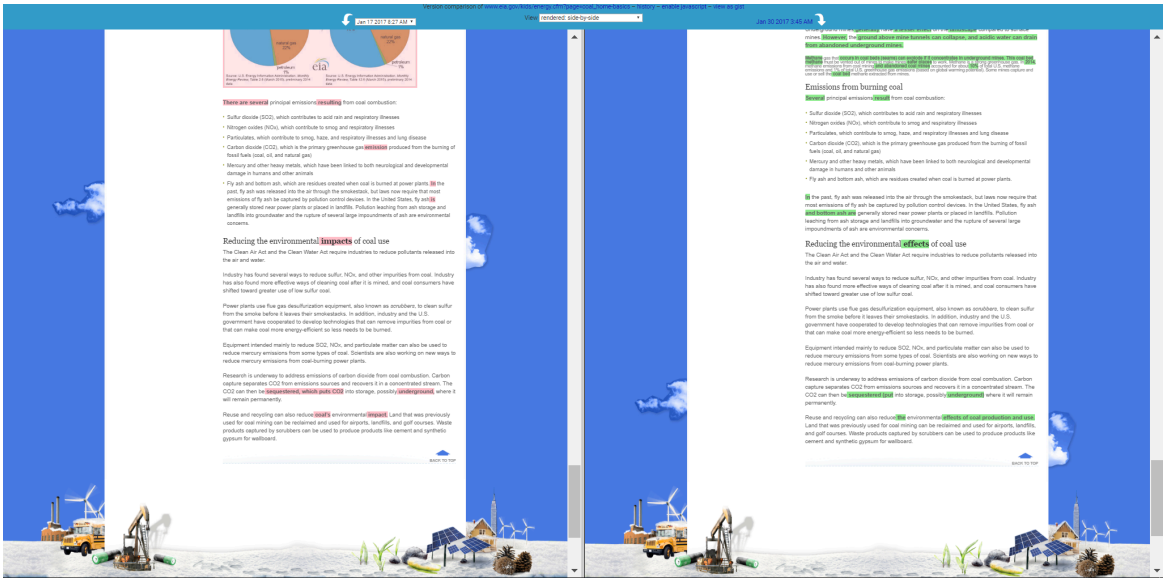
(1.2a) Removal of sentences “In the United States, most of the coal consumed is used as a fuel to generate electricity. Burning coal produces emissions that adversely affect the environment and human health.”

(1.2b) Removal of graph showing major energy sources for US electricity generation and resulting carbon dioxide emissions



Screenshot 1.3

(1.3a) Continued change from the word “impact” to “effect”



Internet Archive Page 1 Status:

Previous version of page captured on January 24, 2017:
https://web.archive.org/web/20170124131915/https://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=coal_home-basics

Page 2: EIA Energy Kids - Oil (Petroleum)

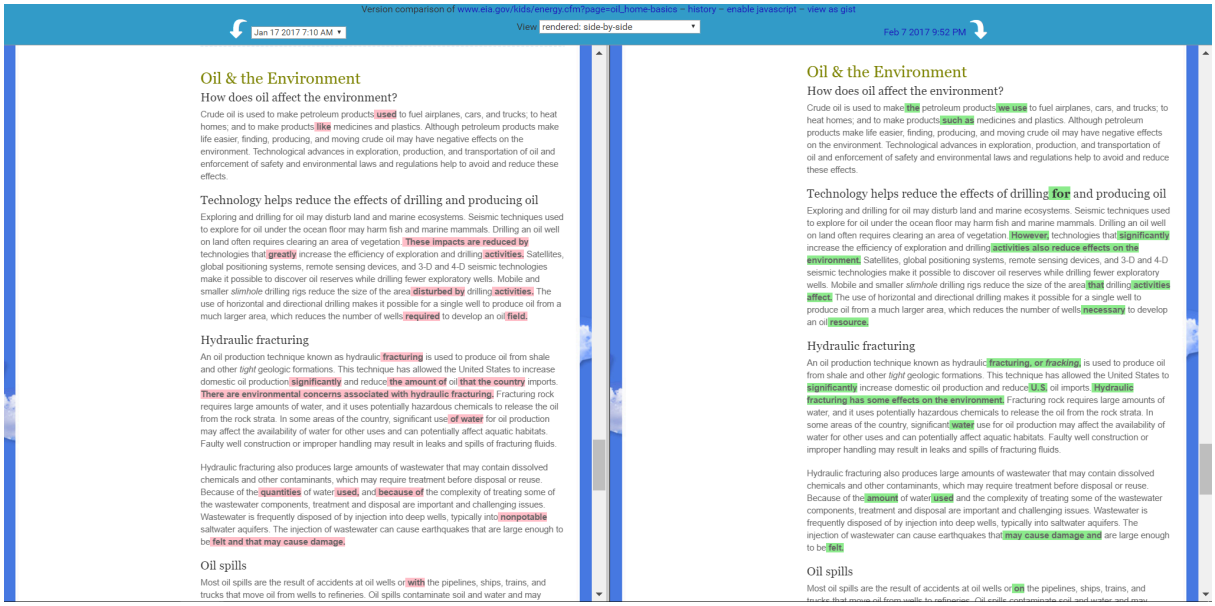
- URL: http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=oil_home-basics
- Side-by-side View: 1/17/2017 to 2/7/2017 21:52

Screenshot 2.1

(2.1a) Change from “impact” to “effect” in the sentence “... impacts are reduced by technologies …”, replaced with “... technologies … also reduce effects …”

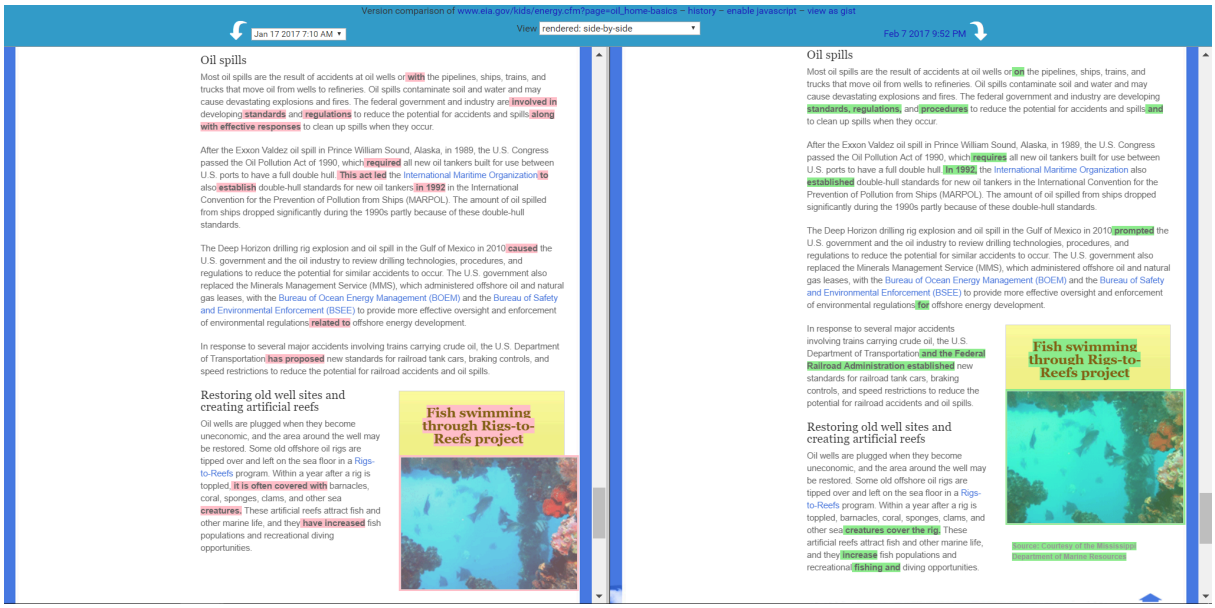
(2.1b) Language changed about hydraulic fracturing from “there are environmental concerns” to “has some effects on the environment”

(2.1c) Phrase change from “required to develop an oil field” to “necessary to develop an oil resource”



Screenshot 2.2

(2.2a) Regarding old oil rigs, phrase “it is often covered with barnacles, coral, sponges, clams, and other sea creatures” replaced with “barnacles, coral, sponges, clams, and other sea creatures cover the rig”



Internet Archive Page 2 Status:

Previous version of page captured on January 18, 2017:

http://web.archive.org/web/20170118101309/http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=oil_home-basics

Page 3: EIA Energy Kids - Biomass

- URL: http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=biomass_home-basics
- Side-by-side View: 1/17/2017 to 2/8/2017 2:54am

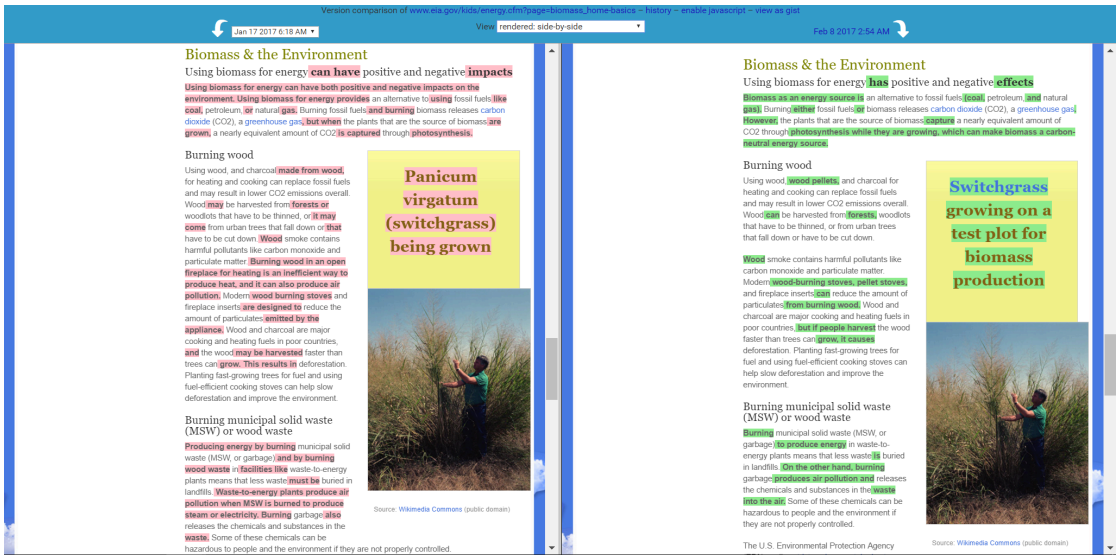
Screenshot 3.1

(3.1a) Wording change from “impacts” to “effects”

(3.1b) Removed sentence “Using biomass for energy can have both positive and negative impacts on the environment”, however the same words are present in the section subheader on the previous line.

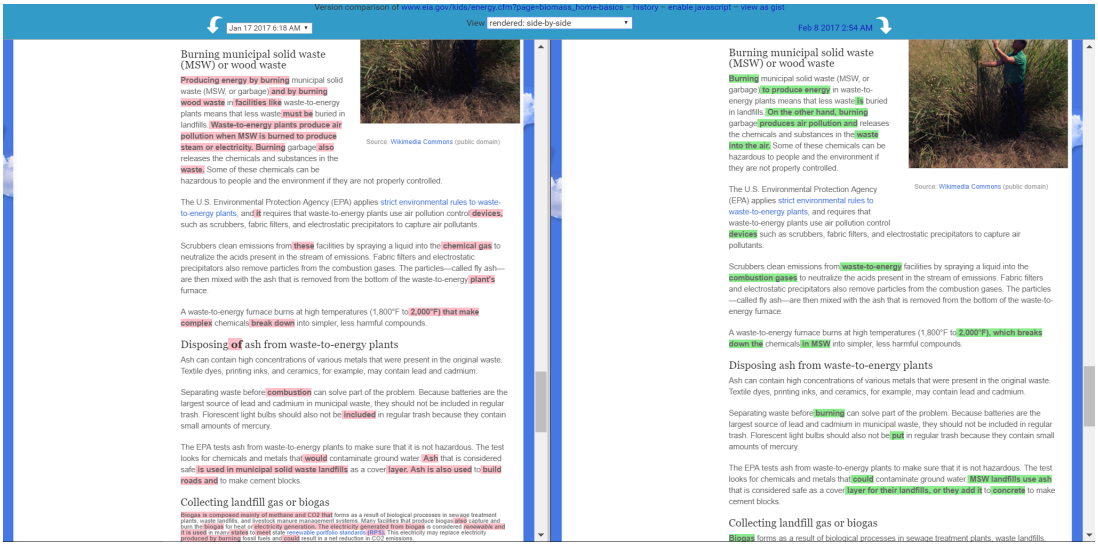
(3.1c) Removed sentence “Burning wood in an open fireplace for heating is an inefficient way to produce heat, and it can also produce air pollution”

(3.1d) Removed sentence “Waste-to-energy plants produce air pollution when MSW is burned to produce steam or electricity,” but added the clause that burning garbage produces air pollution.



Screenshot 3.2

(3.2a) Minor word and sentence structure changes that do not significantly alter content

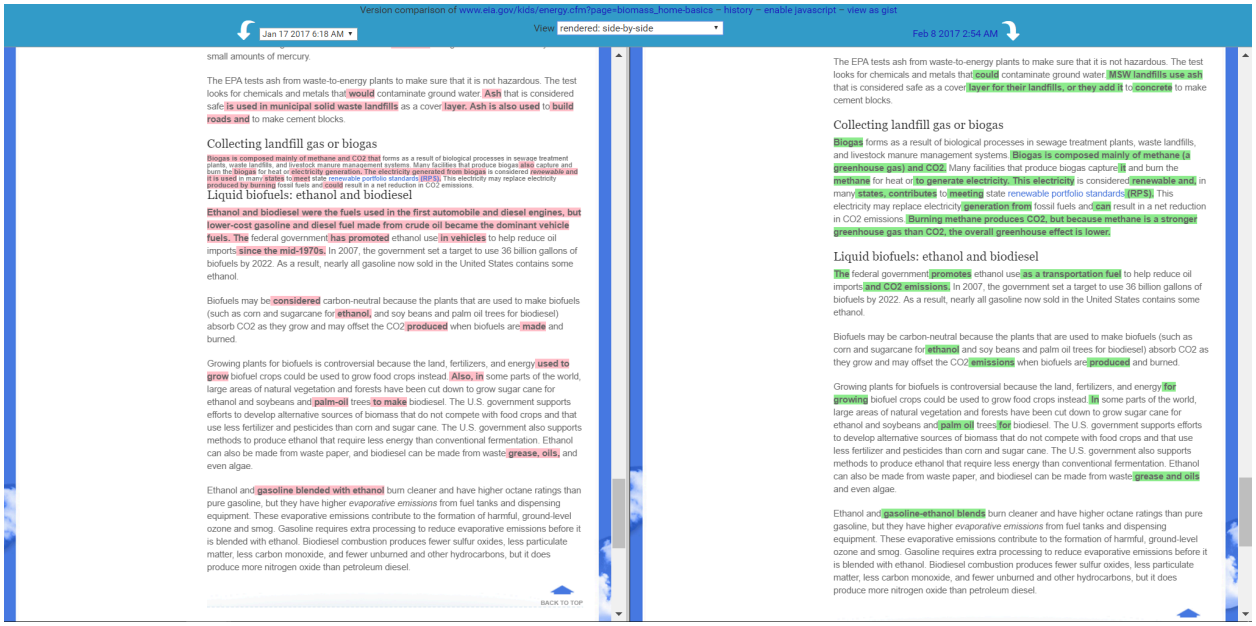


Screenshot 3.3

(3.3a) Changed sentence from "... chemicals and metals that would contaminate groundwater" to "... chemicals and metals that could contaminate groundwater."

(3.3b) Added sentence "Burning methane produces CO2, but because methane is a stronger greenhouse gas than CO2, the overall greenhouse effect is lower."

(3.3c) Removed sentence "Ethanol and biodiesel were the fuels used in the first automobile and diesel engines, but lower-cost gasoline and diesel fuel made from crude oil became the dominant vehicle fuels."



Internet Archive Page 3 Status:

Previous version of page captured on January 24, 2017:

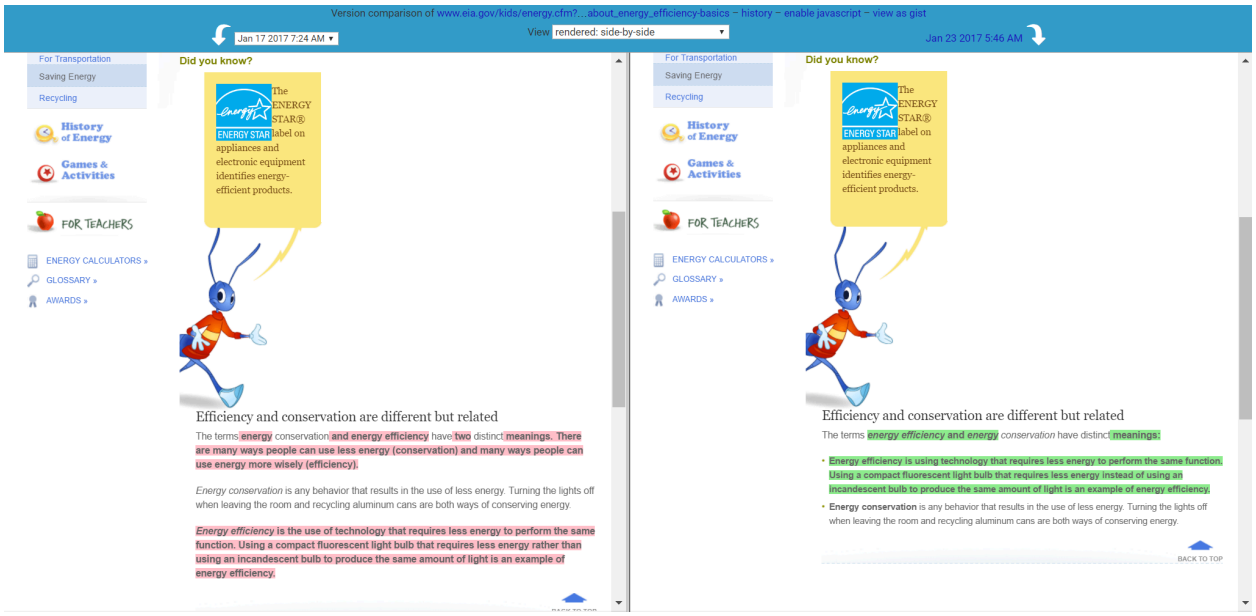
http://web.archive.org/web/20170124132144/https://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=biomass_home-basics

Page 4: EIA Energy Kids - Saving Energy

- URL: http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=about_energy_efficiency-basics
- Side-by-side View: 1/17/2017 to 1/23/2017

Screenshot 4.1

(4.1a) Removal of sentence using “energy efficiency” and “energy conservation” in context.



Internet Archive Page 4 Status:

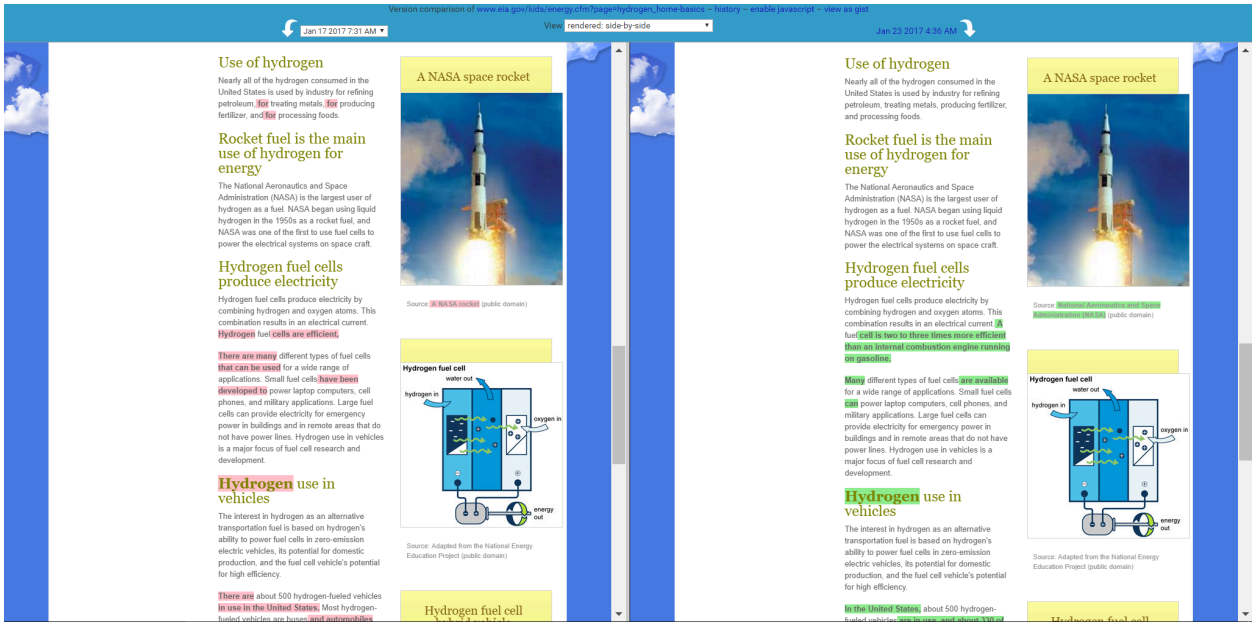
Previous version of page captured on April 20, 2016:
https://web.archive.org/web/20160420004122/http://www.eia.gov/KIDS/energy.cfm?page=about_energy_efficiency-basics

Page 5: EIA Energy Kids - Hydrogen

- URL: http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=hydrogen_home-basics
- Side-by-side View: 1/17/2017 to 1/23/2017

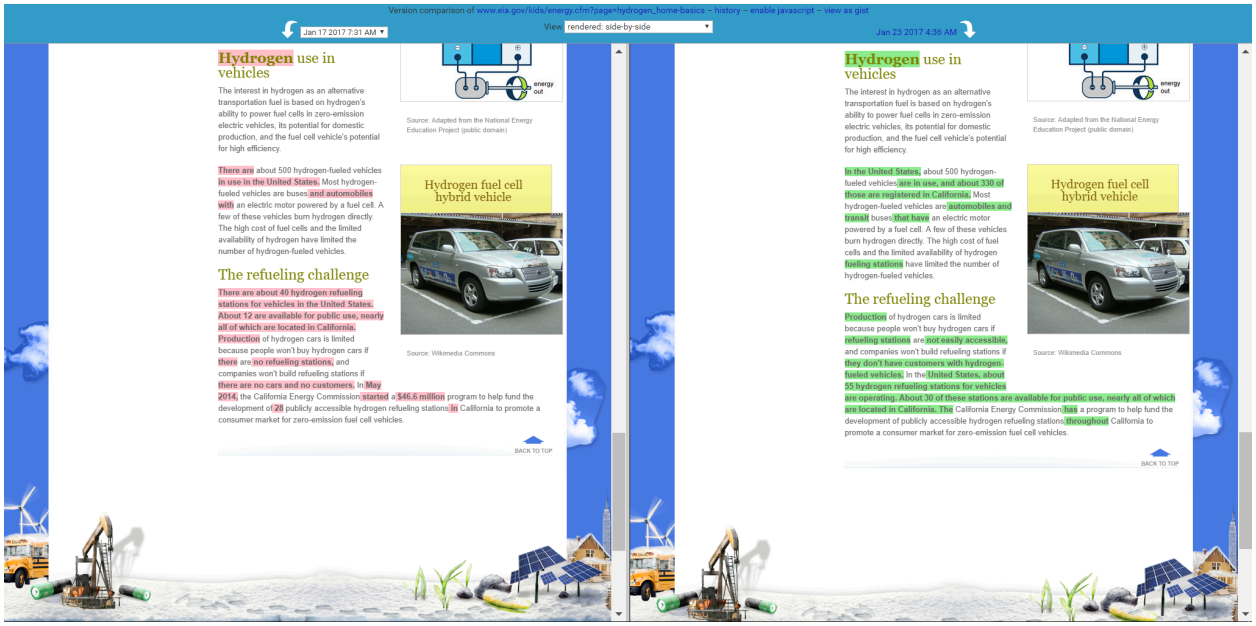
Screenshot 5.1

(5.1a) Expanded sentence to explain that “A fuel cell is two to three times more efficient than an internal combustion engine running on gasoline.”



Screenshot 5.2

(5.2a) Minor word and sentence structure changes that do not significantly alter content



Internet Archive Page 5 Status: Previous version of page captured on April 20, 2016: http://web.archive.org/web/20160420004127/http://www.eia.gov/KIDS/energy.cfm?page=hydrogen_home-basics

Page 6: EIA Energy Kids - Science of Electricity

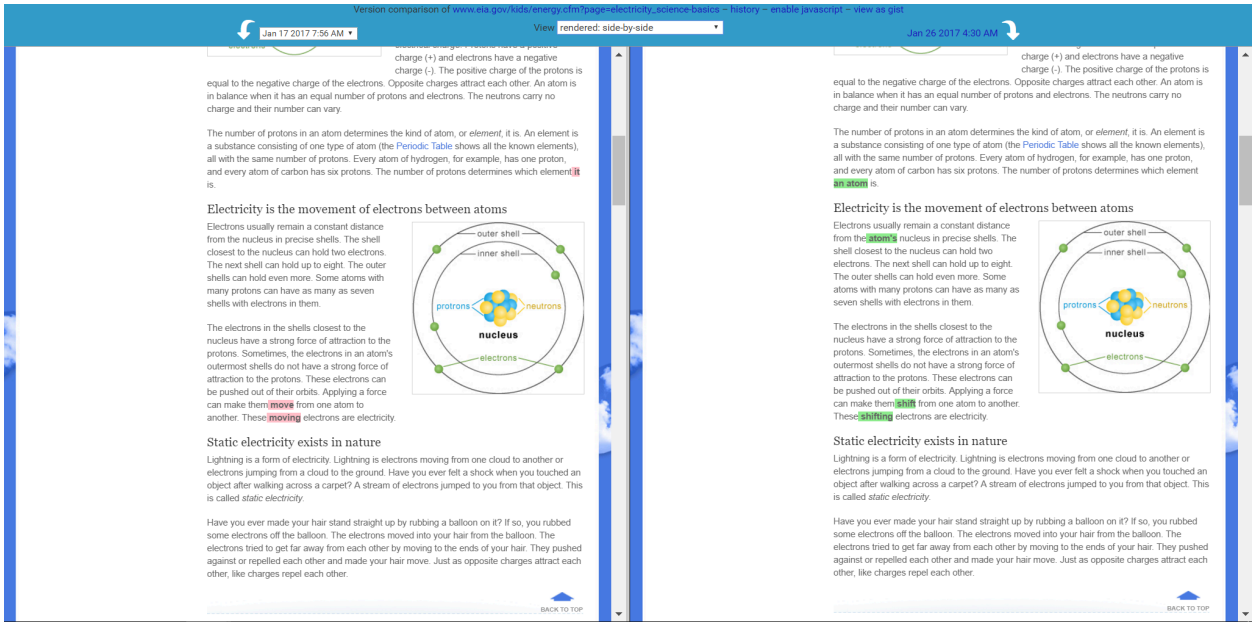
- URL: http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=electricity_science-basics
- Side-by-side View: 1/17/2017 to 1/26/2017

Screenshot 6.1

(6.1a) Minor word and sentence structure changes that do not significantly alter content

Screenshot 6.2

(6.2a) Minor word and sentence structure changes that do not significantly alter content



Internet Archive Page 6 Status: Previous version of page captured on April 20, 2016: http://web.archive.org/web/20170121154019/http://www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=electricity_science-basics