Jefferson.

Sci-Tech News

Volume 64 | Issue 2 Article 7

5-2010

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Recommended Citation
Vogel, Teri M. (2010) "Conference Report: American Chemical Society Meeting," *Sci-Tech News*: Vol. 64: Iss. 2, Article 7.
Available at: http://jdc.jefferson.edu/scitechnews/vol64/iss2/7

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Conference Report: American Chemical Society Meeting

Teri Vogel, Chair, Chemistry Division

In March, I was in San Francisco for the 239th ACS Meeting, as always a good opportunity to talk with vendors and catch up with colleagues and friends. It was also one of the most rewarding ACS Meetings I have attended, with a very strong lineup of programs from the Division of Chemical Information (CINF). Here are some of the highlights from the symposia I attended (http://tinyurl.com/ydk85e6).

At the "Sustainable Chemical Information Education through Faculty and Librarian Partnerships" Symposium, librarians discussed how they are integrating chemical information into courses at their institutions. Sue Cardinal shared her early experience with students using Reaxys to identify doable synthetic methods for an organic chemistry laboratory course, while Eric Snajdr discussed a six-module series of chemical information assignments to prepare students for their synthetic lab experiment.

Though many of us know Judith Currano for her work with graduate instruction, she presented instead on some key themes and exercises she employs in an undergraduate advanced lab course: truncating words and molecules, a brainstorming exercise to identify and group types of chemical information resources, and sending students to look for a property that cannot be found in the literature—so they can discuss the reasons why. Marion Peters talked about the resources and learning objectives she integrates into her department's three-quarter organic chemistry lab sequence, which includes meeting with every lab section. And while most of the presenters focused on work with specific courses, Norah Xiao spoke more about her department-wide outreach and information literacy efforts.

This symposium was followed by "What Happened to My Library?: Managing Organizational and Space-Related Challenges," a particularly timely topic since least half the attendees had faced or were facing these changes to their library (myself included). Susanne Redalje lead off with her recent experience of dealing with the 2009 closing of her chemistry library—one of several branch closures—at her university, and the lessons learned. Meghan Lafferty focused on the changing role of the liaison by highlighting the ten (yes, ten) roles expected of each liaison, including traditional ones like reference and teaching, as well as newer roles like scholarly communication, e-science and even exhibit/event planning. Leah Solla concluded the presentations by sharing her success story when the collection was moved out of her physical science library so the space could be repurposed. They got heavy input from users, were able to minimize some of the impact through acquiring more databases and e-journal backfiles, and even found a way to distribute the chemistry collection to three other libraries. Her "take-aways," though logical (make it strategic, take ownership of the changes, communicate and collaborate), can sometimes get lost in the planning and execution of these organizational/space changes.

CINF's centerpiece for this meeting was a two and a half day program, "The Future of Scholarly Communication." The first symposium I attended was "Towards Web 2.0," which was introduced by Robert Schwarzwalder, who laid the groundwork of the past, present and future of publishing. He also threw out a new word: *infomediation*, an alternative to "information access." The book "The Fourth Paradigm: Data-Intensive Scientific Discovery" (http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/collaboration/fourthparadigm/) came up several times over the two days, including Carl Lagoze's presentation about the oreChem Project, which focuses on data integration, capture and recovery, and storage and manipulation. He highlighted the differences among the various scientific communities about sharing scientific information/data; why it has been generally more successful among physicists than chemists. Kent Anderson showed us some of the social networking endeavors at the *New England Journal of Medicine*, while identifying key reasons why these projects often fail (lack of top-level commitment, dependency on busy and over-extended staff, lack of leadership). And from survey data presented by Bill Town, we were reminded that chemists still use books heavily; that they use Web 2.0 tools more in teaching than research; that Wikipedia and Google Scholar fall into their "top 10" heavily used resources along with SciFinder and e-journals; and that for storing research the use of repositories comes in a distant third behind "their own computer" and keeping things in print. We also heard presentations from publishers,

Published by Jefferson Digital Commons, 2010

including early work by Thieme to publish and make accessible the primary data for *Synthesis* and *Synlett* articles. In the next symposium, "Application of Emerging Technologies," Jason Wild reported about a new project from NPG to improve the uptake and linking of chemical structures in their journals. Richard Kidd (Royal Society of Chemistry) stressed the need for publishers to be flexible and willing to try out publishing models, approaches, and technologies. But he also asked the question of how many apps and widgets out there actually solve research problems and save time or money (which may depend on how you define widgets and apps), and he reminded us that there is a reason that "lowest common denominator" formats like DOC, JPG and PDF are so successful.

In the final symposium I attended, "Authoring and Discovery Tools," we heard from several speakers at Microsoft Research. Alex Wade talked about Researcher Desktop and the need for an articles-equivalent of "iTunes" for scientists to search, grab, organize, annotate, share and store their articles. Joe Townsend presented the new Chemistry Add-In for Word (aka Chem4Word) as a way to support semantic chemical information, including IUPAC names and print-quality 2D structures, in Word documents. Peter Murray-Rust gave a spirited talk about the need for open data in chemical publications, going from "the hamburger back to the cow." And RSC's Antony Williams delivered the final presentation for that symposium, a review of ChemSpider, which is now up to 25 million unique compounds from 300 data sources. We got a progress report on recent developments like the federated searching into RSC content, PubMed and Google Books/Scholar, along with plans for upcoming improvements.

Product highlights at the conference included:

- CAS gave us a report on the next batch of improvements to SciFinder, including copy/paste compatibility with ChemDraw, more drawing shortcuts in the structure editor, the addition of another 300,000 experimental spectra to the CAS Registry, an .RIS output for exporting references, a new "additional reactions" feature in CASREACT that will connect to preparations in CAplus, and the ability to identify preferred and less-preferred suppliers in CHEMCATS.

- From Microsoft Research: the just-released Chemistry Add-in for Word. (http://www.educationlabs.com/projects/ChemistryAdd-in/Pages/default.aspx).

- ACS Publications introduced their new mobile app for the iPhone/iPod Touch. You can select your favorite journals and track the ASAPs, email the links or share via Facebook or Twitter, save the ASAPs , and browse C&EN. (http://pubs.acs.org/page/tools/acsmobile/index.html) ❖

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