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## North Carolina Science Blogging Conference 2008

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## North Carolina Science Blogging Conference 2008

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As recent articles in *Chemistry World*, *Physics World*, and other science magazines and journals attest, scientists are adopting social software technologies and using them to communicate both amongst themselves and with policymakers and the public (see box below for additional readings on social software and science). Science and technology librarians should be familiar with scientists' uses of these tools to better support scientists' work and also for information retrieval.

The members of the North Carolina BlogTogether group (<http://www.blogtogether.org/>) organized and hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual North Carolina Science Blogging Conference on January 20, 2008 in Research Triangle Park, N.C. The purpose of the conference was to address "a variety of issues and perspectives on science communication, including science literacy, the popularization of science, science in classrooms and in homes, debunking pseudoscience, using blogs as tools for presenting scientific research, writing about science, and health and medicine" (<http://wiki.scienceblogging.com/scienceblogging/>). The conference was run as an unconference; that is, discussion leaders were selected in advance, but the topics of discussion were worked out on the wiki, and all attendees were equal discussion participants.

The conference was attended by about two hundred scientists, writers, museum staffers, teachers, and librarians. Pre-conference sessions included a workshop to help scientists learn to blog and tours of local labs. I attended the tour of the United States Environmental Protection Agency's campus at Research Triangle Park. We learned about their environmentally responsible building management techniques as well as about their air research. We toured their wind tunnel (quite different from the one at my place of work) and labs.

I attended sessions on Real-Time Blogging in Marine Sciences, Gender and Race in Science, and Open Science Data. In marine science, blogs are used to comment on research articles for other marine scientists and for the public, to provide day-in-the-life information for scientists at sea, to discuss politics and environmental

issues, and to do outreach. Real-time blogging can be used to provide immediate data to shore-based scientists. The session on gender and race in science discussed ways that women and under-represented minorities use blogs, and efforts to recruit more scientists from these populations into blogging.

The Open Data session discussed ways of posting raw or processed data online in an open and accessible format. This is an effort that gets conflated with open access journal publishing and with social software technologies. Librarians supporting efforts to make data available online or who help scientists locate datasets should be aware of these conversations.

The closing sessions included discussions of Framing Science, Science Debate 2008, and science journalist Jennifer Ouellette's view of science blogging.

Overall it was a wonderful and invigorating conference. While some in the library world are moving past blogs, scientists are just starting to realize some of their promise.❖

### Additional Information:

Posts from the attendees are gathered at: <http://scienceblogging.com/commons/>

### Articles on Scientists and Blogging:

- Griffiths, M. (2007). Talking physics in the social web. *Physics World*, 20(1), 24-28. Retrieved January 23, 2008, from <http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/print/26711>.
- Bonetta, L. (2007). Scientists enter the blogosphere. *Cell*, 129(3), 443-445. DOI: 10.1016/j.cell.2007.04.032
- Murray, K. K. (2007). Mass spectrometry and web 2.0. *Journal of Mass Spectrometry*, 42(10), 1263-1271. DOI: 10.1002/jms.1315
- Van Noorden, R. (2007). Surfing Web<sub>2</sub>0. *Chemistry World* 4(12), 46-49. Retrieved January 23, 2008, from <http://www.rsc.org/chemistryworld/Issues/2007/December/SurfingWeb20.asp>.



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