

Notes of a scientist from RailsConf Europe

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Earlier this month I attended RailsConf Europe in Berlin. RailsConf is a conference about Ruby on Rails, a programming framework to produce websites. I'm a part-time Ruby on Rails programmer and had a very interesting conference. Others have already written about RailsConf, so I want to focus on how it was like from a scientist's perspective.

The topic was of course very different from say a meeting about RNA interference, but many things were surprisingly similar. But I found a few differences very interesting, and I believe a scientific meeting could learn from them.

Many of the talks were about ongoing work that hasn't been finished yet. Ruby on Rails is Open Source software, so there is less worry about intellectual property and people talked freely about their ideas and problems. This is in contrast to the typical meeting in my field (oncology), where only the most established researchers are not afraid to present data that have not yet been published or at least submitted. This of course brings us back to the Open Science discussion both on Nature Network and elsewhere.

Partly because of this openness, but also because it was a technology meeting, the conference is much more accessible for those that couldn't make it to Berlin. Not only are the slides of most presentations available for download, but there are also numerous blog posts. We'll soon also see podcasts and videocasts (the keynote lecture is already available). I'm a big podcast fan and I would love to see more of this from the conferences in my field.