Discuss Papers with JournalFire

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About a year ago I wrote a blog post about how to use Web 2.0 tools for a journal club (Recipe: Distributing papers for a journal club). Although reference management tools such as CiteULike and Mendeley can be used for journal clubs, discussion features are often more of an afterthought. At the time I therefore recommended FriendFeed. In February of this year, ScienceFeed was released (ScienceFeed: Interview with Ijad Madisch). It is very similar to FriendFeed, but is smarter about finding and storing references to scientific literature. Unfortunately ScienceFeed integrates very tightly with ResearchGate. You have to sign up for both services to use the reference management features.

Last week a new web-based tool specifically for Journal Clubs was released. JournalFire was created by John Delacruz, Riccardo Schmid and Tim Hill. JournalFire is free for public discussion groups, but costs money for private groups with more than 4 members.

Feel free to participate in the discussion about this article here. I've picked a paper that is not only freely available and nicely written, but also in a very hot field.

What I like

JournalFire really focuses on discussion around a paper. Journal Clubs are used to organize the discussion, similar to groups in other tools. The interface is uncluttered, and almost everything is available as RSS feed.

What I would like

JournalFire was just released publicly, so it obviously doesn't have all the features of a more mature product. More importantly, JournalFire covers a fairly specific reference management niche, it is therefore important that data exchange with other reference management tools is as easy as possible.
JournalFire has a bookmarklet similar to what other reference managers offer, and you can export one or more references in Endnote or BibTex format. COinS support should be an obvious addition, and an API would allow tighter integration with other tools, e.g. to add Journal Club features to your CiteULike, Mendeley or Zotero library.
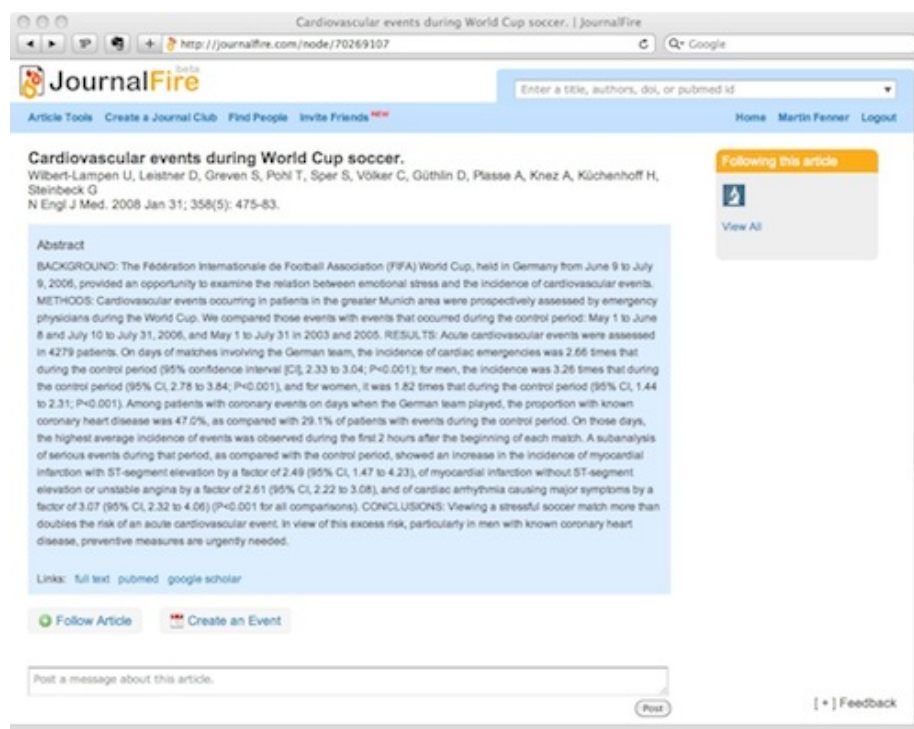
Figure 1:

The Journal Club concept of JournalFire fills a very interesting niche. But in the end, social tools for scientists are about critical mass. It will be interesting to see whether JournalFire can attract enough users in this very crowded market.