Discussing science with microformats

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The best and quickest discussions of a scientific paper now sometimes happen in science blogs rather than in the peer-reviewed literature. Whereas we have a number of scholarly databases that track citations between papers, we don't have the same tools for science blogs. Following all science blogs manually has simply become impossible (unless your first name is Bora). This makes it difficult to find all blog posts about a particular paper - either for proper discussion of an article or for doing automated article-level metrics.

Aggregation

Aggregation can help solve this problem. ResearchBlogging aggregates blog posts about peer-reviewed research. ScienceSeeker aggregates all science blog posts (currently aggregating over 400 blogs) and was announced in February. Nature Blogs also aggregates science blogs, but doesn't seem to be up-to-date.

Microformats

Microformats are an alternative – but of course complimentary – strategy. Microformats are small snippets of HTML that represent commonly published things. A good example is Rel-License, a microformat indicating licensed content:

```
<a href="http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/" rel="license">cc by 2.0</a>
```

In February Google launched a new Recipe view feature based on the hRecipe microformat, demonstrating how microformats can help discovering content. There is currently no standard microformat for scholarly citations. The simplest format would again use the **rel** tag – together with the Citation Typing Ontology (CiTO):

```
<a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.1197258" rel="cito:discusses">this paper</a>
```

There are more than 20 CiTO tags for describing what we think about a particular paper or science blog post – many science bloggers would probably have used cito:critiques for the above paper. I suggest cito:discusses as the standard CiTO relationship for most papers and blog posts. You can add this tag manually, or use a tool such as the Link to Link WordPress plugin (I added cito:discusses to version 1.1.2).