Why local hubs in Nature Network are important

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Earlier this week Matt Brown announced important changes to the Nature Network software: The first step towards new local hubs. Most importantly, it is now possible to set your location and hub. The hub can be the same as the location, or a city or region nearby (as in my case Berlin). Later this year, Nature Network will add new hubs to the existing London and Boston. Hubs that are now picked by many people are more likely to become full-fledged hubs. Some of the early popular hubs include New York, Toronto and Berlin (there are certainly more, but there is no way for me to see them listed).

As we know from the London and Boston hubs, local hubs have local events listings, local meetups, local news and jobs information. We had several discussions here on Nature Network of what Web 2.0 can bring to scientists and that only those tools and increase the productivity or add something new will become popular. Local event and job listings for scientists are two services that I see as extremely valuable, basically I don't see any way other than as Web services to do them properly.

Location information is becoming increasingly popular in other parts of the Web and the Where 2.0 conference on the topic just finished earlier this month. ResearcherID, a tool to assign a unique identifier to every researcher, is one example where scientific information is mapped to locations. You can see a map of my paper coauthors here.

Scientific research and communication is not bound to locations, but local networks are at least as important as virtual networks. We of course all do this already for many years, but we are just starting to figure out how social networks such as Nature Network can enhance our physical networks and connect them to the larger virtual network. Philipp Selenko has a clear vision, he sees this as a great opportunity for PhD students to do the same kind of networking that is usually restricted to seasoned faculty (and often happens behind closed doors). Read his post on the Berlin forum for more details.

And please join the Berlin hub if you work in that region.