PLoS Article-Level Metrics: Interview with Martin Fenner

Martin Fenner, Gobbledygook

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This blog occasionally does interviews with people providing interesting tools for scholars. These interviews have always been among my favorite blog posts. This now is obviously an interview with myself, but I felt this is the best format to explain some important news.

Starting May 16 I will be working full-time as technical lead for the PLoS Article Level Metrics (ALM) project. I will help with development of the PLoS ALM application, and will do community developer outreach for this project.

The PLoS ALM application is written in Ruby on Rails, an open-source web framework I have been working with since 2005. The ALM project was launched in 2009, and I first learned about ALM in a July 2009 presentation by Pete Binfield at SciBarCamp Palo Alto. A month later I did an interview with Pete about Article Level Metrics and PLoS ONE.

What is Article Level Metrics?

Article Level Metrics *place transparent and comprehensive information about the usage and reach of published articles onto the articles themselves, so that the entire academic community can assess their value* (from the PLoS ALM website). A November 2009 paper by Cameron Neylon and Shirley Wu gives a more detailed introduction. And a recent presentation by Kristen Ratan, PLoS Director of Product Management, given at the 2012 NFAIS meeting, provides an update for 2012.

Article Level Metrics is part of the larger altmetrics movement, which also looks at metrics for other scholarly works besides journal articles.

Does this mean that you will be moving to San Francisco?

For personal reasons I will continue to live in Hannover, Germany and work from home as a contractor with occasional trips to San Francisco.

Figure 1: Flickr photo my stevec77.

Will you miss treating cancer patients and doing cancer research?

Absolutely. This has not been an easy decision. To make the transition easier, I will continue to spend 10% of my time at Hannover Medical School. I will no longer be seeing patients, but this will allow me to conclude the RADIT clinical trial for testicular cancer patients where I am the principal investigator.

I hope to continue doing research in the new position, but with a focus on information science. There are for example still a lot of things we don't know about altmetrics. A more detailed analysis of our recent CrowdoMeter project (a crowdsourced analysis of tweets linking to scholarly papers) would be a good start.

What will happen with ScienceCard?

ScienceCard is a website that collects author level metrics and was my entry into the Mendeley/PLoS Binary Battle API contest last fall. ScienceCard is based on the PLoS ALM code (which is open source and available via Google Code). I will decide in the coming months what to do with ScienceCard. This depends mainly on how much author level metrics make sense in the PLoS ALM project.

And what will happen to your other scholarly communication activities?

There is no reason not to continue my other activities, including involvement in the Open Researcher & Contributor ID (ORCID) initiative, and using WordPress as a tool to write and publish manuscripts.

What are your future plans for this blog?

I plan to continue this blog in a very similar format, and I will have more time for more in-depth articles. And of course I will indicate a conflict of interest when I write about Article Level Metrics.