

# Science blogging is the new email

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The just finished conference Science Blogging 2008: London was a wonderful chance for real-life socialising networking. I started to upload some fotos to Flickr (e.g. Scott Keir explaining sign language, see all fotos tagged sciblog here), some of them are too embarrassing and I will keep them for bribes reference later on.

The meeting was also a great opportunity to think about where we are today with scienceblogging. Having a conference is a good sign that the field is evolving<sup>1</sup>, and you can see several subdisciplines evolving:

- conference blogging (also includes event blogging)
- edublogging
- metablogging (blogging about blogging, by far the largest discipline)
- research blogging (blogging about scientific experiments, the smallest discipline)
- investigational blogging (the keynote lecture by Ben Goldacre described this very well)
- evolution blogging (a large subdiscipline)
- news blogging (blogging about science news)
- watercooler blogging (small pieces of interesting or funny thoughts/pictures)
- summary blogging (summarizing other blog posts and linking to them)
- diary blogging (blogging as a personal diary of self-expression)
- hoax blogging (see this example by Jonathan Eisen)

There is no particular order to this list and there are certainly more disciplines and some of the names could be catchier. Most bloggers will blog in more than one category. But these categories can help to think about what you are doing in your own blogging. And it helps when you think about blogrolls or blogging networks such as Nature Network or scienceblogs.com. Could we for example see a conference blogging network in the future?

We ended the conference with a challenge to recruit more senior faculty for science blogging. Jonathan Eisen is a professor at U.C. Davis and might try an April Fools joke again next year, but faculty new to blogging will probably be more interested in conference blogging, edublogging and research blogging (the boundaries between the three can be blurry). I am all for this challenge, as it

will move science blogging forward. And next week I will meet a department head that wants to start blogging. Maybe we can put up another challenge for the next science blogging conference: have a blogging Nobel Prize winner as keynote speaker.

I finally get to the title of this post. Henry Gee made some very thoughtful comments in the plenary session at the end. Blogging is much closer to the informal discussions you have in the hallway or via email than it is to peer-reviewed papers. We have to convince faculty members (and other people involved in science) that blogging is the new email. Just as email was either unknown or looked at in a funny way 20 years ago, blogging will become a tool of daily life for most scientists. We can wait until the current generation of children and young students is old enough to become faculty members themselves, or we can promote the use of science blogging to shorten this time.

fn1. Will we soon have a discussion about starting a journal?