

Google Wave – don't forget the scientists

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Google Wave is a new tool to communicate online and collaborate and was announced today at the Google I/O conference. Google Wave is not only a product, but also an open protocol that anyone can use to build his own wave server.

Google Wave is already very interesting by itself, but can also be extended further:

- by robots that automate common tasks and run on the server, and
- by gadgets that allow new ways of user interactions and run on the client.

This sounds all rather geeky, but why should a scientist care about Google Wave? Part of the job of every scientist is to communicate and collaborate, and email is by far the most widely used tool to do that. Email has many shortcomings, some of which can be overcome by blogs, wikis, and a constantly growing number of other Web 2.0 tools from Twitter to FriendFeed. But Google Wave goes one step further. The basic idea of a wave is a document (and this can be everything from text to pictures) combined with the discussion about that document, and that is a very natural design for many scientific communications.

Google Wave will be publicly available later this year. I hope that by that time it will also have the first extensions designed specifically for scientists, e.g. for

- references with embedded metadata and discussions about these references
- molecular structures and other scientific data types
- scientific manuscripts in progress (Google Wave has nice tools for collaborative document editing)
- lab notebooks (again because of the wiki-like editing features)

Google Wave could turn into serious competition for the The Life Scientists Room at FriendFeed. And it is a great topic to discuss further at Science Foo Camp 2009.

Update 5/29/09: You can now watch the Google I/O presentation. And Ricardo Vidal also blogged about Google Wave from a scientist perspective (Using the (Google) Wave to surf the streams).