

# Is Web 2.0 failing in Biology?

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David Crotty, the Executive Editor from CSH Protocols, last month wrote a provocative blog post called Why Web 2.0 is failing in Biology. He did an informal poll among scientists and found that none of them read science blogs or use social networking sites for scientists. His arguments why that is so?

- Time. Scientists have little time, and rather spend this time in the laboratory or reading papers
- Trust. Web 2.0 sites for scientists haven't (yet) build a reputation. For important decisions (e.g. a critical protocol for an experiment), they rather ask a colleague they know.
- Inappropriate Tools. The requirements for scientists are very different from the typical Facebook or Digg user.

I believe that David is right in his analysis that the big majority of scientists (at least in the life sciences) don't read science blogs or participate in social networking sites like Nature Network. This could mean two things: a) Web 2.0 is not working for biologists or b) we are just at the beginning and need to be patient. As a science blogger I like to believe in b). Fortunately or unfortunately, the success of any Web 2.0 project depends on a large number of users.

As of 2008, I think that Science 2.0 (or whatever you want to call it) has had a good start. But it is very important that we stay focused on where we want to go and not get distracted by the possibilities that the technology offers. One goal I've set for myself and have written about in this blog: Web 2.0 should make the process of paper writing much easier. This includes easy access to papers needed for your manuscript (including open access), online writing tools such as Buzzword or Google Docs, online tools for managing or sharing your references (e.g. Connotea or Refworks) and tools for collaboration and coordination (e.g. Basecamp). Right now, the different pieces don't quite fit together, but the potential is there for tremendous savings of time and money. And that is attractive.