

Web 2.0 for Scientists: Where are the Applications?

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The success or failure of Web 2.0 efforts for scientists depends to a large extent on the availability of cool applications that make the everyday life of a scientist easier. Many of these applications of course already exist, but I would argue that there is a lot of room for improvement. And I would also argue that in a lot of cases we just have to take the example of the Web 2.0 world and adapt it to the needs of scientists – Nature Network itself would be an example of this approach.

Meetings and Seminars

Scientific meetings and seminars are one example where we can do better. Web 2.0 is an ideal approach for this, and Upcoming is the classic application. There are of course a number of websites that list meetings and seminars for scientists, but they either focus on the big meetings or list just the seminars of a particular institution. Look at the discussion [How to find a science event in Berlin](#) in the Nature Network Berlin Forum to see what I mean.

What can we do to improve the situation?

We can wait that either one of the big players or a clever startup has a great idea. But one of the attractive features of Web 2.0 is user participation. We need more discussions between scientists and software developers on what is needed and what can be done. These discussions are of course already taking place, but science bloggers can do more to collect interesting ideas and articulate them. We want the integration of reference managers in online writing tools such as Google Docs or Buzzword, but how do we make our voice heard?

Secondly, we can write applications ourselves. The barriers of entry have become really low, and one reason are the APIs (application programming interfaces) of both science applications or conventional Web 2.0 apps:

- Pubmed
- Scopus
- Connotea

- Google Maps
- Google Docs
- YouTube
- Flickr
- Technorati
- Facebook
- eBay
- Amazon
- Yahoo

And there were hints of a Nature Network API. With some skills in PHP, Python, Java or Ruby, anybody could create an interesting mashup with these APIs over a weekend. Maybe linking Connotea tags to YouTube videos and Flickr pictures?