

Electronic developments in chemical information

A report on the Trisociety Symposium

by Sheila Young

The Trisociety Symposium (<http://megahertz.njit.edu/~slutsky/TRISOCIETY.html>), a joint venture of the American Chemical Society Division of Chemical Information (CINF), the Chemistry Division of the Special Libraries Association, and the Special Interest Group on Scientific and Technology Information Systems of ASIS, is held every four years.

About 150 people attended the symposium "Untangling the Web of Chemical Information," which was held in Boston on August 24 as part of the 216th American Chemical Society (ACS) National Meeting, August 23–27, 1998.

Electronic communication continues to grow and publishers are working to capture the attention of chemists by organizing "virtual communities" offering many services. These communities require registration, but the registration is free.

Wendy Warr, of Wendy Warr & Associates, compared three such communities: ChemCenter of the ACS (<http://www.chemcenter.org/>); ChemWeb, a subsidiary of Elsevier (<http://www.njit.edu/Library/Trisociety/index.htm> and <http://www.ChemWeb.com/>); and ChemSoc (<http://www.chemsoc.org/>).

The communities offer entry points for products of the sponsors and information

services, such as news, jobs, conferences, shopping, and links to other Web sites.

Integration of databases with links to full-text articles is developing rapidly. Chemists want to be able to search by substructure or reaction and retrieve full-text articles. The Institute for Scientific Information (Chemistry Server and Web of Science: <http://www.isinet.com/>), ACS (ChemPort: <http://www.chemport.org/html/english/login.html>), and Elsevier (<http://elsevier.nl>) are working on providing links from structure (or compound) databases and reaction databases to the citation database and then to the full-text article from the participating publishers. Each is continuing to sign on more publishers to their respective systems.

A new link

At the concurrent open meeting for the Society Committees on Publications and CAS, ACS announced an innovative policy that allows the authors to link from their own Web sites to the published articles on the ACS Web site. The first 50 accesses are free, whether or not the viewer subscribes to the journal. After 50, the access is restricted to subscribers or document delivery. Two new journals, both with Web enhancements, were announced: the *Journal of Combinatorial Chemistry* (early 1999) and *Organic Letters* in mid 1999. The

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intent is to provide an option, but not a requirement, for experimental content. *Organic Letters* is an outgrowth of the ARL'S SPARC endeavor.

Michael Newman, from Highwire Press, spoke on three aspects of electronic publications: the divergence of electronic from print, archiving, and pricing. There are links to media and supplementary material, such as "cite alert," when a new article cites a designated one. Also, in some cases, the cited reference will allow full text to the cited article with no charge. The *British Medical Journal* offers interactive responses with "Recent Rapid Responses," active letters to the editor.

Archiving challenges include preservation of unique content, functionality as content (i.e., electronic is more than print), evolving technology, changes in interfaces, and lack of standards. In a novel approach to pricing, the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences has opened its backfile of 1996 to free access for everyone.

One of the areas of development of Web publishing is dissertations. Bonnie Lawlor described the current initiatives of UMI (<http://www.umi.com/>) and Virginia Tech (<http://www.ndltd.org/>). UMI accepts electronic dissertations and digitizes all new titles.

As of June 1998, 83,700 dissertations/theses were available over the Web from UMI with new titles added daily. The Virginia Tech objective is to have all universities participate and each load their own dissertations onto their own server. One unresolved question is whether this constitutes prior publication resulting in rejections by publishers. ACS "largely allows editors to make decisions [of] what constitutes prior publication, most will be considered prior published if it is on the Web before submitted to an ACS journal."

Looking ahead in electronic publishing, Peter Murray-Rust, from the University of Nottingham, presented Chemical Markup Language (CML) for dealing with the special challenges that molecular information presents (<http://ala.vsms.nottingham.ac.uk/vsms/talks/acs/index.html> and <http://www.xml-cml.org/>).

Steve Heller from NIST gave a visionary presentation of the move into electronic only publishing (<http://www.hellers.com/steve/pub-talks/boston98/>). Electronic format permits enhancements unavailable in print, such

as generation of tables on the fly from equations and rotation of molecules. The *Internet Journal of Chemistry* (<http://ijc.chem.niu.edu/>) is an electronic only journal with an interesting policy on copyright. The journal retains "commercial copyright" while the author retains "noncommercial rights," which include rights to distribute the article. Heller also discussed plans for the *Journal of Physical Chemical Reference Data*, which will be a nonprint journal of mostly data and equations. Using the capabilities of electronic format, the journal will be a database, a shift from the concept of each manuscript being a separate entity.

Electronic publishing and the Web are firmly established as integral to chemical information. The development of 3D structure software is an exciting area of growth. Enhancements to publications, searching mechanisms, and linking between indexes, articles, citations, other databases, and supplementary material has just begun, and the electronic only "journal" has potential limited only by the imagination. ■

Letters to the editor

Dear editor:

Great article by James Farmer in the November 1998 issue of *C&RL News*, "Don't lead a road warrior existence."

I thought the "information highway" metaphor had been overused to the point of annoyance, but he brought new life to it and made an excellent point as well.—*Kathy Kaldenberg, librarian, Kaskaskia College Library, e-mail: kathyk@kc.cc.il.us*

Dear editor:

Jim Kapoun's July/August article in *C&RL News*, "Teaching undergrads WEB evaluation," showed his obvious understanding of college students especially in his statement, "I had to first acknowledge that most students today tend to conduct research with speed rather than accuracy and rarely evaluate resources." His chart for evaluating Web pages is excellent and quite easy to understand. It is the first I've seen that I would even consider dropping on a Freshman Comp. class.—*Sara Dodge, Toccoa Falls College, e-mail: library1@toccoafalls.edu* ■

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