

Scispace: an experiment in social-software-mediated collaborative scientific research

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Abstract

The rise of the World Wide Web has been paralleled by an increasingly pervasive series of communications methods, from e-mail to Instant Messaging, through which inter-personal interactions can be made with unprecedented rapidity and ease. This has had a catalytic effect on scientific research collaboration; sharing of results, analysis of their significance, and discussion on future direction, can occur with much greater facility than previously. However, it has not fundamentally changed the way in which these things are done. Further, these methods are now showing their limitations; for example the ease of email communication paradoxically reduces its utility when users get hundreds of messages a day; and disorganized, disconnected, personal INBOXes mitigate against useful project histories.

Recently, though, the rise in usable social software represents a confluence of mature internet technologies which provide exemplars in how to provide a rich, useful, online collaborative environment. Scispace¹ is an experiment - driven by its intended users - in co-opting Elgg, an existing social software platform, into providing the necessary components to enable new modes of scientific research collaboration.

¹<http://scispace.net>