

The Blogger's View of SLA 2005

By Christina K. Pikas, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory,
R. E. Gibson Library and Information Center

It was an exciting conference from the blogger's view. Individual members of SLA have been blogging conferences since at least 2002, but this year was different. Not only was there an official conference blog, but there were at least two division blogs, and the number of individual members blogging the conference skyrocketed. The diverse blogs added richness and connections not found in previous years.

The official conference blog, http://slablogger.typepad.com/sla_conference_blog/, provided a method of communication less formal than the official website but more formal than the listservs. It contained quick reports from sessions, photographs, room changes, and first-hand accounts of traveling to and around Toronto. Contributors came from all over the world and from diverse divisions.

Division blogs such as the News Division and Physics-Astronomy-Mathematics Division blogs provided more detailed information on specific topical sessions. Generally these blogs had fewer contributors with more lengthy posts of specific interest to the particular division. It was a great way to get out the message of what the division is all about.

Individual blogs serve different purposes from official conference blogs and division conference blogs. I have maintained personal blogs for almost two years (see, for example, <http://christinaslibraryrant.blogspot.com>). I use my blogs to keep track of things I have seen in my environmental scanning. Blogging an item does more than save its location – it places the item in context by assigning a date-time stamp and by linking the items to other information about the topic.

Blogging conference notes is a great way to make connections with other attendees and people interested in the field. Blogs are also great for better retention of the vast amounts of valuable information provided at each session and they allow you to read about sessions you were unable to attend. It is interesting to see that multiple bloggers covering a single session take different notes and record different views of the session. While the conference is still in session, blogging allows for backchannel communications and rare opportunities to meet colleagues in person. Backchannel communications take place during the session, but are between audience members; that is, not with the speaker, presenter, or to the other audience members as a whole.

How does one find and read the SLA conference posts? The easiest way is to use Technorati to aggregate all of the posts categorized "SLA2005." Visit <http://www.technorati.com/tag/sla2005>. Other SLA members have set up a wiki listing various SLA bloggers at <http://www.seedwiki.com/wiki/scilib/sla2005bloggers.cfm>; a blog listing SLA-related posts at <http://www.bloglines.com/blog/carolyne>; and a Blogdigger Group aggregating the posts at <http://groups.blogdigger.com/groups.jsp?id=2090&pp=10&sortby=date&si=41>. Of course, if you just use your favorite general web search engine and search for sessions by name or speakers, you will also retrieve quite a few blog hits.

Next year in Baltimore we'll have all of the above plus a local chapter blog with tips and hints for getting the most out of this great city! Until then, I'll see you around the blogosphere. ❖

Some SLA Science and Technology Bloggers

Richard Akerman, Science Library Pad, http://scilib.typepad.com/science_library_pad/
David Bigwood, Catalogablog, <http://catalogablog.blogspot.com>
John Dupuis, Confessions of a Science Librarian, <http://jdupuis.blogspot.com>
Catherine Lavallée-Welch, EngLib.info, <http://englib.info/>
Randy Reichardt, SciTech Library Question, <http://stlq.info>
Teri Vogel, SD Librarian, <http://sdlibrarian.blogspot.com>
Andy Wheeler and Jay Bhatt, Engineering Resources, <http://englibrary.blogspot.com/>