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About this blog

"Nascent Web publishing efforts have their genesis in a burning need to say something, but their ultimate success comes from people wanting to listen, needing to hear each other's voices, and answering in kind." Rick Levine, The Cluetrain Manifesto

NASCENT

Nature Network Boston launches

08 Jun 2006 | 16:13 BST | Posted by Gavin Bell | Category: Social software

Science is a close knit community, but often this is between small groups of

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people in a similar field. What if you wanted to collaborate with people in a related area? A way of finding collaborators would be good and it'd be great if they were nearby. Face to face meetings are good at getting projects started.

Well to that end, Nature has released Nature Network Boston. It is a social networking website for scientists, aimed at researchers in the Boston area, though it is not just for Bostonians. Locality lets us offer a solid events listing service to which anyone can add events. We also cover news from the Boston area, home to both MIT, Harvard, Mass General and dozens of biotech companies.

Some of the key features of the site are the groups, which allow individual communities to have their own spaces within NNB. Each user has a public profile, which tracks their activity on the site and each user has a corresponding page to track the activity of people in their social network. So you can get an at a glance with of what is happening on Nature Network Boston with hooks to explore more. Tagging is a core feature, virtually everything can be tagged and this allows for discovery of new content and bookmarking of existing content.

The application is built in Ruby on Rails, it is from the ground up, all new. We did look at a range of technologies and products, but wanted to build something tightly integrated with nature.com identity and incorporating tagging at a high level. We found Rails to be very much as advertised, using a small team we went rapidly from wireframes of site functionality to implemented, test backed code.

Giving scientists a persistent public profile, which lets them find their own

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voice, we hope, will raise the visibility of individual scientists and encourage early collaboration and information sharing. Nature Network Boston is a first release and we have plans for the future, more features to add and other Nature Networks to build.

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