



The status of blogging as scientific communication.

HENRY RZEPA

READ REVIEWS

WRITE A REVIEW

CORRESPONDENCE:
h.rzepa@imperial.ac.uk

DATE RECEIVED:
June 10, 2015

DOI:
10.15200/winn.143124.42703

ARCHIVED:
May 10, 2015

CITATION:
Henry Rzepa, The status of
blogging as scientific
communication., *The Winnower*
2:e143124.42703, 2015, DOI:
10.15200/winn.143124.42703

© Rzepa This article is
distributed under the terms of
the [Creative Commons](#)
[Attribution 4.0 International](#)
[License](#), which permits
unrestricted use, distribution,
and redistribution in any
medium, provided that the
original author and source are
credited.



Blogging in chemistry remains something of a [niche activity](#), albeit with a variety of different styles. The most common is commentary or opinion on the scientific literature or conferencing, serving to highlight what their author considers interesting or important developments. There are even [metajournals](#) that aggregate such commentaries. The question therefore occasionally arises; should blogs aspire to any form of permanence, or are they simply creatures of their time.

In this blog, as you might have noticed, I take a slightly different tack. One focus is on exploring, perchance in more detail than might be found in the *standard text-book*, some of the dogmas of chemistry. It happens that occasionally when writing a conventional scientific article, I find myself wishing to cite such sources. This of itself raises interesting issues (such as should one cite what might be considered material that has not been peer-reviewed in the conventional manner) but the most important would be whether one should cite evanescent sources. So this brings me to the topic of this post; can a post be archived in a sense that achieves a greater perceived permanence? Nowadays, permanence tends to be associated with a digital object identifier, or DOI. So one can boil this question down to: can one assign a DOI to a blog post?

Well, if you came to this post via the main page, you may indeed have spotted that some do have a DOI. This is an experiment I have been running with an organisation known as [The Winnower](#), who provide a WordPress extension to archive any individual post and assign it a (CrossRef) DOI. The archived version also includes metadata that points back to the original post.

This archival is not yet perfect. In its current state it does not (yet) capture:

1. Comments on any post (which could be considered a form of open peer review)
2. Enhancements such as the links to Jmol/JSmol that I associate with some of the posts
3. The [ORCID](#) identifier, which adds a layer of additional provenance.
4. We of course do not yet know what the lifetime expectancy archiving organisations will achieve (could it be 100 years for example?).

It does capture the citation list when there is one, and since I include citations to my data sources (for the computations performed in support of many of my posts) the archive is I think accordingly rendered more valuable.

What brought this post on? Well, the Journal of Chemical Education has put out a [call for articles on chemical information](#) for a special issue. I decided to contribute by aggregating some of my teaching related posts; indeed individually could perhaps have only appeared here as opposed to a more traditional means of dissemination such as the JCE journal itself. And I wanted to cite them using the DOI rather than simply the URL of the post. It's an experiment, and one which I do not yet know if

anyone else will try. That in some ways is the point of a blog; it *is* an interesting experimental vehicle!