

Science Online 2012: A Post-Mortem

Description

For those of you unaware, last Wednesday I travelled to the mystical land of Raleigh, North Carolina and attended a really unique conference entitled [Science Online 2012](#). It is what is known as an “unconference,” where there are no lectures or presentations, but sessions that encourage and are built on discussion.

I could talk about all the fun that was had over there, the people I met for the first time in person (but have been talking to for years online) or the exciting times that were had. But, people have already written marvelous posts on that already (such as [Ed Yong](#), [Sarah Chow](#) and [more](#)). Therefore, I will focus on a few things at the conference that really surprised me.

On the first day of the conference, after meeting countless people I’ve been talking to on Twitter for years, I decided to attend a variety of sessions. Most surprisingly, practically right out of the gate, one immediately blew me away.

The session, entitled “Sex, gender and controversy: writing to educate, writing to titillate” was moderated by the amazing [@KateClancy](#) and the incredible [@scicurious](#) about a blogger’s identity, comment moderation and the difficulty of being outspoken and passionate about science.

Prior to the conference, both Kate and Sci had posted blogs that received a lot of flack. And not constructive criticism, mind you, but a variety of hateful and mean-spirited comments that insulted their intelligence, status and even gender.

Now, I’ve been lucky, the readers of my blog have been quite kind. And some have criticized me about mistakes or called me out on a few things, but it was always done with tact. But never like those two ladies described, and while others recounted their experiences with similar situations, I was struck by the courage writers have.

Yes, we get criticized a lot, that is just a fact of nature.

It is one thing to get in a discussion about a fact or opinion, but another to discredit a the thoroughly researched and hard-worked piece simply because of gender. That is not right, that is not appropriate and that is not the age I thought we lived in.

But then Kate said something.

“You just need to keep going. Wipe yourself off, make your next one better and show them you are better than they are.”

Now that takes balls for anyone for anyone to do.

Even after attending numerous different sessions throughout the conference that one sticks in my mind as a clear standout.

Another surprising element from the conference was that notable bloggers/writers were happy to talk to everyone. While some people knew who I was (and that was fantastic), I was really surprised just how nice everyone was, whether they were “famous” or not.

But the greatest thing about the conference was how easily the friendships cultivated online, through Twitter, Facebook or whatever other social media platforms, seamlessly moved into meeting in person. There are a few shout outs I must make, to those who made my time at the conference just that much more memorable. I have already thanked some of them via Twitter, but it is still an incomplete list.

However, I am pasting those I have done here for all to see.

Favourite [#scio12](#) moments:

My session with [@DrRubidium](#), where we made people laugh (and think) using Mel Brooks movie clips

Talking at great length with [@sciencecomedian](#) and actually making him laugh more than once!

Holding court with the almost too amazing for words [@jeannegarb](#) in the [#DSN](#) suite (and later during the endnote)

Helping out [@DrBondar](#) and [@sciencegoddess](#) with the film festival (technical glitches and all)

Spending time with the fascinating [@astvintagespace](#) and bonding over space, university and telling stories

Getting my armpits swabbed for microbes by [@DrHolly](#) â€¦ FOR SCIENCE

Meeting [@experriment](#) and watching her draw & sketch fabulous works of art

[@arikia](#) and [@hannahjwaters](#) using very different â€œmethodsâ€• to open my locked from the inside hotel room door

[@scicurious](#) [#NuffSaid](#)

There are more wonderful people who I met that Iâ€™ve forgotten and others who arenâ€™t on the list but deserve to be.

See you all next year!

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