

More on shared notebook projects

I keep forgetting to turn on the comments on this site and when I do I forget to check them. You can always send me an email, like Jean-Claude Bradley, who responds to [my post on Shared Notebook Science](#). I'm reproducing his email here in full. More from me below.

Peter,

Thanks for discussing Open Notebook Science and linking to my presentations!

I didn't see a way to leave a comment so I'm sending you a quick email response.

The curation boundary problem is a tricky one when we move away from the standard article format. Interpretation of the data is in flux after it has been recorded in the lab notebook, either because new information comes to light or errors are corrected. We like to think that traditional peer reviewed articles are set in stone and "fully ready for curation" but the reality is that the scientific literature is full of errors (especially errors of omission) and it is really really hard to get an author to admit they made a mistake and publish an erratum or retract a paper once in print. I think that this is the source of a lot of reluctance to provide raw data. If we operate under ONS "no insider information" at all times, it is much harder to fall into that trap. That is one reason I am a proponent of ONS but I don't think it is necessary for everyone to do things that way (especially if IP issues are involved). I like your term "Shared Notebook Science" to describe an intermediate scenario.

Jean-Claude

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Jean-Claude Bradley, Ph. D.

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Jean-Claude makes some good points here about the value of openness for science, particularly "it is really really hard to get an author to admit they made a mistake and publish an erratum or retract a paper once in print".

In my previous post I cut some stuff about how I now favour working in the open as much as possible, so I'll talk a bit about that now.

I mentioned the RUBRIC project, and the fact that we had a **shared but not open** workspace. This presents us with a problem at the close of the project. Participants in the project want a take-away version of the shared space. But the shared space belongs to the trusted community, not to their organizations or to the whole world. We're going to have to do grab a snapshot of the Trac wiki, but we can't put it in a repository so we will have to give everyone their own souvenir DVD.

(Some of the partner project managers on RUBRIC note that they liked the shared space because it gave them a chance to ask dumb questions, and put up drafts that they would not

be happy to circulate more widely. Maybe in future I just need to work with people who don't ask dumb questions :-)

But seriously, this is an issue that needs to be addressed. There do need to be places where people can draft things in-group, before moving them out to the public. Even in open notebook science I'm sure most people would not like to draft blog posts or wiki pages in public. The challenge is to provide a shared workspace that's private but to move as much as possible into the open as soon as possible, so at the end of a project you don't have stuff hanging around that can't be archived because it belongs to an ad-hoc project group which no longer exists.

I'm keen in future projects to try making all our 'notebooks' open as far as possible, in the way we do in the ICE project, where our [Trac site](#) is open to read, or on the AANRO evaluation project where there's a [project blog](#) and the final report will be available under a Creative Commons license, but that doesn't mean that you're going to be seeing my draft blog posts.