

2015-08-12 Trip Report -- VIVO Conference, Cambridge MA

VIVO Conference Trip Report

August 12-14, 2015

Symplectic Conference

The week started with the Symplectic conference on Tuesday, August 11. About 80 people attended. Jonathan Breeze, Ken Anderson and other folks from Symplectic filled people in on the frenetic pace of development for Elements. The product is moving forward very rapidly. Latest development is in a module for "review" which could be used for review of faculty. The module appears to have configurable workflow underneath it. Configurable workflow could be fundamental in expanding the role of systems such as Elements.

VIVO Conference Wednesday

Wednesday was workshop day. Kristi Holmes, Melissa Haendel and I co-taught a workshop on "Getting More from your VIVO," Background and techniques for assessment of research using VIVO, followed by 2.5 hours of a fairly intense introduction to SPARQL queries for VIVO. Starting at the beginning, and using the UF VIVO for data, the group learned SPARQL basics, how to read ontology diagrams, and was introduced to a collection of SPARQL queries that have proved useful at the University of Florida. It was fun to engage with the 20 attendees, hear their questions and comments, and help them on their road to getting results from their VIVOS.

In the afternoon, The VIVO Leadership Group and the VIVO Steering Group had their joint annual meeting. Lasting most of the afternoon, the group reviewed VIVO progress, the budget, the roadmap, and the upcoming membership drive. It was good to welcome the new members to each group, have people meet those they had only interacted with via email, and discuss the present and future of VIVO.

The opening reception was held on the upper levels of the hotel with an outdoor terrace and a beautiful view of the Charles River. It was so good to see old friends and meet new members of the community.

VIVO Conference Thursday

Kristi and Melissa welcomed the attendees to Boston and the sixth annual conference. Having chaired the conference for the first five years, it was great to see the transition to new leadership, and with it, new ideas.

I provided some quick updates on the status of VIVO. I'm happy to say that the status is good – the project is gathering momentum. There are many new implementations, the task forces have done a spectacular job, the work groups are re-invigorated.

David Weinberger of Harvard provided the opening keynote on Thursday. He queried the audience on their perceptions of the Internet – importance as a technology, force for change, force for good? Each of us was challenged to think through our views.

Following the keynote, contributors presented their very strong work. With so many presentations, it is impossible to see most of them. I saw the CTSASearch work, the presentation on Converis, VIVO ISF speed factors, Neo4j, and using Virtuoso as an alternate triple store. I expect to review others when the materials are available on line.

Justin Starrin gave an invited talk on the impressive research assessment work being done at the Northwestern CTSA. Nettie Lagace of NISO introduced us to the work there and its relationship to the emerging scholarly ecosystem.

I spent some time with the VIVO sponsors. I hope you did as well. The sponsors are very important to the conference.

The poster session was wonderful – more great work in a relaxed setting, again overlooking the Charles River.

Thursday evening was the VIVO Collaboration dinner for sponsors and invited speakers. The dinner was held at the Harvard Club. A great time was had by all.

VIVO Conference Friday

Friday morning, I had the honor of announcing the contest winners. Each received a token of appreciation from the VIVO project and will be recognized in conference materials.

James Onken of the NIH gave a keynote address on the work being done to modernize NIH data systems and data representation.

During the second day of sessions I saw the SEO talk by UCSF, Lessons in mapping the ISF ontology, Publishing Linked Open Data

Ina Blumel of TIB Hannover gave a great talk on engaging/teaching students about linked data using VIVO. It was remarkable to see the progress students could make in a short time, starting with little to no experience.

The conference closed with a new session, VIVO Around the World, in which sites were encouraged to submit one slide regarding their VIVO. Many interesting examples were presented from around the world. The work at DTU Denmark on aggregating research output at the national level using VIVO was particularly intriguing.

Following VIVO Around the World, there was a tribute to Jon Corson-Rikert. Jon is the originator of VIVO and will retire from Cornell University at the end of 2015. Jon has been an amazing colleague -- thoughtful, kind, generous, and extraordinarily productive. Most of what we see in VIVO is Jon's work. Jon will be greatly missed.

Digital Science Post Conference Event

Digital Science hosted a post-conference event at which they debuted "GRID" – General Research Identification Database." GRID will be available in the fall via an open license – anyone can take, remix, use the data. The data consists of names, geolocations, ISNI identifiers and some relationship information for approximately 45,000 academic institutions across the world. Digital Science expects to continuously curate this data. Interested persons can subscribe to a fee-based service for searching and using GRID. VIVO users should be able to use GRID data in their VIVO instances to refer in a standard way, to academic organizations.

Final Thoughts

The conference was bigger than last year. Boston was a great location for last minute registrants from the surrounding universities, and a great location for European attendees. Workshop attendance was also up this year. Perhaps that is an indication of the interest people have in learning more about VIVO for their own implementations.