



**Announcing The 2010 Research Blogging Awards  
Interview with  
Dave Munger, editor, [researchblogging.org](http://researchblogging.org) &  
Joy Moore, Seed Media Group**

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**KENNEALLY:** We're getting ready to open the envelopes for the very first edition of Research Blogging Awards and we've got the judge for that, and we as well have the sponsors of these new and very interesting awards, joining us today for Beyond the Book. Welcome everyone. My name is Chris Kenneally, Director of Author Relations at Copyright Clearance Center and joining me on the line today is Joy Moore, who is Vice President of Global Partnerships for Seed Media Group. Joy, welcome to Beyond the Book.

**MOORE:** Hi, Chris. It's great to be here.

**Q:** It's nice to have you join us today and we also have on the line Dave Munger, who is a writer living in North Carolina, a columnist for *Seed Magazine* and the editor of [researchblogging.org](http://researchblogging.org). Dave, welcome to Beyond the Book.

**MUNGER:** Hi. Great to be talking to you.

**Q:** It's again, a pleasure to have you join us and what we're going to be talking about specifically are the 20 award winners in this first time edition of the Research Blogging Awards, but we want to give people the broader picture about the state of research blogging today online and how all of this is helping to promote science and science literacy and culture throughout the world. So Joy, I'd like to turn to you first of all and ask you about how Seed Media has been working with Research Blogging, which I believe has been online since 2007. What are you trying to do in your support of that site?

**MOORE:** Well, we recognized from our experience with Science Blogs, which is our own blogging platform that is the largest blogging platform for science in the world today and reaches over 2.5 million viewers per month, that there was not only the opportunity to facilitate conversations about science in an informal way, but that there was also the potential to support more academic and serious discussions about science among researchers and so working with Dave, who was one of our original science bloggers, we developed a system to help sort through and identify posts that bloggers were making that were specifically about peer reviewed research.



So a blogger might discuss what he's doing in his lab or what views they have on certain topics, but from time to time, they will write about what they read and give their interpretation or their opinion of what they're reading in the journals as part of their day to day work and so research blogging was designed to be a way to identify those particular posts about peer reviewed research and then through technology, to aggregate those posts through a common database, through a registration driven site that we can then syndicate and disseminate those specific posts from across all these blogs to a broader community and we do that through the website, [researchblogging.org](http://researchblogging.org). We also do it through RSF and through Twitter and we have what we call the Research Blogging Widget, which can be posted on any website to provide a feed of those posts.

So really our role in working with Research Blogging is to give the activity of research blogging a virtual community, a way for this group of posts to be aggregated and to be categorized, but also to be syndicated and to reach a much wider audience than the individual bloggers would be able to capture on their own blogs.

Q: Right, and what's interesting to me about this – there are several things here. One is that it helps to reinforce the point that our impression of blogging is that it's about celebrity babies and that sort of more kind of entertainment driven news, but here is something quite serious, peer reviewed research that's finding its way onto the web because researchers simply want to communicate their own reactions to the news and they want to share it and they want to find others who may have something to add to that. So this is really blogging of a very special kind.

MOORE: It really is and what we're seeing, and it's quite exciting, is that bloggers, scientist bloggers around the world are putting a lot of very, very thoughtful effort into spontaneously writing about peer reviewed research in a way that is very similar to what you'll see in say the news and views sections of some of the top science journals. And so what we're able to see is not only a broader spectrum of coverage of peer reviewed research and interpretation, but we're also seeing the immediate accessibility to that interpretation through the blogs and it's open and it's free and so it's really opening up the accessibility to views and interpretations of research in a way that we've never seen before.

Q: Right, that's really I think a good point, Joy, and Dave, I want to bring you into the discussion here. Dave Munger, you're a blogger yourself. You're in fact an award winning blogger, so somebody who is well positioned to be making the choices for the Research Blogging Awards, which we'll get to in just a minute, but what is it that drives somebody like yourself to want to blog about research in the first place? What are you hoping to achieve? What kind of reactions are you looking for?



MUNGER: I guess I just am interested in getting people interested and excited about the things that I'm interested in and excited about myself and I think that's the case with a lot of these bloggers, that really what they want to do is just share what they love and in many cases, it really catches on and they become really popular and well known within their certain field.

Q: Well, I would imagine too there's kind of a bleeding that goes on. So much of science today is so thoroughly siloed. People are within a very strict discipline that is a very narrow slice of a certain science, but when you're collecting all of these blogs together and they range from covering neuroscience and philosophy to psychology and conservation, there's an opportunity here for people to kind of look over to another department that they might not otherwise encounter and maybe incorporate some of that research, some of those findings, or at least have them kind of in their mind when they're doing their own research.

MUNGER: Absolutely, and it's both on that wide scale of a neuroscientist looking at chemistry or astronomy studies, but also even within say psychology, a psychologist can get incredibly specialized in what she studies, but if she goes to our site and just clicks on psychology, she'll find the entire range of research across the entire discipline and that's something she may not normally be exposed to.

Q: Right. And for those of us who aren't in the science field, reading about science is still an interesting thing to be doing and what we know is that many newspapers, popular newspapers, daily newspapers in various communities around this country, have been cutting back on their science reporting, so the availability of a lot of this is diminishing at least in the traditional sources. Do you see what researchblogging.org is doing as kind of filling in some of those gaps?

MUNGER: Yeah, I do to a certain extent. I mean it's not quite the same as journalism, though we do have many journalists who are some of our bloggers, but I think that you can use this site as way to get that same information. It wouldn't be quite the identical format of what you traditionally got through a newspaper, so I still think that there's some value in other types of work, but it can be one way of getting a lot of science information to a lot of people.

Q: Right, and just for some numbers here, that you currently have over 1,000 bloggers. There's a database of more than 10,000 blog posts, predominantly in English I understand but in other languages as well.



MUNGER: That's right. We have German, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese and we're looking to start up Polish. There's a really vibrant community of Polish bloggers who are really excited about getting started with us.

Q: Well, maybe next year there'll be a special category for Best Polish Language Blog, but why don't we get straight to the news here, which is that you've been involved, Dave, in judging the very first Research Blogging Awards and Joy, let me ask you, before we turn to Dave and start opening the envelopes, what were you hoping for at Seed Media in deciding to sponsor these awards?

MOORE: Well, we've been very impressed and excited about the evolution of Research Blogging and in particular, in 2009, we saw a huge explosion in the adoption and the growth of members of the community and so we started to see what started as a small group of people sharing blog information grow into really a global network of bloggers who were discussing thousands and thousands of journal articles and we wanted to give back to the community, but also provide a way to recognize the best of the best and so the goals of the Research Blogging Awards was to give the community themselves the opportunity to nominate who their favorite bloggers and what the best posts were, but also provide them with the ability to cast the votes themselves.

Q: Well, that sounds like it must have been fun for them and Dave, what was it like for you to sort through all the entries and nominations?

MUNGER: It was a tremendous task and I was just one of ten judges in English and then we had many more judges in the other languages as well. But we had over 400 nominations and for each nomination, we had to read several different blog posts from that blog and a lot of this is very dense scientific information, so it really was a ton of work to go through and for the most part, it was all excellent quality. So we had to narrow that down to about 150 nominees. That was kind of the call of the judges and then after that, we turned it back to the registered members of [researchblogging.org](http://researchblogging.org) and they are the ones who selected the winners in each category.

Q: Well, then let's take out those envelopes that we talked about, Dave, and start opening some up here. The Research Blog of the Year Award, it's \$1,000 award, and it goes to –

MUNGER: It goes to Not Exactly Rocket Science, which is a fantastic science blog about all aspects of science by a journalist, Ed Yong.

Q: Now who is Ed and what's he trying to do with his blog?



MUNGER: He is a journalist who I believe works for a cancer research center in England and he kind of wanted to get his message out to a broader spectrum of people, so he helps share their research findings as an employee, but then he wanted to kind of broaden it and do more than just what he was doing, reporting about cancer and so I think that's why he started that blog.

Q: In fact, I looked it up and had a brief time with Not Exactly Rocket Science, his blog, and he seems to be very concerned about uncomplicating very complicated stories, to not fall prey to jargon and that kind of thing and indeed, he's won several awards in the Research Blogging Awards this year. One is particular for the best lay level blog, so he must be getting somewhere with his attempt to kind of make things accessible.

MUNGER: Absolutely. He's doing a fantastic job and the thing I also really like about Ed Yong's posts is that while he makes the research accessible to everyone, he doesn't oversimplify. He really explains the details behind the research.

Q: So we don't mean dumbed down.

MUNGER: Not at all.

Q: And then so I guess I'm going to ask you about this most intriguing of awards. It's the Blog Post of the Year for Not Exactly Rocket Science and what was the blog post of the year?

MUNGER: The blog post of the year's title is Ballistic Penises and Corkscrew Vaginas: The Sexual Battles of Ducks and –

Q: I'll go ahead and stop you right there. This is a family program. (laughter) Well, anyhow, at least for human families, not for duck families. What was he up to with that post?

MUNGER: It's actually a really fascinating study that has an accompanying video, believe it or not, and it has to do with how ducks select through the mating process and really actually very interesting science but it's also probably one of the most notorious blog posts of the year, so I'm not surprised that it won.

Q: It sounds notorious and we'll leave it at that, but there are many serious winners here. One is for the Best Blog in Social Sciences for Anthropologies, a blog called Epiphenom. What's up with Epiphenom?



MUNGER: Epiphenom is I think by a cancer researcher as well and he talks about the scientific study of religion. So he covers scientific studies that touch on who is believers and what makes them different from non-believers and I believe he's an atheist, so he's kind of taking this skeptical perspective on all of it. But it's interesting research.

Q: Indeed, it sounds it. And there's also a blog here for psychology and what's interesting I guess about that is when I saw first about Research Blogging, I was imagining much of this was really very hard science and starting to use complicated chemical formulas and that sort of thing and would be off putting, but something like psychology has an appeal because we all have our own personal notions of psychology. What was that winner? What kind of work were they doing there?

MUNGER: That's BPS Research Digest, which is the blog of the British Psychological Society and –

Q: So a fine organization behind that blog.

MUNGER: Absolutely. And it covers just the latest psychology research in a variety of areas and so it can be everything from what handedness has effect on reading to what kind of drugs you might be using for antidepressants.

Q: Well, really, as you said, you are covering quite a lot of ground here and I suppose we could continue here, but I'll ask you just to pick out one more blog that struck you as especially worth following in the future.

MUNGER: People might be interested in the Best New Blog, which is called Culturing Science, and it covers biology, it mostly covers kind of population and species biology and it's fascinating stuff about different animals and how they work, how they evolved and behave.

Q: Right. Now apart from the \$1,000 award for the Blog of the Year, all the other awards are for \$50. So this is more for the honor than for the honorarium that you are giving these awards, but I imagine, Joy, that it's going to encourage people to – really even to try to improve, try to be more thoughtful, to do work that may be nominees next year.

MOORE: Absolutely. We hope so. One of the most critical aspects of being not only a scientist, but also a blogger is ensuring that you get your work out there and you have recognition and attribution for it and therefore, to continue to encourage the Research Blogging activity, we feel that we can help play a role by ensuring that the bloggers are recognized for their work.



Q: And I noticed when I had a look at Ed Yong's blog, that he's already got a little badge up there that said he was a Research Blogging Awards Finalist and so I imagine we'll start seeing that posted to the other winners and to the other nominees and in a way, it becomes an interesting – not so much a seal of approval, but kind of an indicator of quality.

MUNGER: Oh, absolutely, and we found that once we made those finalist badges available, that most of the finalists put them right up on their blogs. They were very proud to be selected as even just a finalist and we'll have a similar set of badges for the winners as well.

Q: Well, it's been very nice to chat with both of you about the very first series of awards for Research Blogging and I want to thank for joining us today on Beyond the Book, Dave Munger, who is a writer and the editor of [researchblogging.org](http://researchblogging.org). David, thank you very much for joining us today.

MUNGER: Thank you. It was a great conversation.

Q: And Joy Moore, Vice President of Global Partnerships for Seed Media Group, which is the underwriter of the awards. Joy, thank you for joining us too.

MOORE: Thank you. It was a pleasure.

Q: We will be posting more information about the award winners today, as it's been announced by [researchblogging.org](http://researchblogging.org) and we look forward to having Dave and Joy back a year from now to take a look at the second annual awards. We're sure there'll be some interesting results there too. For Beyond the Book and everyone at Copyright Clearance Center, this is Chris Kenneally. Have a great day.

M: Beyond the Book is an educational presentation of the not for profit Copyright Clearance Center, with conferences and seminars featuring leading authors and editors, publishing analysts, and information technology specialists. Beyond the Book is the premiere source for knowledge on the latest business issues facing today's dynamic publishing industry, from initial research to final publication and beyond.

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