The ChemWiki project is a new approach toward chemistry education where an Open Access textbook environment is constantly being written and re-written partly by students and partly by faculty members resulting in a free Chemistry textbook to supplement or supplant conventional paper-based books. Anyone can view, although a freely available account is required to edit the site modules. The UCD ChemWiki was founded and is currently directed by Prof. Delmar Larsen (dlarsen@ucdavis) in the Chemistry department at UC Davis.

Publicity

The ChemWiki has been written up in the UC Davis Aggie (university paper) and the Davis Enterprise (city paper). Some have suggested that it will make it to the Sacramento Bee in the near future, but we will see about that; the links are here: "Profs take whack at expensive textbooks and The Davis Enterprise. Over the past couple of months, we have been attempting to captivate the Chem Blog readers (and writers) into either actively participating in the ChemWiki development or at least help to spread the word. To this end, Kyle Finchsigmate from "The Chem Blog" has two entries on his blob about the ChemWiki and has generously merged his existing Wiki material on "laboratory techniques" into ChemWiki. It was a great add on and I hope to build on it in the near future.

Rich Apodaca from the "Zusammen Metamolecular Blog" has an entry on the ChemWiki: Metamolecular Blog. He has some good recommendations which we have been considering implementing for a while and will probably do this year depending on the support I can get. We have also been added to a list of Wikis for education here: jmgenter.com

The upshot of this summer publicity activity was a doubling to tripling of the background (students or visitors not from an active Wikitext) visitors. It appears to be increasing exponentially with a doubling every month although the statistics are not solid in this matter. I consider this all good and should aid in garnering financial support.

Facebook Forum

The standalone forum has not been implemented yet since we do not have out LDAP application running to integrate the SARIS, Forum and ChemWiki into an integrated suite. If students desire to access something like a forum, I encourage them to go to the Facebook forum
SARIS

Matt Barkovich over the summer spent a lot of time designing and building the online homework system (SARIS) that is accessed here: http://barko.ucdavis.edu/SARIS/. Full implementation and testing will take some time as Matt decided Medical school was more important than the ChemWiki (not sure why). We will play with it a bit over the next quarter in a small class to evaluate it and identify what will need to be developed. There is a chance this will develop faster depending on the needs of the department to address the upcoming assessment of the university education performance by the Western Association of Schools (or something like that).

Modules

Currently, the ChemWiki has 1728 pages (less than half are non-content Modules, e.g. Wikitext pages) and 276 registered ACTIVE Module contributors (with many more not active in the past 6 months). We have introduced material from several faculty to augment the ChemWiki. These include:

1) Dr. David N. Blauch from Davidson College
2) Dr. Charles Ophardt, Professor Emeritus, Elmhurst College
3) Dr. Constantinos E. Efstathiou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (allowed us to "iframe" java material from his site)

I have notice that a lot of Blog entries can be solid "seeds" for Modules, mostly case studies, for the ChemWiki. However, I have not proposed to any bloggers the suggestion of shifting some of their content to the ChemWiki, in part to time constraints. I am using the ChemWiki to host the Chemistry 115: instrumental Analysis lab manual this upcoming quarter. All ~15 students in my class will have access to the manual to aid in correcting aspects that are not 100% useful for their education (and mistakes). This is the first low-key primary resource of the ChemWiki in a class.

Future

We have been approached by about half a dozen of people with commercial interests in the ChemWiki (which have been politely turn down). However, several more companies have expressed interest to support the project with some of their technology or sponsor activities (e.g. best Module from a general chemistry class or O-chem class, etc gets a small cash price). Once this is solid, I will announce who it is and how it will proceed.

I have extended my hand to multiple faculty (both in UCD and outside) with potential interests in participating in the ChemWiki development. Several have responded positively, most have not responded at all. It consider it a priority to develop a strong network in the upcoming year of people interested in the success of the project. This includes faculty at every stage of instruction and experts in Science Education and Evaluation to present the ChemWiki as a viable project.

Regarding financial support, we intend to run for the NSF's CCLI program under Phase I again (assuming my previous proposal is unfunded) and Also try to get the nomination for the Keck or HHMI programs for education (doubtful, but still worth the effort). I will also contact the Dreyfus people to see if they have a program that will be useful for the project. Any agency, private or public, that may be interested in helping us along will be considered, in case anyone has ideas.

I am hoping that Richard Osibanjo will be able to break into the African (or at least Nigerian) chemistry community/education to see several classes over there to participate and take advantage of the ChemWiki project (once viable) for their textbook needs. That's enough for now. I will send another update somewhere around mid-Winter.