

AGU Fall 2006

# Science Blogging: RealClimate.org and the debate on Global Warming



**Gavin Schmidt**

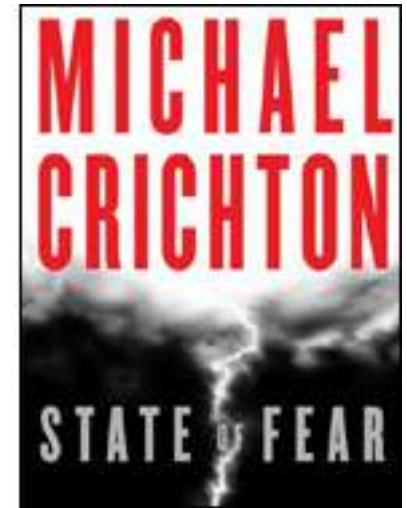
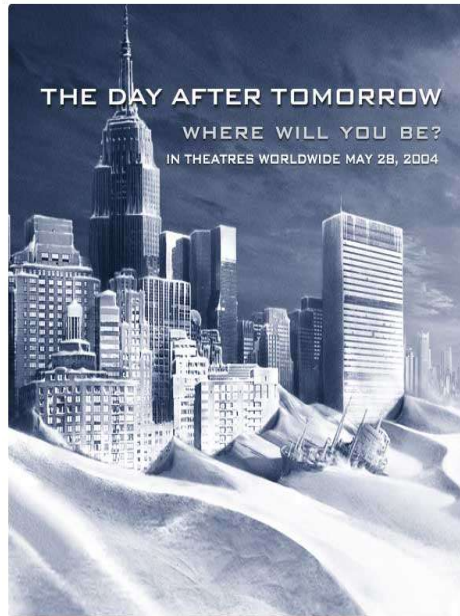
NASA GISS and Center for Climate Systems  
Research, Columbia University, New York

# Who are we?



4 countries, 6 timezones, 100's of publications

# Why did we start?



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

# What do we hope for?



Context:

Why was any particular paper in Science/Nature?

Background:

What's known, what's uncertain (and by how much)

Correct popular fallacies:

Cherry-picking



Strawman arguments



Red-Herrings



Basic errors



Insight:

How do new results get assimilated into sci. community?

What happens after peer review?

How do we come to a consensus on anything?

# How does it work?



Hosting: Environmental Media Services (donated)

Software: Wordpress/MySQL (open source)

Volunteer effort, ~ 1hr a day.

Internal review of postings (1-3 a week)

Most from a few of us, frequent guest postings

Some translations (Fr, Sp, Slovak!)

Comments received/replied to

Some moderation essential

'Dinner party conversation'  
rather than schoolyard brawl

3. Can someone explain to me how oxygen isotope ratios are effected by salinity? I can pretty well understand how temperature effects the ratio but can't get a grasp on how salinity and hence density enters the picture.

[Response: The relationship is somewhat indirect, and results from the fact that there is an isotopic fractionation involved in the evaporation of water from the ocean surface, whereby the lighter isotopes of oxygen are preferentially evaporated, increasing the proportion of higher isotope oxygen left behind. Salinity is also influenced by the rate of evaporation (more precisely, by the difference between the evaporation and precipitation rates and, in some instances, the added effects of coastal runoff), and hence there is a relationship between salinity and oxygen isotopic content of ocean-dwelling organisms that produce calcareous shells or skeletons. There is a very nice discussion of this available at [this educational website](#). - mike]

Thanks.

Ian Forrester

Comment by Ian Forrester — 30 Nov 2006 @ 10:46 pm | [Edit This](#)

# Response?



“propaganda blog... There's so much money to be made” - Mark Morano, staffer of Sen. Inhofe

“go-to site for climate science” - Andy Revkin, NYT

“A refreshing antidote to the political and economic slants that commonly color and distort news coverage” - Scientific American



“a valuable resource that other disciplines might do well to emulate” - American Scientist

“Un blogue chaud” - Le Devoir (Quebec)

Press from Nature, Science, etc.....

> 2 million visitors since Dec. 2004

#2 Science blog (Technorati)

# Response?



## Journalists:

Generally positive, use posts for story ideas, background material, access to sources

## Other scientists:

Extremely positive, used for graduate teaching, keeping up to date with connected fields, sharpening thinking on basic issues

## 'Informed' public:

Positive, used as a resource, also argued over

## 'Uninformed' public:

Positive, but often too technical, takes too much for granted

## 'Skeptics':

Grudging respect to vitriolic abuse

# Effects?



- Better journalism?
- More informed public?
- More serious discussion?
- Wider appreciation of subtleties?

Maybe....

# Next moves?

- Wiki-debunking? Open source/more rapid response
- More guest commentaries
- Better gender/field/facial-hair balance....
- Any volunteers?

