A Panorama of Publication Pitfalls
SFU

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Overview

► What Not To Do

► What To Do

Paper Pitfalls: Strategy

► What I Did Over My Summer Vacation
  ▪ focus on effort not contribution
  ▪ too low-level

► Least Publishable Unit
  ▪ tiny increment beyond (your) previous work
  ▪ bonus points: new name for old technique

► Dense As Plutonium
  ▪ so much content that no room to explain why/what/how
  ▪ fails reproducibility test

► Bad Slice and Dice
  ▪ two papers split up wrong
  ▪ neither is standalone, yet both repeat

► Slimy Simultaneous Submission
  ▪ often detected when same reviewer for both
  ▪ immediate dual rejection, multi-conference blacklist

Paper Pitfalls: Tactics

► Guess My Contributions Game
  ▪ it's your job to tell reader explicitly
  ▪ consider carefully, often different from original goals

► I Am So Unique
  ▪ don't ignore previous work
  ▪ both on similar problems and with similar solutions

► Enumeration Without Justification
  ▪ "X did Y" not enough
  ▪ must say why previous work doesn't solve your problem!
  ▪ what limitations of theirs does your approach fix?

► Deadly Detail Dump
  ▪ how allowed only **after** what and why
  ▪ motivation: why should I care
  ▪ overview: what did you do
  ▪ details: how did you do it

► Jargon Attack
  ▪ avoid where you can
  ▪ define before using

Review Reading Pitfalls

► Reviewers Were Idiots
  ▪ rare: insufficient background to judge worth
  ▪ if reviewer didn't get point, many readers won't
  ▪ rewrite so clearly that nobody can misunderstand

► Reviewers Were Threatened By My Brilliance
  ▪ seldom: unduly harsh since intimately familiar area

► I Just Know Person X Wrote This Review
  ▪ sometimes true, sometimes false
  ▪ don't get fixated, try not to take it personally

► Ignore Review and Resubmit Unchanged
  ▪ often will get same reviewer, who will be irritated

► It's The Writing Not The Work
  ▪ sometimes true: bad writing can doom good work
  ▪ converse: good writing may save borderline work
  ▪ sometimes false: weak work all too common
    ▪ many people reinvent wheel
    ▪ some people make worse wheels than previous ones

Talk Pitfalls

► Results As Dessert
  ▪ don't save for end as reward for the stalwart
  ▪ showcase early to motivate

► A Thousand Words, No Pictures
  ▪ aggressively replace words with illustrations
  ▪ most slides should have a picture

► Full Coverage Or Bust
  ▪ cannot fit all details from paper
  ▪ talk as advertising, communicate big picture

Review Writing Pitfalls

► Uncalibrated Dismay
  ▪ remember you've mostly read the best of the best!
  ▪ most new reviewers are overly harsh

► It's Been Done, Full Stop
  ▪ you must say who did it in which paper
  ▪ providing full citation is best

► You Didn't Cite Me
  ▪ stop and think whether it's appropriate
  ▪ be calm, not petulant

► You Didn't Channel Me
  ▪ don't compare against the paper you would have written
  ▪ review the paper they submitted

Overview

► What Not To Do

► What To Do

Paper Structure: General

► low level: necessary but not sufficient
  ▪ correct grammar/spelling
  ▪ sentence flow

► medium level: order of explanations
  ▪ build up ideas

► high through low level:
  why/what before how
  ▪ paper level
  ▪ section level
  ▪ sometimes even subsection or paragraph

Paper Writing: Contributions

► what are your research contributions?
  ▪ what can we do that wasn't possible before?
  ▪ how can we do something better than before?
  ▪ what do we know that was unknown or unclear before?

► determines everything
  ▪ from high-level message to which details

► often not obvious
  ▪ diverged from original goals, in retrospect

► state them explicitly and clearly in introduction
  ▪ don't hope that reviewer or reader will fill in for you
  ▪ they'll leave unsaid what should be obvious after close reading of previous work
    ▪ pw very important - but many readers skip
  ▪ goal is clarity, not overselling
    ▪ do include limitations: often later, in discussion subsection

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Three Suggestions

► write and give talk first

► **then** create paper outline from talk
  ▪ encourages concise explanations of critical ideas
  ▪ avoids wordsmithing ratholes and digressions

► practice talk feedback session: at least 3x talk length
  ▪ global comments, then slide by slide detailed discussion
  ▪ nurture culture of internal critique

► have nonauthors read paper before submitting
  ▪ internal review can catch many problems
  ▪ ideally group feedback session as above