When to Choose

- ideal: maintain mix at any given time
  - limited number of active projects
  - some preliminary work
  - may lead to dance if banter phase pans out
  - steady stream of low-cost initial meetings
  - keep an eye on the whole room even when dance card is full for this particular evening

- premature commitment can be the wrong thing
  - avoid full dance card with wrong partners
  - joining grant at last minute with people you’ve never even met
  - don’t assume “can’t say no”, consider more deeply

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What Kinds of Dances/Domains?

- pick one: foxtrot
  - learn language and problems of one domain deeply
  - become an expert yourself
  - easier to connect with and be found by people in that domain
  - many upsides
  - Bill Lorensen, medical imaging
  - some downsides
  - how to have fun at 4am when ballroom is closed and you’re at a rave?

- choose between many opportunistically
  - my model: waltz, tango, polka, slamdancing,...
  - who to dance with?
  - how and when to choose?
  - how can both dancers be happy?
  - challenges
  - learning each others language
  - finding right people/problems where needs of both are met

- look broadly, gradually winnow
  - don’t commit too soon!
  - eye contact with many
  - initial meeting
  - exchange words with some
  - further discussions
  - continue bantering with a few
  - get feet wet with start on real work
  - try a first dance
  - do a project
  - multiple dances
  - do another project

Keeping Both Dancers Happy

- holy grail: full project culminates with fabulous new technique paper and tool they use
  - what if looks like they need engineering not research?
  - larger space of possibilities
  - you write a different kind of research paper
  - design study
  - evaluation of existing techniques/tools through field study
  - you’re an initial/occasional consultant
  - point them to existing tools/techniques
  - you build them a tool that’s purely engineering
  - maybe you discover research issues once you dig in
  - takes you minimal time, use rest of money for real research
  - big timesink but hope for future goodwill/payoff
  - you decline the dance

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Picking Dance Partners

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Four Process Questions

- ask them early in dance/negotiation!

- what is the role of my (potential) collaborators?
  - real end users or fellow tool builders?
  - is there a real need for my new approach/tool?
  - or are existing tools good enough?

- am I addressing a real task?
  - how central is it to how many people for how long?
  - does real data exist and can I get it?
  - now vs “real soon now” - what are probabilities?

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More Variations on This Theme

- 15 min version (Dagstuhl infovis, 2007)
  - When To Walk Away: Questions To Ask In Infosvis Projects

- 10 min version (Dagstuhl scivis, 2009)
  - Visualization Process and Collaboration
  - reflection on QuestVis: A Visualization System for an Environmental Sustainability

- 40 minute version (VIEW, Leiden 2007)
  - Research Cycles, Collaboration, and Visualization
  - Rt: postmortam of how/why collaborator went wrong

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Ballspenden: Filling Your Domain User Dance Card

Tamara Munzner

Dagstuhl InfoVis Seminar 2010