

A Panorama of Publication Pitfalls

SFU

Tamara Munzner, UBC

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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
 - ▶ instant 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
 - ▶ don't 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

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