

Choosing conferences/journals and about plagiarism

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Outline

- ▶ Choosing journals/conferences to submit one's work
- ▶ Plagiarism: basic info
- ▶ This talk: quite a few 'opinions': use wisdom and discard suitably

Why publish?

- ▶ Because we are 'measured' by how-many/how-good papers we have
- ▶ For promotions, for future project grants, etc.
- ▶ Our PhD students need to publish, hence we have to retain publishing habit
- ▶ Want to be recognized in the community, for 'fame'
- ▶ Have original ideas which will benefit(?!) humanity
- ▶ Can earn money (through awards)!

(Sorted: direct relevance to philosophical/indirect)

Research

- ▶ Not any more about inventions and discoveries
- ▶ Usually incremental. Sometimes 'big' idea
- ▶ Sometimes essential to keep skills sharpened
- ▶ Could save labour for many others by few smart researchers
- ▶ My personal feeling: in good journals/conferences:
 - ▶ one out of 50 papers truly 'contributes'
 - ▶ ten out of 50 papers will never be read/cited

Publish

(Mainly) two ways (with overlaps) of measuring research: broadly

1. Research papers in Conference proceedings and Journals (though copyrighted, **public** knowledge)
 - ▶ Theorem/proof, simulation, experiments in new materials,
 - ▶ New methods in analyzing problems
 - ▶ Sciences
2. Technology transfer/patents (closed/protected)
 - ▶ Implementation techniques,
 - ▶ New interconnection topologies
 - ▶ New processes for manufacturing

Quality aspects

- ▶ Just like there are onions of different qualities,
- ▶ clothes of different qualities/prices,
- ▶ journals/conferences too are of every quality: top to bottom
- ▶ Hence every piece of 'research' work finds a journal and/or a paper

Examples of mock stories

- ▶ Alan Sokal affair: sociology journal accepts mathematical garbage from physicist (1996)
- ▶ Bogdonov brothers (French journalists publish papers in top physics journal) (around early 2000's)
- ▶ SCIdgen 2005
- ▶ :

(Please see wiki/google for details)

SClgen

<http://pdos.csail.mit.edu/scigen/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SClgen>

This talk at www.ee.iitb.ac.in/~belur/talks/plagiarism.pdf

- ▶ Automatic Conference Paper generator (developed by graduate students at MIT)
- ▶ Several conferences accept 'incoherent' papers
- ▶ Reviewers: willing to admit ignorance rather than pointing out incoherency
- ▶ WMSCI 2005 (then an IEEE conference)
- ▶ See wiki/SClgen for estimates of 'generated' papers in IEEE

Conferences

- ▶ Quick dissemination of results
- ▶ Proof of Fermat's last theorem
- ▶ A place for experts to meet/discuss and exchange
- ▶ More intensive than 'leisurely' reading of articles on the web
- ▶ Often too many parallel tracks
- ▶ Highlight: plenary and semi-plenary talks
- ▶ Can build a network for collaboration
- ▶ Holidaying!

Conferences

- ▶ Above advantages only if conference is reputed
- ▶ Too many conferences: most of them are unreputed
- ▶ To submit/attend sub-standard conferences: harms one's image
- ▶ Some conferences accept almost anything
- ▶ Conference quality usually quantified by 'acceptance rate'
- ▶ More people submit to reputed conferences, and only top papers are accepted: **small** acceptance rate
- ▶ Good conferences: about 30% acceptance rate

Conferences

- ▶ Harder (for reviewer) to reject based on just extended abstract:
'reviewer has to give benefit of doubt'
- ▶ Hence (vague) guideline:
full-paper required during review: relatively better conference
(not universal rule)
- ▶ arXiv.org (for submitting full version), while submitting extended abstract:
time stamp and quick dissemination of results without peer review
- ▶ Often, proceedings are not available to all

To submit or not to submit

- ▶ 'Flagship conference': just one/two for each area
- ▶ About 4 annual good conferences in Control: rest are not worth money/effort
- ▶ Waste of public money. Waste of time/effort
- ▶ Registration money gives a profit: for conference organizers
- ▶ Poster-presentation not as good as oral-presentation

National conferences?

- ▶ National conferences are important for having a tier-2 level
- ▶ Helps build that area in country systematically
- ▶ Required for building a national network
- ▶ A good interaction of top researchers with upcoming researchers: both are benefitted
- ▶ Many top countries have their own conferences: for long-term benefit
- ▶ Ought not submit to **just** national level conferences
- ▶ Good conferences are expensive. Unlike journals

Open-access journals

- ▶ Pay to publish
- ▶ Not necessarily bad quality
- ▶ Even reputed peer-reviewed journals allow open-access payment possibility
- ▶ Money better spent on open-access than conference registration/travel!

Citations

- ▶ Citations of a paper: # papers that have referred to our paper
- ▶ We all want our papers to be cited
- ▶ Measures importance/usefulness of a paper
- ▶ In some areas, too many non-essential papers are included in references
- ▶ Journals sometimes insist during final paper submission that more of their recent papers ought to be referred to
- ▶ Reviewers 'suggest' their own (or friend's) papers to be referred
- ▶ Self-citation: (often) unreasonably
- ▶ Citation index: better indicator (after removal of self-citations)

Journals

- ▶ Journal quality: 'Impact factor': very debatable
- ▶ On average (across papers), how many cites for each paper in that journal (but totalled across many other good journals also)
- ▶ In control, **good** journals could have value as **low** as 2
- ▶ In some areas (materials science), impact factor > 7 is good.
- ▶ Non-uniform because of different average # references per paper across areas
- ▶ Self-citations are better removed
- ▶ Review papers receive more citations: help journal's impact factor too much
- ▶ 5-year impact factor, 2-year impact factor: community needs time to assimilate/cite/appear

Journals

- ▶ In most areas, journal-papers are worth more than conference papers
- ▶ In Maths (for example), very few conferences

Journals

- ▶ In most areas, journal-papers are worth more than conference papers
- ▶ In Maths (for example), very few conferences
- ▶ 'read-only' files in a computer
- ▶ Even good journals have 'write-only' papers
- ▶ Individual papers: citation index: good papers have more cites

Journals: special issues

- ▶ Special issue in a journal (on a specific topic)
- ▶ Papers in edited books: contributed chapters
- ▶ The special issue has its guest-editor who invites, organizes review, etc. If insufficiently unpublicized, this ends up as guest-editor's internal circle who publishes!
- ▶ Edited books are by and large inner-circle friends who are contributors. The contributions are called 'contributed chapter in a book'
- ▶ Related to this reason, contributed chapters are given less weightage than peer-reviewed conferences or peer-reviewed journals. Please use this opinion judiciously.

H-index of a person

- ▶ Each person writes many papers: some more cited, some never cited
- ▶ Sort the person's papers in decreasing order of citations
- ▶ Paper # 1: most cited (say 30). ($1 < 30$)
- ▶ Paper # 2: next-highest cited, say 25. ($2 < 25$)
- ▶ Paper # 3: next-highest cited, say 18. ($3 < 18$)
- ▶ :
- ▶ Look for the highest N_1 such that
Paper # N_1 : say cited N_2 times with $N_1 < N_2$

That person has H-index N_1 : this person has as many as N_1 number of papers that have been cited by more than N_1 times.

Better to remove self-citations

Self-citations

- ▶ Self-citations are not necessarily bad: sometimes we further develop on an existing work
- ▶ Sometimes the co-authors change
- ▶ During incremental work, better that reader knows of our own past results
- ▶ Sometimes: citing solely to improve citation index

Just last reason is bad.

Which journal/conference to choose

Journals

- ▶ Aim for the best journal for that area
- ▶ Takes longer review perhaps, but worth the delay
- ▶ Could risk a reject
- ▶ Rejects often come with more detailed (critical) review
- ▶ Use the suggestions and improve
- ▶ Take rejections in the stride
- ▶ Aim for next best
- ▶ Unless in much hurry to have acceptance

Typical time-lines

- ▶ Many good journals have improved review-times
- ▶ Linear Algebra & its Applications: 2 months
- ▶ IEEE Transactions on Automatic Control: 2 months
- ▶ SIAM: 4 to 6 months
- ▶ Earlier: papers got 'stuck' in review for a year!
- ▶ Don't get impatient with review process. Start further work

Reviewer's job: thankless

- ▶ Reviewer has no (monetary/'resume') incentive to review.
- ▶ Associate-editor (AE): no monetary incentive. But at least can write in resume
- ▶ Reviewers review either due to personal relations with AE or considers it a professional duty
- ▶ Reviewers are supposed to remain anonymous
- ▶ Reviewers are (understandably) very impatient: due to no obvious incentive
- ▶ The only advantage: get to see new results first!
- ▶ Advantageous for those working in that area: they do abuse (though rarely)
- ▶ Their impatience **helps** improve quality overall
- ▶ Write your paper keeping the 'impatient-reviewer' in mind

Exchanging shoes

- ▶ Obtaining tough theorems or insightful experimental results requires solid techniques, insight, passion, etc.
- ▶ But **writing** a paper requires very good **teaching** skills
- ▶ Students in our class are all very impatient and ‘de-motivated’
- ▶ The reviewer and reader also are very ‘pessimistic’
- ▶ Please keep jumping between the two roles:
 - ▶ you as author and
 - ▶ you as reviewer
- ▶ Think of reviewer who is very very keen to reject, and you have to convince
- ▶ ‘Author proposes, reviewer disposes’
- ▶ At least while ‘disposing’ the paper as rejected, reviewer is usually obliged to give critical comments

Back to journal choice

- ▶ Decide on the journal based on typical readers
- ▶ The papers you referred to most: which journal are they from?
- ▶ Same journal: best choice (if that is a good journal)
- ▶ Bad journal: write-only journal: harms reputation could 'label' us, and this label might make things harder for future papers and future projects
- ▶ Zero papers is better than bad-journal paper
- ▶ (Sooner or later, all will realize that that journal is bad.)
- ▶ We now know of WMSCI-05 as the conference where SCIdgen paper got accepted!
- ▶ Variety of journals is fine too.

Journal variety

- ▶ Having papers in variety of journals helps you become reviewer for all these journals
- ▶ Lets you read others work first: never abuse that
- ▶ Improves breadth of one's own work by being a reviewer
- ▶ Read very impatiently, critically
- ▶ (We need to **practise** this role: **exchanging** required while writing one's own paper)

Conference

- ▶ Can submit to good conferences: at least review comes on time
- ▶ Rejections help due to detailed reviews
- ▶ If paper is accepted, often have to pay full registration fee for paper-upload (and for paper in proceedings)
- ▶ Visit to conference often not necessary: can request some other attender to present our paper
- ▶ Visit: often hassles about bookings/visa/travel-cost
- ▶ Proceedings will not mention whether presented personally or by others
- ▶ **As of now**: no problem if paper presented by non-author
- ▶ 'No-shows': better to avoid

Reviewers: important

- ▶ We authors write papers for many direct reasons
- ▶ We claim (and get) credit for this work: resume, promotions, later awards, . . .
- ▶ Reviewers get nothing (at least directly)
- ▶ Hence authors need to ensure basic level quality to ensure reviewer's time is not totally wasted
 - ▶ No spelling mistakes
 - ▶ Grammar
 - ▶ Basic consistency about references
 - ▶ Period, commas: everything!
- ▶ If **you** don't care, **nobody** should care!

Plagiarism

- ▶ Very loose phrase: stealing other's work
- ▶ Different from copyright infringement
- ▶ Plagiarism is not 'illegal', but unethical
- ▶ Institution might sack for plagiarism (or punish in other ways)
- ▶ Not a criminal/court-case

Copyright

- ▶ If the author or somebody publishes in some conference/journal, usually, copyright is ‘transferred’ from author to publisher
- ▶ To keep that work public (on website, systematic photocopying) is illegal
- ▶ This is illegal even if somebody else who keeps on website acknowledges publisher/author
- ▶ Limited distribution (for personal research or while teaching) is legal/acceptable for copyrighted material
- ▶ Entire book xerox: copyright infringement!

Plagiarism

- ▶ Absence of acknowledgement of the work to the author
- ▶ Insufficient acknowledgement is bad too
- ▶ Not enough to give a reference after ‘copying’ word-to-word
- ▶ Main results, opinions, entire lines, non-standard phrases require **explicit** citing: with quotes is safest.
- ▶ Picking opinions seems innocent: this is dangerous too
- ▶ CNR Rao had to apologize for ‘innocently picked’ introductory lines
- ▶ How many lines is plagiarism?

No clear uniform rules



http://www.ieee.org/publications_standards/publication_rights/plagiarism_FAQ.html

- ▶ Usually plagiarism cases require a committee to resolve allegations/cases
- ▶ Attempt to 'pass off' other's work as one's own \equiv plagiarism
- ▶ As authors, we consciously have to ensure that we do not appear to be 'not-acknowledging'
- ▶ Put ample efforts to ensure own-written introduction/conclusion
- ▶ Main ideas: acknowledge that 'We are motivated by the work of so and so ..'

No clear uniform rules

- ▶ Picking opinions or non-standard phrases: very risky
- ▶ No citation needed for 'Sun rises in the east'
- ▶ If you feel 'Sun sometimes rises in the west': acknowledge as much as possible.
- ▶ Even if your own observation/conclusion is that 'Sun rises in the west', still you need to exhaustively search that nobody already observed this.

Plagiarism blame-game

- ▶ Often, only first author is blamed for plagiarism
- ▶ First authors are usually juniors! Convenient for seniors!
- ▶ Many publishers punish all the authors equally
- ▶ In multi-author papers, please check **yourself** carefully
- ▶ Better safe than sorry
- ▶ IEEE publishes a list of people banned from publishing in their journals

Self-plagiarism

- ▶ Due to much pressure to publish, and fear of plagiarism, authors 'tweak' their own work and re-publish
- ▶ With new interpretation :-)
- ▶ With little more results, and then repeat old stuff
- ▶ No severe punishment, but people recognize this easily
- ▶ Not as unethical as plagiarism!
- ▶ Often, much overlap between conference and journal papers (on a specific topic by the same author)
- ▶ Acceptable in many areas (like control): not unethical
- ▶ Not acceptable in communications, computer-science
- ▶ Self-plagiarism is unethical if group of authors is changing!
(Authors of just the earlier paper suffer.)

Thank you!