

Publication, publication

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(presented by Chris Brew)

A recipe for success

- * Find an empirical paper that addresses a substantive question in your field.
- * Obtain the data for that paper.
- * Replicate the quantitative results of that paper using the same data and methods.
- * The change one thing to produce an improved paper

Why is this a good recipe?

- * The replication forces you to produce work that is up with state of the art.
- * In your write-up, you need only defend the one thing that you chose to change.

What you don't have to defend

- * The original data (Unless that was your change)
- * The importance of the problem **GIVEN**
- * The basic methodology (Unless that was your change, which is not recommended for beginners)
- * The evaluation metric

Replication

- * This is always harder than you think it will be.
- * It is rare to find a paper that is so well-written that everything is completely obvious.
- * It is rare for authors to make their data available in convenient form for others to use.

Rhetoric

- * Your paper should have one main point.
- * Anything else you say stands or falls by its contribution to supporting that point.
- * Ask yourself: **Whose mind will this paper change about what?** The answer to this, stated clearly, is your main point.

The write-up

- * You will spend a large fraction of the time on the replication of the previous work.
- * This is useful for you, but is not the main point of your paper, because it is already known.
- * A large fraction of the write-up should be about presenting and defending one improvement.

The write-up

- * You don't have to defend the decisions made in the target paper, you can just treat them as correct.
- * After all, that's what the peer reviewers said!
- * You do have to make your own points clear.

Main point (90% of space)

- * I changed just one thing (e.g. used SVMs) and it helped.
- * This change is reasonable and justified because...
- * Here is the evidence that it helped.

Secondary point (10% of space)

- * I now understand the problem better, and think that N+1 changes would be desirable.
- * SVM, better features, bells, whistles, guys on unicycles, etc.
- * I tried it and it works

Other advice

- * Assume that reader randomly falls asleep for 5 minutes but keeps turning pages. Make sure paper is still comprehensible.
- * Use clear and simple section headings.
- * Make tables comprehensible without the text, and vice versa.

Other advice

- * Do not give anonymous peer reviewers easy excuses for rejecting the paper
- * Do give enough background
- * Do make clear exactly what you did
- * Most existing papers fail on all these

Courtesy

- * Write on the assumption that previous authors are smart, honest and hard-working.
- * When replicating, do all that you can on your own. After that, it is reasonable to ask the previous author for help.

Courtesy

- * You will undoubtedly find things that are confusing or wrong in the previous work
- * Say “Lapata and Brew (2004) is mistaken”
- * Don’t say “Lapata and Brew are dishonest, inadequate and fundamentally flawed” even if we are.

Courtesy

- * Do send a copy of your work to the previous author.
- * But before doing that, get your friend, co-worker or advisor to read it and make sure that it is OK.
- * Ask the author for feedback.

Author feedback

- * If the previous author suggests changes, revise the paper to take account of these suggestions.
- * However, don't back away from your point. You have after all **improved** the previous work.

Main point

- * King says that “almost all students who follow these suggestions get publications”