

SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES

Processes & presenting

Prof Vanessa Steenkamp



Research Forum 11 May 2017

Conference

- Overwhelming rush of presentations, conversations, meet-ups
- Important forum
- Prime opportunities for researchers to
 - Exchange views
 - Communicate with each other
- Solidify current professional relationships
- Avenue to establish contact with people who will use your evidence
- Great way to build your social and professional network
- Opportunity to improve your communication skills
- Important part of entering academic society
- Postgrad students encouraged to present work at ONE major conference (PhD)

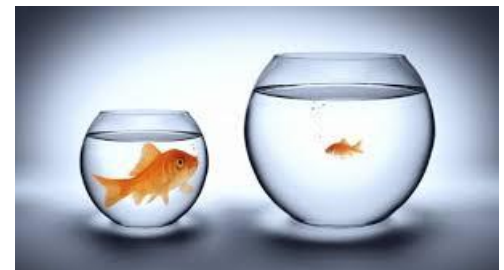


Information avalanches

Identifying conferences with value

- Attend national society annual conference
 - get to know national leaders
 - easier networking
- Make sure conference you are eyeing is best place for you to present
- National Societies usually belong to international society/union
 - PhD students to attend 'Mother' society's conference
- Local international congress: ideal opportunity any postgrad
- Specialized conferences: young researchers (value for money)
- Multidisciplinary conferences: more established researcher
 - discipline specific sessions or single day

More intimate = more visible
Too big = not detected



'Unrejectable' abstract

- Competition to get conference abstract accepted is rarely as fierce as competition for getting an article accepted
- Should be enticing [descriptive + inviting]
- Selling your ideas to organizers and delegates
- Compared to journal abstract it is a stand alone
- Follow abstract formatting guidelines/use template
- Submit on time, before deadline
- If have co-authors get their permission before submit



'Unrejectable' abstract

- Pick a good title: short attention-catching
- Don't go over word limit – not too short
- Do not write in future tense/say will be discussed

Off-putting

Doesn't make it clear that presenter knows what they are talking about

May not get work done

No conclusion [Paramount!]

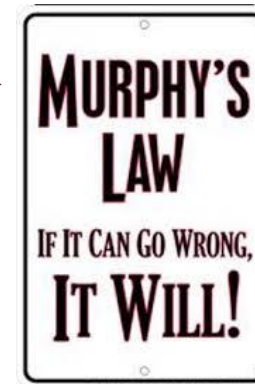
- Include only completed work
- Poor abstract unlikely to be accepted

Rejected

Sent back to edit

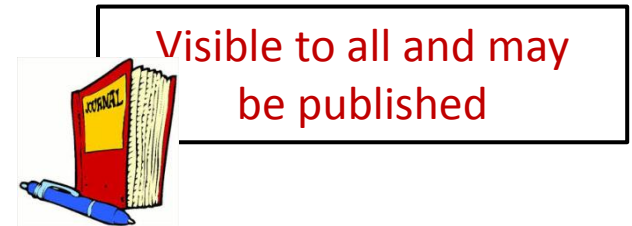


- If need to select sub-discipline see that it is correct/appropriate
- Do not include diagrams nor references

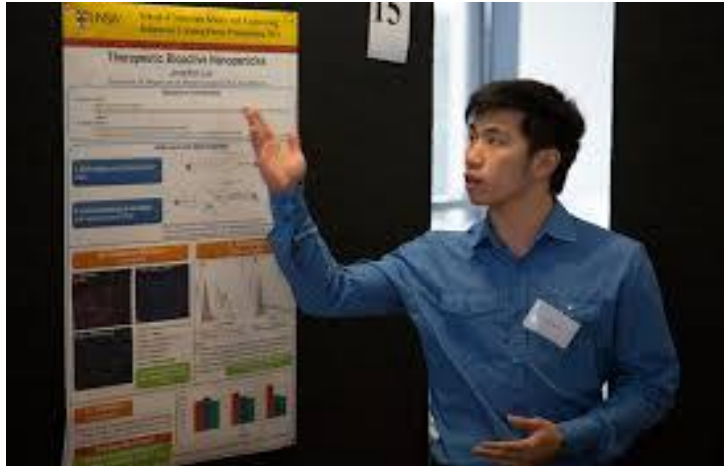


'Unrejectable' abstract

- Think through
 - What kind of presentations is conference most likely to attract?
 - How can you make yours different?
 - What are the fashionable areas in your field currently?
 - Are you working in one of these areas?
 - If so how can you make different from others doing the same?
- Draft abstract early
- Supervisor will offer constructive criticism
- Write well
 - Edit for grammar, punctuation, typos
 - Do not use abbreviations
 - Plain English
 - Words accessible both non-specialists and specialists (cross-disciplinary)



Presentation or poster?



- Depend on
 - how far you are with your research project
 - not have that much information – poster
 - study completed - oral
 - interest in topic (organizers decide)

Oral presentation

- Attendance based on the title of your abstract
- Well done oral presentation should:
 - Communicate importance of your research
 - Clearly state your finding and analysis of those findings
 - Prompt others in the academic community to ask questions
give you valuable feedback that could further, and strengthen your research



Make impression
Invited again

Poster

- Summarize research concisely and attractively
- Stand at poster display in time slot
- Participants view and interact
- During poster presentation slot
 - Stress key points
 - Highlight essence of work
- Handouts successful idea
 - **Only if published/submitted**
- If you are upset and decide not to go – let organizers know and withdraw



=

Showcase work

What makes a good poster?

- Title is short and draws attention
- Important info readable from 10 feet away



People don't like to stand on top of you
- rather walk past

- Text clear and to point
- Use bullets/numbering/headlines to make easy reading
- Consistent and clean layout
- Good graphics (use Graphics department)

How do people read a poster?

- Read the title
- Read the conclusions (if readable and interesting continue)
- Glance at the graphs (easily and quickly understood?)
- Read the symbols (is experimental manipulation effective?)

If all this works, then proceed to

- Actually read the poster



BAD

FROM ACTORS TO AGENT-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING IN simpAL

1

THE FREE LUNCH IS OVER...
ALSO FOR ABSTRACTIONS!

- fundamental form of software towards **asynchrony, interaction, distribution**
- need of effective programming abstractions that help building concurrent programs, just as OOP has building large object-oriented programs in day-to-day programming

2

SOLUTIONS?

- introduction of **new programming mechanisms** to tackle specific problems handling the basic model (see 1.0.1. Software architectures...)

OR

• tackle the problem at the conceptual level
THINK ABOUT A NEW ABSTRACTION LAYER
EXTENDING ACTORS AS TO:

- reduce the gap between design & programming
- identify simpler ways to think and develop as well as deploy and run concurrent / distributed / reactive programs

AGENT-ORIENTED IN PROGRAMMING simpAL

- rich set of programming abstractions inspired to agents and multi-agent systems
- orthogonal to the data abstraction layer based on OOP
- **simpAL** is a statically typed language extending OOP/Lava subset with agent-oriented abstractions

3

A simpAL TASTE

TASK DEFINITION

- task parameters: input, output, flags, ...
- groups in roles: agent interfaces, agent types

PLANS

- intended in scripts
- possibly multiple plans for the same tasks

4

PLAN MODEL

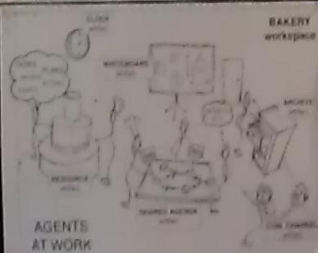
when in OOP-like code, we define within a structure (a class) an agent type, a group of agents, and a plan. The plan is a sequence of tasks, each with its own parameters and flags. The plan is executed by the agent type, which can be seen as a stateful object.

ONGOING & FUTURE WORK

- Cooperative tasks: generalization of current individual tasks
- Sub-typing: allowing more generic specialization
- Mechanisms for code reuse at the agent level: inheritance / composition
- Formalization of a core part of simpl: agent-oriented type system
- Performance analysis & optimization: agent control loop overhead, comparison with agent technology
- Improving simpAL platform: complex, domain-independent IDE
- Libraries of abstract facilities: wrapping GUI, I/O, DB functionalities
- Prototyping apps with simpAL

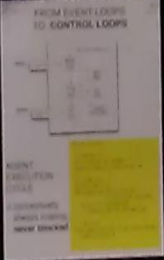
ACTORS (& OOP)
ARE BACK TO RESCUE!

- Back to OOP-like: **Actors + objects + concurrency** (Hewitt, Agre, Fox, ...)
- not model in the mainstream now
- e.g. Scala Actors, Erlang, HTML5 Web Workers, DART
- clean and sound foundation: autonomous control flow, asynchronous message passing, event loop



AGENTS VS ACTORS

- From actor **reactivity** to agent **pro-activity**
 - agents act because of **tasks** to do
 - tasks as pure description of work to do
- Encapsulating behaviors in **plans**
 - plan = how to do a job
 - integrating autonomous and reactive behavior
 - dynamic plan library
- Communicative + environment actions
 - async message passing +
 - actions & percepts using/interpreting artifacts



"HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM..."
ABSTRACTION GAP

- autonomy + async msg passing allow making programming **harder & slower** (not for large programs in particular)
- several open issues & challenges: avoiding asynchronous spaghetti, integrating autonomous & reactive behavior, structuring complex active behaviors, cooperative tasks, when actor modeling, interaction issues with existing paradigms, integration

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agents: A Practical Introduction to Multi-Agent Systems, Wooldridge & Jennings (2000)
- Agents: Foundations of Intelligent Distributed Systems, Wooldridge & Jennings (2000)
- Agents: Foundations of Intelligent Distributed Systems, Wooldridge & Jennings (2000)
- Agents: Foundations of Intelligent Distributed Systems, Wooldridge & Jennings (2000)

LINKS

- simpAL web site: <http://www.simpal.org>
- For more info & to join the project:
 - Alessandro Rossi - a.rossi@uniroma2.it
 - Andrea Serri - a.serri@uniroma2.it



GOOD



A Family-Researcher Partnership: Working together to spread awareness on the 'F-words' in Childhood Disability



Andrea Cross, Peter Rosenbaum, Danijela Grahovac, Diane Kay, Jan Willem Gorter
CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

The 'F-words' in Childhood Disability: Function. Family, Fitness, Fun, Friends, Future



Background

- In 2012, CanChild researchers published a paper called, "The 'F-words' in childhood disability: I swear this is how we should think!"
- Building on the WHO's International Classification of Functioning (ICF) framework, the article featured key strengths-based ICF themes – Function, Family, Fitness, Fun, Friends, and Future.



Objective

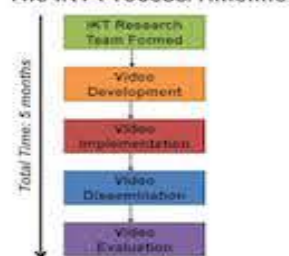
- The objective of this integrated Knowledge Translation (iKT) project was to work with families to spread awareness on the 'F-words' ideas through an online awareness video.



Methods

- Families and researchers worked together through the entire project – developing, implementing, disseminating, and evaluating the video.
- The video, posted on the CanChild website, used written descriptions, parents' reflections, pictures, music, and graphic effects to captivate the audience.
- The video was evaluated by tracking the number of views and through an online survey that collected feedback on viewers' perceptions of the video and the 'F-words' concepts.

The iKT Process/Timeline

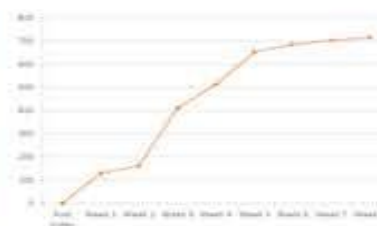


Results

Weekly Dissemination Strategies

Week	Research Team Implemented - Dissemination Strategies
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video posted on CanChild website Presentations and flyers on video distributed at two conferences
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific strategies implemented
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emails sent to physician colleagues, McMaster SRS graduate students, CanChild network, family and friends Video shown during Developmental Learner Training Session at McMaster University Posted at Danijela's son's school and shared with teachers Posted on CanChild Facebook and Twitter pages
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posted on CanChild Facebook and Twitter pages
Week 5 - 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific strategies implemented

Spread of Awareness



Online Survey Responses - Evaluation of Video and 'F-words' Concepts:

- After two months, there were 715 views of the video and 137 survey responses. These findings are based on the 137 survey responses.

Viewer Demographics

In what country, do you currently reside?

89% of viewers lived in Canada
From what perspective are you viewing this video?

Perspective	% of Viewers
Physician	27%
Researcher	20%
Teacher	22%
Educator	14%
Student	14%
Friend of someone with a disability	11%
Family Member	13%
Other Health Care Worker	8%
Person with a disability	9%

Perceptions of 'F-words' Concepts

Have you previously heard of the 'F-words' in childhood disability?



What are your initial thoughts of the 'F-words'?



Perceptions of Video

What did you like or dislike about this video?

Category	Like	Dislike
Length	71	4
Content	84	5
Pictures	56	8
Parent Quotes	81	2
Music	36	18
Graphics	27	5
All of the Above	57	2
Other	7	40

Will you share this video with others?
89% said Yes!

"Great video, will make me view childhood impairments in a different and more positive way." - Physician

"I loved that it will give parents permission to think what they have known all along." - Educator

"Very well done & informative video. Thanks for the great enlightening info!" - Family Member

Implications

- We were able to spread awareness to a wide audience in a short time.
- Engaging families throughout the project was a critical factor in the success of the video.
- Our hope is to continue building up the 'talk' on the 'F-words' and intrigue families to find out more information.
- The 'F-words' ideas hold great promise for supporting the adoption of a biopsychosocial approach in children's health care.

Next Steps

- This video was the first step to spreading awareness on the 'F-words'.
- Based on the feedback we received from the video, the research team will work together to make minor changes in order to enhance the video.
- By designing a multi-faceted iKT intervention we hope to address the knowledge needs of families raising children with disabilities and to promote the uptake of the 'F-words' concepts in children's health care.

Caution

- Be wary of research thieves
- Spend time going through posters
- Reproduce work faster
- To be safe see to it that work is submitted for publication or recently published



Accepted Article

Abstract

There is ample evidence regarding a bidirectional connection between health assessment and cognitive processes, such as problem solving. Current research suggests that cognitive assessment may influence the problem solving process, but it is unclear whether this effect is automatic. Therefore, two experiments investigated the automaticity of cognitive assessment during problem solving. In Experiment 1, participants solved a series of problems while receiving a performance feedback. The results showed that participants who received a positive feedback performed better than those who received a negative feedback. In Experiment 2, participants solved a series of problems while receiving a performance feedback. The results showed that participants who received a positive feedback performed better than those who received a negative feedback. These findings suggest that cognitive assessment may influence problem solving performance, and this effect may be automatic.

Funding

- Limited



doesn't grow on



-



VS



-



VS



Funding

- Supervisor grants MRC/NRF /CANSA
 - R20,000 international conference
 - R5,000 national conference
 - Free-standing Master's and Doctoral Postdoc Scholarships/Fellowships within NRF Free-standing DST/NRF Innovation Scarc Skills categories
 - NRF-TWAS (The World Academy of Science) R75,000
 - UP conference funding: supervisor applies, only PhD (R50,000)
 - NRF Knowledge, Interchange and Collaboration (KIC)
 - Twice year Jan – June and June - Dec
- 
- Travel grant amount varies

Funding

- Collaboration eg. SA-Romania: travel and accommodation
- Link visit to conference
- National society is usually linked to international society –
if member of society may apply for travel awards
- International conferences call for volunteers – registration fees waived
- Apply for Young Scientist scholarships – covers all costs



You are going to spend  and sacrifice a
valuable chunk of



It must thus be worthwhile



BE PREPARED

Once there, no time to stop and pause

Preparing for conference

- Review the agenda – select sessions that are appropriate
set up a schedule ➡ **Focus your time**
- Get there early to orient yourself with venue location and conference spaces
- Register early: not stuck while everyone is off to the races
- Stay for the entire conference
- Stay in the conference’s designated hotel
- Attend functions but remember you are not “off duty”
- Take plenty of business cards
- Become active participant, ask questions
- Students:
 - attend young scientists sessions
 - ask organizers for student accommodation
 - spend time at poster sessions



The plan is nothing but
planning is everything!

Preparing for conference

- Select clothing carefully taking into account functions
- Dress smart
 - Look important are assumed to be important
 - Opportunities seem to seek out people who dress well
 - If dress well you send signals of respect
- Research people
 - Online profile search
 - Reach out to speakers BEFORE the event (email person, introduce yourself; use other media)
- Remind yourself not to spend time with co workers you see every day
- Schedule in attending AGM – sure to be noticed
- Load mobile app



After conference

- Rarely re-read notations so spend time to review notes and identify items to put into task management tool
- Follow up on business cards
 - write your intended action on the card
- Follow up with prospects
- Teach: give feedback what learnt



So after all this

You may feel



when the reality of the



has hit you

but remains a



experience!

Points to ponder over

- Visa applications: international students
- PG: list in outputs of dissertation/thesis
- Established scientists: invited speaker – impact NRF rating
- Case study (SACRA): potential employers
- Curriculum transformation: additional assessment method?
(partial fulfilment)

