Getting The Most Out Of Conferences*

Panelists:
Rance Cleaveland
David Levin
David Mount
Ahmed Abdelkader (Moderator)

11/13/15

(*) Video recording available here, thanks to Todd Holden
How to get the most?

• Why bother?
• Before, During & After
• Jobs & Industry
• Women in CS
Why bother?

• Why go to a conference?

• Which conference(s) to go to?

• What if I have nothing to present?
Highlights (0:00:00 – 0:12:00)

• Reasons to attend
  – Learn about current status and trends
  – Get ideas
  – See what it takes to publish, possibly get a sense of confidence that you can do it
  – Meet people in your community & socialize
  – Get more insights by listening to talks rather than reading papers, get introduced to new topics
  – Mentioned in “How to have a bad career” [1]
Before

• What should my objectives be?

• Who am I going to meet there?

• What to talk about?

• Logistics ..
Highlights (0:12:00 – 0:16:00)

• Planning for a conference
  – People you want to meet or collaborate with
  – Study the conference program in advance
  – Doctoral symposia, PhD panels, receptions
  – Consider skipping few talks to save energy
  – Leisure time while there
  – Valid travel documents, visas, processing times
Highlights (0:16:00 – 0:19:00)

• If you will be presenting:
  – Finish your presentation early to have more time to engage at the conference
  – Advertise your talk to people you talk to
  – Anticipate questions you might be asked

• Be ready to present yourself
  – Few sentences to get conversations started
  – “30-second interview” or “elevator pitch” [2, 3]
During

- Meet new people: profs, students ..
- Which talks to attend? Ask questions?
- Coffee breaks, dinners and outings
- Etiquette
Highlights (0:23:00 – 0:49:00)

• Asking questions
  – Don’t be shy
  – Avoid self-serving or confrontational questions
  – Write down the question to help deliver it clearly
  – May prepare early by skimming through the paper
  – More questions bring you more attention. Can be good or bad, play it safe.

• Check mic and projector settings if presenting
After

• Things you have learned, e.g. problems

• Keeping in touch with people

• Service?
Highlights (0:49:00 – 0:57:00)

• Ideas to keep in touch
  – Write down the names of new people you meet
  – Short follow-up emails, possibly a link to a paper
  – Thoughts on social media

• Report back to your group
  – Helps decompress the information you took in
  – Discuss relevant papers and other highlights

• Reviewing papers
More

- Jobs & Industry
- Women in CS Conferences
- From the audience?
Highlights (0:57:00 – 1:01:30)

• If you’re going on the market
  – Let the session chair know
  – Be ready for this type of discussions
  – Follow-up with people who show interest

• Help create a more inclusive environment
  – Keep things professional
  – Plan events and outings that suit everyone
  – Appreciate different perspectives, e.g., [4]
Questions?

Thanks to our Panelists!
Links

[1] How to have a bad career by David Patterson
http://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bzis5MXW83vCVUpIMDRVTm5CcHc/view

[2] A nice introduction to the concept of a 30-second interview
http://www.job-hunt.org/fired-to-hired/30-second-elevator-speech.shtml

[3] Tips on preparing an effective 30-second interview

[4] Brave essay by an anonymous female student