

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*



Why Me? The Track Record

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Some are more naturally suited to seeking research funding than others.

Rhino courtesy of Free Digital Images



What is the Track Record For?

- You might think this is obvious.
 - Does writing/reading your CV make you feel good?
- It might well do so, and indeed given your CV and track record convinced someone to give you your position, it probably should.
- However, a **CV is not the same as a Track Record** for a proposal.
- You are essentially aiming to convince **the reader** (reviewer/panellist who refers to it) that you (your team) are **ideal** for doing **your proposed project**.
- It's not primarily a statement of general eminence, though aspects of prior achievement are valid as part of your case.



Publication at top venues?

Some journal papers? CS is a bit different to other subjects in that (some) conferences are taken more seriously than (some) journals.

We are more conference-centric than other disciplines generally.

There is often a **quasi-religious stance** on **conferences vs. journals** issue. But if you ask researchers what their best publications are they rarely miss out publications in the top journals.

If you have a recent paper in **Science** or **Nature**, even if not strictly relevant to the project, I suspect you will (rightly) find some way of mentioning it!



Publication at top venues?

There are highly ranked traditional outlets but if your topic is a newer one, other venues may carry weight. If so, say so.

Not all referees will be expert in your direct topic and many of the panelists (including some of your speakers at panel) will not be.

Make it clear why your publications should be judged of high quality.



What constitutes a quality venue/outlet is often the source of considerable debate.

So how do you rank the quality of an outlet in your field?

Identify 1 top journal and 1 top conference venue.

Identify 1 second tier journal and conference venue.

Identify 1 third tier journal and conference venue.

Would your research group colleagues agree?



Accepted for
Publication.

OK, the definitive article is about to hit the streets. You'll unfortunately need to wait for the ink to dry (unless "available online" as a preliminary).

Contemporary/with the Zeitgeist, huh?

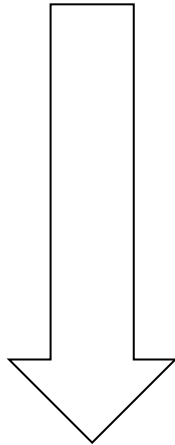
It is evidence of acceptability by the community.

Similarly for conference publication (which in CS generally have proceedings).



Quality Research: Publications

In prep?



Try to
achieve

Under review?

Hmmm. In Prep can (easily be taken to) mean:

- I like it.
- No-one else has seen it.
- I ask you to believe me in the absence of any verifiable evidence that the referees will love it eventually, honest.
- No way of verifying how close it is to submission.
- Vapourware?

Need to be very careful about the amount of “In prep”. Might be better to finish stuff off and at least get it to the Under Review stage. Otherwise suggests you cannot organise yourself to get stuff completed. Will you really get time to finish it when you have additional work to do, e.g. the First Grant?

State of your publication record will affect **WHEN** you put in your First Grant as PI.



- Note the advice to finish stuff is **just sensible career advice** and you should do it **because it is a good thing to do**.
- En passant, put yourself in a good position for REF 2020 by getting those heavyweight items out of the door.
 - I have lost count of how many times the current REF/RAE was going to be “the last one”. It never is.
 - It’s just good for your career generally.
 - You get promoted on the quality of your **publications**.
 - Publication is part of research, not what follows it.
 - The First Grant submission may provide *additional* motivation.
 - Note that for fellowships you are often required to cite your top five journal publications and top five other publications.
- If special circumstances apply indicate what they are, e.g. a career break.



- Prizes and Awards
 - Conference best paper prizes are probably the most likely source of recognition.
 - It shows *some degree* of recognition.
 - Even better if you then turned the best paper and into a top journal paper!



- Citations: these are not just about **absolute** numbers
 - Citations are a function of merit AND age (the paper's and yours), and the referees generally know this.
 - So if the world is showing an interest in a recent paper, demonstrate how.
- Also don't be afraid to quote quasi-citations:
 - “Our open source toolkit Solvelt has been downloaded more than 10000 times per year since 2011”.
 - Or...
 - “Our open source toolkit Solvelt has been downloaded more than 1000 times per year since 2011 and its use has been acknowledged in more than 100 papers since that date.”



“In their most recent paper detailing their world-leading research group’s next generation of verification technology [1], Professor Big Cheese et al incorporated algorithms from my primary PhD paper [2]”

may well carry more weight than....

“30 researchers so far have cited [2]” (for unspecified reasons, including some that may be along the lines of ‘I feel obliged to mention [2]’...)

Take care using “influential” without elaboration – an interested referee might well look it up on *Google Scholar* or (less flatteringly) *World of Science* or *Scopus*, and cites need to support your claim.



- Invited Talks:
 - Plenaries at major conferences (especially those related to the topic of this project)
 - To commerce and industry (ditto)
 - Local to the UK (ditto)
- Membership of influential bodies or committees:
 - Government advisory groups
 - Research council advisory panels
 - Local community partnerships
- You are in the business of making the best of what you have got.
 - Emphasise your strengths
 - Don't mention areas you are not strong in - this is legitimate, there isn't the space, they shouldn't be relevant to the proposal anyhow.



Training and Its Relevance

- If you have attended training courses that have enhanced your ability to conduct and manage research then indicate this.
 - “Dr Bloggs’s work is in an area of considerable commercial interest. Some of it has been in collaboration with SME’s and major companies (e.g. X,Y and Z). She has received awareness training in related issues such as IPR and contracts negotiation. She has also entrepreneurship awareness training from the Royal Academy of Engineering. She was the first academic in the Computer Science Department to complete the University’s Research Leadership programme, addressing issues such as staff recruitment, team building and motivation, communication, strategic planning and outreach. “
- You have limited space, but, if it adds to your case, put it in.



I got this whole series of grants [1,2,3,4,5]. (Give me another.)

Indicates **you can sell ideas** (this is important) but **not that you can deliver quality research**.

Much better is to include statements along the lines of (for a project proposal on symmetry breaking applications):

“EPSRC Grant EP/12345/1 (£400k) led to a series of top venue publications on applications of symmetry breaking in constraint solving [6,7,8,9]. Algorithms proposed in [8] were subsequently taken up by X as part of their toolkit [9]. As part of this project, we also established in 2009 the ASBCS series of conferences which now regularly attracts over 200 attendees.”



- You need to show that the investigative team is fit for purpose.

“Dr Bloggs and Dr Jones have collaborated on automated testing research for 5 years. Their review [1] has become the highest cited in the field. Their work under the collaborative EPSRC Project AutoTest (EP/12345/1) combining Bloggs’ formalisation of UML [2] and Jones’ development of enhanced constraint solving techniques [3] won best paper prize at conference X [4], leading eventually to archival publication in Transactions on Software Engineering [5]. This work has been the subject of further collaborative research [6,7,8]. Their work in [7], where new theory was developed and implemented by Jones to handle the particularly complex constraints arising from Bloggs’ TestIt tool [9] when applied to financial systems, serves as the basis for WP5 of this proposal.”

Collaborations have to start somewhere. So if you haven’t worked together before make the case that this is a collaboration we should want to see.



Ability to Make Things Happen

Demonstrate your ability to make things happen. How have you shown initiative? How have you got involved in the community?

*Workshops or
Competitions etc.
Initiated*

*Conference
Programmed
Chairing*

*Local
Initiatives
Taken*

Make the best of what you have got, where it is relevant.



- Andreas Zoeller (commenting on ERC grants but holds elsewhere):
 - Sell yourself – you need irrefutable evidence
 - Avoid unverifiable assertions.
 - Create unique selling points



Tone: Firm, Upbeat and Factual

- Don't flannel and avoid loaded vocabulary.
- Stick to facts:
 - Our paper [1] (ranked by WoS in the top 1% of all CS articles of 2008)...
 - ..and was awarded best paper prize in ACM Conference on Y (Coy'13).
 - Collaborative work in grant EP/12345/1 led to outputs [1,2,3,4,5], all in venues ranked "A" by ARC. These have received more than 400 GS citations since 2012.
 - Might need to be careful with statements like this one though, since almost all rankings are somewhat controversial (and ARC certainly has been)
 - Has been chair of ABC twice (in 2008 and 2013) and editor of IEEE Top Journal in Y (TJY) since 2010.



Tone: Firm, Upbeat and Factual

Aim to deliver a calm, modest but firm, factual and positive **demonstration** of why you and your team are just the team for this proposal.