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Assignment 9: Resources for Ph.D.

1. *How to give a good research talk* (Jones et. al.)

To be a successful graduate student and a successful research afterward, it is very important to develop new knowledge and share that knowledge with the research community in one's field. Therefore, communication skills, particularly spoken communication, are a highly valuable asset. For me, other than utter shyness, one difficulty in giving a good research talk is saying enough without saying too much. In other words, how does one discriminate what material to cover during a presentation and what should be assumed to be already known by one's target audience. Furthermore, it is sometimes tempting to give every tedious detail related to the topic. However, this may not only confuse the audience, but also make the presentation extremely boring and difficult to follow. Thus, the question remains: How can one prune precisely the relevant details in a convincing manner without overwhelming the audience? Jones et. al. suggest that presenters take a “non-uniform” approach to the talk – this means that some topics should be treated in more detail than others. For example, in a research talk, the presenter can usually safely assume that the audience has at least some superficial background understanding of the concepts that are fundamental to one's presentation. Thus, it is wise for the presenter to give only a brief amount of time to discussing the background. It is also a good idea to tell the audience where they might find more details about these topics in case what you provided was not enough for some audience members. By only briefly covering the more remedial aspects of the talk, this gives the presenter more time (and attention of the audience) to focus on the real and interesting contributions.

2. Gerhard's Advice for Ph.D. Students

Perhaps the most difficult part of the “overall picture” of the Ph.D. thesis process is deciding when I am ready to write a proposal. The way that I have understood the Ph.D. process is as follows: As a junior Ph.D. student, it is necessary to work on interesting projects and write papers that have perhaps a vague relationship with what turns out to be the final thesis. These papers serve as a way of understanding and articulating the thesis (i.e., the main idea within the dissertation document). One important question remains: When is a student ready to move from the phase of exploring ideas and receiving validation from the research community to one of distilling these ideas into a coherent thesis statement? This should ideally occur once the student has gained an understanding of the problem and is able to articulately define the problem in the context of the field of study. As a young Ph.D. student, I am constantly reading papers and exploring my own ideas, but I still find it difficult to arrive at a coherent theme that may turn into a successful thesis.

3. Other Online Resource

<http://citeseer.ist.psu.edu/>

This website provides a database of workshop, conference, and journal papers in Computer Science and related fields. I often explore this site to find new and interesting papers to read.