

# How to Attend a Conference (and why)

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# The International Conference

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- International meeting of scientists for the ostensible purpose of hearing presentations about each other's work, usually with permanent publication of written papers.
- Publication aspect is the **primary** means of scientific dissemination in computer science. More important than journals.

# Why Attend a Conference?

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- Get feedback on your work.
- Learn about other people's work.
- Become known and (hopefully) respected.
- Visit somewhere interesting, for free.
- Publish your work in a peer-reviewed venue, in a reasonable period of time.
  - Can reuse text in the DPhil dissertation
  - Makes negative judgment by examiners challenging!

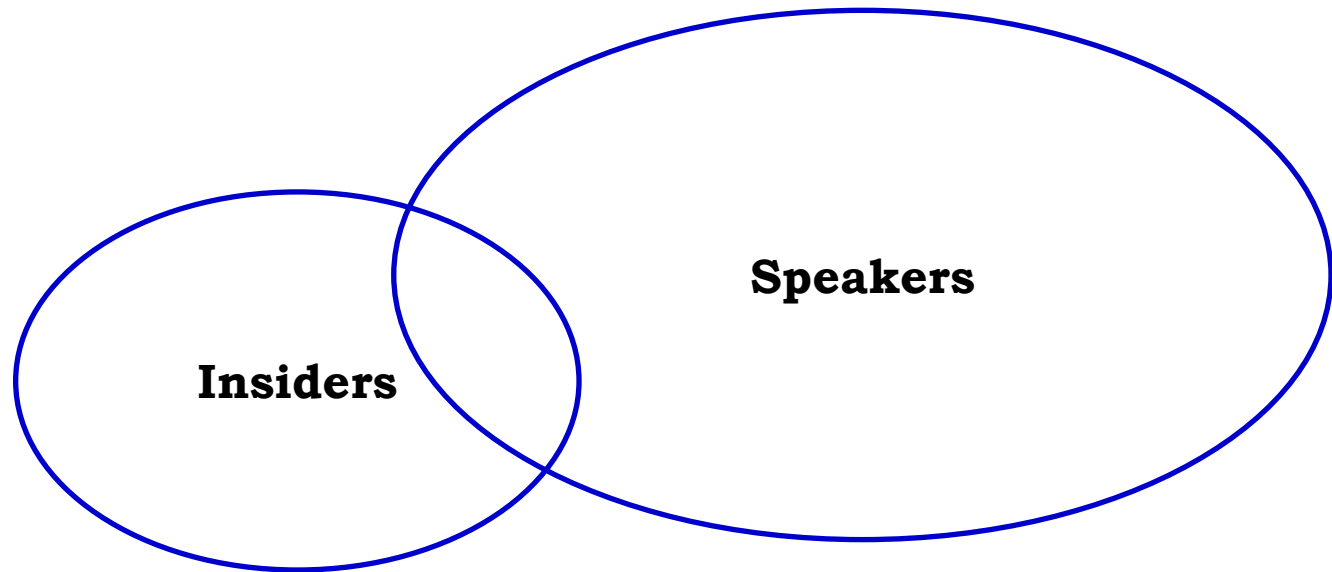
# Why Attend a Conference, Really.

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- Reason number 1:
  - It's not science until it's communicated.
- Reason number 2:
  - To build relationships with colleagues in the international scientific community.
  - Foster collaborations and stimulate new ideas, as well as for personal benefit.
- Corollary: Conferences are primarily a **social** activity, and you have to be good at this!

# Typical Social Structure

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Corollary: you must be a speaker, and so have had a paper accepted.

**Everyone else**

# The Process

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- First, have something good to publish!
  - High scientific **significance**, important.
  - Research with potential for **impact**.
  - Of **interest** to the community.
  - Something others can **build upon**.
- Do not publish weak results in low-grade conferences, just to ‘get a publication’.

# The Process

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## 1. Identify your conference

- Suitability for the topic
- Prestige ranking
- Quality of publication venue
- Suitability of submission deadlines, conference dates, location, page limit.
- Composition/quality of likely participant group
- Read some past conference proceedings!

# The Process

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## 2. Do the research



$$\forall y. \exists x. P(x) \supset Q(y)$$

# The Process

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## 3. Write and submit the paper

- Agree authors and author order up front.
- Commit to attending, if accepted.
- Obtain required style files (IEEE, Springer,...)
- Use CVS/Subversion.
- Write exceptionally clear, readable, thorough, and enjoyable technical prose.
- Always make appropriate range of citations (see the PC list).

# The Process

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4. Receive anonymous referee feedback
  - Accept/reject (sometimes revise, or rebuttal phase)
  - Learn from the referee comments
  - Stupid misunderstandings are **your** fault
  - Never argue with the result (well, almost never)
  - Prioritise and handle requested revisions
  - Resubmit to another, easier to get into conference?  
Only if you have made **substantial** improvements!

# Example

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----- review 1 -----

OVERALL RATING: 1 (weak accept)

REVIEWER'S CONFIDENCE: 1 (low)

----- REVIEW -----

The paper presents an automatic technique to generate abstraction relation among variable guards in STE.

The paper is written nicely and well organized: initially, the paper gives enough motivation and background; then a simple version of the algorithm is presented; different optimizations follow; and finally, the experimental part concludes the paper.

Though, there is a gap between the motivation part and the description of the algorithm: in section II, the authors say that the algorithm computes an abstraction relation between two sets of guard variables; instead, ...

# Example

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...

Minor comments:

- page 2, definition of strong preimage, second line, I would enclose between parenthesis the scope of the existential quantification.
- page 3, last line, what is the "stop expression".
- page 4, before second paragraph, you should state that variables are sorted so that variables in C precede all other variables.
- page 4, Figure 3, why isn't the base case of lines 14-15 be put as first case of the algorithm? It would be more intuitive and consistent with Figure 1.

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# Get Organized

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Review 1

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1.1: TFM

status: done. This referee is confused. Added a note after formula (I) to the effect that *\*all\** variables appear in the guards.

Though, there is a gap ...

1.2: TFM (previously SA)

status: reassigned to TFM. Done - see end of section II.A and second paragraph of section II.B.

Also, it is not clear when you start to consider ...

...

# The Process

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5. Prepare and submit camera-ready copy
  - Sign copyright assignment form
  - Then put the paper on your webpages...
  - Perhaps release a tech report version.

# Funding your Trip

- Lab funding:

- Form to request funding, prepared **in advance**
- Usually 50% of ‘expensive’ trips, 100% of small ones

- College funding

- Can often get 200-300 pounds (or more)

- Supervisor’s funds

**Increase your credit card limit...**

**REQUEST FOR CONFERENCE FUNDING**

Please complete **all** parts of this form, get your supervisor’s approval and return it to Julie Sheppard (Programming Research Group) or Shirley Day (Numerical Analysis Group). If your claim is approved the Computing Laboratory will normally pay half of actual substantial costs (e.g. for international conferences) and all of actual small costs (e.g. less than £100 for local or short events). Requests must be submitted **well in advance** of the event for which funding is requested.

Receipts will be required for **all** expenditure, not just the amount approved, and must be produced within one week of your return. Failure to provide these will result in money having to be repaid to Computing Laboratory.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SUPERVISOR \_\_\_\_\_

CONFERENCE OR EVENT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION (city and country to be shown) \_\_\_\_\_

REASON FOR ATTENDING \_\_\_\_\_

Total of expected expenses = £ \_\_\_\_\_ made up as follows:

Air _____	Hotel _____
Train _____	Food _____
Coach _____	Other _____

FUNDING REQUESTED FROM OTHER SOURCES (PLEASE GIVE DETAILS)

\_\_\_\_\_

Brief supporting case by supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (Supervisor’s signature)

I agree to abide by the above rules and supply full receipts on return from the trip.

Student’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Total sum approved:

\_\_\_\_\_ Director of Graduate Studies

Your claim, if approved, will be paid directly into your bank account within about a month.

Bank Account No \_\_\_\_\_ Bank Sort Code \_\_\_\_\_

Bank Name \_\_\_\_\_

OUCLGS Rev 7/9/2004

# Registration, Accommodation

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- Most conferences have a cheaper, **early registration** deadline. Meet it!
- Late booking of flights is very expensive.
- Stay in the main conference hotel, if you can possibly afford it, even if it's outrageously expensive. Remember, this is a **social** activity.

# Prepare an **Excellent** Talk

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- It's an advertisement for the paper, but also much more.
- Crucial for your **scientific reputation**
  - Enhanced influence of your scientific ideas
  - Enhanced personal benefits (respect, jobs, invitations to collaborate, ...)
- You **must** be(come) good at this!
  - Prepare, prepare, prepare
  - Consciously study the masters
  - Get friendly feedback

# Conference Attendance 101

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- What talks to attend.
  - Anything especially relevant to your area.
  - The whole of ‘your session’
  - All keynote/invited talks.
  - All panel sessions, or other unusual format events.
  - Anything by a potential future employer/referee/...
  - Anything where you would be absent conspicuously
  - The business meeting.
- Don’t necessarily attend *every* talk.
  - Make time for side-meetings, walks, rest...
  - But be discreet.

# Conference Attendance 101

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- Ask **intelligent** questions
  - Gets you noticed.
  - But avoid the impression that this is why you are doing it...
- Handling questions - reasons people ask
  - to be polite
  - to compete with/undermine you
  - to advertise their own work
  - to find out the answer
- Some tough questions
  - Have you tried X? (You haven't.)
  - Isn't this just Y's old idea? (You've never heard of Y.)
  - Some technical flaw. (You're unprepared.)

# Conference Attendance 101

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- Have your ‘elevator talk’ ready.
- Q. What are you working on?
- A. Well, erm, we’re looking at, you know, when systems are too big to verify... I mean when the BDDs blow up, ... well ... kind of you have to ... like, it’s like abstraction... and, err..., we calculate how the variables, I mean a relation that we use, kind of, to simplify things...

# Conference Attendance 101

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Remember, the purpose of the conference is to see and talk to people, and to discuss your speciality with colleagues, outside the session chamber.

[Sindermann, 1982]

# Conference Attendance 101

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- Introduce yourself, when opportunity arises, giving your name and affiliation clearly. (Don't rely on the badge.)
- And have something interesting/sensible to say after that.
- Talk to and ask people about *their* research, only about yours on request.

# Conference Attendance 101

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- Don't just hang out with the other Oxford students, or read email on the sidelines.
- Insinuate yourself into the 'inner circle', or at least get introduced to a wide range of attendees – especially the other speakers. But don't intrude on obviously private interactions.
- Hang out with your supervisor... **for the purpose of meeting people**, not comfort. (But don't be a nuisance.)

# Conference Attendance 101

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- Go to all cocktail parties (early), spontaneous pub outings, and other peripheral social gatherings. (But never get drunk and embarrass yourself.)
- Be especially careful to join interesting and useful groups for dinner – even if expensive.
- Never complain publicly about any aspect of the conference organization (food, transport, facilities, ...)
- Never complain publicly about your own institution, or indeed anything else.

# Conference Attendance 101

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- Have a follow-up list
  - Things you promised to send people
  - Ideas to look at in more depth
  - Papers to chase
- And follow up **soon** after getting back
- Submit your expenses immediately.

# TTVSI 2008

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