MY EXPERIMENTS WITH 

(SCIENTIFIC) STORYTELLING

Himanshu VERMA  
Senior Researcher  
Human-IST Research Center  
Université de Fribourg
THERE ARE ALWAYS (TOO) MANY QUESTIONS

WHERE SHOULD I BEGIN?

WHAT MESSAGE WILL MY CHAPTER/ARTICLE CONVEY?

WHICH RESULTS SHOULD I PRIORITIZE?

WHAT ARE OTHERS’ ROLES?

HOW SHOULD I SEPARATE MY CONTRIBUTION FROM OTHERS’?

Image: “The Thinker” by Auguste Rodin
What over-thinking might get you called...
HOW IS THE FINAL STORY GOING TO BE?

EXPECTATION VS. REALITY
Le Radeau de la Méduse (Théodore Géricault)
THESIS WRITING

SO, WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT?

▸ Take notes of all the possible solutions
▸ Talk with colleagues, professors, and friends
▸ Go out for purposeless walks
▸ Start doing something
  ▸ Creating an outline
  ▸ Adding small (informal) notes about what each section might contain
Thesis writing is not different from Improv. theater
WHAT TOOLS SHOULD I USE?

Luke Skywalker
Choose tools you are already used to, or the ones with the least learning curve.
## Tools that I Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functionality</th>
<th>Tool Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>MacTex Package (TexShop + BibDesk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figures &amp; Graphs</td>
<td>Inkscape &amp; R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Management</td>
<td>Zotero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Version Control</td>
<td>Git(\text{<a href="http://git.epfl.ch%7D">http://git.epfl.ch}</a>) + SourceTree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Backup</td>
<td>Dropbox</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW TO KEEP TRACK OF ALL THE PAPERS I’VE READ DURING MY PHD?

Gandalf “The Grey”
THESIS WRITING: LITERATURE REVIEW

VARIOUS TECHNIQUES I USED

How to manage these different physical and digital notes?
ALL NOTES IN ONE PLACE

Better Choice: Zotero
HOW CAN I MANAGE ALL THE SUGGESTED REVISIONS?
Reviews are crucial and should be taken with absolute seriousness.
In-Line Comments

- Not efficient with multiple-person reviews
- Don’t create different files for each review
  “Ch-3-John-Review.tex”,
  “Ch-3-Susanne-Review.tex”
- Don’t rename files based on versions
  “Ch-3-V-Final-Almost.tex”
  “Ch-3-V-Final-For-Sure.tex”
- Frustrating when your chapters are iteratively reviewed and revised
Each chapter can be a separate branch, and revisions can be performed on each branch, one-by-one.

Later, merge these different branches with the master for a final version.
HOW CAN I SPECIFY MY CONTRIBUTION AS OPPOSED TO OTHERS’?

Samwise Gamgee
6 Latent Social Information

Other's Contribution and Mine

The user study presented in this chapter was a collaborative work with two more colleagues, and aimed to investigate different aspects of group behavior. Therefore, I will distinguish between my peers' contribution in contrast to my contribution. In this chapter, I will not go into details about my peers research, however I will briefly mention it in places where necessary.

My Contribution: I analyzed the group members' interaction with the artifacts that were created and shared over the shared workspace during the experiment sessions. In addition, I will extract the latent social information from these interactions and investigate their relationship with various aspects of ongoing collaborative behavior.

Other's Contribution: One of my peers was studying the effects of temporal awareness on task organization during meetings via a time management widget that was implemented as a component of MeetHub. Another peer analyzed the explicit collaborative search activity during meetings and compared it with automatically generated search recommendation produced after the analysis of shared text over the shared workspace.

Clearly specify at the beginning of each chapter, what differentiates your contribution from other's.
COLLABORATIVE WRITING
TWO PHASES OF COLLABORATION

CONTEMPLATIVE PHASE
(PLANNING)

- POTENTIAL STORYLINE
- STRUCTURE OF THE ARTICLE
- ROLE DEFINITION
- TIMELINE

ACTION PHASE
(WRITING)

- WRITE
- REVIEW
- REVISE
- ITERATE
WHAT TOOLS TO USE?

- **sharelatex.com**
  - Version management is limited in the free version.
  - Only 1 private project with free account.

- **overleaf.com**
  - Auto-compile is sometimes slow and frustrating, especially when simultaneous authors are working.
  - Overall works well.

- Native Latex Editor + GIT
  - Collaborators can work on different branches simultaneously.
  - Preferred choice if authors are working on different sections/chapters.
I worked on 4 collaborative writing projects (1 Journal and 3 Conference articles)

Before starting: Division-of-Labor
- Who are the authors? Who writes which section?
- Who Reviews?

Some sections (Discussion, Abstract, etc.) were peer-written
- Better coordination and work experience
COLLABORATIVE WRITING: REVIEWS & REVISIONS

CHALLENGES & WAYS AROUND THEM

- Reviews as marginal annotations or comments on a PDF
- Revisions are done in a peer-writing way
MERCI BEAUCOUP!

himanhu.verma@unifr.ch