BUILDING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PERSONA

Amanda Stent & Laura Dietz
I am Laura Dietz

- Assistant Professor at University of New Hampshire (UNH)
- Research: Information Retrieval
- Computers that help you find what you are looking for!
  - …using Text, Knowledge Graphs, and Semantic Annotations
- Organizing KG4IR Workshop and TREC Complex Answer Retrieval track
- Also:
  - ACM SIGIR Student Affairs Chair
  - Founder of Women in IR
  - Doctoral Consortium Chair at WSDM19 and Mentoring Chair at ECIR19
I am Amanda Stent

• NLP Architect at Bloomberg LP

• Research: Text Analytics; Summarization; Dialog; NLG

• Leadership/Service (2018): NAACL HLT 2018 Program Co-Chair; Co-Organizer KDD 2017, 2018 Workshops on Data Science + Journalism; SIGGEN treasurer; SIGdial president emeritus; Dialogue & Discourse associate editor…

• Selected 2018 Speaking Engagements:
  – Keynote speaker, Canadian AI (May 2018)
  – Panelist, WiNLP (June 2018)
  – Invited speaker, Ethics in NLP Workshop (June 2018)
Summary

- A professional persona is a persona that is effective in giving others a positive perception of you & your abilities
  - Components:
    - Appearance: body language, clothing
    - Behavior: communication skills, attitudes
    - Competencies: work skills
    - Differentiation: what makes you stand out (in a good way) and makes you memorable
  - Make *intentional* choices about how you represent yourself both in person and online that reflect *your* goals for your professional persona
  - Practice makes perfect
Perceptions of You

How Others Perceive You

- Online:
  - How you interact (email, twitter, facebook…)
  - Your online artifacts (website, git repo, LinkedIn…)
- In person:
  - How you interact
  - Your work style
  - Your social activities and interests
- Both:
  - Your professional experience and activities
  - Your work products (papers, patents, code)

How You Perceive Yourself

- Your professional interests
- Your professional, social and personal activities
- Your work style
- Your internal narrative about
  - Your strengths
  - Your areas for improvement

Getting intentional: http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/
Goal

- You want to be known for
  - 1) Your technical skills
  - 2) Your friendliness

- … in this order!
Examining Your Professional Persona

- What is the first impression you give?
  - Ask someone around you!
- What is the persona you display to those you work with?
  - Solicit (and use) feedback (regularly)!
- What is the persona you present in your broader professional network at tech events?
  - What is your reputation?
  - Listen to what people have heard about you!
- What is the persona you present online?
  - Look (with a friend)!

What do you think is great? What do you want to fix?
How Others Perceive Me

• Strengths:
  – Communicates well
  – Leads by example
  – Subject matter expert
• Areas for improvement:
  – Assertiveness
  – Relatability

How I Perceive Myself

• Strengths:
  – Subject matter expert
  – Have a clear product vision
• Areas for improvement:
  – Overcommitted / time management
  – Communication skills
  – Need to publish more
• Goals for myself:
  – Strong technical skills
  – Integrity
  – Focus
• Action items:
  – Update web site
  – Submit 3 papers
  – Say no to reviewing for rest of 2018
Laura

How Others Perceive Me

• Strengths:
  – Strong woman
  – Technical knowledge
  – Has a research vision
  – Defends students

• Areas for improvement:
  – Asks too many questions in plenary
  – Too optimistic regarding time

How I Perceive Myself

• Strengths:
  – I like to geek out
  – … WITH other people
  – Painting a research vision

• Areas for improvement:
  – Urge to speak up
  – Shy in unfamiliar territory

• Action items:
  – Less last minute publishing
  – Brush off paper rejections
  – Grants to feed my students
Activity

• Discuss with the person next to you two of these (as appropriate):
  – The first impression you give
  – The persona you display to those you work with
  – The persona you present to your larger professional network in person
  – Your online persona
• Write down three strengths you display in your professional persona
• Write down three areas for improvement
Things to consider

- The research community is like a small fisher town:
- Everyone knows everyone
- There is only one first impression
- Because you are female, people tend to give you administrative tasks.
- Avoid being the scribe, instead be the one in charge.
- Learn how to say ‘no’ without offending people
- Volunteer for the roles you want, and turn down all the others
At Conferences: Engage in Technical Discussions

• Let them see your knowledge!

• Don’t hesitate!
  – Researchers LOVE to talk about their research
  – Professors LOVE to give advice

• Practice
  – Think of a question for every talk.

• Many ways:
  – Walk up to the microphone, ask after talk, or send email
At Conferences: Get to know your Peers!

- Check for shy people in the corner
- Tag along for dinner and drinks
- Most are fun to talk to

Why?
- Peers will be future big shots
- (or they are students of current big shots)
- Unintentionally this may get you your next job
At Conferences: Develop Ideas for Better Conferences

• Ideas for a better conference? Tell organizers!
  – Volunteer to work out a proposal
  – Option to organize

• Why?
  – People see that you care for the community
  – Conferences get even better for you!

• Side story:
• I became ACM SIGIR Student Affairs chair by organizing parties.

BLOG@CACM
Student Liaison Program Debuts at SIGIR 2017
At home: Letters of Recommendation

- Apply for scholarships, internships, jobs
  - Ask community members for a letter of recommendation
  - Summarize your accomplishments for them

- Why?
  - People remind themselves of your skills and abilities
  - You may get the scholarship/job
In the Workplace – Advocate for Your Ideas

- Write them down
- Form a plan
- Share with your team mates and manager
- Give a talk / organize a hackathon
In the Workplace – Teach Others

- Join a meetup / birds of a feather
- Take something you know – and teach it to others
- Write up what you did and share the achievement with your manager
In the Workplace – Develop Your Skills

• Think of one technical or subject matter skill you want to develop
  – Python
  – Deep learning
  – “fundamentals of finance”
• Ask a teammate to teach you, or take a class (inside or outside the company)
• Practice the skill, and then…
• See the previous slide
Online: Blog of Reading Notes and Explanations

- A good way to learn from papers!
- Why?
  - Other people may want to read them
  - People may follow your blog
Online: Upload your Code on GitHub

- Your research is now easy for others to use
- Make sure your it is usable and installs easily.

- Why?
  - People may use your research and cite your work
  - People realize that you can code.
Online: Describe your Projects on your Website

• People may get curious what else you are doing

• Why?
  – People realize you do interesting work
  – People may use your research and cite your work

Reminder to Amanda and Laura:
Update your websites!
Online – Establish a Web Presence of Your Own

• You need a professional web site that is not at your university
  – Links to you on LinkedIn
  – Lists your publications/patents/talks/code projects
  – Has your CV/resume
Online – Develop a Professional/Personal Strategy

• Two basic possibilities:
  – I am my self everywhere
  – I keep my personal and professional lives separate
Online – Set Time Limits

- You are what you pay attention to
- Be intentional about your time and attention
  - Is this contributing to my professional or personal growth?
  - Do I feel good while/after doing this?
  - What happens if I stop doing it for a week?
The Non-Quantifiables

• A positive attitude
  – Show willingness and gratitude
  – Come prepared
  – Approach situations logically and analytically, without judging

• Respect for others
  – Be mindful of your company
  – Make yourself available

• Self integrity
  – Be true to yourself
  – Advocate for your ideas
  – Grow your technical and soft skills
A Periodic Checklist for Your Professional Persona

Goals for Online
- Look at my online traces on social media
- Set up / Update home page
- Set up / Update LinkedIn
- Set up / Update Google Scholar
- Set up / Clean up my git page
- Join an online professional group / discussion / mailing list
- Create / Update my resume / CV

Goals for In Person
- Collect feedback
- Give a talk
- Do a practice interview
- Coding practice 3x / week
- Present a poster
- Volunteer for an event
- Attend a meet up / conference
- Introduce myself to three peers
- Write a paper
- Teach a class / coding session
- Mentor someone junior to me

Choose three things, set dates for each in your calendar
Getting Started

• The right time to get to this is **NOW**

• Start a checklist and put recurring appointment on your calendar to revisit every quarter (reward yourself for doing it)
THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?