

BUILDING YOUR PROFESSIONAL PERSONA

Amanda Stent & Laura Dietz



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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



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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)



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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



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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/>



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Goal

- You want to be known for
 - 1) Your technical skills
 - 2) Your friendliness
- ... in this order!



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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?



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Amanda

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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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



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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.



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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!



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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



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Online – Develop a Professional/Personal Strategy

- Two basic possibilities:
 - I am my self everywhere
 - I keep my personal and professional lives separate



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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?



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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



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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



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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)



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THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?