Tips for a successful PhD, and how to win an award with it!

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My background

- 4 years PhD @ AI lab KU Leuven
- 4 years PostDoc
- 1 year Assist. Prof.
- 3 awards (2 thesis, 1 sw)
- chairman of CP thesis award committee
Most advice has little meaning, until you've experienced it.
Pieces

- Working with your promotor
- Writing a paper
- Conference participation
- Writing an (award winning) PhD
- After the PhD
Working with your promotor

[ You will feel stupid ]
Working with your promotor

[ Structure your own meetings ]
Working with your promotor

[ Guard your own interests ]
Working with your promotor

[ Embrace feedback ]

This is often difficult...
Working with your promotor

I WANT YOU TO DO “X.”

YOUR ADVISOR HAS A BAD IDEA. DO YOU:

A) WASTE TIME DOING IT.
B) WASTE TIME TRYING TO CONVINCE THEM IT’S A BAD IDEA.
C) WASTE TIME AND HOPE THEY FORGET ABOUT IT EVENTUALLY.
D) ALL OF THE ABOVE AND IN THAT ORDER.

DON’T WORRY, YOUR TIME IS ONLY WASTED IF IT’S WORTH SOMETHING.

[ Learn how to disagree ]
Working with your promotor

( e.g. asking for help, admitting failure, steering a discussion )
Writing a paper
Writing a paper

common in spreadsheets, with semantically related items stored in rows or columns and formula’s usually ranging over contiguous ranges on formulas parallel to a table are often dragged over its entire span.

Our contributions are as follows:

– we define the tabular constraint learning problem, where the goal is to find constraints that range over entire rows or columns in an unsupervised way;
– we propose an effective two-stage generate-and-test method where the first stage reasons only over properties of contiguous blocks of rows/columns, and the second stage continues to investigate individual rows and columns and their content;
– furthermore, in the first stage we use a constraint solver to efficiently enumerate all combinations of maximally contiguous blocks compatible with the arguments of the candidate constraints
– experiments on different publicly available spreadsheets show that the system is able to extract constraints with high precision and recall.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses related work. Section 3 introduces the relevant concepts and defines the problem formally while Sect. 4 presents our approach. This is evaluated in Sect. 5 after which we show how to realize two of the motivating applications using our system in Sect. 6, and we conclude in Sect. 7.
Writing a paper

[ Align section content, iteratively ]
Conference participation

[ Do a try-out presentation ]
Conference participation

[ Talk to other people ]

speaker: “Hi, I saw your presentation and liked ...”
non-prof: “Hi, are you presenting at the conference?”
prof: “Hi, I’ve been reading a bit about your work on ... and like the direction of ...”

pro-tip: keep a list of people you want to talk to, and about what
Community participation

[ Have a website ]

Papers, software, data
Github...
Twitter, research gate?
Writing an (award winning) PhD

[Focus on intro & conclusion, iteratively]
Writing an (award winning) PhD

[ Write about your impact ]

Read and mention papers that cite you

Organized workshops? Won awards?

http://matt.might.net
Writing an (award winning) PhD

[ You only win if you apply ]

Submit →
After the PhD

[ PostDoc @ jury member? ]
After the PhD

[ PostDoc? Industry?
Ask and mail anybody ]
After the PhD

[Dare to jump]
THE MORNING OF THE DEFENSE:

THIS IS IT.

THIS IS IT!

Good luck!!

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ECMLPKDD17 PhD Forum