When Researchers Disagree:

Facilitating Helpful, Respectful Collaboration

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Why this topic?

- Collaboration is important
- Collaboration is hard
- Collaboration is understood
  - Theory: computer science
  - Practice: sociology & business

Definition

- Sharing of effort between 2+ parties, hoping that each party benefits
- Involves
  - Coordinating effort
  - Expressing your findings
  - Understanding other's findings

How do you collaborate?

How do you collaborate?

- Face-to-face, telephone

- Mail, email

- FamilySearch.org

- Forums

- Mailing lists

- Family history consultants

- …

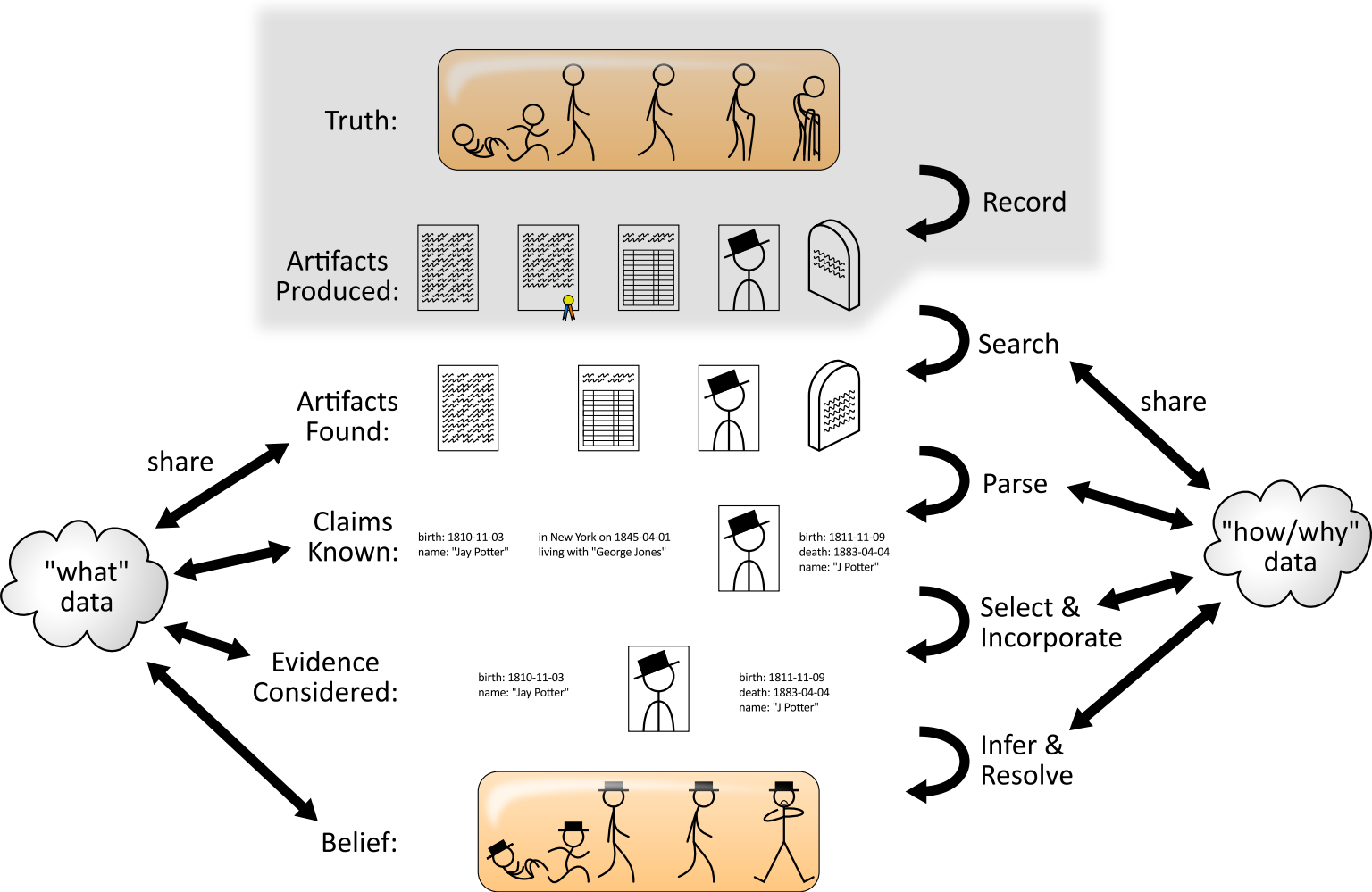| Gain	Risk
Productivity	Time Communicating
Access to sources	Duplication of effort
Research validation	Increased uncertainty
Personal validation	Personal invalidation
Sense of altruism	Sense of Antagonism
	Stylistic disagreement
	Loss of control
	Priority manipulation

Learning you are wrong is a **good** thing

Thus, disagreement is good

Truth:

Artifacts Produced:

Record

Artifacts Found:

share

Search

share

Claims Known:

birth: 1810-11-03
name: "Jay Potter"

in New York on 1845-04-01
living with "George Jones"

birth: 1811-11-09
death: 1883-04-04
name: "J Potter"

Parse

"what" data

Evidence Considered:

birth: 1810-11-03
name: "Jay Potter"

birth: 1811-11-09
death: 1883-04-04
name: "J Potter"

Select & Incorporate

"how/why" data

Belief:

Infer & Resolve

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A little theory

- If you work on
  - same data, they can mess it up
  - separate data, can get out of sync
- Tasks can be shared via
  - both do each task
  - shared to-do list
  - centralized division of labor

Tips

- **Make it pleasant for them**
- **Give and take**
- **Handling stubbornness**
- **Handling poor-quality work**
- **Handling greedy people**
- **Handling liars**

Make it Pleasant for Them

- Be helpful
  - productivity & local sources
- Be nice

  - research validation (compliments)
  - personal validation (listen)
  - sense of altruism (thank them)
- Never lie: be genuine or be silent

Give and Take

- You *should* feel that you are giving more than you get
- Contribution = importance × quantity
  - We focus on what we find important
  - We are more aware of our effort
- Feels equitable? Probably not doing your share.

Handling Stubbornness

- It takes two to have a protracted argument
- Compromise
  - Record something general (e.g., "the 1850s")
  - Note all opinions (e.g., "might be 1851-05-02 *(rationale)*")
  - Move on

Handling Poor-Quality Work

- Do **_NOT_** try to fix *them*
- Do they accept your corrections?
  - No: see "stubbornness"
  - Yes: are they willing to be taught?
    - No: they are an unreliable source (accept but verify)
    - Yes: teach them

Handling greedy people

- Be polite and gracious and they might give more later
- But why does this bother you?
- Practice thinking well of them
  - "maybe this was harder than it looks"
  - "maybe their life is difficult"
- Think "audience" not "team"

Handling liars

- Liars do exist

- Usually created by society: braggarts

- Coach honesty: patiently praise truth and act like lies never happened

- Serious cases can be banned from site

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Finding Collaborators

- Family

- FamilySearch contributors

- Forums and mailing lists

- One-name and one-place studies

Family

- Pros and cons:
  - Pro: shared interest
  - Pro: spirit of Elijah
  - Con: often need to train them
  - Con: emotions more pronounced
- Give validation, accept invalidation (both personal and research)

FamilySearch contributors

- FamilySearch.org lists who contributed what

- Most researchers welcome contact

  - Be succinct & grammatical
  - Ask a Q they can respond to
  - Treat them professionally
  - Be patient waiting for a reply

Forums and mailing lists

- Forums and mailing lists usually have a topic: find the right one

- Search archives before you post

- Detailed & brief subject line

- Message to be glanced at, not read

- Ask a clear question

- Summarize what you already know

One-name and one-place studies

- There are groups that study by place or name, not by family

- They are usually happy to share what they have

- Their research is their priority; treat it with respect

Summary

- definition: 2+ parties, both benefit
- 5 benefits, 8 risks
- disagreement = good
- know what you are (not) sharing
- be nice and generous; compromise
- finding collaborators

Questions?

These slides: `http://www.cs.virginia.edu/luther/NC-collab.pdf`