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
- ...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gain</th>
<th>Risk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Time Communicating</td>
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<td>Access to sources</td>
<td>Duplication of effort</td>
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<td>Research validation</td>
<td>Increased uncertainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal validation</td>
<td>Personal invalidation</td>
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<td>Sense of altruism</td>
<td>Sense of Antagonism</td>
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<td>Stylistic disagreement</td>
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<td>Loss of control</td>
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<td>Priority manipulation</td>
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Learning you are wrong is a **good** thing

Thus, disagreement is good
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)”)
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
Tips

• Make it pleasant for them
• Give and take
• Handling stubbornness
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• Handling greedy people
• Handling liars
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