

Tips and tricks about collaborations that were mentioned during the PhD Forum of 18 March 2021

Summary of Mikola's talk:

- Hold a "Wednesday morning session"; someone asks a question that can be formulated in 2-3 minutes. You discuss the question in the group. It's a useful challenge for the asker to make a question accessible.
- Ask a question during or after talks. If you know beforehand that you have to ask a question, you listen differently.
- Ask other researchers to discuss their research. Make an effort to understand what they are doing. For example, you can ask people that are coming to talk in a seminar. Read some of their papers, ask something about some proof, etc.
- Actively organise events/discussions/seminars. For example, in organising the Wednesday morning sessions, you have to go around asking people about their research.

Summary of Vandana's talk:

- Ask yourself: what is your strength? For example writing proofs, coding, etc.
- Stay up-to-date with the literature. An advantage of Google Scholar over arxiv: you can see when something is published, you don't always want to check out preprints.
- What is your weakness? Are there people who can help you?
- Look for common ground with colleagues
- Ask yourself: does this fit my agenda? Do I have time, etc?
- When you have a collaboration: set clear expectations and make a good planning! Make sure you have regular contact (pre-set meetings every week), especially when your collaborators are abroad.

Other tips that came up during discussion:

- Go for a walk in a forest with a fellow PhD!
- When you go to a conference and have nothing yet, you can just present what you will be working on. Amey just presented some dataset they were going to look at, and it resulted in a collaboration.
- Use your advisor's network
- Mail people when you've got a question! After doing it once, the threshold for approaching people lowers.
- Go to conferences alone, so that you are forced to get to know people. Also, if you take 3-4 days holiday after the conference, chances are you will meet someone during the conference who will also do so and then you can hang out together:)
- How to approach famous people?
 - Usually if they're famous, they're the head of some department and hence will have people working under him who are easier to approach (e.g. his PhD students!)
 - Also, just try; he might just be a very chill guy. Preparing the question well might help