Advice from PhD to Early Career

4 things I wish someone had told me bluntly before I started junior proffing!

Arun Kumar
My Research

Abstractions, systems, and techniques to make the lifecycle of ML-based data analytics easier, faster/cheaper, and scalable

https://adalabucsd.github.io
These are the 4 things:

1. How to wage DB research cultural warfare
2. How to suck at proposal writing
3. How to squander time
4. How to become a sorry wreck of a junior prof
The Blind Men and the Elephant

An elephant is like a big snake

What are you saying! It is like a sheath of leather!!

Your all wrong!!! It's actually like a little furry mouse.

Actually, No! It's a tree stump!
The 4 “Canonical” Cultures of DB

The DB community is NOT a monoculture!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Main Progress Metrics</th>
<th>Nearest Neighbors in CS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formalist</td>
<td>Non-trivial theorems</td>
<td>STOC, LICS, COLT, NIPS?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>System time/space/etc.</td>
<td>SOSP, NSDI, ASPLOS, ISCA</td>
</tr>
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From an article on my research blog. 2018.

The Tribal Culture Wars of DB

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Formalists  Humanists  Heuristicists  Systemists

As seen by “extremists” among:

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SIGMOD/VLDB’s out-of-control culture wars are toxic and emotionally abusive of students and new researchers. This madness has to stop!

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Talk to a wide range of researchers and practitioners
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Pale Blue Dot

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wupToqz1e2g&t=11s
The Blind Men and the Elephant

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Actually, No! It's a tree stump!

Interesting! It also has a tree stump like thing.
The Blind Men and the Elephant

Wow! I find it also feels like a sheath of leather.

Interesting! It also has a tree stump like thing.
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Wow! I find it also feels like a sheath of leather.

Incredible! We are all learning so much instead of abusing each other!

Interesting! It also has a tree stump like thing.
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Start writing late (say, 3-4 weeks before deadline)
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- early-ish (2 months before deadline)
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- specific and explain technical depth and novelty clearly
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Or else, they might mis-route proposals from newbies!
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Take on too many students too quickly
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Ramp up comfortably; 1 great student > 3 mediocre ones
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Schedule everything, including leisure time
Work every waking hour of every day and burn out

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Cultivate gratitude, equanimity, empathetic joy ("mudita")
Junior proffing is one heck of an extreme roller coaster ride. Sit tight, wear safety belts, scream, laugh, cry, HODL, and fully experience every up and every down.

Enjoy it! You just might make it out alive!
THANK YOU!

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arunkk@eng.ucsd.edu
@TweetAtAKK

Acks: Hellman Fellows Fund, Google, Opera Solutions, NVIDIA