Networking Skills

Jan Cuny, National Science Foundation
Networking is …

Making professional connections and using them wisely

Systematically seeking out and becoming acquainted with people in the service of professional goals
Networking ...

- Makes you known
- Makes your work known
- Source of new research ideas
- Different slant on old ideas
- Feedback on your research
- Form new collaborations
Networking can get you ...

- Good letters of recommendation
- An edge (very slight) on getting papers accepted
- An edge (very slight) on getting proposals funded
- Invitations to give talks
- Program committees
- Job Interviews
Networking makes you more effective and more productive.

People who don’t network are less likely to succeed!
Networking is *not* ... 

A substitute for quality work

“Using” people
“Networked with” is a transitive relation.
It takes a village …

And you have to create your own.
Creating your own village

All Villages Need Elders
   Learn from those who came before you

All Villages Need Regular Joes

All Villages Need Diversity
   Learn different strokes from different folks

All Villages Need Uniformity
   Similar folks have similar issues

John S. Davis, IBM, 2003
Who should you network with?

- Established researchers (include people outside your narrow research area)
- People who could give you good technical advice (people you cite)
- Visitors to your department and people at departments you visit
Who should you network with? (cont.)

- Your peers (the people here)
- Other people at your institution (other departments, non-researchers)
- Your students!
Who should you network with?

EVERYONE, cast your net widely.
Networking example

Fran Berman
CRA-W
CRA
CRA Board of Directors
Peter Freeman
Great job at NSF
Informal networking

- Serendipity happens: talk to people you meet by chance
- Convey excitement about your research and interest in theirs
- Talk to people about their lives as well as their work
Informal networking (cont.)

✓ Ask for help when you can use it
✓ Offer to help out when you can
  Volunteer (caution!)
  Help to build the network of others …
More formal networking

Conferences
Outside of conferences
Before the conference

Prepare (write it down, practice)

“Elevator talk” (1-minute)
  Why is it an interesting problem?
  Why is your solution unique?

Longer talk (3-minute)
  Slant to different audiences
    (foreground/background)
Before the conference (cont.)

✓ Who will be there that you want to meet?
✓ What do they look like?

   Find a picture beforehand
   Ask someone to point them out
Before the conference (cont.)

✓ What do you want to talk to them about?

  Read their papers, write down questions
  Ask why/how they started project, where they got the problem
  Integrate your work and interests into conversation
At the conference

- Wear your badge visibly
- Speak! (Don’t just stand there)
- Use the dreaded microphone
- Have discussions with speakers after their presentation
- If you’re the speaker, hang around afterwards
- Talk to the person sitting next to you
At the Conference (cont.)

- Make lunch/dinner plans
- Participate in hall talk
- Attend social activities
- Get your friends/adviser to introduce you
- Get people you’ve just met to introduce you; introduce them
- Talk to people who come up to you
At the Conference (cont.)

✓ Make plans for FOLLOW UP

After meeting someone
Write down the next step
Write down technical tips
Write down what you owe whom/what they owe you
At the Conference: Don’ts

✓ Don’t hang around with your friends
✓ Don’t interrupt heavy or private technical conversations
✓ Don’t be overly negative/critical
✓ Don’t hang on to a conversation too long
✓ Don’t put too much stock in a single, short conversation
✓ Don’t get discouraged
After the conference

✓ FOLLOW UP!!!!

Send them your related papers, Ask for theirs
Actually read them! Send them comments
Share software and workloads
Do joint work together
Invite them to give a talk (* put them up at your place)
* Ask to give a talk there
Other networking opportunities

Go to workshops
Sign up to talk to seminar speakers in your department
Use your contacts to get new contacts
Cold e-mail? Papers?
Use electronic media professionally
Join a women’s group
Other networking opportunities (later on)

Indirect path to program committees
Visit program directors, volunteer to be on a review panel
The tenure tour
But I’m horrible at small talk!

It’s not genetic, it’s a skill.
Practice.

e.g. How to Talk to Anyone: 92 Little Tricks for Big Success in Relationships by Leil Lowndes
When you are connected …
connect others who aren’t.
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You will have great opportunities to network here,

**USE THEM!**

And don’t forget the **FOLLOW UP!**