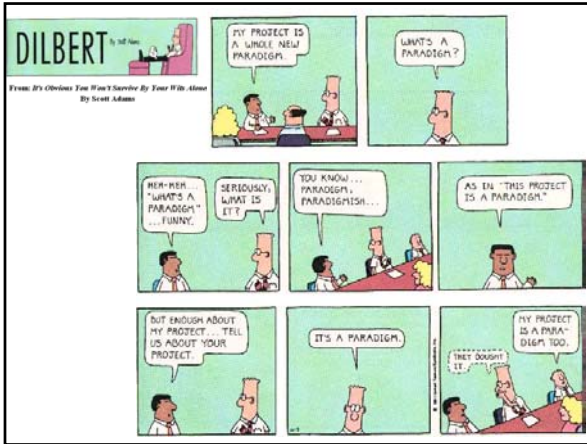




## Simpsons quote

- **Network Executive:** We at the network want a dog with attitude. He's edgy. You've heard the expression "let's get busy"? Well, this is a dog who gets biz-zay; consistently and thoroughly.  
**Krusty:** So he's proactive, huh?  
**Executive:** Oh, God yes. We're talking about a totally outrageous paradigm.  
**Writer:** Excuse me, but "proactive" and "paradigm"? Aren't those just buzzwords that dumb people use to sound important... not that I'm accusing you of anything like that... I'm fired aren't I?  
**Roger Meyers, Jr.:** Oh, yes. The rest of you writers start thinking up a name for this funky dog. I don't know, something along the lines of, say, Poochie. Only more proactive.

2

## Experimental demonstration of the tomatotopic organization in the Soprano (*Cantatrix sopranica L.*)

Georges Perec

Laboratoire de physiologie, Faculté de médecine Saint-Antoine, Paris, France

- As observed at the turn of the century by Marks & Spencer (1899), who first named the "yelling reaction" (YR), the striking effects of tomato throwing on Sopranoes have been extensively described. Although numerous behavioral (Zegg & Puss, 1931; Roux & Combaluzier, 1932; Sinon *et al.*, 1948), pathological (Hun & Deu, 1960), comparative (Karybb & Szyla, 1973) and follow-up (Else & Vire, 1974) studies have permitted a valuable description of these typical responses, neuroanatomical, as well as neurophysiological data, are, in spite of their number, surprisingly confusing. In their henceforth late twenties' classical demonstrations, Chou & Lai (1927 a, b, c, 1928 a, b, 1929 a, 1930) have ruled out the hypothesis of a pure facio-facial nociceptive reflex that has been advanced for many years by a number of authors (Mace & Doyné, 1912; Payre & Tairnelle, 1916; Sornette & Billeveyzé, 1925). Since that time, numerous observations have been made that have tried to decipher the tangling puzzle as well as the puzzling tangle of the afferent and/or efferent sides of the YR and led to the rather chaotic involvement of numberless structures and paths: trigeminal (Loewenstein *et al.*, 1930), bitrigeminal (Von Aitick, 1940), quadritrigeminal (Van der Deder, 1950), supra-, infra-, and inter-trigeminal (Mason & Ragoun, 1960) afferents have been likely pointed out as well as macular (Zakouski, 1954), saccular (Bortsch, 1955), utricular (Malosol, 1956), ventricular (Tarama, 1957), monocular (Zubrowska, 1958), binocular (Chachlik, 1959-1960), triocular (Strogonoff, 1960), auditive (Balalaika, 1515) and digestive (Alka-Seltzer, 1815) inputs. Spinothalamic (Attou & Ratathou, 1974), rubrospinal (Maotz & Toung, 1973).

## How to Write a Good Article

Frédo Durand

Computer Graphics Group  
MIT CSAIL

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## Writing is important

- Our major contribution is to communicate ideas, not only to create them
- It is NOT superficial for a committee to reject an article based on writing alone
- Even if ideas are great, when nobody can understand them, they are worthless

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## What I know about good writing:

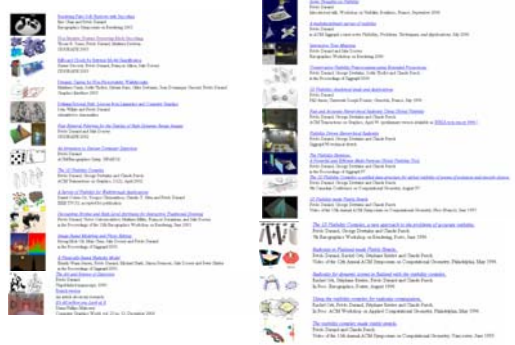
6

## How to Write a **BAD** Article

Frédo Durand  
Computer Graphics Group  
MIT CSAIL

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## What I know about BAD writing:



8

## Why am I so knowledgeable?

- I had several papers rejected solely for bad writing
- I rejected several papers as a reviewer
  - Reviewing is a great way to learn

9

## Write the article only for you

- Assume the audience knows everything you know
- You know your contribution
- So they know
- So you don't need to write at all
- If you've been able to do the research, they should be able to do it as well

10

## Don't provide context

- Don't define the problem
  - They won't know if you solved it
- Don't provide premises
- Don't describe previous work
- Don't compare to previous work
  - You have not described it anyway

11

## Write a purely descriptive paper

- We did this, we did that, and we did that other thing
- Don't discuss alternative choice
- Don't comment results
- Don't provide take-home messages

12

## Spend 23 pages on detail

- You spent 3 months optimizing this part of the code?
- The world needs to know about it!
- After all, people care about small detail, not big ideas?
- Or don't they?

13

## Be obscure

- Use tons of acronyms
- Change notations through the paper
- Define a new notation system where  $x$  is a function and  $f$  is a value
- Use footnotes more than text
  - Don't forget to put footnotes in the footnotes
    - And parentheses in the footnotes
      - And digressions inside the parentheses
        - » After all, recursion is what CS is about
        - » And human brain has an infinite stack

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## Be obnoxious

- Insult the authors of previous work
  - “We do not report the pitiful results of our ridiculous competitors using their laughable technique, as this would be an insult to human intelligence”
- But be politically correct
  - Do not call them “stupid”
  - But rather “intellectually challenged”
- Suggestions for exotic French insults
  - Idiot de sa race
  - Blaireau
  - Pauv' gars

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## Copy-paste

- Need a previous work section?
- Just copy it from somebody else's paper!
- After all, since these people are the specialists in the field, they're unlikely to read or review your paper
- Or will they?

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## Oversell, overgeneralize

- Instead of “on the only example we tried, the method performed 1% faster”
- Write “Our new method was proved to achieve dramatic speedup compared to the dumb method used by intellectually-challenged competitors. And it does the coffee too”
- See part on insults

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## The infamous word “paradigm”

- E.g. in biomedical, the use of “paradigm” has grown 26% a year in the 90’s
- Articles who use paradigm are less often cited (according to Science magazine)
- Doing a search on “paradigm” in citeseer broke their system

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## What is a paradigm?

- From the Greek paradeigma
- An example, an archetype
- Alternatives to “paradigm”:  
Idea, style, format, pattern, hypothesis approach, algorithm, model, metaphor

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## Infamous titles

- See Robert Fulford's and Todd Sallo's columns about “paradigm”
- Paradigm and Paradox: Explorations into a Paradigmatic Theory of Meaning and its Epistemological Background
- A new paradigm for imaging systems
- Essays on Creating Sacred Relationships: The Next Step to a New Paradigm
- Handbook for the New Paradigm
- Paradigms: The Business of Discovering the Future
- The word is used even on bumper stickers!



## Vocabulary inflation

- Buzzwords are cool... yet shallow
- Do we need to say that we invent a new paradigm each time we propose an incremental improvement to an algorithm?
- It is true that my paradigm beats your idea any day
- Is there shame in inventing algorithms?

22

## Useful resources

- See my web page, resources for students  
<http://graphics.csail.mit.edu/~fredo/student.html>
- My Favorite:  
How to have your abstract rejected  
Mary-Claire van Leunen and Richard Lipton
- <http://www.cs.purdue.edu/homes/palsberg/vanLeunenLipton.html>

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