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Why did you cite...?



...So many papers outside your field?

In this issue of *Research Trends*, we have analyzed the multidisciplinary nature of research and developments. One area that is becoming more multidisciplinary over time is computer science.

A good example is Professor Fionn Murtagh's recent paper, "The structure of narrative: The case of film scripts" in *Pattern Recognition*, cited in *Nature* (1). Murtagh is from the Computer Science Department at the University of London. His paper is clearly multidisciplinary, citing many papers from linguistics. Murtagh adds: "it also strongly cites media arts and digital humanities, mathematics and statistics."

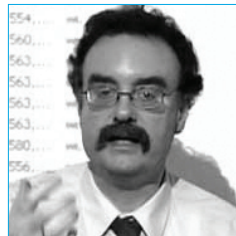
Following a theme

One of the linguistics papers referred to is a paper by Yves Bestgen (2). Murtagh says: "We cited the Bestgen paper due to its content – reading input data for analysis of discourse (in the case of that particular author) and analysis of the particular narrative form provided by a filmscript (in the case of our paper). But I paid no interest whatsoever to whether this paper was categorized as linguistics or otherwise. The way I work is to pursue themes that I think are (very) important, find supporting data, perform extensive evaluation and write all that up.

"Then, if I am convinced at that point that it is presentable, I start thinking of an appropriate journal. I publish, or have pub-

lished, regularly in journals that are categorized as computer science, statistics, mathematics, physics, astronomy, geology, and other areas."

Murtagh goes on to explain that in this instance they chose a computer science journal rather than a linguistics journal because "I always seek the most appropriate journal, irrespective of area. I have published in *Pattern Recognition* before, my first being in 1984, and it is high on my list of 'personal best' journals. I am also mindful of discipline-specific evaluations at national and other levels, which can have career implications. I therefore ensure that I have sufficient publications in any given area when I think this is necessary."



Fionn Murtagh

Breaking boundaries

On the topic of multidisciplinary in general, he says: "I personally have research interests overlapping many fields. My personal aspiration is to always pursue my interests, irrespective of the labels applied to the fields or journals. I would suggest that the core of what computer science is all about is 'computational thinking'. This is applicable to all disciplines and beyond – to humanities, and to governance and management too.

"However, I do admit that career structures in particular mitigate strongly against cross-disciplinarity. In universities you are in a particular discipline and your performance in all aspects, including research, is evaluated in accordance with the discipline you are in. No one ever said that life is easy!"

References:

(1) Merali, Z. (2008) "Here's looking at you, kid", *Nature*, issue 453, p. 708.

(2) Bestgen, Y. (1998) "Segmentation markers as trace and signal of discourse structure", *Journal of Pragmatics*, issue 29, pp. 753–763.