On the Discovery of Success Trajectories of Authors

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the qualitative patterns of research endeavor of scientific authors in terms of publication count and their impact (citation) is important in order to quantify *success trajectories*. Here, we examine the career profile of authors in computer science and physics domains and discover at least six different success trajectories in terms of normalized citation count in longitudinal scale. Initial observations of individual trajectories lead us to characterize the authors in each category. We further leverage this trajectory information to build a *two-stage stratification model* to predict future success of an author at the early stage of her career. Our model outperforms the baseline with an average improvement of 15.68% for both the datasets.

Keywords

Success trajectories,; citation networks; prediction

1. INTRODUCTION

An individual author's career trajectory is governed by a plenty of decisions and unforeseen events, that can significantly impact her career. As a result, the career trajectory is subjected to an author's past accomplishments and can be of different shapes in temporal scale. A *success trajectory* can be defined with respect to different objectives, such as research publications, funding, teaching ability etc. However, most important criterion accepted universally is the *citation count* of an author's scientific publications. Most of the author-centric indices, such as h-index, g-index captures either growth or saturation of research profiles, however fails to capture the decline of success. Analyzing the decline of success is similarly important to unfold several aspects, such as whether the authors are still active in research, how worthy are their recent publications, do they overcome the "test of time" challenge etc.

Here, we explore two massive datasets consisting of papers related to computer science and physics domains, and analyze the success trajectory of authors in terms of the *normalized citation count* (ratio between total citations and total publications) over the years. Interestingly, *we discover at least six distinct categories of success trajectories, which to the best of our knowledge is revealed here for the first time in the granularity of individual authors*. Finally, we build a system which predicts (mean accuracy 15.68% more than the baseline system) the future success of an author at the early stage of her career.

2. EXPERIMENTAL SETUP AND RESULTS

Datasets. We crawled two massive bibliographic datasets [2]: (i) CS (2,473,171 articles in computer science), (ii) Physics (425,399 articles in Physical Review journals). After preprocessing, we consider 1,549,317 and 295,311 authors respectively from CS and Physics datasets whose publication informations are available for at least 10 years.

Heuristics for trajectory discovery. To begin with, we take the selected sets of authors with the information of their papers and citations over time. An initial three-year buffer window is provided to each author with the assumption that unlike for a paper, a few-years time frame is always required for an author to set up her career. Therefore, we consider the fourth year of the career timeline of an author as the beginning of the logical year of her career profile. Then we quantify the *success* of an author a at year t (termed as S_a^t) by the ratio between the number of citations received by a till t (termed as C_a^t) and the number of papers published by a till t (terms as P_a^t). This is followed by a series of data processing: firstly, to smoothen the longitudinal data points corresponding to an author, we use five-years moving average filtering for smoothing; secondly, we scale the data points by normalizing them with the maximum value present in the time series; finally, we use two heuristics for peak detection: (i) the height of a peak should be at least 75% of the maximum peak-height, and (ii) two consecutive peaks should be separated by more than 2 years; otherwise they are treated as a single peak.

Categories of success trajectories. Remarkably, we observe six different patterns of success trajectories of authors based on the count and the position of peaks present in a trajectory (see Figure 1(left)): (i) Early-risers (ER): authors whose career peaks once within initial 5 years (but not in the first year) followed by a decay; (ii) Late-risers (LR): authors whose career peaks once after at least 5 years since she has published her first paper, followed by a decay; (iii) Frequent-risers (FR): authors whose career peaks multiple times over the years; (iv) Steady-risers (SR): authors having a monotonic increasing growth of success over the years; Steady-droppers (SD): authors whose career peaks in the first year followed by a monotonic decrease over the years;

Success Trajectories of Authors
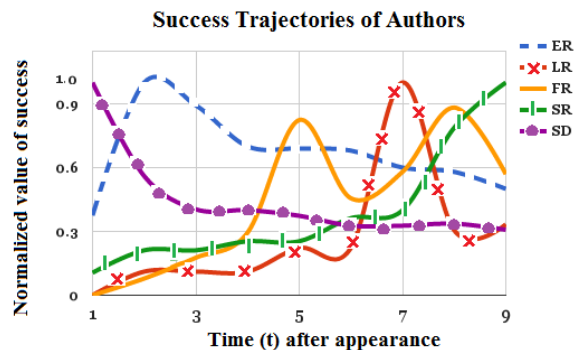
	ER	LR	FR	SR	SD
% of authors	9.96; 7.85	23.15; 18.36	6.51; 8.78	58.97; 62.35	1.38; 2.65
Avg. h-index	4.69; 3.87	5.15; 4.49	6.06; 4.21	4.10; 5.36	2.93; 3.01
Avg % of conference papers	68.39; NA	43.22; NA	51.98; NA	39.08; NA	76.09; NA
Avg % of self-citations	31.01; 34.58	30.30; 28.64	25.71; 25.12	26.14; 25.65	32.67; 36.54

Figure 1: (Color online)(Left) Sample examples (taken from CS-dataset) of success trajectories; (Right) Characteristics of different trajectory categories for CS (black) and Physics (red) datasets (NA: Not Applicable).

and Others (OT): apart from the above types, there exist a large volume of authors who on an average publish less than one paper per year and receive less than one citation per year. Due to the lack of proper statistical evidences, we categorize them into a separate category.

Characterizing individual success trajectories. Next, we attempt to understand the authors of individual categories in more details (see Figure 1(right)). First, we calculate the percentage of authors in each category and observe that steady-risers are the major class of authors, followed by late-risers; whereas steady-droppers are rare. Second, we measure the average impact of authors in each category and notice that while in CS domain frequent-risers are the most profound authors in terms of h-index, in Physics steady-risers dominate others, the reason being that physicists prefer publishing papers in Journals (see later). However, as expected steady-droppers seem to be least prominent. Third, for CS-dataset we notice that early-risers and steady-droppers tend to publish papers mostly in conferences, while steady- and frequent-risers prefer publications in journals. Forth and most interestingly, we observe that early-risers and steady-droppers are mostly affected by self-citations [1]. Had the self-citations been discarded from the analysis, 53% early-risers and 63% steady-droppers have migrated to OT category.

A deeper inspection of the decay in the success trajectories of early-risers, late-risers and steady-droppers for CS (Physics) dataset revels that around 82% (79%) cases the value of success drops due to the enormous volume of individual publications overshadowing the effect of incoming citations. Further, we observe that during the time of decay, 46% (37%) of authors are unable to retain their most prominent collaborators (in terms of h-index), indicating that the effect of collaboration might be a reason for this decay. Interestingly, for both the datasets (CS; Physics) the rate of publications of steady-risers (2.06; 1.27) is least among others (on average 4.32; 3.29), which indicates that formers tend to emphasize on *quality*, rather than quantity.

Leveraging trajectory information for predicting success. One crucial question in this context is – how can the trajectory information be leveraged for building real applications? Here we consider the task of predicting success (defined above) of an author in future at the early stage (t years after her first appearance) of her career. We consider the same set of author-centric features (along with the first two years citations and publications of authors) and framework discussed by Chakraborty et al. [1] where Support Vector Regression (SVR) [1] turned out to be the best learning framework. We use 10-fold cross validation technique. The baseline is designed by training SVR on the *entire* training samples and predicting the success of a query author by fitting the regression equation. On the other hand, we propose a *two-stage stratification learning* model [3]. In stage one, a query author is mapped into one of the trajectories/strata[2] using a Support Vector Machine that learns from the same set of features used in the baseline. In the second stage, *only* those authors corresponding to the category of the query authors are used to train the SVR module to predict the future citation count of the query author. In this way, we remove the effect of random noise while training the regression model. Experimental results show that our model achieves 15.09% (16.3%) and 14.7% (10.5%) more accuracy in term of mean squared error and Pearson correlation coefficient respectively for CS (Physics) dataset[3].

3. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

We discovered and characterized success trajectories of authors in two massive datasets. We believe that this information may be useful to develop models for performance prediction. Our study here for a span of at least initial 10 years performance may be extended over several decades of an author's lifetime, which would lead to a complete characterization of her career. Understanding the dominant features among author's collaboration profile, affiliation, research domain, etc. which primarily controls the success profile may also be worth exploring further.

4. REFERENCES

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[1] A citation is marked as self-citation if there is at least one author common in both citing and cited papers.

[2] Note that we know the category information of the authors present in the training set a priori, and therefore the training points are divided into six categories.

[3] The results are averaged over t, ranging from 3 to 6.