

Name Change Policies: A Brief (Personal) Tour

Danica J. Sutherland (*she/they*)

or from 2019ish – 2020: D. J. Sutherland (*intentionally vague*)

or before 2019ish: D[REDACTED] J. Sutherland (*he*)

Queer in AI workshop, NeurIPS 2022

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For trans people, naming things (yourself) can be hard
...and getting other people to update the way they refer to /
think of you can be harder

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definitely no signs, nothing to see here

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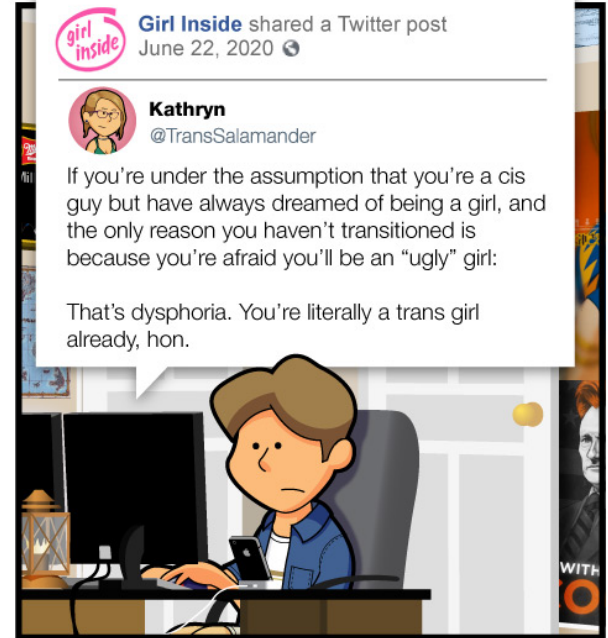
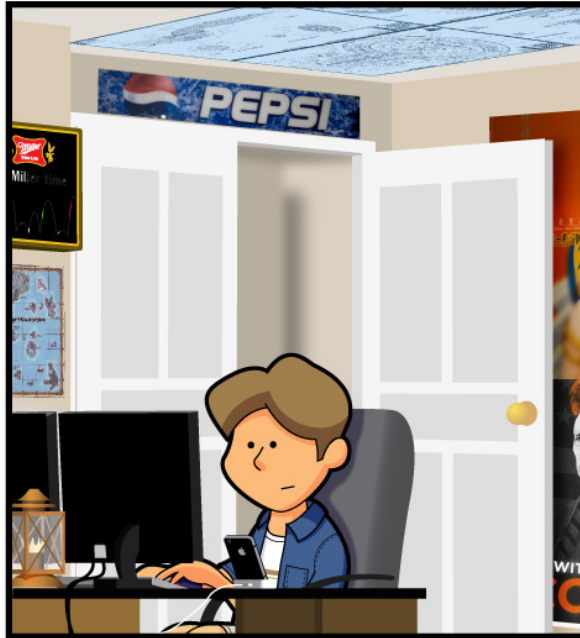
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early 2018

hmm, time to decide whether to apply for faculty jobs...

June 2018

(Not this
tweet, but the
basic idea)



reallifecomics.com

RealLife ©2020 Grea Dean

Mae

A few hours later, on academia.stackexchange.com

Gender transition as a starting faculty member: a terrible idea?

Asked 4 years, 5 months ago Modified 2 years, 8 months ago Viewed 22k times



118



I'm a computer scientist at the point in my postdoc where I will have to decide soon whether to apply for faculty positions this fall or go to industry, in the US/Canada/UK/maybe Europe.¹

But I've also recently come to the realization that spending half of my waking hours fervently wishing I had been born a girl could be a sign that maybe I should be doing something about that.

My situation is such that I doubt I would be able to really "pass" anytime soon, if ever. Even if I went all-out on transition immediately – which I'm not sure I'm ready for anyway – I can't imagine that I wouldn't be quite obviously physically trans at interview time and at least for a while afterwards.

I'd be fine presenting male through the faculty interview process and so on; my dysphoria is not particularly acute, and I have not yet started on hormones or anything. But I am certainly

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Answer from Rebecca J. Stones (a mathematician):

I transitioned as a postdoc back in 2013, so I did it. Whether or not it's a terrible idea **depends on many factors, and just plain luck**. I don't have experience in industry, so I can't

I'm mostly passable nowadays, but **people still find out about my past through my prior publications**. Generally even if they find out, they act like they don't know.

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- Iterated through a *bunch* of possible names

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 - Felt a *lot* better after Queer in AI @ NeurIPS 2018
- Got some offers; picked one, deferred for a while
- Started publishing + giving talks as "D.J." in the interim

Danica Sutherland @d_j_sutherland · Dec 31, 2020



Getting some personal news out this year, because I told myself I would:

Surprise, I'm trans! My name is Danica (or Dani), she/her pronouns.

(The first vowel is /æ/, like "cat.")

(If you think you might know who I am but aren't totally sure:

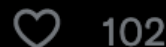
djsutherland.ml.)



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4



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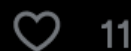


If you noticed my suspiciously pronoun-free talk bios, or the switch to publishing as "D.J.", this is why.

A free piece of life advice: if you have a Big Thing that you're not letting yourself think about, better to make yourself think about it in less than, say, six years.



1



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Danica Sutherland @d_j_sutherland · Dec 31, 2020



Name and pronouns apply retroactively, please, even to times before *I* knew them.

Also to citing papers that haven't been fixed (yet), especially since many publishers have bad policies here: tesstanenbaum.medium.com/towards-a-tran...



1



7



Danica Sutherland @d_j_sutherland · Dec 31, 2020



Thanks to everyone who's been working on pushing publishers on this. If you registered for NeurIPS, you can still see a great [@QueerinAI](#) panel about this, starting at 2:52 on neurips.cc/virtual/2020/p...

Still lots more to do, though.



Amy J. Ko @amyjko · Dec 23, 2020

Thanks @TheOfficialACM, for reverting my ACM profile to my deadname and not telling me /sarcasm. Can you please not do this again? And how about that name request I submitted two months ago?



1



6



A non-solution

“As an aside, I believe you should not rebrand your older papers with your new first name. This confuses all the database searches. I am afraid that your best bet is to stick to your initials only.

“Similar things happen to divorced women. For instance, [a person] was essentially forced to keep the name of her ex-husband [...] decades after her divorce.

“I am sure many people told you so, so...”

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A non-solution

“Just start using the new name + note on your website/ORCID/...”

- Have to disclose the name change constantly, forever
- Readers won't realize you and “old you” are same person
- Will still get cited under the old name, forever

Name change policies

Before me:

- ACM adopts an early policy, after much resistance
- Name Change Policy Working Group
 - Principles for trans-inclusive publishing
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- Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) forms a working group in 2019
 - Publishes an update in January 2021
 - "Anticipate sharing the initial guidance document... within the next few months" 🦋

NeurIPS

For me:

I have admin access to the NeurIPS papers database. With your permission I will merge your two records into a single record as Danica J Sutherland, which will fix the metadata and bibtex entries for your papers and should update the search index. I am also happy to replace the PDFs if you still have the source and would like to change the byline.

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- Wanted approval from program chairs

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- OpenReview no longer requires PC permission

PMLR (ICML, AISTATS, COLT, UAI, ...)

- Via GitHub pull requests, no PC approval or anything needed
- Not *ideal*, but not particularly visible unless you go looking
- (Looking, I found one person changing last name, plus me)

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ACL

- I haven't done this, but I understand it's similar

arXiv

- I made new versions of all my papers with the name fixed
- You **don't have to do this anymore**:
 - Invisible retroactive name changes for the most important places
 - As of last year, editing citations/etc was officially against policy (but the person I was talking to let me do it)
 - Submit new versions if you need to

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- My request (one measly paper) took five months
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- Supposedly allows fixing citations, but not aware of anyone having actually done it

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 - IEEE style uses initials, so I haven't “field-tested” this
 - but seems like if an IEEE paper cites your IEEE paper and your NeurIPS paper, and both names are fixed, would change the citation of the IEEE paper and not of the NeurIPS paper 🤔

AAAI

- No public policy
- They will change names, but implementation is bad
- Months and months of ghosting me before I complained elsewhere in the org and my one paper (where I *sent them a fixed PDF*) finally got fixed

Other publishers

Dozens of publishers (for thousands of venues) [tracked here](#)

The big missing thing in general is updating citations

Semantic Scholar

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DBLP

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- There's no one to email scholar.hasfailed.us
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- After name is fixed at publisher, *remains wrong* at Google Scholar until they invalidate their cache (*months* later)
 - [Recently added](#) fast-tracked (5-10 days) updates for name changes, for *some* publishers

People's .bib files they reuse between projects

- Often remain wrong
- I've corrected bibs from multiple coauthors in paper drafts

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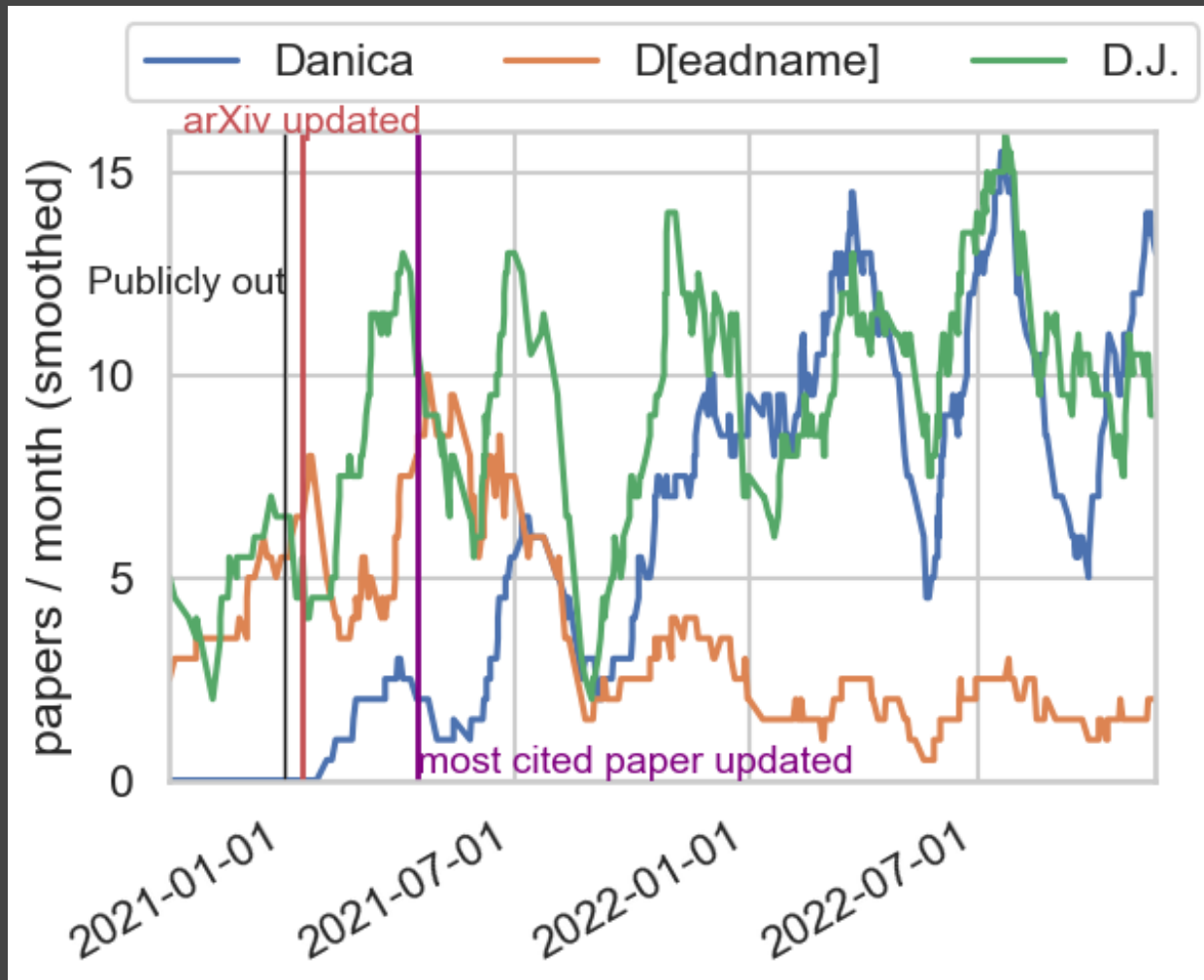
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- Often remain wrong
- I've corrected bibs from multiple coauthors in paper drafts
- `rebiber` pulls DBLP entries for conferences it knows about
 - but design means rebiber itself can easily be out of date
- ACL camera-ready checks now warn for outdated names
 - system built by Pranav

Do people actually cite me by the right name?

Semantic Scholar API => arXiv downloads => pdfgrep:
some errors in processing, 1/3 of citing papers not on arXiv



Do people fix their bibliographies?

Eight papers corrected my name in later arXiv versions
(two of them because I emailed and asked)

Compare: 158 papers deadnaming me after arXiv was fixed,
>100 after corresponding official versions were fixed

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Compare: 158 papers deadnaming me after arXiv was fixed,
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Do people look at their own bibliographies?

Eight (different) papers cite me by *both* correct and deadname
in the same version

Takeaway, if you're changing your name:

- You absolutely can!
- Once Google Scholar gets the updates, *most* people will start citing you correctly
- Old citations won't change unless you *really* work at it
- It's still a *lot* more work than it should be
- Ask for help dealing with publishers if you need it
 - (Me, on the Queer in AI Slack, the [NCPWG](#), ...)

Takeaway, if you're writing papers:

- Check your bibs
- pdf-name-change-checking.herokuapp.com Or rebiber