

Post-Publication Name Change Policies, Why they Matter, and Whether they Work

Danica J. Sutherland (*she*)

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

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

Robotics DEI Seminar, University of Michigan – March 23, 2023

HTML version

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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

How do you change your name?

Ask people to call you something new

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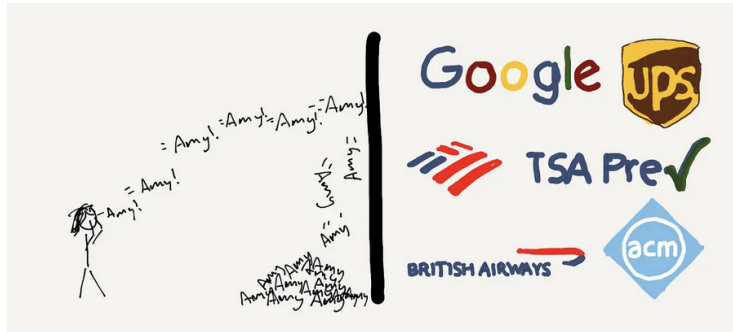
- In the UK: write on a piece of paper, have a witness sign it
- In many places (esp. on temporary visas): literally impossible
- Most US states: go to court, announce in the paper
- Costs up to thousands of dollars

What happens after you change your name?



Amy J. Ko

Oct 20, 2019 · 22 min read · Listen



Shouting your new name at private enterprise isn't very effective.

100 hours of name change labor

This is a long post, partly because it's a catalog of the immense amount of work that changing my name has been. Here's a summary: 1) choosing my new name was a huge part of affirming my identity, 2) seeing and hearing my old name a hundred times a day hurts, 3) changing my name, which is key to avoid encountering my old name, has required a lot of time, organization, money, and emotional labor, 4) a lot of barriers to name changes are just a matter of poor software design, 5) software designers can avoid most of these barriers by not using names or metadata involving names as primary keys in databases, thinking carefully about whether name changes need to be verified, and perhaps not gathering names at all.

I flew here on a passport with the wrong name on it,
but a driver's license with right name in my pocket

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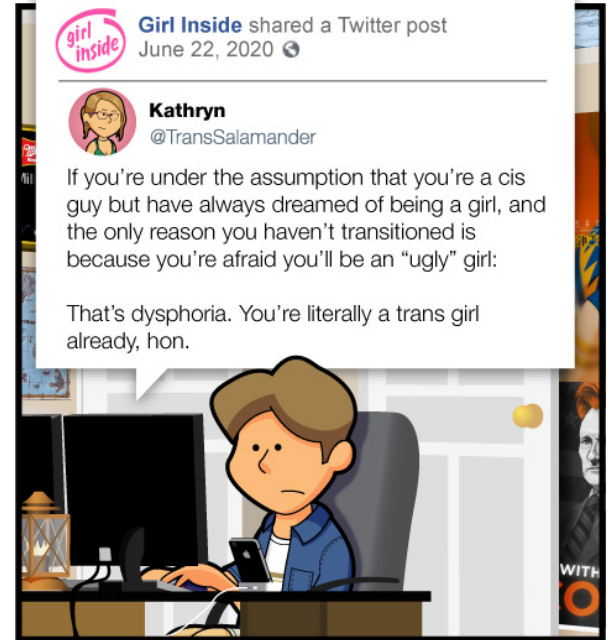
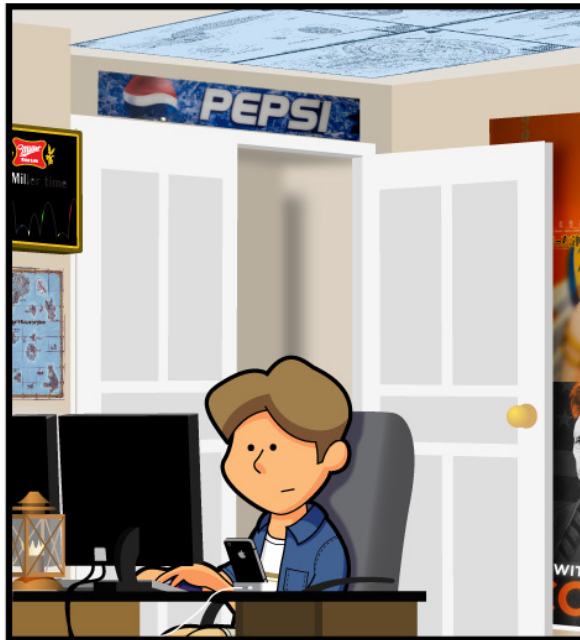
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- ...

How I started wanting a name change

(Not actually
this tweet)



Girl Inside shared a Twitter post
June 22, 2020



Kathryn
@TransSalamander

If you're under the assumption that you're a cis guy but have always dreamed of being a girl, and the only reason you haven't transitioned is because you're afraid you'll be an "ugly" girl:

That's dysphoria. You're literally a trans girl already, hon.



reallifecomics.com

RealLife ©2020 Greg Dean

Mae

A few hours later, on academia.stackexchange.com

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

Asked 4 years, 9 months ago Modified 3 years 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.

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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.

Next steps

- (Reading, therapy, talking to people, trying new things, ...)
- Iterated through a *bunch* of possible names

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- Eventually settled(ish) on one that keeps my initials
 - **Explicitly because** I wanted citations to "D. J. Sutherland" to stay correct
- 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:

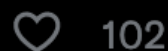
djsutherland.ml.)



2



4



102



Danica Sutherland @d_j_sutherland · Dec 31, 2020



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



11



Now, what to do about the old papers?

How it used to be (1960s)

Lynn Conway:

Although she had hoped to be allowed to transition on the job, IBM fired Conway in 1968 after she revealed her intention to transition.^[20] IBM apologized for this in 2020.^[21]

Career as computer scientist [\[edit \]](#)

Upon completing her [transition](#) in 1968, Conway took a new name and identity, and restarted her career in what she called "[stealth-mode](#)" as a contract programmer at Computer Applications, Inc. She went on to work at [Memorex](#) during 1969–1972 as a digital system designer and computer architect.^{[19][22]}

When nearing retirement, Conway learned that the story of her early work at [IBM](#) might soon be revealed through the investigations of Mark Smotherman that were being prepared for a 2001 publication.^[6] She began quietly [coming out](#) in 1999 to friends and colleagues about her past [gender transition](#),^{[57][58][59]} using her personal website to tell the story in her own words.^[12] Her story was then more widely reported in 2000 in profiles in [Scientific American](#)^[14] and the [Los Angeles Times](#).^[19] In a later [Forbes](#) interview, Conway commented "From the 1970s to 1999 I was recognized as breaking the gender barrier in the computer science field as a woman, but in 2000 it became the transgender barrier I was breaking."^[21]

How it used to be (2010s)

- *Prior publications*: I had to come to terms with having publications under my dead name. I absolutely hate hearing or seeing that word refer to me. I had to decide whether or not to include those publications on my CV and cite them in my publications (which could out me as transgender). For my CV, I include these publications, but I list only the author surnames (I still feel uncomfortable with the thought that whoever reads my CV will Google these publications). I cite them in my publications, as citing them doesn't directly imply that that name belongs to me. I'm hoping I can bury these publications in new publications over time.

[Rebecca J. Stones on academia.stackexchange, 2015]

How it used to be (2013)

publicationethics.org/case/change-authors-name-after-publication

Case text (Anonymised):

An original work was published in our journal in September 2010. The article had five authors. Now, in February 2013, the third author is requesting an alteration in his/her name. The original name published was SFHS. The request is to change the name to SFH, both on the journal's website and Medline.

No valid reason could be provided by the author for this change in name. The last name is the cast and now he/she wants to write in future without the cast being evident.

Would this deletion be ethical?

Can there be any legal implications?

On a show of hands, the majority (15) of the Forum said they would not change the name and 10 said they would.

Follow up:

As no valid or convincing reason could be provided by the author for a change in name, we wrote back stating that the case had been discussed at the COPE Forum and the majority of the Forum were of the opinion that, due to lack of a convincing reason, the name should not be changed. The case is now considered closed.

How it used to be (2020)

When Teddy Goetz—a fourth-year medical student at Columbia University—applied to residency programs in October 2020, he felt as though he had no choice but to out himself as transgender. "I had to put my birth name all over my application because of my publications, and that was really upsetting," he says. He changed his legal name to Teddy last year. But many of his papers listed him using his birth name.

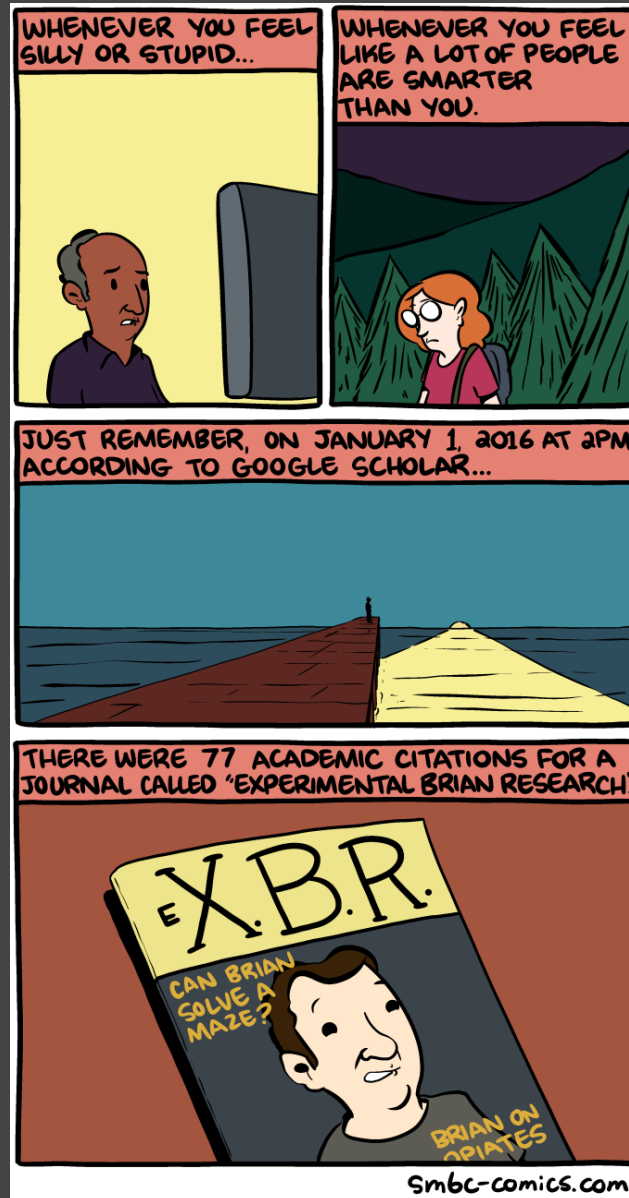
[Article in *Science* by Katie Langin, Feb 2021]

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

“But the sanctity of the published record!”



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, [someone] 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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Men's Rea
@InternetHippo



Just got back from the centrist rally. Amazing turnout. Thousands of people holding hands and chanting “Better things aren’t possible”

9:42 AM · Jul 1, 2017 · Twitter for Mac

What happened

Before submitting his applications, Goetz had contacted every journal he'd published in—14 in total—to request they change his name. Two journals offered to change his name and issue a correction notice. Many others didn't have a policy to deal with author name changes and refused to change his name without one. It was disheartening, but he continued to press the journals to accommodate his request. Now, his name is changed or in the process of being changed on all but one of his publications. "It's been a very long process and involves a lot of ... labor, time, energy, attention, massive spreadsheets," he says. But it's worth it. "My legacy should not be the name that isn't mine; the legacy should be mine."

Towards A Trans Inclusive Publishing Landscape

Addressing common concerns about allowing transgender authors to change their names on previously published work

By Theresa Jean Tanenbaum, Robyn Speer, Irving Rettig, Teddy G. Goetz, Z Toups, Katta Spiel, & B.M. Watson

What happened

Before me:

- ACM adopts an early policy, after much resistance
- Name Change Policy Working Group
 - Principles for trans-inclusive publishing
 - Accessibility; comprehensiveness; invisibility; expediency and simplicity; recurrence and maintenance


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What happened

Lots of arguing with lots of different publishers

Some formal policies, some making changes without one

What happened: Formal policies

Journal/Publisher	Compatible with COPE principles? (see "Further Information" below)		
AIP Publishing	Yes	Hindawi	Yes
American Astronomical Society	Yes	ICE Publishing	Unclear
American Chemical Society (ACS)	Yes	IEEE	Yes
American Geophysical Union (AGU)	Partially	Information Technology and Libraries	Yes
American Mathematical Society	Partially	IOP Publishing	Yes
American Meteorological Society	Yes	Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies	Yes
American Nuclear Society	Partially	Journal of Open Source Software	Yes
American Physical Society	Yes	Journal of Radical Librarianship	Yes
American Psychological Association (APA)	Partially	JSTOR	Partially
American Society for Microbiology (ASM)	Yes	Marketing Libraries Journal	Yes
American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)	Partially	MDPI	Partially
Archival Issues	Yes	Open Journal of Astrophysics	Yes
arXiv	Partially	Optical Society (OSA Publishing)	Yes
Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)	Yes	Oxford University Press	Partially
Avian Conservation and Ecology	Yes	PeerJ	Yes
BMJ	Partially	PNAS	Yes
Cambridge University Press	Unclear	Public Library of Science (PLOS)	Unclear
Canadian Science Publishing	Unclear	Quantum	Yes
Code4Lib	Yes	Rockefeller University Press	Yes
College & Research Libraries	Yes	Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC)	Partially
Company of Biologists	Partially	SAGE Publishing	Yes
CSIRO	Yes	Science (AAAS)	Yes
Dartmouth Digital Commons	Yes	Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics	Yes
EDP Sciences	Yes	Springer Nature	Partially
eLife	Yes	Student Research Journal (SJSU)	Partially
Elsevier	Yes	Taylor & Francis	Yes
Emerald Publishing	Yes	Ubiquity Press	Yes
European Geosciences Union	Yes	University of Florida, LibraryPress@UF	Yes
European Journal of Medical Case Reports	Partially	USENIX	Partially
F1000 Research	Yes	Volcanica	Yes
Frontiers	Partially	Wellcome Open Research	Yes
Future Science Group		Wiley	Yes
(incl. Future Medicine and Newlands Press)	Yes	Wolters Kluwer Health	Partially
Geological Society of America (GSA)	Unclear		
Geological Society of London	Yes		

An example: ACM

- One of the first actual policies
 - Took lots of convincing, by Tess Tanenbaum + others
- Slow and messy implementation



Amy J. Ko
@amyjko



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?

10:24 AM · Dec 23, 2020

- My request (one measly paper) took five months
- Others have waited a year or more

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“Apparently a few months ago the folks in publishing made a snazzy presentation to the board indicating that waiting times were going down and the list had started shrinking. It appears to have achieved this by noticing that there were a series of single-paper requests in a row, and selecting exactly that range to base the presentation on.”

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Policies aren't enough

Implementing name changes for published transgender authors

October 12, 2020 / [PLOS](#) / [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) [Journal enhancements](#) [News](#)

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“As it turns out, when no one monitors the mailboxes you send your name change requests to, the policy is as good as nonexistent.”

“I have written to plosone at plos dot org and privacy at plos dot org in May 2022, August 2022 and October 2022, requesting to have my name updated on a publication I have in PLOS One. I've received no response aside from one automated acknowledgement email, and my name has not been updated.”

Bureaucratic violence – Vagrant Gautam, Feb 2023

An example: IEEE

 **Mar Hicks** ✓ @histoftech · May 24, 2021 ...

Now if only I could get the @IEEEorg to fix my deadname on this article (ironic, huh?) 🙄 twitter.com/merbroussard/s...

This Tweet was deleted by the Tweet author. [Learn more](#)

4 34 193

 **Mar Hicks** ✓ @histoftech · May 24, 2021 ...


They actually gave it an award but refused to fix my name. They claimed that they were “reviewing their policies and procedures”—that was over a year ago.

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And the reason I didn’t publish it under my current name in the first place? They wouldn’t let me because my ORCID was linked to my old name and I had to keep the same ID number.

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So thanks, @IEEEorg, for showing how computing systems continue to be used to hurt trans & nonbinary people—not due to the affordances of machines but because gatekeepers use them to consolidate & wield power. Sadly, this was what my article showed was the case... in the *1960s* 🙄

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It’s their current policy to dispute & delay name changes. They could make this change if they wanted. But they seem to think it’s odd/wrong & believe it irrevocably messes up their system of taxonomy & tracking. What’s the point of using ORCID then? It’s a permanent ID number!

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...but then they actually instituted a policy! (Sep 2021)

An example: IEEE



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and it's a pretty good one, implemented reasonably well

An example: OpenReview (ICLR)

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- OpenReview no longer requires PC permission

An example: 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

An example: 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

Generally

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

The big missing things in general:

- updating citations
- prompt implementation

What happens after?

What happens after?

...how many authors actually get their citation info from the publisher page?

Semantic Scholar

- Send an email: all papers fixed regardless of publisher

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 - [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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- 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

People's .bib files they reuse between projects

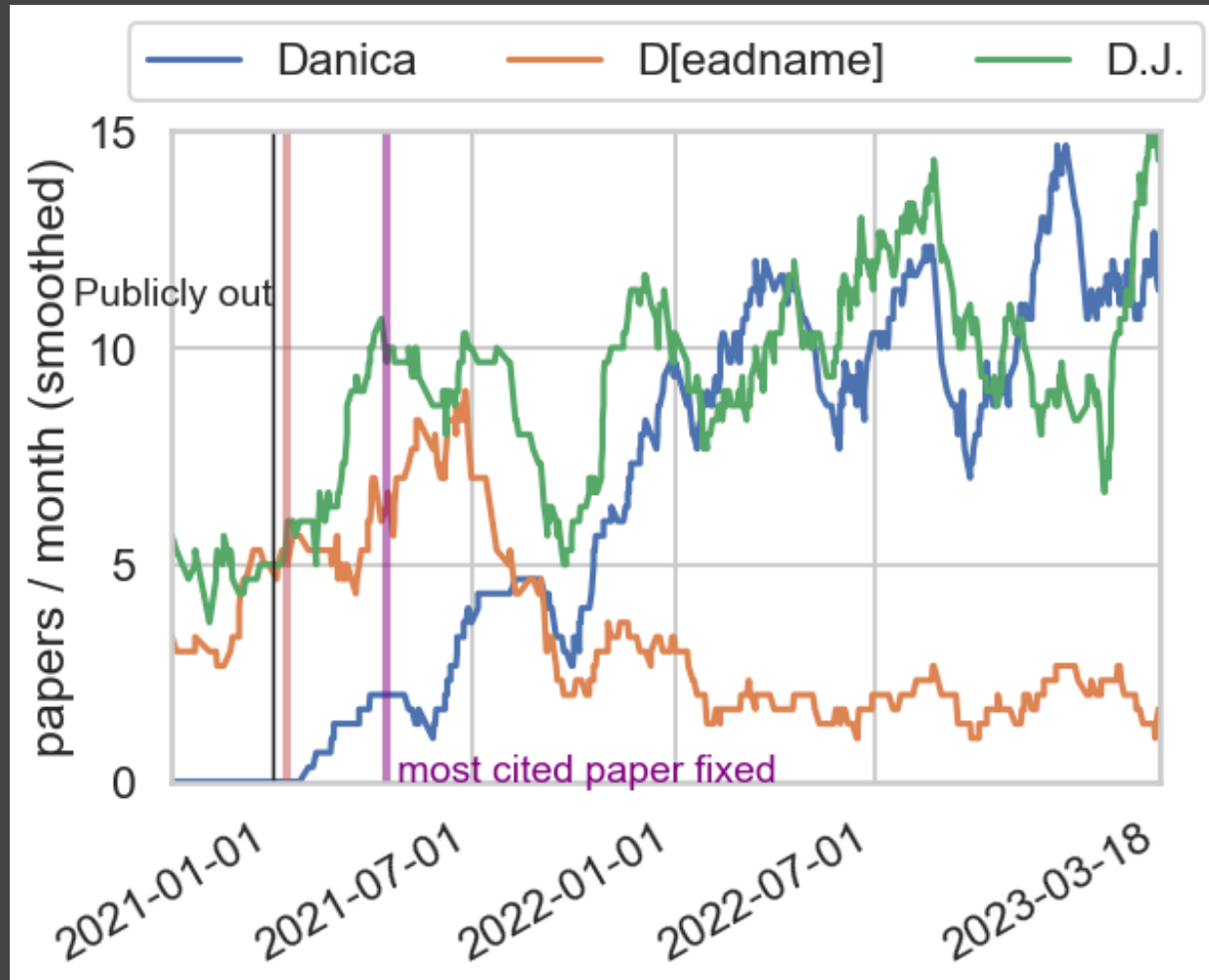
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 - hoping to get this more widespread

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?

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

Compare: >100 papers deadnaming me after arXiv was fixed,
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Do people look at their own bibliographies?

Ten (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 bibliographies, please
- [qinai-name-check.streamlit.app](#) Or [rebiber](#)

