

Unraveling the Research Tapestry: Exploring the Fundamentals of Research Design

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This paper reports on the Imagination Run Wild: Unraveling the Research Tapestry session at PLoP 2024, which explored fundamental qualities of research excellence through a collaborative visual metaphor. Participants created a collective tapestry using colored paper pieces to document their insights on good research practices and design principles. Analysis of the workshop outputs revealed seven key themes: research planning and boundaries, knowledge translation, research impact, researcher development, methodological considerations, creative processes, and practical implementation. The workshop demonstrated that effective research combines methodological rigor with creative thinking, while highlighting the importance of clear communication and personal growth in the research process.

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1. INTRODUCTION

While academic conferences and workshops provide valuable platforms for sharing research findings, methodological innovations, and writing techniques, there remains an opportunity to explore what constitutes good research at a foundational level. Conferences and places for feedback offer excellent guidance on research papers' structure and presentation, and this workshop aimed to complement these existing practices by creating dedicated space for examining the underlying qualities that make research valuable and well-designed. This gap is particularly significant given that a clear understanding of research excellence is crucial for advancing any field.

This workshop aimed to address this gap by creating a space for researchers to collectively explore and articulate their understanding of research excellence and fundamentals when designing one. Through the metaphor of weaving a tapestry, participants were encouraged to consider both the individual threads (specific elements of good research) and the overall pattern (how these elements combine to create meaningful research).

2. METHODOLOGY

The workshop utilized a participatory approach where attendees documented their insights on colored paper pieces. These pieces were assembled into a collective "tapestry" on a white background. Participants then discussed their contributions, explaining why they considered these elements essential for good research and research design. This visual metaphor functioned as both a data collection method and a representation of research's creative nature. The discussion was guided by four key questions:

- What is Good Research?
- What are important elements of good research?
- What are things you keep in mind when doing research?
- How do you design good research?

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Figure 1: Participants cutting and sticking colored paper, writing down what they think are important for good research, and discussion with each other.

3. FINAL PRODUCT

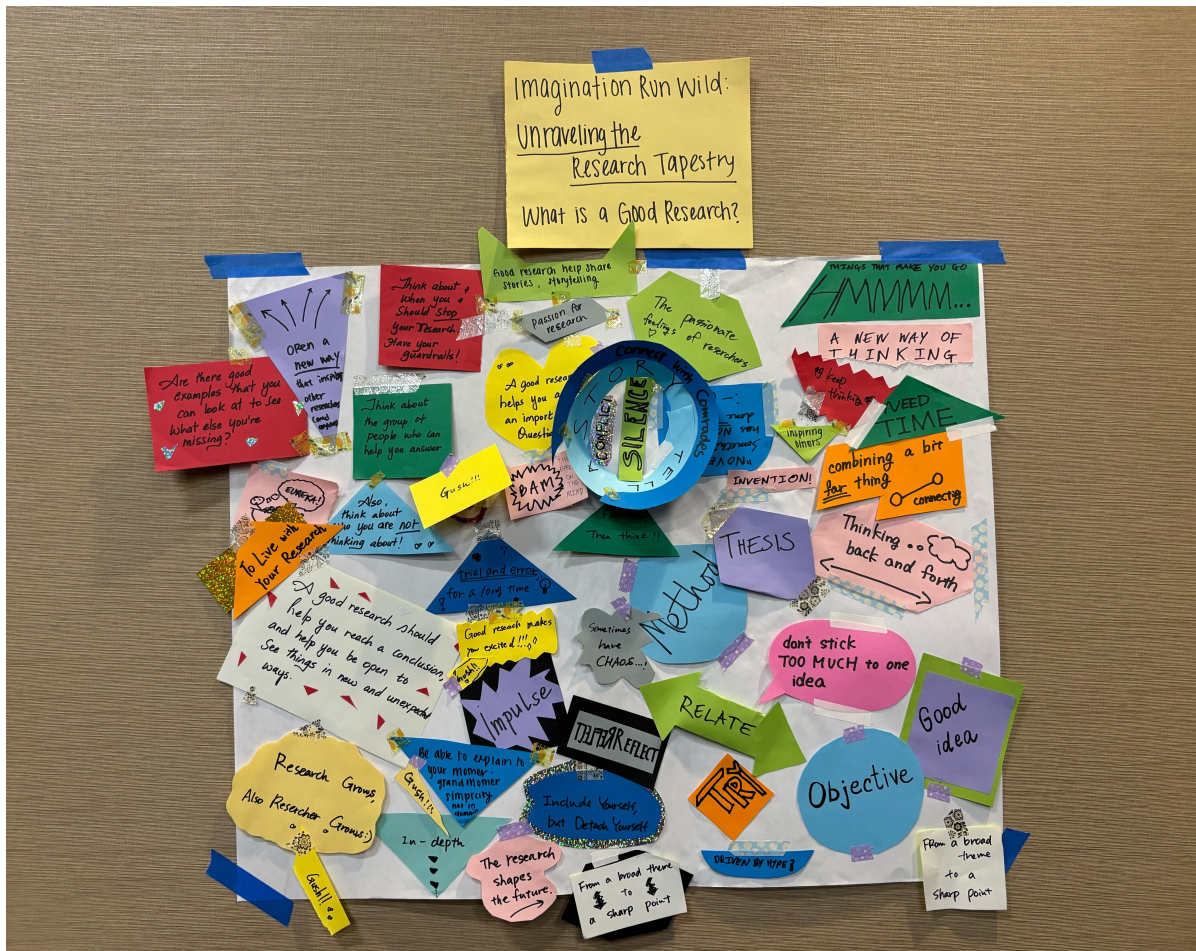


Figure 2: Final tapestry that was created through the workshop.

The workshop generated rich insights through participants' contributions to the research tapestry (Figure 2). Their responses are organized into the following thematic categories:

(1) Research Planning and Boundaries

Participants emphasized the importance of establishing clear boundaries and endpoints in research, noting "Think about when you should stop your research" and "have your guardrails." They highlighted how research often involves "trial and error for a long time" and may "sometimes have chaos," suggesting the need to balance structure with flexibility.

(2) Knowledge Translation and Communication

A strong theme emerged around research communication, with participants noting that "good research helps share stories" and should "be able to explain to your mother/grandmother" with simplicity, not just within your domain. The ability to "tell a story" was repeatedly emphasized as crucial for effective research.

(3) Research Impact and Innovation

Participants stressed that good research should "open a new way that inspires other researchers" and "shape the future." They noted the importance of looking at "good examples" to identify gaps and opportunities, while cautioning "don't stick too much to one idea."

(4) Researcher Development

The personal dimension of research was highlighted through comments about how "research grows, also researcher grows" and the importance of maintaining "the passionate feelings of researchers." Participants valued "connecting with comrades" and learning to "include yourself but detach yourself."

(5) Methodological Considerations

Methodological insights included moving "from a broad theme to a sharp point" and maintaining objectivity while staying "driven by hype." Participants noted the importance of both "reflection" and "impulse" in the research process.

(6) Creative and Analytical Processes

The creative nature of research was emphasized through observations like "feel first, then think," "thinking back and forth," and "combining something far and connecting." Participants noted how good research often involves "invention" and should make researchers "excited."

(7) Additional Insights

Other notable contributions included the importance of identifying "the group of people who can help you answer," research questions, ensuring research helps "reach a conclusion" while remaining "open to see things in new and unexpected ways," and maintaining the ability to "relate" to broader contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This was a report of the PLoP 2024 Imagination Wild Session "Unraveling the Research Tapestry." The workshop revealed that good research is characterized by a complex interplay of methodological rigor, creative thinking, and practical considerations. The collaborative tapestry approach proved effective in capturing diverse perspectives on research excellence, highlighting both technical and human elements of the research process. We all had an imaginative and enjoyable time.

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