

## Reviewers reading Proposals for MURC

Reviewers of conference proposals read a large number of submissions to determine whether the proposed paper or poster meets the requirements of the conference and how the submission might best be combined with other presentations in oral sessions or poster displays. They may or may not be experts in your area of study. Reviewers need to understand clearly:

- the importance of the research project
- the existing state of knowledge
- the research question
- the method or methods used
- the main findings

Since MURC is not a specialized conference, reviewers will also be assessing whether an interested non-specialist audience will be able to follow the presentation. Including brief definitions or explanations and using concrete “real world” examples helps non-specialists understand what your study is addressing and why.

The following proposals for oral presentations were all accepted for MURC 2011. They represent disciplines from across the university. The blue highlighting and side labels show how a reviewer may interpret the parts of the research projects listed above. The comments below the proposals indicate responses reviewers may have as they are reading.

### Sample proposal #1

#### Production and Distribution History of New Line Cinema

From its inception in 1967 until 2007 when it became a subsidiary of Warner Brothers, New Line Cinema was one of the most prolific film distributors outside of the major Hollywood studios, and yet, **little research exists regarding the company**. This study aims to create a definitive list of all films produced and distributed by New Line during the period as well as to gain insight into [the] business of film distribution as well as production. At the University of Michigan, we were able to gain access to archival materials donated by Robert Shaye, the founder and long-time CEO of New Line. From these materials as well as on-line data-bases, we were able to create a timeline of New Line’s output. **Other materials such as** company financial reports, memoranda and even Christmas party speeches and rejected script submissions provide anecdotal evidence that indicates why certain projects were chosen over others and what may have contributed to the success or failure of individual films and the company as a whole. These findings provide an overall picture of **how New Line Cinema operated as an independent company in the business of film distribution during for [sic] 40 years and a better understanding of film distribution in general.**

What is not known + importance of research (implied)

Research question (implied)



April Green (Faculty Sponsor: Ernest Mathijs)

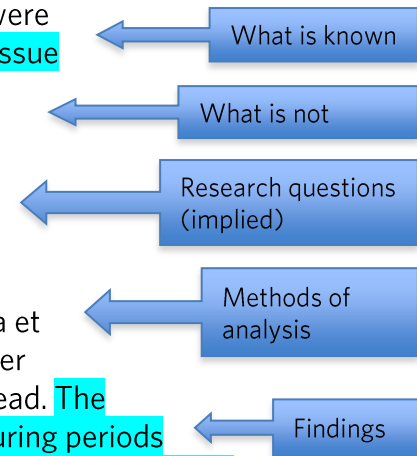
Reader's Response:

- I can see why the researchers have decided to focus on New Line Cinema; I have a good sense of why this research site was chosen. However, I'm wondering why the aim is to create a list of all films produced and distributed by this company and I'm wondering what larger questions the researchers are trying to address by zeroing in on its distribution and production practices.
- Now, I'm trying to sort out why the creation of a time-line is important; what issues/concerns does this research activity address?
- I could use a better sense of how these researchers analyzed the materials they say they analyzed. What were their methods?
- I'm struggling to understand the connections amongst the researchers' activities (the creation of a list, a timeline) and the company's activities (its production and distribution of films, its successes and failures). I think it's because I don't have a set of research questions that guide my understanding of why the researchers are doing what they are doing and why they are examining New Line Cinema's activities.
- I'm guessing that the larger issue is something about understanding independent film production and distribution, but I'm not sure what that something is. Knowing what other scholars have said about independent film companies might help me to understand the larger significance of this project.

## Sample Proposal #2

### Analysis of Infant Vocalizations and Head Movements towards Music and Language Stimuli

Previous research has shown that head movement affects the performance of participants during auditory perception tasks (Munhall et al., 2004). But these studies were conducted with adult participants. The current study investigates a similar issue with infants, namely whether infants are already beginning to make head motions that accompany speech. We tested the hypothesis that infant vocalizations are accompanied by increased magnitude of head movement. In addition, differences between infants exposed to music stimuli versus those exposed to language stimuli were examined. For the procedure, we used Anvil (Kipp, 2001), which enabled us to hand code for vocalizations in video. We also ran a Matlab script that uses Optical Flow Analysis (Barbosa et al., 2007) to compute the magnitude of pixel intensity per frame defined over Regions of Interest. This allowed us to measure the motion of the infant's head. The results obtained by comparing the magnitude of head motion per second during periods of vocalization to that during periods of non-vocalization, do not show a significant difference between infants exposed to music and infants exposed to language stimuli. Overall, on average, the magnitude of head motion per second during vocalization was higher than during



periods of non-vocalization. These results suggest that head motion is part of co-verbal gesture even for infants. A further investigation into the timing of the onset of vocalization and increases in the magnitude of head motion just before these onsets explores the link between head motion and vocalizations in infants.

Suweera Desouza (Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Laurel Fais)

#### Reader's Response

- The focus in the first two sentences on “participants” confuses me a little because I don’t have a sense of who these participants are. What if we were to generalize, to simply say “people” in the first sentence rather than “participants” and “adults” rather than “adult participants” in the second?
- I wonder if the “issue” the writer mentions in the third sentence is really a “response.” Perhaps if I had a better sense of the issues being addressed in others’ studies, I’d know what larger concerns (rather than behavioural responses) were being addressed.
- I’m a little confused about the focus of this study. Whether infants make head movements that accompany their speech seems to me a different focus than how head movements affect performance during auditory perception tasks. I’m wondering how the two are connected. The first seems to be about cause and effect whereas the question about infants’ head movements appears to be a developmental matter.
- As a reader who is not familiar with this field’s methods, I could use a definition of Anvil.
- As I read on, I’m thinking about the two stimuli being compared: language and music. What prompted the researcher-writer to compare them in the first place, that is, what larger issue is being addressed via this comparison. Perhaps a fuller sense of what is already known about this topic would help me out here.
- The last sentence confuses me. I’m wondering if the writer is describing research he or she will do in the future or describing an additional focus of the current research project.

