Papr swipes reveal instant reactions to preprints

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Credit: Charles Rondeau/public domain

Jeff Leek, a [biostatistician](#) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland, released a prototype for an app called [Papr](#).

The swipe-to-like approach in the app was being taken from a dating

application into the world of scientific paper ratings. Researchers could rate life-sciences abstracts by swiping across a screen.

He said, in describing it, to think of Tinder, but this is for papers.

"The basic idea," he blogged, "is for you to log in to the system, and then swipe to rate preprints on biorxiv on one of two scales:(1) Boring versus exciting and (2) Probably accurate versus questionable."

[bioRxiv is an online archive and distribution service for unpublished preprints in the life sciences.]

But now Nick Strayer, a PhD student in biostatistics at Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt biostatistician Lucy D'Agostino McGowan have added newer swipe directions and the recommender engine to Papr.

As for the recommendation engine, it "will learn from what you like and show you more papers that meet your personal tastes," said Leek.

You swipe the abstract from the preprints to rate the paper under four category options.

Here is what the different directions mean: right, 'exciting and probable'; up for 'exciting and questionable'; down for 'boring and probable'; and left, for 'boring and questionable'."

So far, said *Nature*, 150 people have signed in to use the app, although many more are doing so anonymously, said McGowan.

What's next?

Strayer and McGowan are thinking about releasing a leaderboard of the most popular papers, and also throwing preprints from the ArXiv

physical-sciences server into the mix, said *Nature*.

What happens when you go the Papr site: You get a welcome note

"Think of this as 'Tinder for pre-prints'. If you don't know what Tinder is, think of it as a web app for collecting gut-reactions to pre-prints from the scientific community. Enter your information below and click on the "Rate" tab to begin rating papers."

Leek blogged "We hope to aggregate the data and get a community level view of what is going on biorxiv. Lucy and Nick have done an amazing job and I really hope that you will check it out and rate some papers, who knows you might find a new paper or Twitter friend!"

Alexandru Micu, *ZME Science*, talked about what is going on:

You will be able to make "snap judgements on pre-prints—papers published before they've gone through the peer-review process." (You can only see the papers' abstracts, he pointed out, not the full work, you can't see who wrote it.)

Leek, according to the article, said that Papr's goal was not to serve as an alternative to peer-review. Rather, the goal was to help researchers cope with an 'overwhelming' number of new papers —and to spot areas of interdisciplinary overlap.

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