

How to make a positive ML research community

ML DevFest 2021

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- Is it “positive”?

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Why I didn't belong to the pre-2020 ML research community

- I was not on a “traditional” path
 - [“AI research: the unreasonably narrow path and how not to be miserable”](#)
- I did not belong to one of the mainstream “cliques”
- I really wanted different things

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But to define “positive”
we need a baseline first.

The open source community.

What a bad research community feels like

- There are social strata
- Strong power differential
- Simple metrics (sometimes just one number)
- Interactions feel transactional
- Goal-driven
- Little upward mobility

What a bad research community feels like

	ML research	Open Source (Baseline)
● There are social strata	✓	✗
● Strong power differential	✓	✗
● Simple metrics (sometimes just one number)	✓	✗
● Interactions feel transactional	✓	✗
● Goal-driven	✓	✗
● Little upward mobility	✓	✗

So how to make the ML research
community more open-source-like?

So how to make the ML research community more open-source-like?

- The entry
- The growth

If every open-source contributor has to obtain a CS degree first, the concept simply wouldn't work.

Or get hired by Company X, or admitted by School Y...

The mentor-protégé model
simply doesn't scale.

Distributed, decentralized, peer-mentoring.

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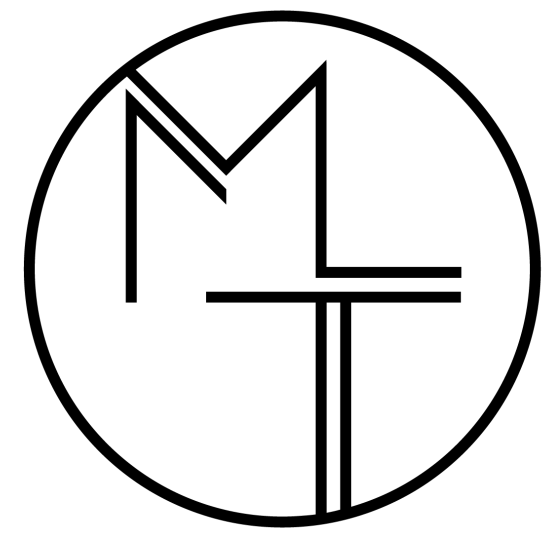
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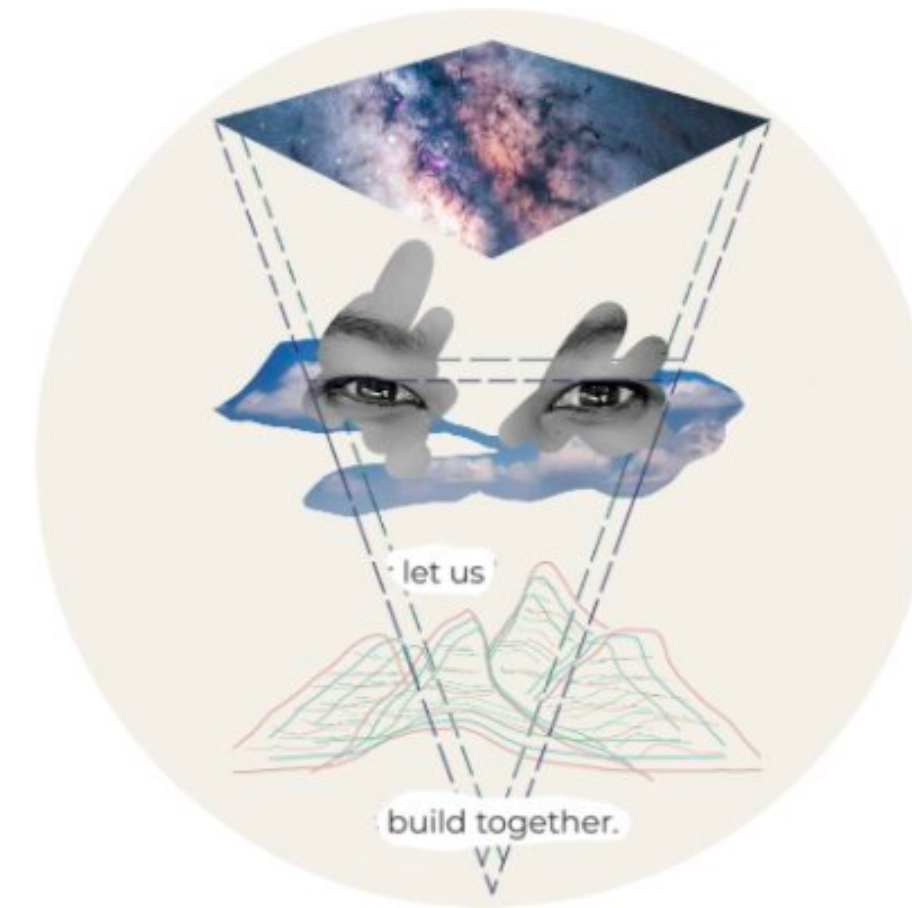
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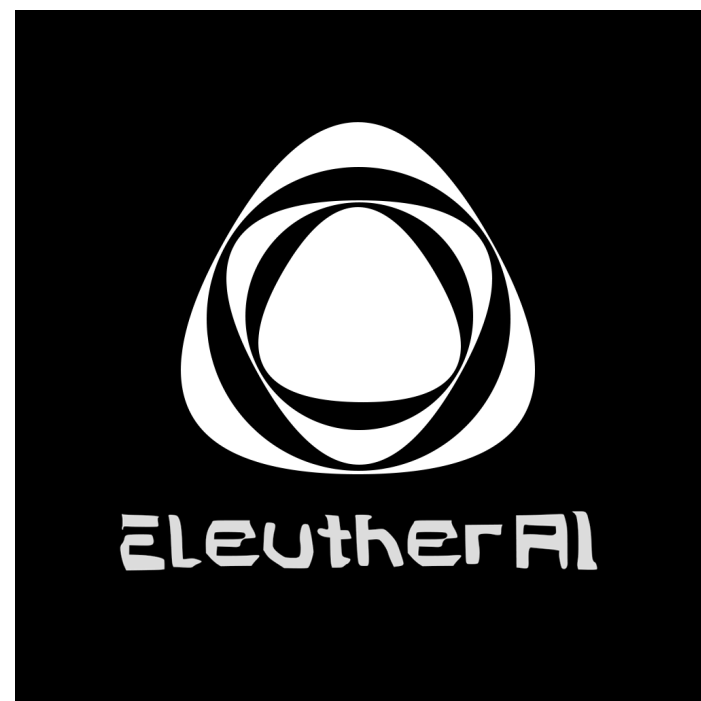
MACHINE
LEARNING
TOKYO



Masakhane



DEEP LEARNING
INDABA



google/**BIG-bench**



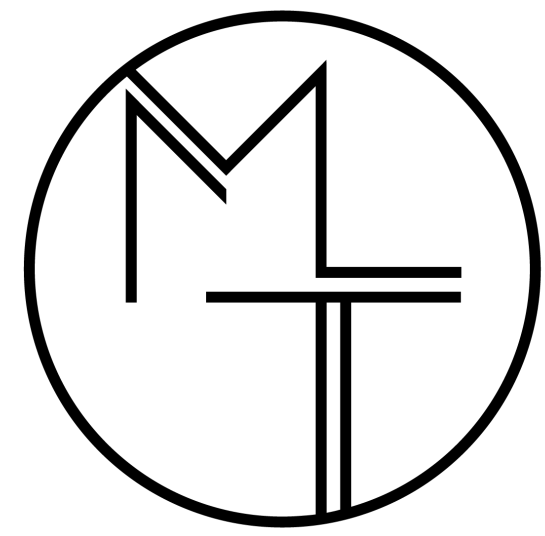
Beyond the Imitation Game collaborative
benchmark for measuring and extrapolating the
capabilities of language models

👤 197 Contributors 🕒 27 Issues ⭐ 395 Stars 🍴 270 Forks

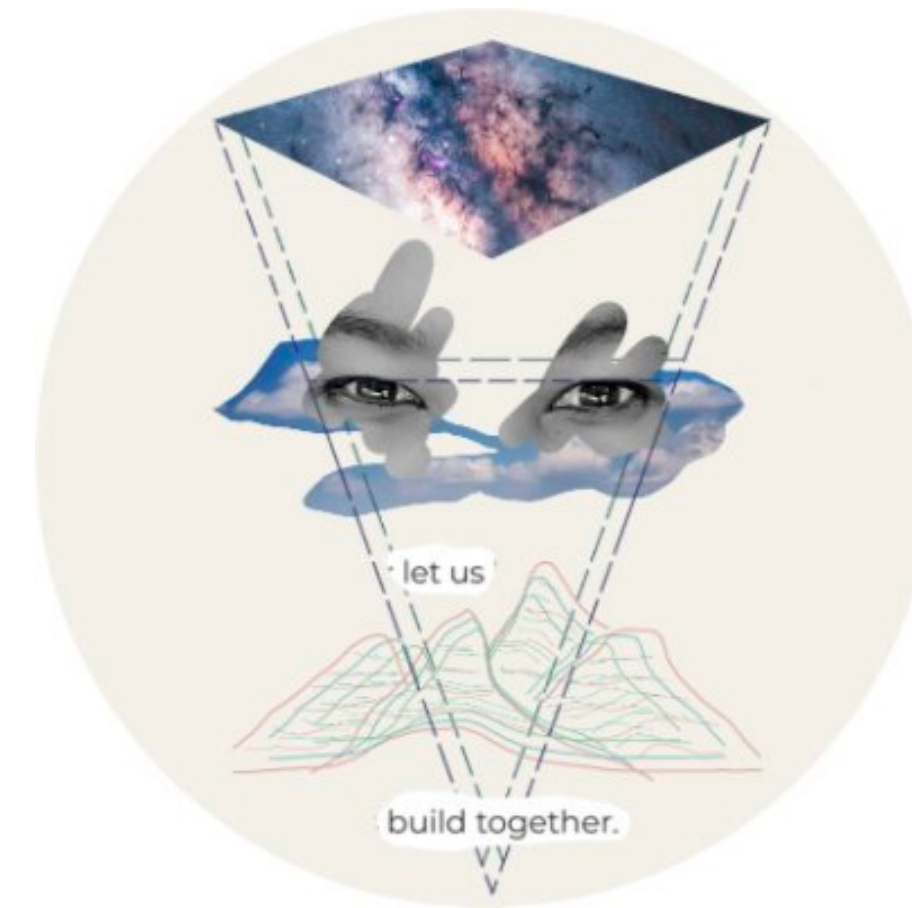


BigScience





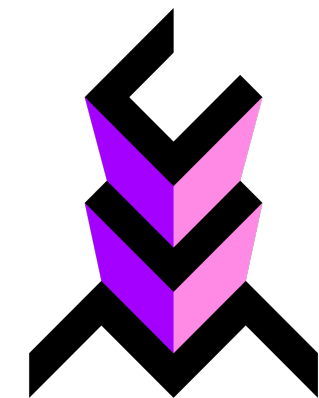
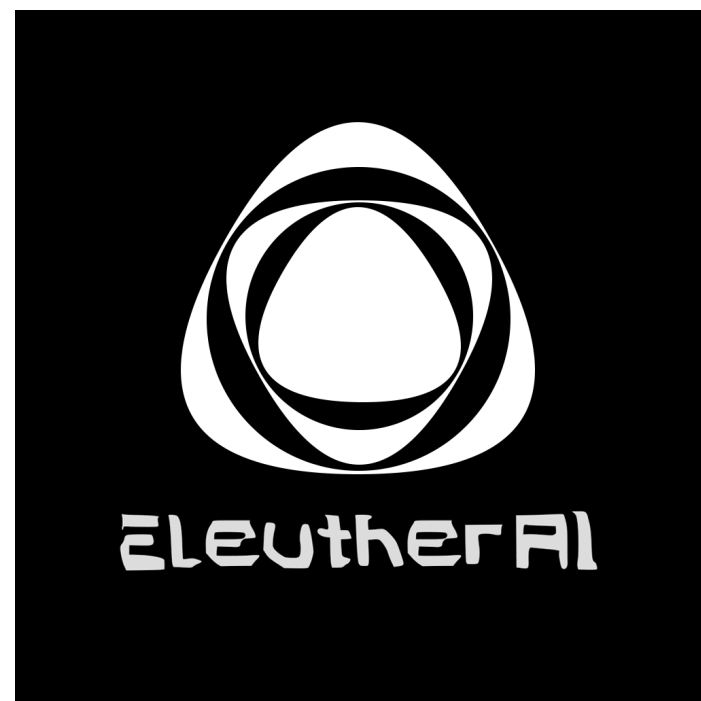
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BigScience



ML Collective

A non-profit
company

A grassroots
community

A coworking
space

A distributed research lab
(we publish papers!)

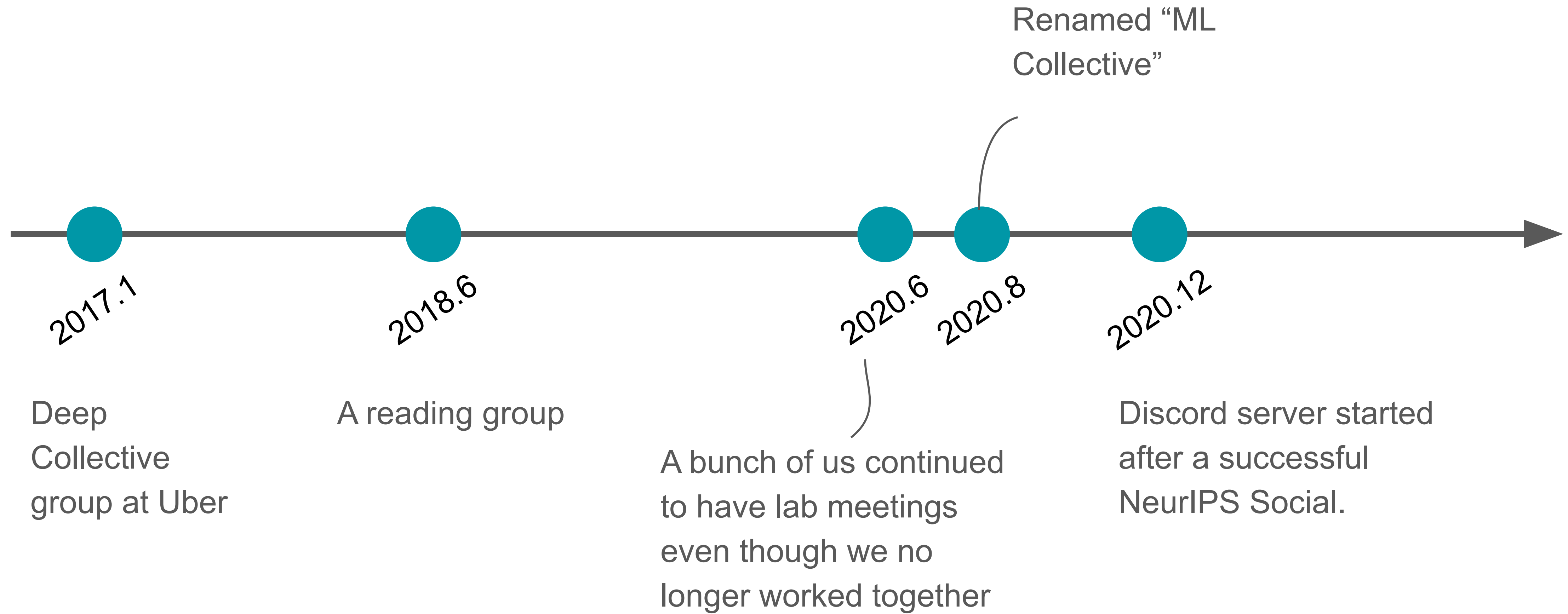
A study group

A career network

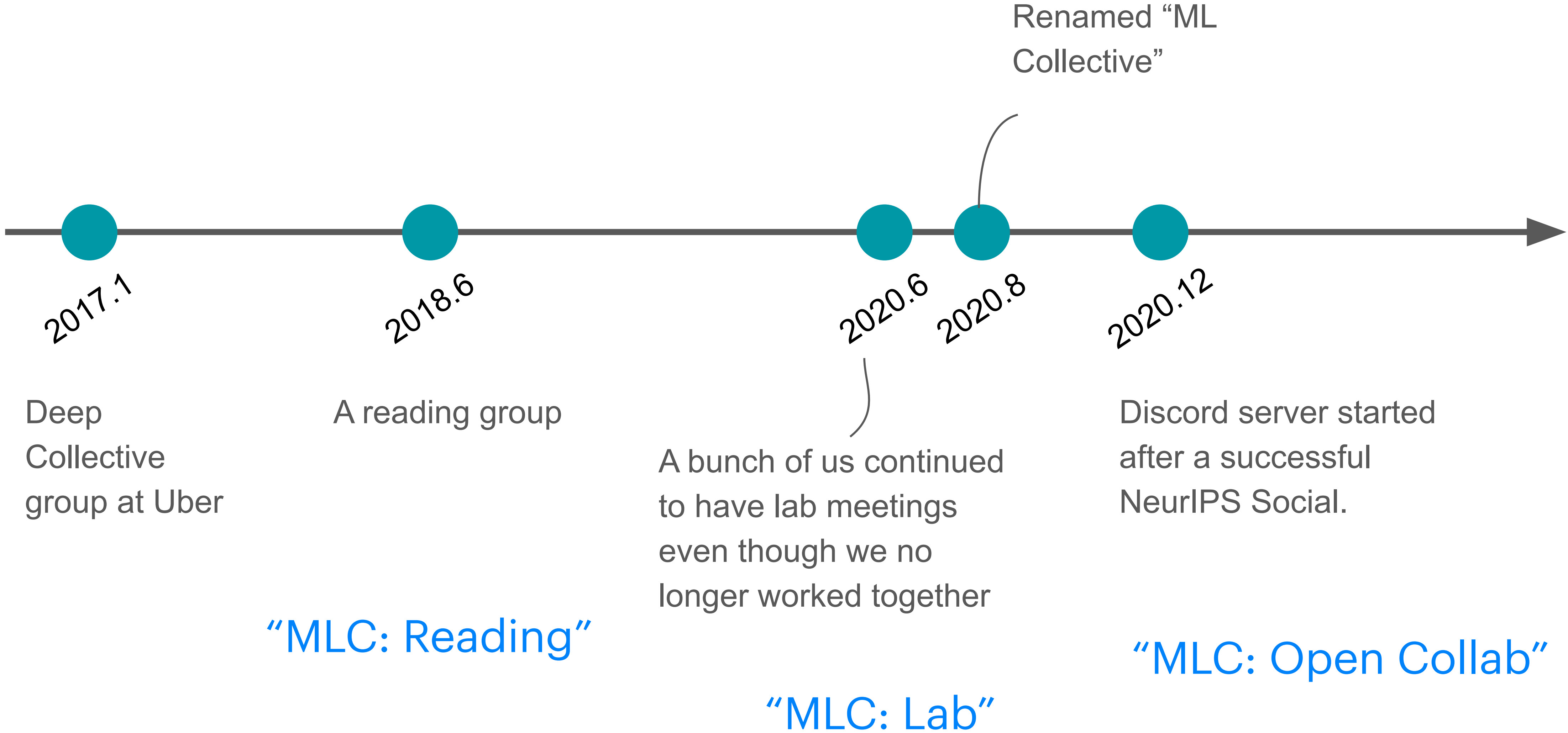
MLC is a lab for those who
want a research home.

(Who are lacking a lab, or finding their
existing lab unsatisfying)

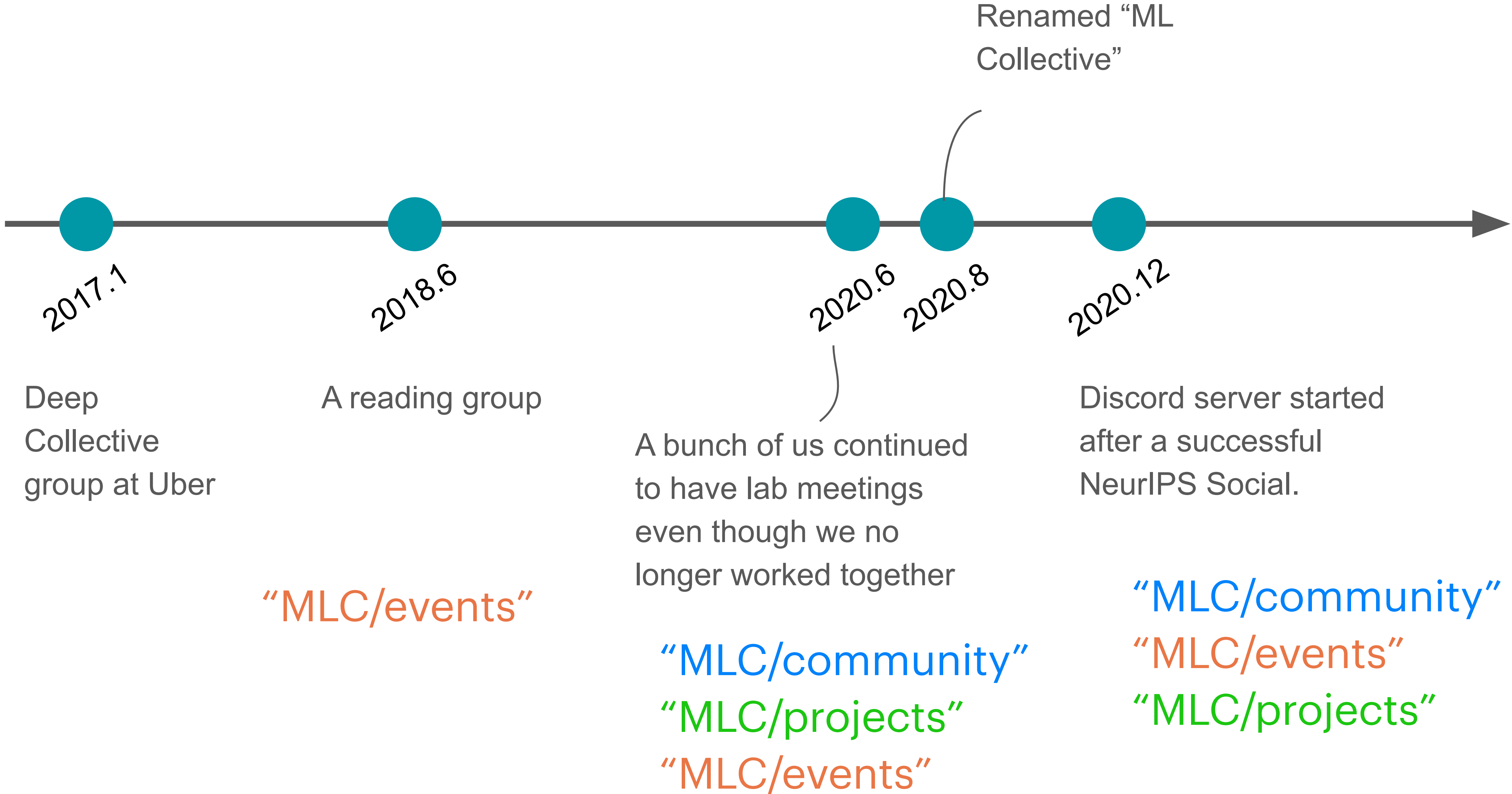
How it started



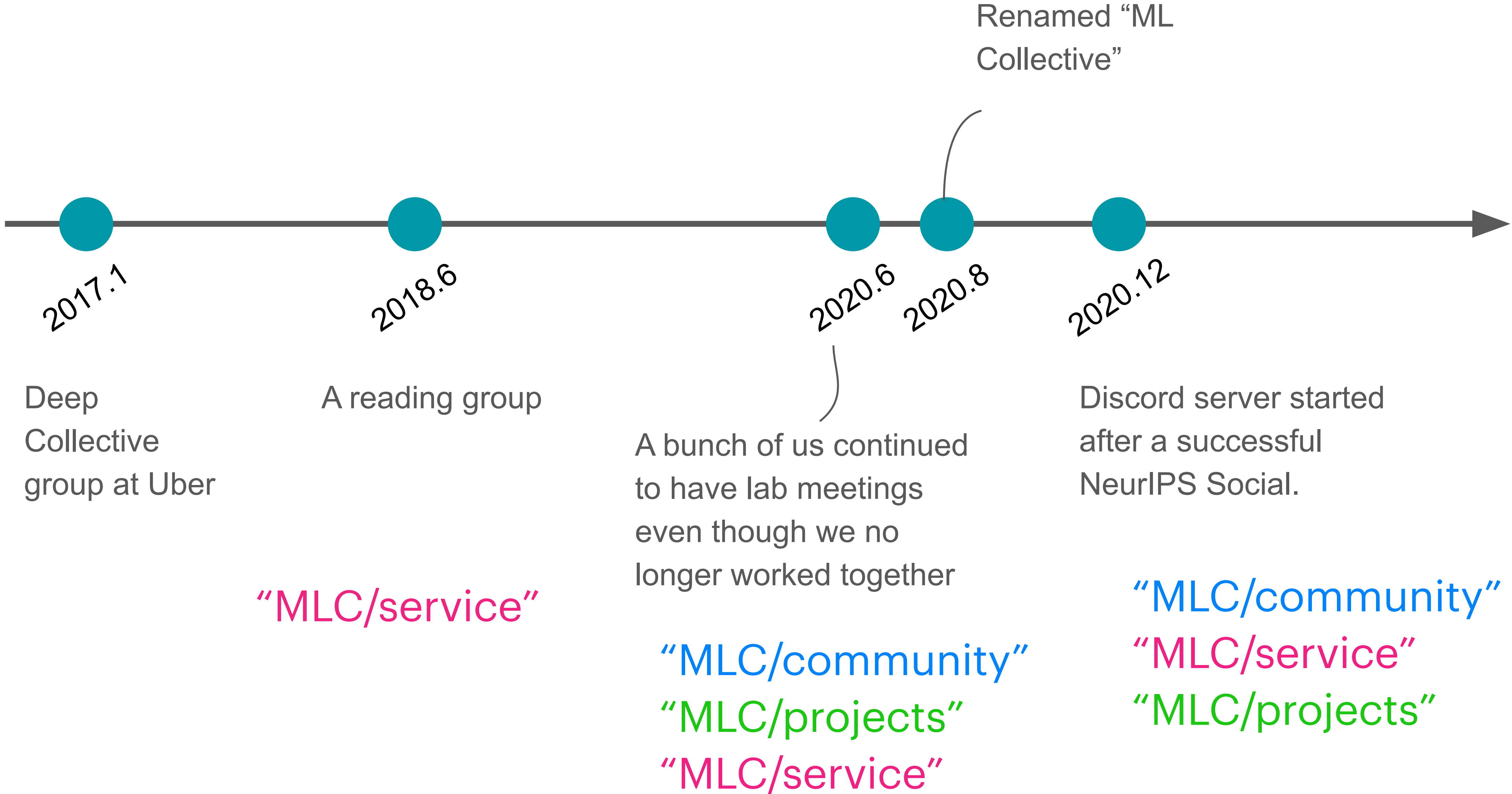
How it started



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How it's going

- Discord: 2,435 members*
- DLCT Reading group: 2,278 subscribers*
- Twitter: 5,695 followers*
- YouTube Channel: 859 subscribers*
- Tons of service: research jams, office hours, OpenClubHouse, conf socials, grad school application help sessions ...
- 6 sponsored (GCP credits) projects
- A wiki (collaborative writing space)

* as of Dec 18, 2021

From talk: “AI research: the unreasonably narrow path and how not to be miserable”

Misconception #1: Talent vs. Opportunity

Misconception #2: Individualistic vs. Collective

Misconception #3: Competitor vs. Collaborator

From talk: “AI research: the unreasonably narrow path and how not to be miserable”

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ML Collective

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What a true positive ML research is == What MLC could be

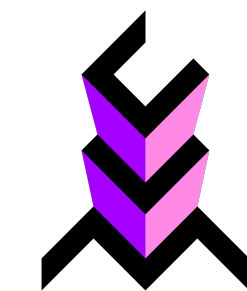
- A true (and lasting) marriage between community building and research training
- A customized, individualized growing path for everyone
- Scalable mentorship with little power differential
- Increased wellbeing
- Personal freedom
- Science driven by love and curiosity, rather than fear and anxiety

“We have come a long way,
we have a long way to go. In
between we are somewhere.”

— Kim Stanley Robinson

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