

# Picking a Research Topic

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**It is a dark art**



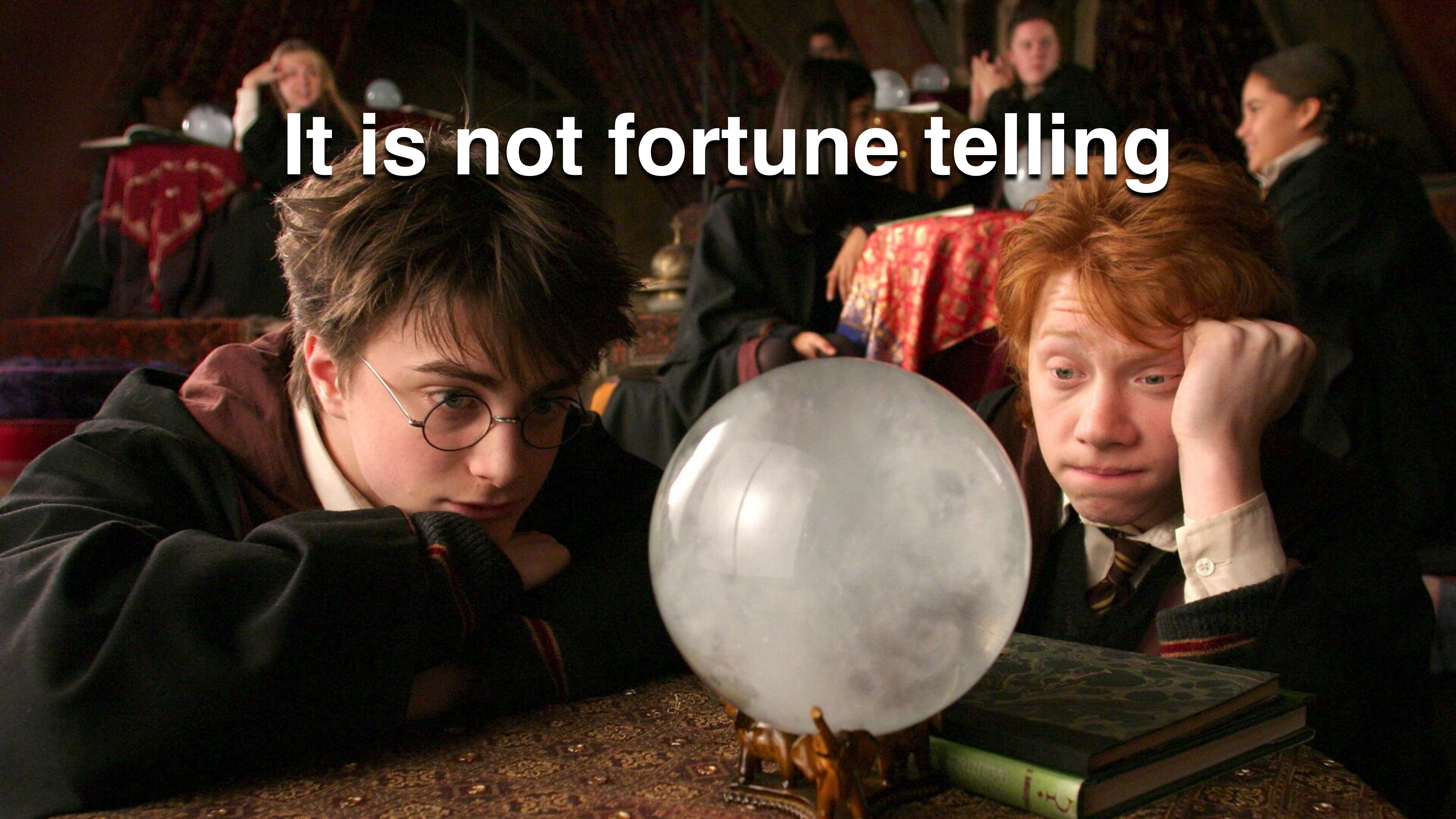


**But it is not random luck**





**It is not fortune telling**

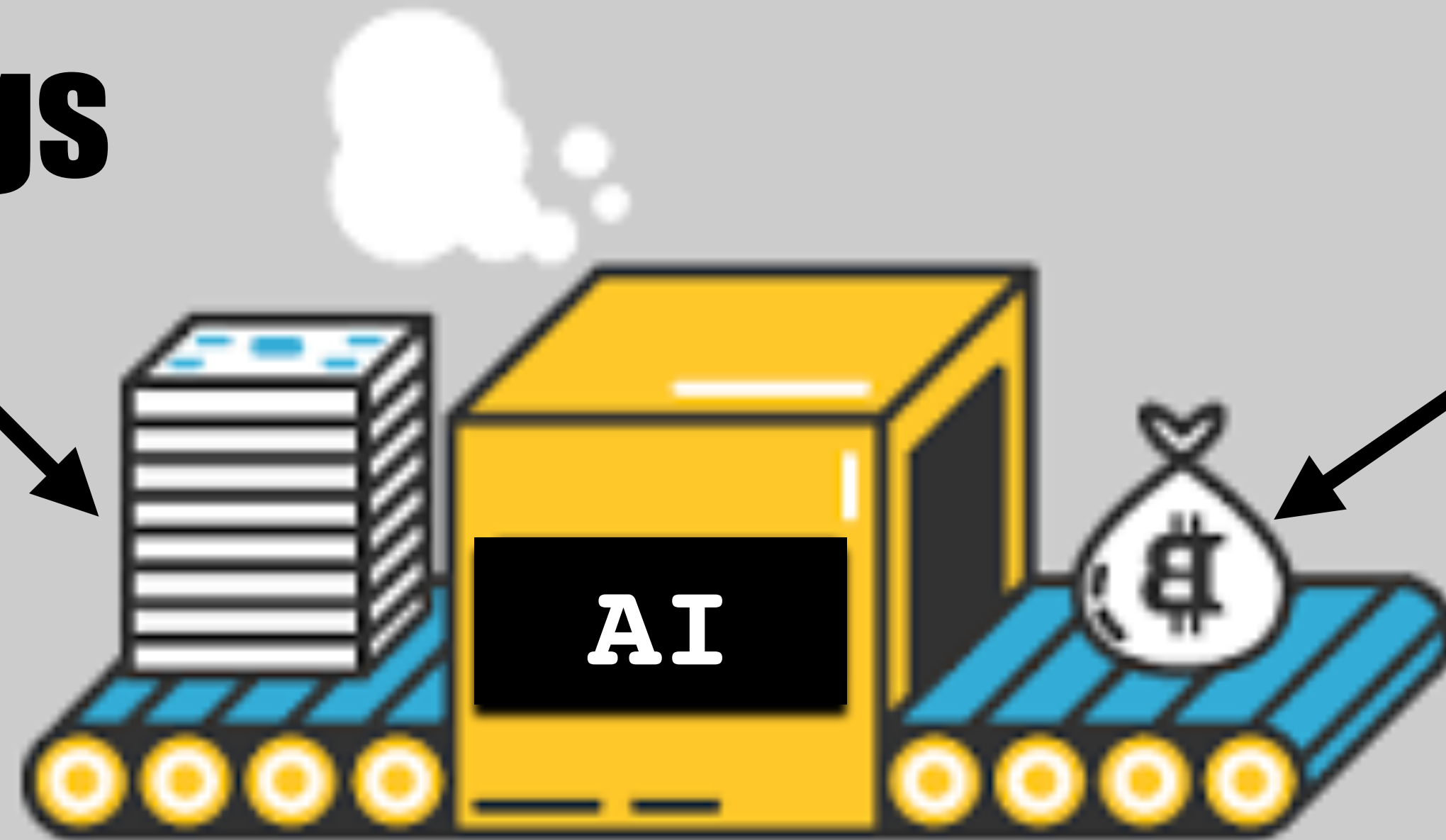




**And it is not machine learning  
(maybe a little bit)**

**SOSP 2019  
Proceedings**

**Brilliant  
research  
ideas**



# Irene's Guide to Picking Research\*

**DON'T  
PANIC**

\*some restrictions may apply

# 1. Pick something that is research

- Harder than you might think ...  
because we can't seem to agree
- Easier than you might think ...  
because more things are research  
than you might assume

# Research 101

**YOUR RESEARCH!**



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## 2. Pick something others are excited about

- Pushing on research by yourself sucks.
- Find interested people at all levels: your advisor, your lab, your research community.



# **3. Pick something you are excited about.**

- Research projects take a long time.
- They are really hard.



## 4. Pick something you are qualified to do.

- Make sure you have the expertise for success.
- And if not, make sure you have experts to help you.



## 5. Pick something you are uniquely qualified to do.

- Maybe you have some insight that others have not had before
- Or some expertise across two areas
- Or some resources (e.g., experts, hardware, prototypes) that others don't



# Irene's 5 rules to picking research

1. Pick something that is research
2. Pick something others are excited about
3. Pick something you are excited about
4. Pick something you are qualified to do
5. Pick something you are uniquely qualified to do