

## Deirdré

23 Jul 2016

Several years ago I had a burning desire to improve the state of technical education, and wanted to develop books, blog posts, talks, and videos. I'd previously worked as a technical instructor and saw opportunities to try new things, but had encountered resistance to change. Some felt it both ridiculous and egotistical to want to actually film engineers talking about their own engineering! Look at youtube now, where almost every conference talk is videoed, is popular, and is hugely useful. I was wanting to do this a decade ago.



At Kernel Conference Australia in 2009, I met Deirdré Straughan. She was an OpenSolaris community manager at the time, and was dragging video equipment with her everywhere to film engineers. She shared my passion and drive to create excellent technical content, pioneer new ideas, and to help the community. She was also wicked smart, and someone who I felt was my equal.

Since then we've worked on many projects together: articles, blog posts, talks, videos, and books. She helped me get my first solo conference talk, USENIX/LISA 2010, and helped with many more. She's filmed me on countless occasions, and edited countless articles. I was never a great writer to begin with, but I've improved a lot with her help, and cannot write anything nowadays without hearing her advice in my head.

The largest projects we worked on were my last two books. We spent hundreds of hours together, discussing ideas, planning, creating, researching, soliciting feedback, and, arguing. Deirdré touched every word on every page, had me rewrite sections, delete sections, and rewrote sections herself. She was able to handle any technical depth and improve the content, without breaking subtle technical meanings.

Copy-editing large books, when you both really care about the outcome, is an intimate process. You get to know someone. I got to know Deirdré, who is not just an amazing woman in tech, but an amazing person.

Last year Deirdré got cancer. For someone I cared deeply about and who has helped me so much, it was painful to feel so helpless in return, although my pain was nothing compared to what she endured. I couldn't do much, apart from drive her to chemo, and stay with her every night. Fortunately, as far as the doctors can say, the treatment worked! Deirdré is cured.

Will we write another book? We have several good ideas, and we've started work on one a while ago. Although my spare time has been more spent on other projects, especially bcc/BPF (my books are spare time projects). The heavy lifting in bcc/BPF is wrapping up soon, so, I'll have more time for books... I'll also have more time with Deirdré.

Deirdré and I are now partners!

You can read more about Deirdré on [her blog](#) and the [techies](#) project, and follow her on [twitter](#).

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