



Mr. Josh Greenberg
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
630 Fifth Avenue
Suite 2550
New York, NY, 10111

Dear Mr. Greenberg:

I am writing this letter in strong support of the proposal by the Mozilla Foundation and Software Carpentry to develop and host a series of two-day scientific computing workshops. Workshops like these, especially leveraging distributed peer-to-peer education technology, will be critical to the education of the next generation of scientists.

Biologists and other scientists are well trained, of course, in their own specific disciplines. However, "training" for number crunching and data analysis often consists of stumbling around with Excel spreadsheets. This process is not scalable to the size of data sets that are now commonplace in all disciplines (not just molecular biology).

My co-author Casey Dunn and I have written a book, *Practical Computing for Biologists* (<http://practicalcomputing.org>), in an attempt to bring useful computing skills to scientists. The response, from readers and participants in our own training workshops, has been overwhelmingly positive. The need that motivated the writing of the book is echoed in the grateful letters that we receive. ("Where has this book been??" is a typical response.)

The skills and goals of the proposed courses are entirely compatible with the urgent educational needs of scientists. You cannot teach them every program they might use for their research, but you can give them a confident start leveraging the power of the internet to create an interactive research environment. Once they have a few basic skills, the discipline-specific learning curve is extremely rapid.

Should this proposal be successful, I would be excited to participate in hosting and/or mentoring at one or more of these software bootcamps. I think they will be a critical component of science training, even after university curricula catch up to the need for fundamental computer skills among the scientists they are educating.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S Haddock', written in a cursive style.

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