Jan. 3, 2018 1:19 pm

'The R community is doing really well in gender diversity'

A new meetup, R-Ladies Philly, looks to build on that momentum.

By Roberto Torres / REPORTER

R-Ladies has over 50 global chapters. Pictured here, an R-Ladies Vancouver event.

(Photo via @RLadiesGlobal)

With data science quickly slipping into so many aspects of our lives, the open-source R programming language has been gaining notoriety for its use in statistical analysis and data visualization, despite its long-running face-off with Python.

Per **Elea McDonnell Feit**, a **Drexel University** professor, R's user base has exploded.

"It's optimized for statistical analysis," said the researcher, who's been working with R since 2003 and coauthored a book called *R for Marketing Research and Analytics*.

Next week, Philly will be getting a local chapter of a global group that seeks to rally local women in tech around the language: **R-Ladies Philly**. The group will meet for the first time next Wednesday to intro the Philly community to the might of the language.

"I want to have a community that's very inclusive and willing to have women take the lead," said organizer **Alice Walsh**, a senior research investigator at **Bristol-Myers Squibb**, who moved to Philly in 2007. The aim, per the researcher, is to setup an inclusive learning environment around the language. Initially, the programming will focus on beginner content, but R-Ladies Philly seeks to appeal to both entry-level and advanced users.

Last year, an email to the organizers of R-Ladies Global, which now has 60 local chapters around the world, led to Walsh getting access to a **Slack** channel, Git repositories and information. Along with Walsh, developers **Katerina Placek** and **Katie Cousins** are also organizing.

Per a rough 2016 graph, there were more women among top contributors to R projects than other languages like Java and Python. The stat is indicative of what McDonnell Feit sees as an ethos of the R community: diversity.

"The R community is doing really well in gender diversity," the professor said. "It's a shining star in the tech community where there are awful things going on. It's always made me happy to be involved in R, a community that's been very supporting of women."

It's a platform, McDonnell Feit said, where spaces are proactively created.

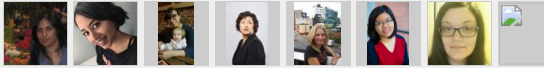"I'm excited to bring my students to this community," she said.

NEW YEAR, NEW R MEETUP!

Wednesday, Jan 10, 2018, 6:00 PM
MakeOffices
2001 Market Street #2500 Philadelphia, PA

23 R-Ladies Attending

Ring in the new year with a resolution to use R more!Who are we? We are a few women in Philadelphia who use R and wanted to have a friendly community to extend our R skills and network with other women R users. We learned about the international R-Ladies community and decided to try it in our city.Anyone with an interest in R is welcome. You can ...

Check out this Meetup →