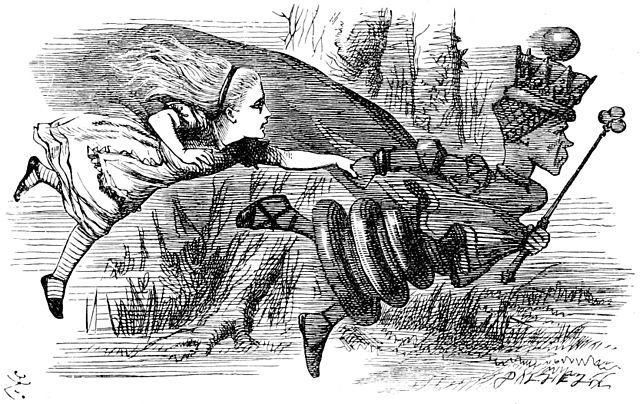
CodeRefinery and the Red Queen's race



John Tenniel’s illustration of Alice and the Red queen, 1871

‘Well, in OUR country,’ said Alice, still panting a little, ‘you’d

generally get to somewhere else--if you ran very fast for a long time,

as we’ve been doing.’

‘A slow sort of country!’ said the Queen. ‘Now, HERE, you see, it takes

all the running YOU can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to

get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!’

Lewis Carroll, [Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Through_the_Looking-Glass,_and_What_Alice_Found_There) , Chapter II

**Charles Dogson**, better known for his pen name Lewis Carroll was a mathematician at Oxford. He probably did not write his famous dialogue between Alice and the Red Queen as an allegory of the world of academic research but few modern researchers could fault him if he had. Just as Alice needs to constantly run to keep still, a researcher needs to focus all their effort to creating the next publishable result and publication.

The marginal cost of a researcher's time is very small. The cost of adding one extra hour of effort is not really borne by anyone other than the researcher. The system is rigged like the Mad Hatter’s tea party: it’s always deadline-time. Many postgraduate students are trapped in an eternal haste without a chance to step back and rethink their working practices. They probably know that their working practices are not the best possible, but in doubt and under time pressure the tried and tested method is a much more natural choice than taking chances with something new.

## Research and Software Engineering

Researchers are the top professionals in their respective fields. Yet, they must also increasingly venture into the realm of programming to implement the algorithms and analyses that are an integral part of their research.

Software developers, on the other hand, are considered a very expensive asset by their employers. These employers have put considerable money and effort into tools and practices that improve the cost-efficiency of software engineers.

Would a researcher who writes code benefit from using the best tools and practices employed by software engineers? Definitely.

## CodeRefinery

How is a researcher to know what the best tools and practices are without investing three to five years in getting a second degree in computer sciences and engineering? That's what the CodeRefinery project is about.

CodeRefinery is a project by the Nordic e-Infrastructure Consortium (NeIC) to teach and support scientists in the use of software engineering best practices. The first stage consists of workshops offered in Nordic university cities.

CodeRefinery is a team of scientists and software engineers who have put effort into planning a three-day curriculum to teach the most beneficial software engineering concepts and best practices to researchers. Their mission is to spread this knowledge by giving workshops and continually improve the contents. The project will host workshops in Helsinki on December 12th to 14th and Turku during the first academic spring term 2018. Both workshops are are expected to fill rapidly. Follow <http://coderefinery.org> for updates on signing up etc..

CodeRefinery is here to help you help yourself get to the bottom of the rabbit hole.

**Jyry Suvilehto**

The author is regularly ashamed when reading his old code, sometimes just minutes after writing it. His mission in life is to teach others to embrace that shame and learn from it.