



.Layer

January 24, 2019

Prof. Mary Thompson
Chair of the Fundraising Committee
Statistical Society of Canada

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Subject: education and outreach proposal

Dear Prof. Thompson,

I am writing to you on behalf of *.Layer* (pronounced “dot layer”), a community created for promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing in the field of data science. As an organization in its creation process, we were very pleased to learn about the recent call for education and outreach proposals of the Statistical Society of Canada. I will try, in this letter, to clearly describe who we are, what our mission is, and how we intend to put our words into action. We hope that you will find our proposal convincing enough to grant us your support.

Who we are

Last Summer, some of us organized a week-end of presentations and activities related to data science. Friends of friends, fifteen in total, then met for an epic brainstorm. Out of it emerged *.Layer*, a hub consisting of more or less 25 students and/or practitioners in the fields of statistics, actuarial science and computer science, (mostly) residing in either Montreal or Quebec City. We create, through various initiatives, both virtual and physical spaces where people can meet, learn and share. Members responsible for the present proposal are (* = SSC member):

Jean-Thomas Baillargeon, M.Sc. FSA, CERA

PhD student at Laval University (computer science)

Lecturer at Laval University

Former actuarial analyst at Industrial Alliance (6 years)

Former data product manager at Xpertsea Solution (2 years)

David Beauchemin, B.Sc.

Masters student at Laval University (computer science)

Christopher Blier-Wong*, M.Sc.

PhD student at Laval University (actuarial science)

Masters student at Laval University (computer science)

Antoine Buteau

[??]

Stéphane Caron*, B.Sc.

Actuarial analyst at Intact Insurance

Masters student at Laval University (mathematics and statistics)

Marie-Pier Côté*

[??]

Member of the *committee on new investigators* of the SSC

Nicolas Garneau

[??]

Samuel Perreault*, M.Sc.

PhD student at Laval University (mathematics and statistics)

Research & innovation analyst at The Cooperators Insurance

Three of us, Marie-Pier Côté, Christopher Blier-Wong and Samuel Perreault presented at the 2018 SSC meeting.

We are currently in the process of registering a nonprofit organization for administering the community's activities. Here is a sketch of the structure we intend to put in place.

Board of directors: The board consists of five people: an executive president, a secretary, a treasurer, a vice-president assigned to communication and a vice-president assigned to external affairs.

Members: In addition to contributing and participating to the organization's projects and events, members have the right to vote during the general assemblies. One must first be accepted by the current members in order to gain its member status.

Sympathizers: This group includes any other individual involved in the community's projects and events. They can share their opinion, but have no right to vote during assemblies.

This simple structure allows the organization to be as inclusive as possible while assuring that funds and efforts are spent on activities that are aligned with its mission. Any sympathizer minimally involved in the community, and demonstrating that he or she shares its inclusive values, should expect to be accepted as a member if requested.

Our mission

As stated, the main objective behind *.Layer* is to create both virtual and physical spaces for the curious as well as the experimented. So far, we have been working mostly on the two following initiatives.

- (a) *Meetup Machine Learning Québec*: This project was founded by Nicolas Garneau. As the name suggests, it is dedicated to the organization of meetups and conferences related to machine learning in Quebec City. Before *.Layer* even existed, *Meetup* had already organized three events in 2017-2018 (at Laval University/XpertSea's offices/Coveo's offices), attracting more than 100 people in total. Since then, Nicolas joined forces with many others to organize events of even greater scope. Concretely, we organized both a conference (Laval University) and a hackathon (Bloc Solutions' offices) on statistics and machine learning applied to casualty insurance; as well as a workshop on natural language processing (Laval University). These events attracted an approximate total of 200 people. They were paid for (rooms, food, beverages, web services for GPUs, etc.) by our sponsors: Intact Insurance, Co-operators Insurance, Bloc Solutions and, from Laval University, the Big Data Research Center (CRDM), the Chaire d'actuariat and the service de placements (SPLA).
- (b) *.Layer blog*: During the founding week-end of *.Layer*, we agreed that a blog would be great as a first project to collaborate on, as well as a convenient way of reporting our activities and sharing our ideas. Though great devotion: the blog is already up and running at dotlayer.org.

We seek your support for helping on the four matters detailed below.

1. Structuring the community

We are lucky to have among us a professional graphic designer, Jean-Christophe Yelle, who created our logo at no cost. However, we believe that professional services not directly related to data science (like logo design, t-shirt design, social media setup, and so on) should be fairly remunerated. In the budget provided with the letter, we also detail recent and future expenses related to the registration of *.Layer* as a nonprofit organization.

Member in charge: Stéphane Caron

2. *.Layer* blog

We are now working on a bilingual display of the website (en/fr). So far, some of the articles are in English, some in French. In order to be as inclusive as possible, we would like to have the important ones in both languages. A revision of the website by a professional would be of great use. ****

Member in charge: Antoine Buteau

3. Educational events.

More *Meetup Machine Learning Québec* events are coming. An introduction to the foundations machine learning, followed by a workshop on computer vision are offered on February 7 and 9 respectively. We are always seeking funds for the organization of more events of the kind. More details are provided in the budget.

Member in charge: Nicolas Garneau

4. New projects.

Some of us are already working on a francophone podcast named *OpenLayer*. In video clips of about 45-60 minutes, David Beauchemin would meet different actors of the data science community to discuss the journey that took them where they are today and what their day-to-day looks like. The objective is to shed light on the job market, a hidden layer for aspiring data scientists. David could for example meet a Ph.D. student in statistics or artificial intelligence or a data analyst at some insurance company. The concept is influenced by podcasts *à la* Joe Rogan and “Mike Ward sous écoute”. In each episode, we will discover someone and his/her surroundings through a casual conversation.

Member in charge: David Beauchemin

In addition to the funds obtained from sponsors, we intend to ask voluntary contributions from our members/sympathizers. Your support would hence help us reduce such burden on individuals.

Administration of the funds

Administering the funds and reporting how they are used is the *raison d'être* of the nonprofit entity tied to *.Layer*. Until its official incorporation, the members responsible for the proposal will take the responsibility of providing such report to the *Statistical Society of Canada*. With this letter is provided a budget for the coming months, which includes a timeline.

On behalf of everyone involved in *.Layer*, I would like to thank you for considering our proposal. We wish to have convinced you that our mission fits perfectly with the *education and outreach call for proposals* of the SSC and that our projects are worthy of your support.

Sincerely,

Samuel Perreault