



Software Carpentry: Lessons Learned

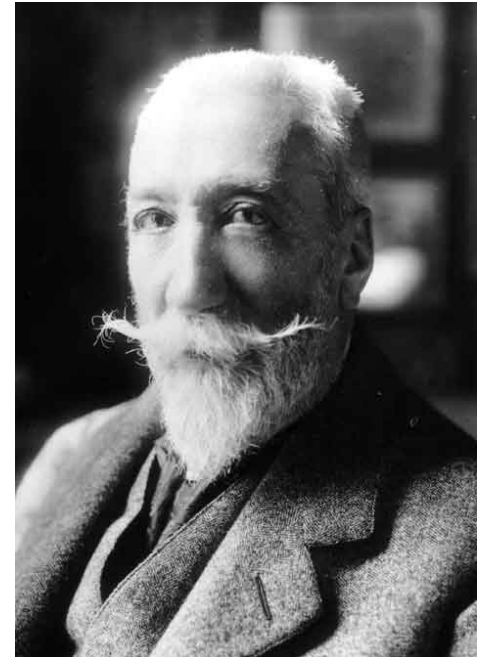
Greg Wilson



Then

Anatole France (1844-1924)

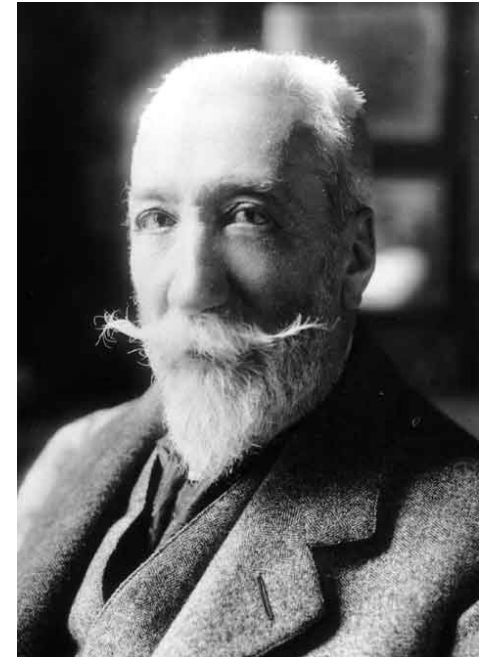
“The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.”



Now

Anatole France (1844-1924)

“The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.”



Today, thanks to computers,
every scientist can devote her working life
to getting software installed.

5-15%



GPU clusters to
analyze petabytes
in the cloud

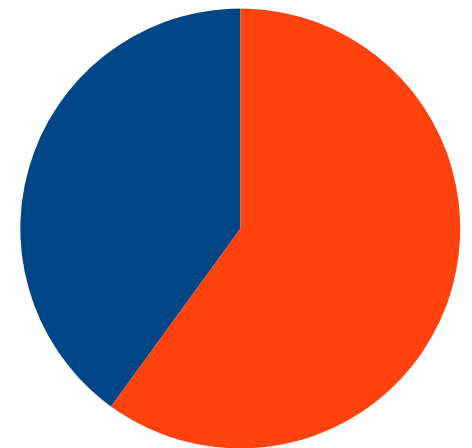
85-95%



Sending each other
spreadsheets
by email

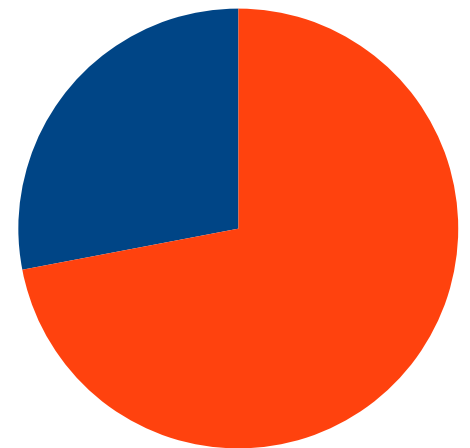
Surely You're Exaggerating

1. How many graduate students write shell scripts to analyze each new data set instead of running those analyses by hand?



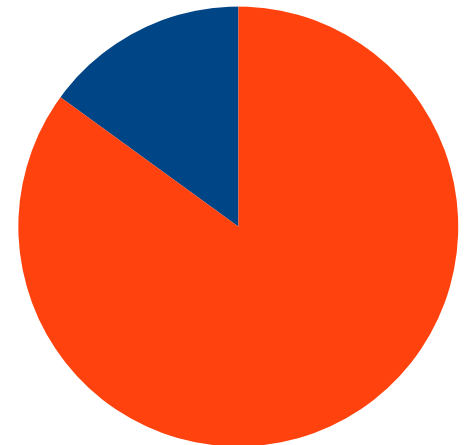
Surely You're Exaggerating

2. How many of them use version control to keep track of their work and collaborate with colleagues?



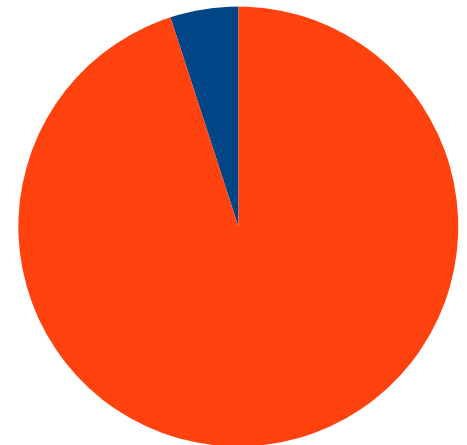
Surely You're Exaggerating

3. How many routinely break large problems into pieces small enough to be
- comprehensible,
 - testable, and
 - reusable?



Surely You're Exaggerating

3. How many routinely break large problems into pieces small enough to be
- comprehensible,
 - testable, and
 - reusable?
- And how many know those are the same things?



Goalposts

A computationally competent scientist can:

- Manage and process data
- Tell if it's been processed correctly
- Find and fix problems when it hasn't been
- Keep track of what she has done
- Share her work with others

Efficiently

It Is Therefore Obvious That...

- Put more computing courses in the curriculum!



- But it's already full

It Is Therefore Obvious That...

- Put a little computing in every course!



- 5 minutes/lecture = 4 courses/degree
- First thing cut when running late

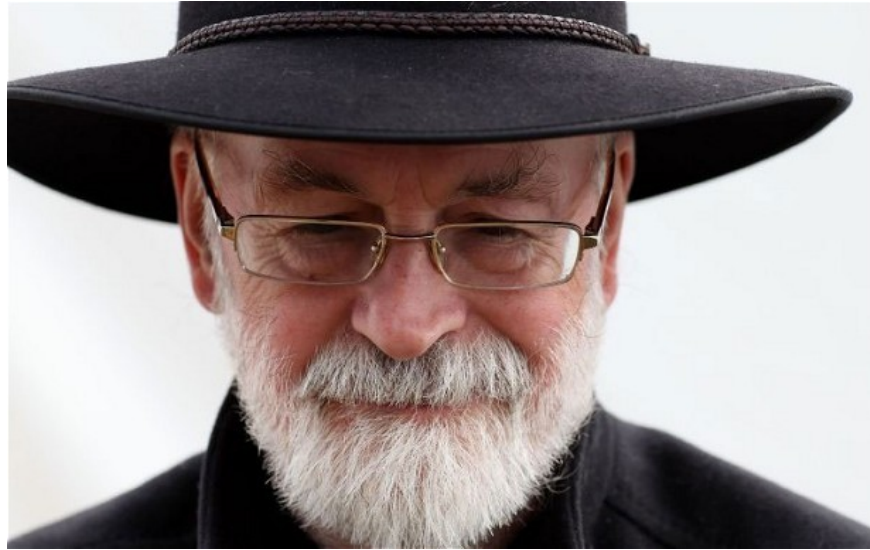
It Is Therefore Obvious That...

- And no matter what we do...



- The blind leading the blind





*If you build a man a fire,
you'll keep him warm for a night.
If you set a man on fire,
you'll keep him warm for the rest of his life.*

— Terry Pratchett

What We Teach

Unix shell

Version control

Python/R/MATLAB

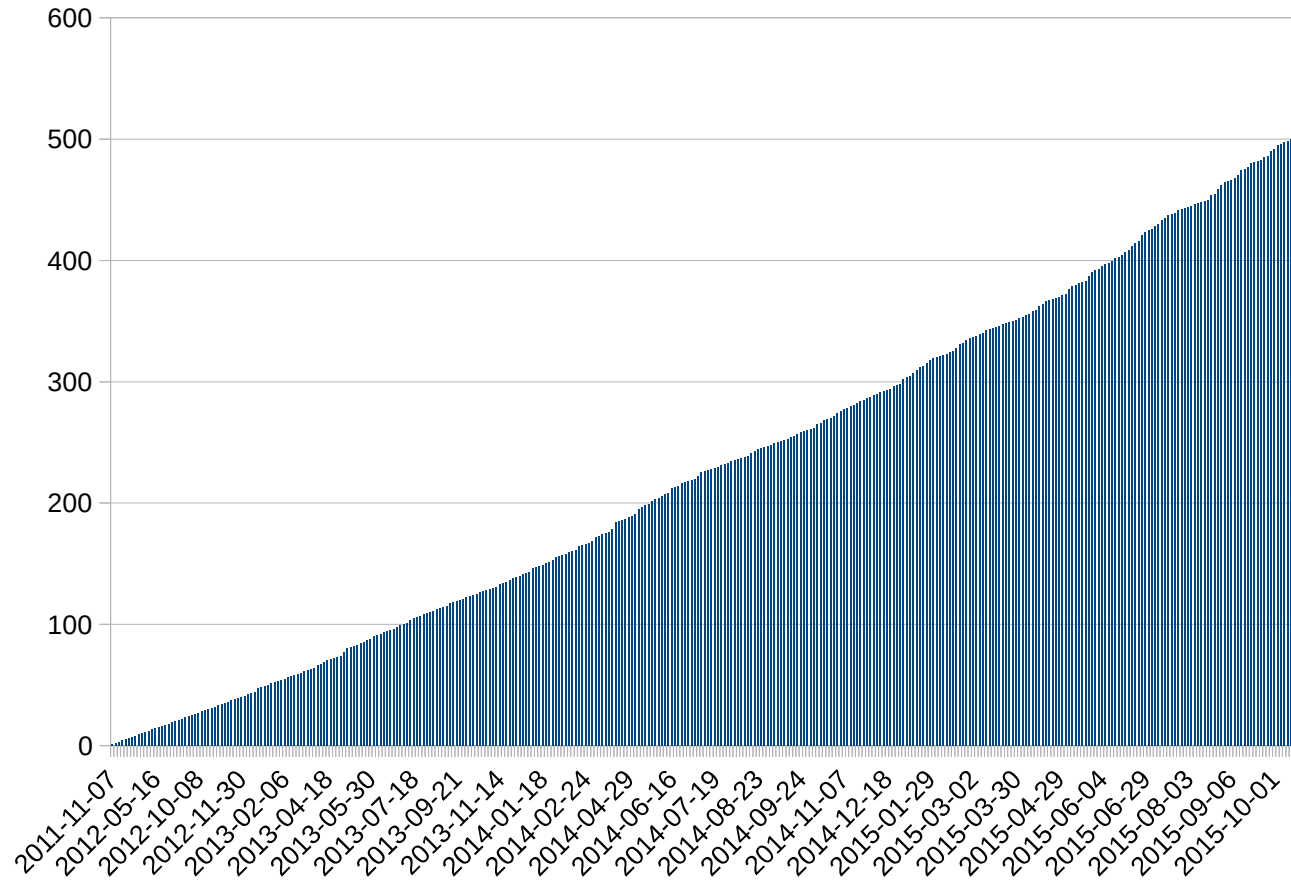
SQL

Make

What We *Actually* Teach

Unix shell	=> Task automation
Version control	=> Track and share work
Python/R/MATLAB	=> Modular programming
SQL	=> Data management
Make	=> Reproducibility

How It's Going



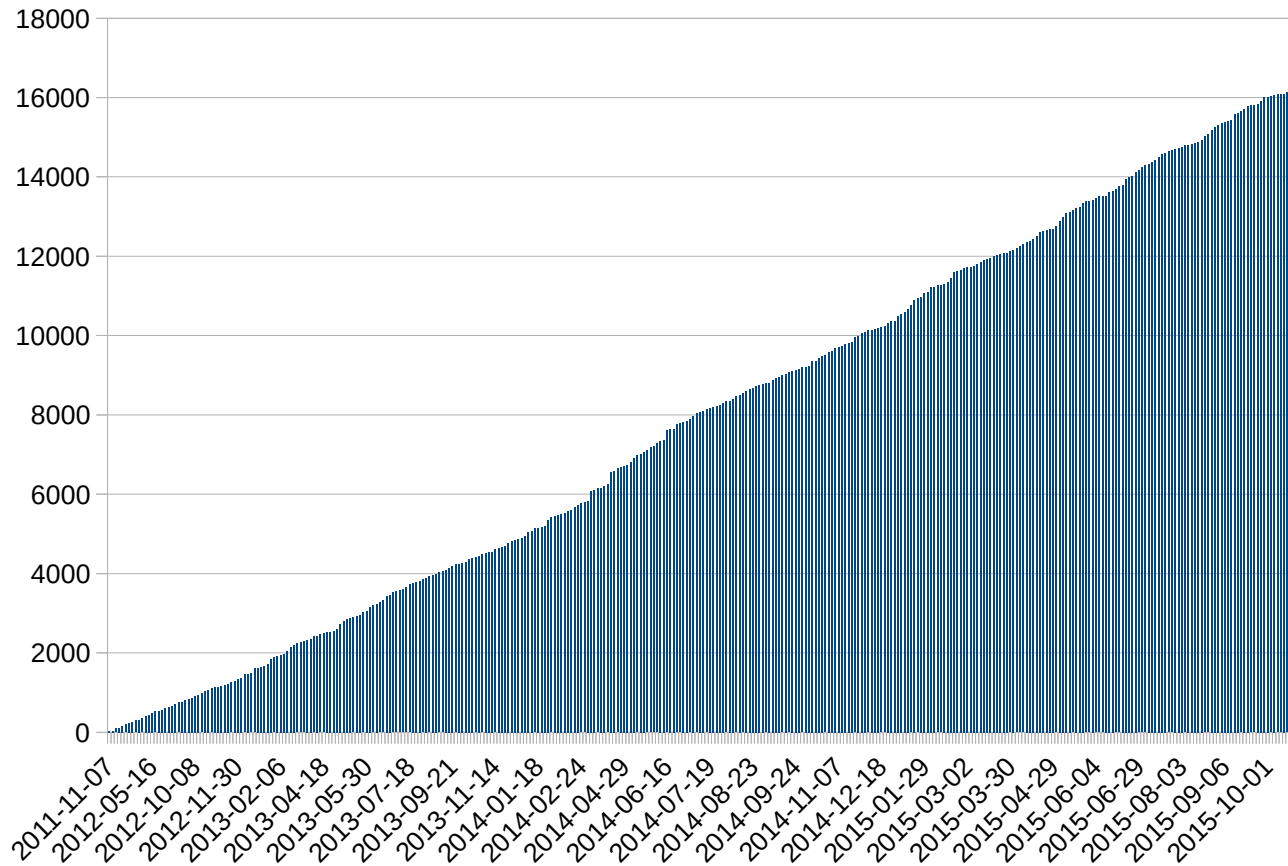
Workshops

How It's Going



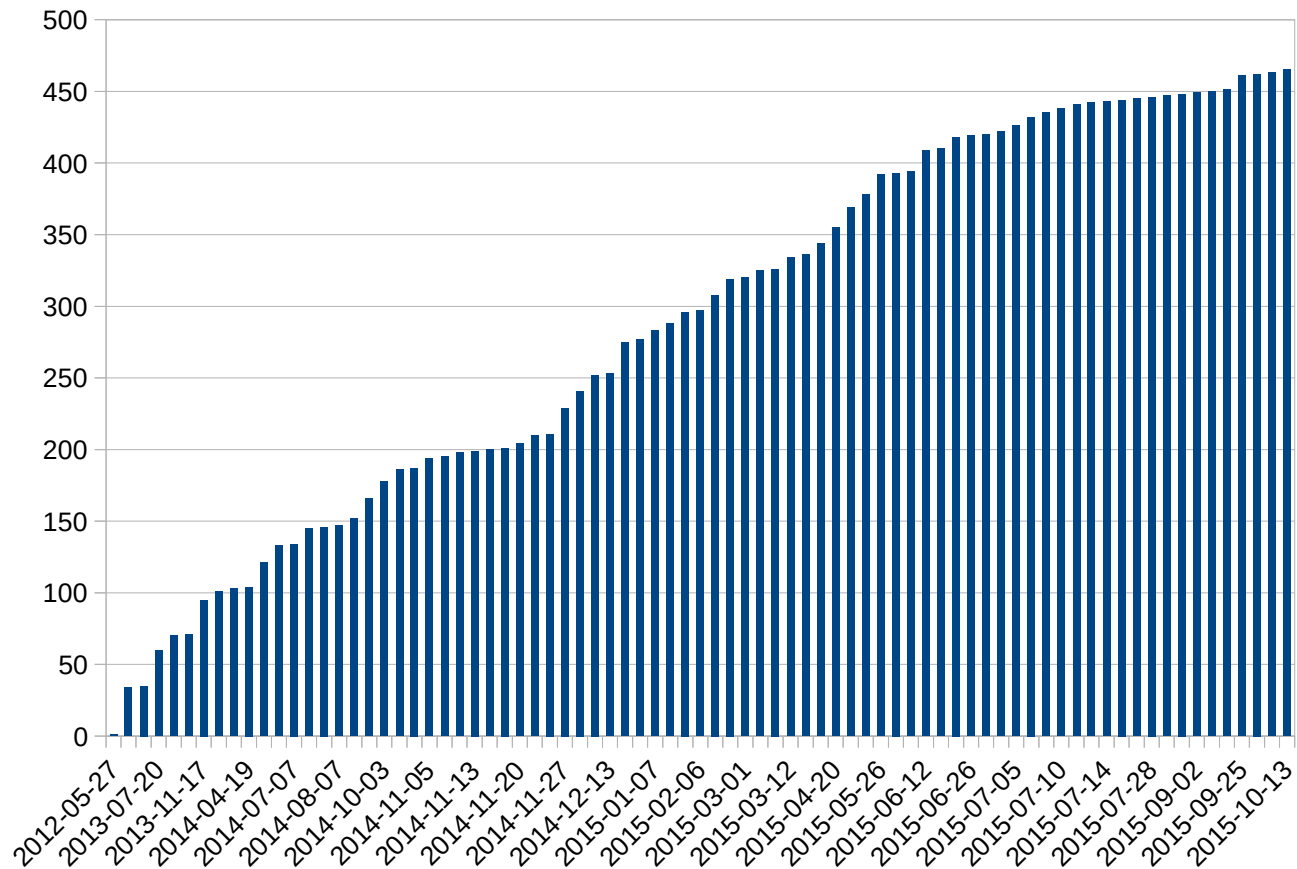
Workshops

How It's Going



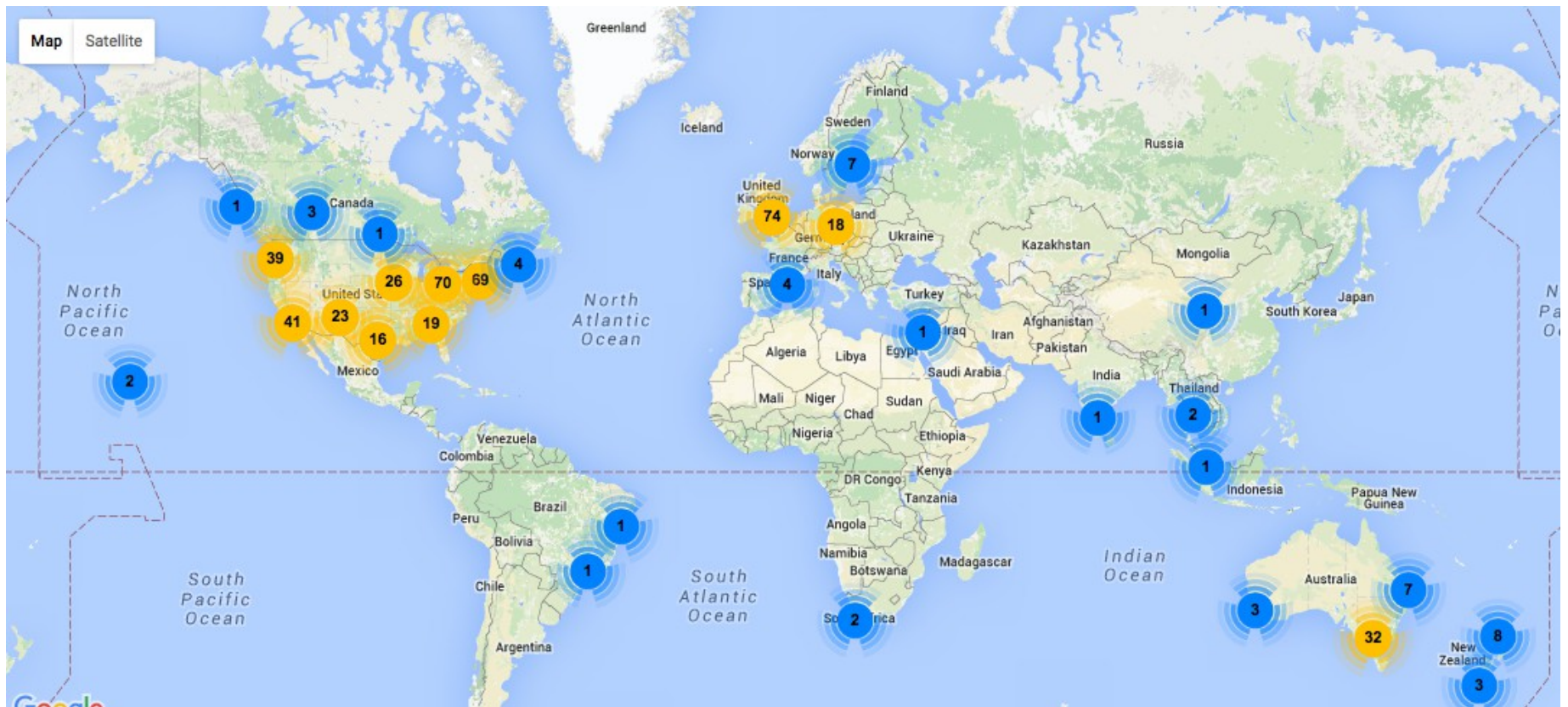
Learners

How It's Going



Instructors

How It's Going



Instructors

What We Learned (Version 1)

- Software engineering isn't appropriate for most scientists
- Week-long workshops are easy to schedule, but bad for learning



What We Learned (Versions 2-3)

- Hard to fit this into existing curricula
- Hard to convince Computer Science departments to care



What We Learned (Version 4)

- Videos aren't cost-effective
- “It's the maintenance, stupid”



And Now... Version 5

- Instructor training creates community
- Collaborative lesson development
- Early joiners are atypical



And Now... Version 5

- Every partner has different needs
- People would rather argue about technology than pedagogy



And Now... Version 5

- Never teach alone
- Learners use their own machines
- Live coding



And Now... Version 5

- Sticky notes
- Collaborative note taking
- Debriefing



And Now... Version 5

- Iterate
- Iterate
- Iterate

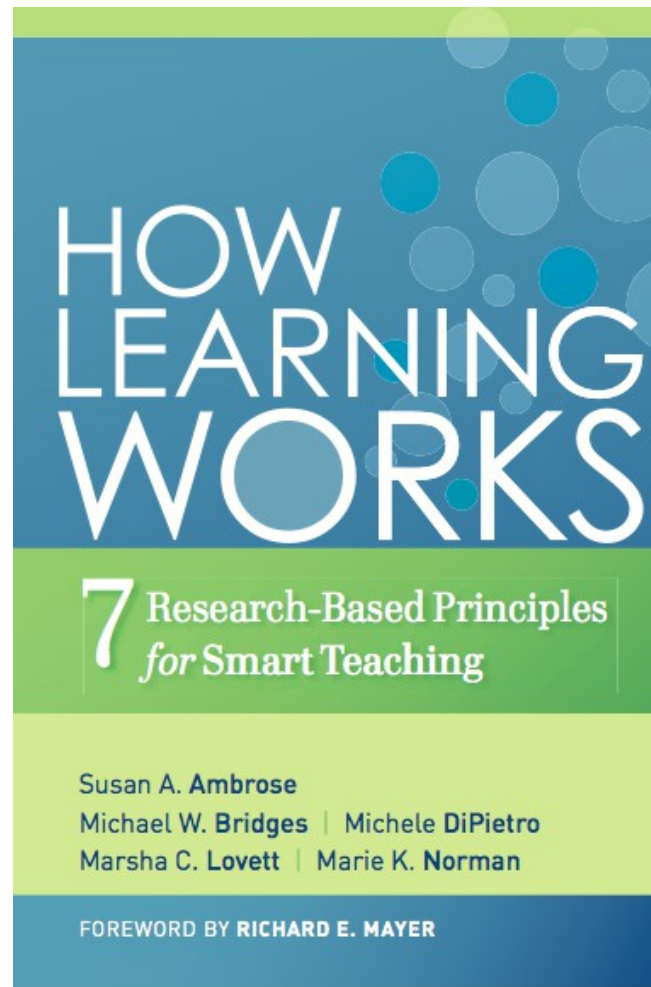


Why People Volunteer

- Make the world a better place
- Self-defense
- Learn this stuff themselves
- Make new friends
- Boost their careers



Learning About Learning



A Puzzle

- Thousands contribute patches to open source software projects
- Millions have edited Wikipedia
- Why don't people build lessons this way?

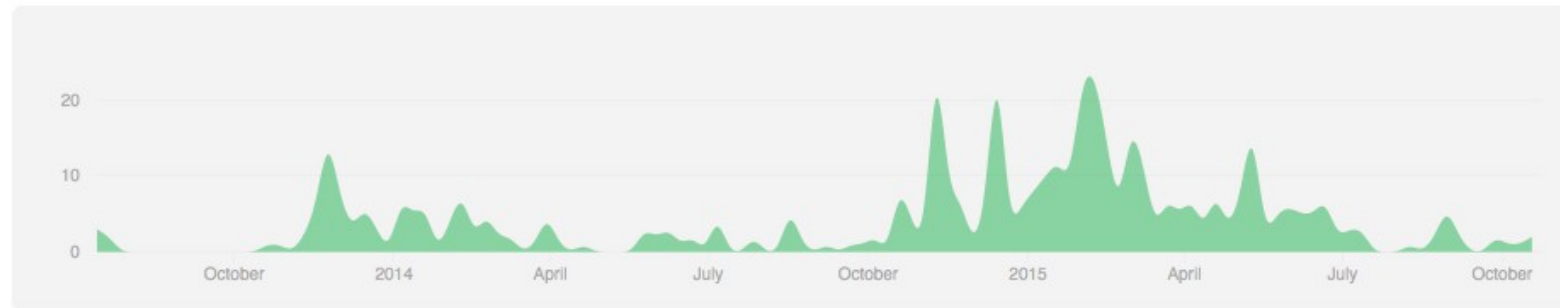


All Together Now

Jul 14, 2013 – Oct 24, 2015

Contributions to gh-pages, excluding merge commits

Contributions: **Commits** ▾



- 187 contributors to our lessons in the run-up to publication
- *A culture of contribution*

The Model Transfers



- Domain-specific lessons
- Shared instructor pool
- Next: librarians, humanities, ...

Why You Should Care

- Make scientists more productive
- A new model for curriculum development
- Give *everyone* a say in shaping 21st Century science



How You Can Help

- Come learn
- Host a workshop
- Become an instructor
- Contribute to our lessons
- Build tools



Thank You



<http://software-carpentry.org>