AI tools in programming

Scientific workflows: Tools and Tips 🛠️

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2024-01-18

What is this lecture series?

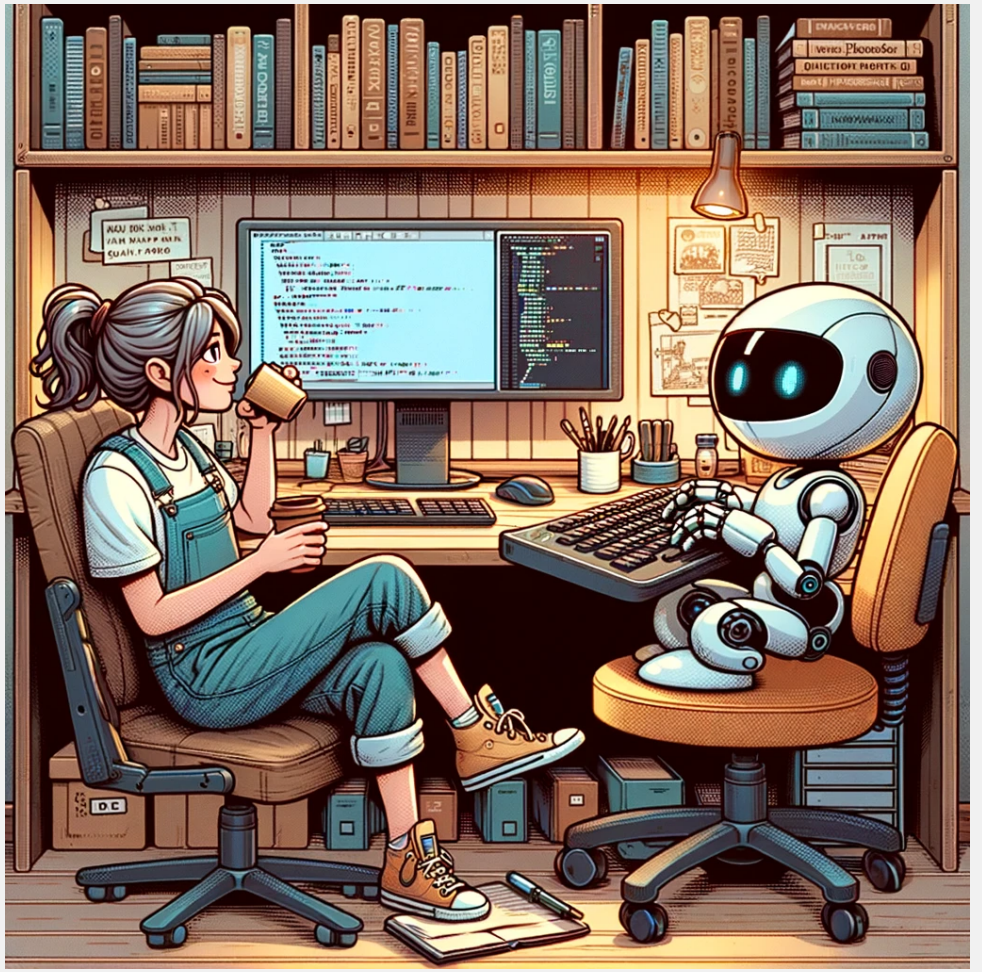
Scientific workflows: Tools and Tips 🛠️

🗓️ Every 3rd Thursday 🕐 4-5 p.m. 📍 Webex

- One topic from the world of scientific workflows
- Material provided online
- If you don't want to miss a lecture
  - Subscribe to the mailing list

Motivation

- AI tools assist programmers with
  - Coding
  - Debugging
  - Learning
  - …
- Higher productivity and efficiency
- More motivation



Overview of tools

- **Browser-based chat bots** (ChatGPT, Bard, …)
  - General-purpose
- **Data-analysis tools** (Data analyst GPT, RTutor, …)
  - Upload data and ask questions about it
  - Download the code that was used for the results
- **Integrated AI tools** (GitHub Copilot, Codium AI, …)
  - Integrated directly in programming environment
  - Real-time suggestions, chat, debugging, …

Today

- Focus on **integrated AI tools**
  - How to use GitHub Copilot to
    - Speed up your coding
    - Improve your code
    - Learn
- Concerns when using AI tools
- **Main goal**: Motivate you to try out tools and find out what fits your workflow
- Find other tools on the website

Now You

❓ What is your **main programming language**

❓ Which **IDE (programming environment)** do you use

❓ Which **AI tools for programming** did you already try

Integrated AI tools for programming

Mainly GitHub Copilot

GitHub Copilot

- Cloud-based AI tool by Github and OpenAI
- Model based on GPT-4 and OpenAI's Codex
  - Specifically trained on source code
- Basic idea: Plugin for your IDE to integrate Copilot
- Works best for well-represented languages (Python, JS, ...)

How to get GitHub Copilot

It's really easy, but you need:

- GitHub Account
- Active GH Copilot subscription (10$ per month)
  - Get it for free as an academic with an educational account
- IDE that supports Copilot
  - Full support: Visual Studio (Code), Vim, Neovim, JetBrains IDEs (e.g. PyCharm)
  - Limited support: RStudio, ?

See website for step-by-step guide and more information.

Using GitHub Copilot

Demo of the main features and use cases

Inline code suggestions

- Copilot tries to predict what you want to do next
- Suggestions are based on the context
  - Previous code
  - Comments
  - Variable and function names
  - …

Get better suggestions

- Provide context
  - Open other files
  - Add top level comments explaining the purpose of the script
  - Name variables and functions properly
  - Copy-paste sample code and delete it later
- Be consistent
  - "Garbage in, garbage out"
  - Have a nice and consistent coding style

Nice side effect of using Copilot: More good-practice coding

Chat

- Ask and give commands regarding:
  - Highlighted lines of code
  - The whole script or project
- Preset commands starting with `/`
  - `/fix`: fix problems in your code
  - `/explain`: explain this code
  - `/test`: write unit tests
  - `/new`: create new projects or scripts with code

Codium AI as an alternative

- No inline code suggestions
- Great functionality to
  - Explain code
  - Suggestsions improve and enhance code
  - Generate tests
- Not in RStudio, but in VS code and many other IDEs
- Free for personal use (for now)

Concerns to consider

- Privacy
  - Chose whether your prompts and suggestions will be used by Github `Github -> Seetings -> Copilot -> Policies`
- Plagiarism
  - Block suggestions matching public code (`Github -> Seetings -> Copilot -> Policies`)
- Ethical concerns
  - For-profit tool trained on open-source
- Environmental concerns
  - Water and enery usage

Usage guidelines

- No definite guidelines, but see examples on lecture website
- **Responsibility**
  - You are responsible for your scientific output
  - Stay critical, double-check
- **Transparency**
  - Make clear for which tasks you used which AI
- **Know relevant guidelines**
  - Journals
  - Your university
- Don't use AI in exams

Summary

- AI tools for programming can be extremely useful
- Try different tools and find the ones you like
- Think about concerns
- Learn about relevant guidelines
- Development is fast, so keep up
- Check out the lecture website if you want to get started

Next lecture

Topic t.b.a.

 15th February  4-5 p.m.  Webex

 Subscribe to the mailing list

 For topic suggestions and/or feedback send me an email

Thank you for your attention :)

Questions?

References

- Experiment on programmer efficiency with AI tools
- GitHub Copilot
- GitHub Copilot privacy FAQ
- GitHub Copilot Docs: Useful information and guides on how to use Copilot
- Prompt engineering with GitHub Copilot
- Codium AI

References

Guidelines

- DFG Rules on the use of AI particularly for proposals
- Nature living guidelines on responsible use of generative AI in research
- EU AI Act
- Universities (German)
  - FU Berlin "Eckpunktepapier" (German)
  - TU Berlin on AI: Mainly about AI in teaching but contains some general links to other guidelines