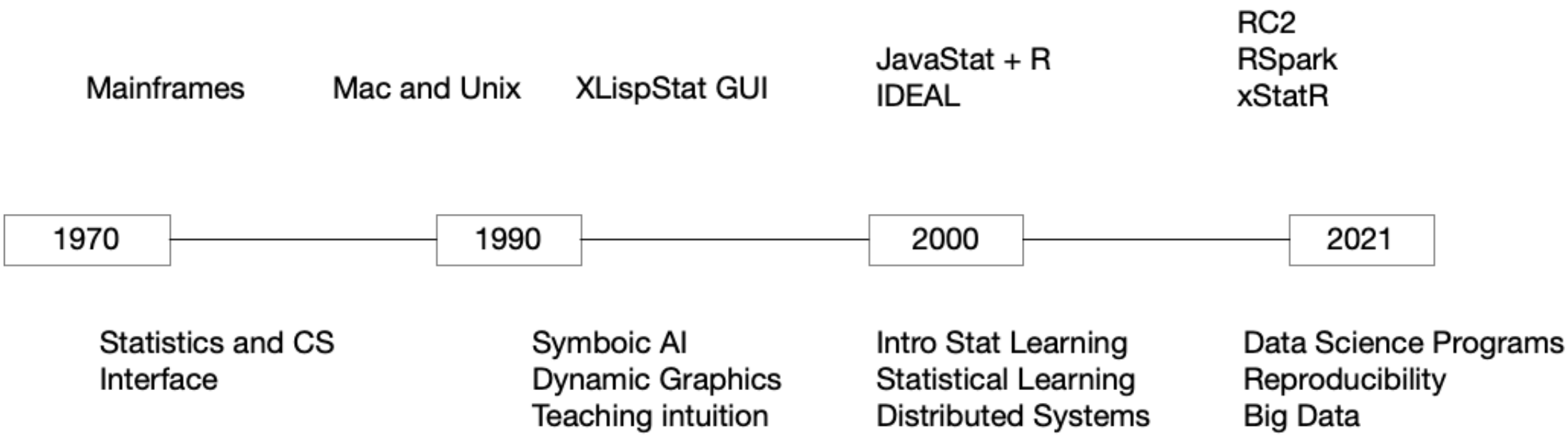
How Usability and Reproducibility in Software Improves Teaching and Research

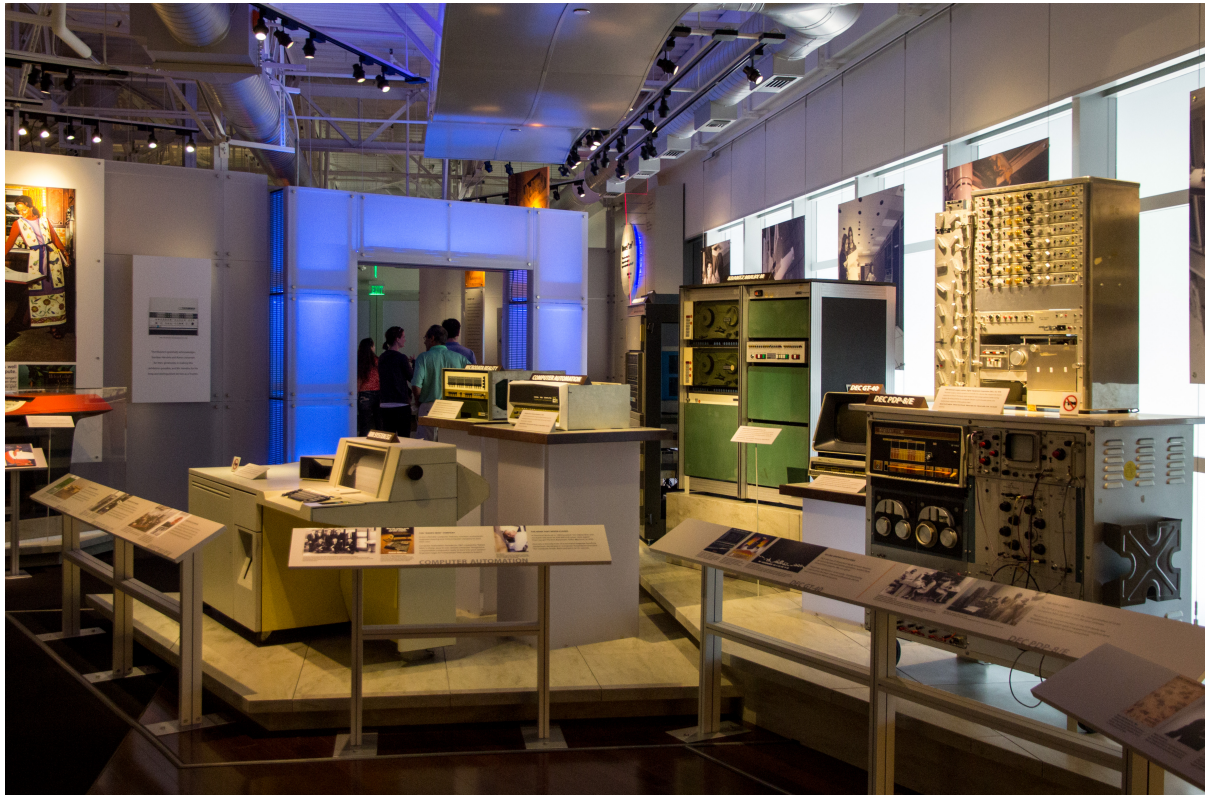
Soren Harner, RC2AI

Jim's 50 years in statistical computing

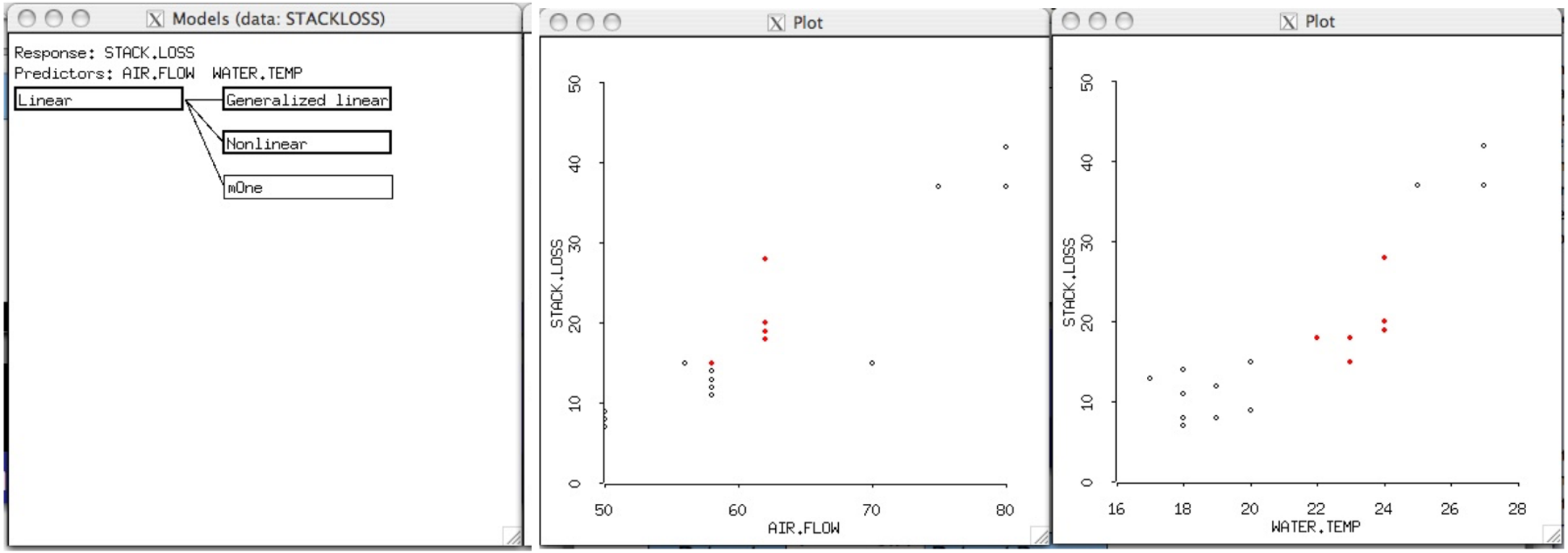


1970s and 1980s Interface of CS and Stat

- Early Interface Symposia
- Punchcards as flashcards
- Homework on line-printer paper
- Memory lane, Mountain View, CA



1990s Interactive Graphics in XLispStat



2000s IDEAL and JavaStat

- IDEAL: On-line, adaptive learning in HTML and Java Applets
- GUI with interactive graphics for building intuition
- Used for 13+ years at WVU
- JavaStat: Client-server architecture with Java and R

JavaStat: a Java/R-based statistical computing environment

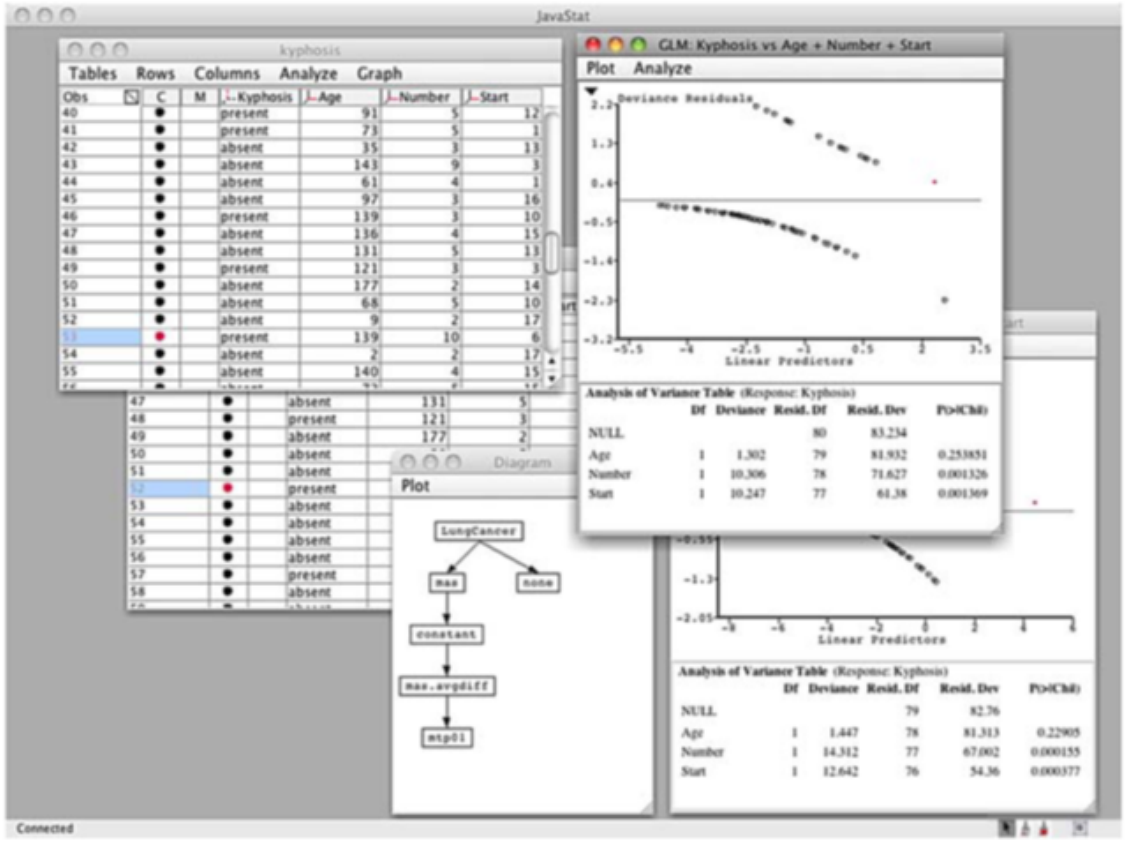
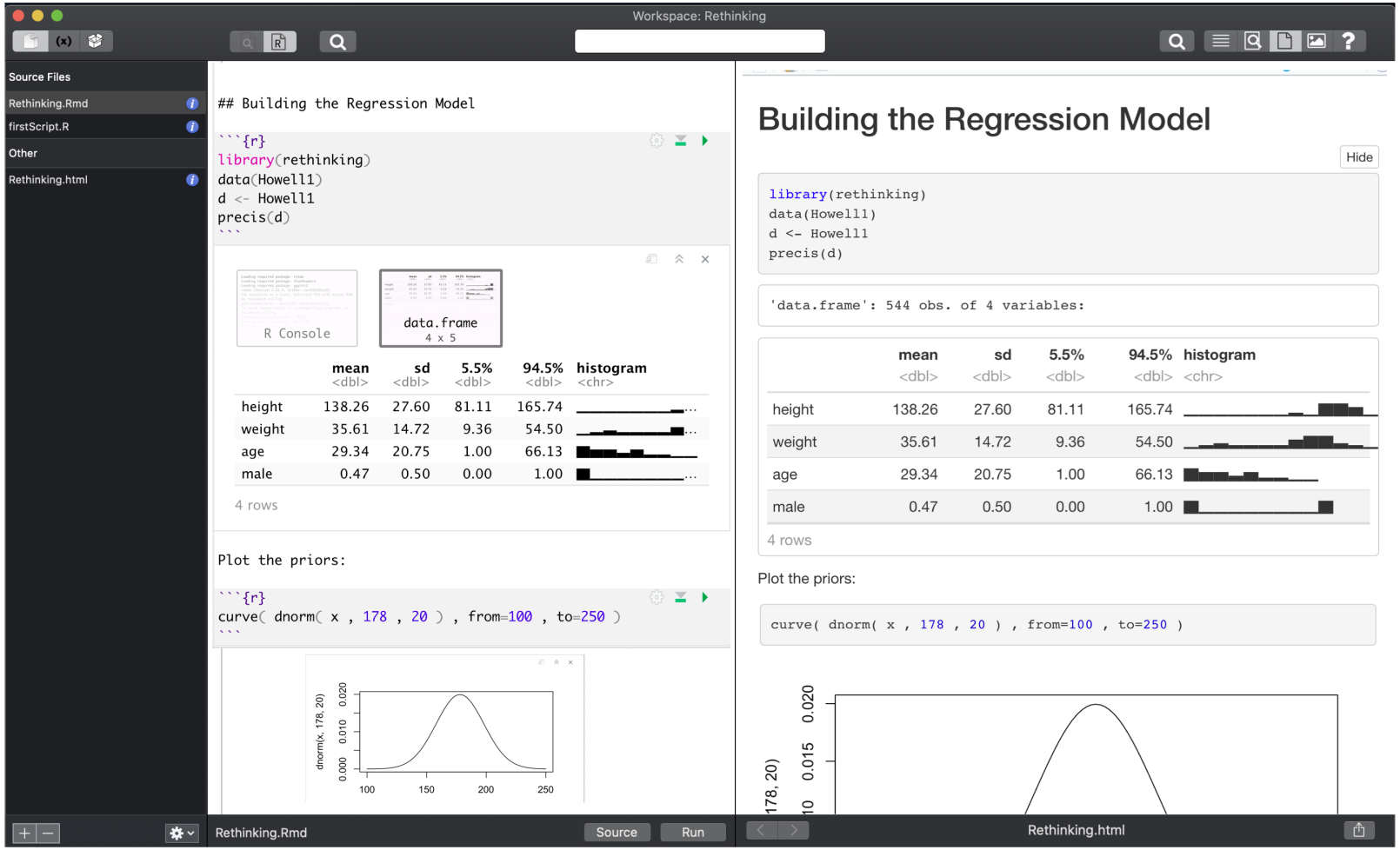


Fig. 3 JavaStat Java application

After 2015: RSpark and Reproducibility

- Teach data science courses and seminars
- Introduce SQL, DataFrames, MapReduce, Streaming
- Emphasis on reproducibility with Docker and Git
- Built on R, Spark, Apache Arrow, and Postgres
- Building on rocker, R on Docker
- Brought back XLispStat with xStatR

Rc^2 Reproducibility for Teaching



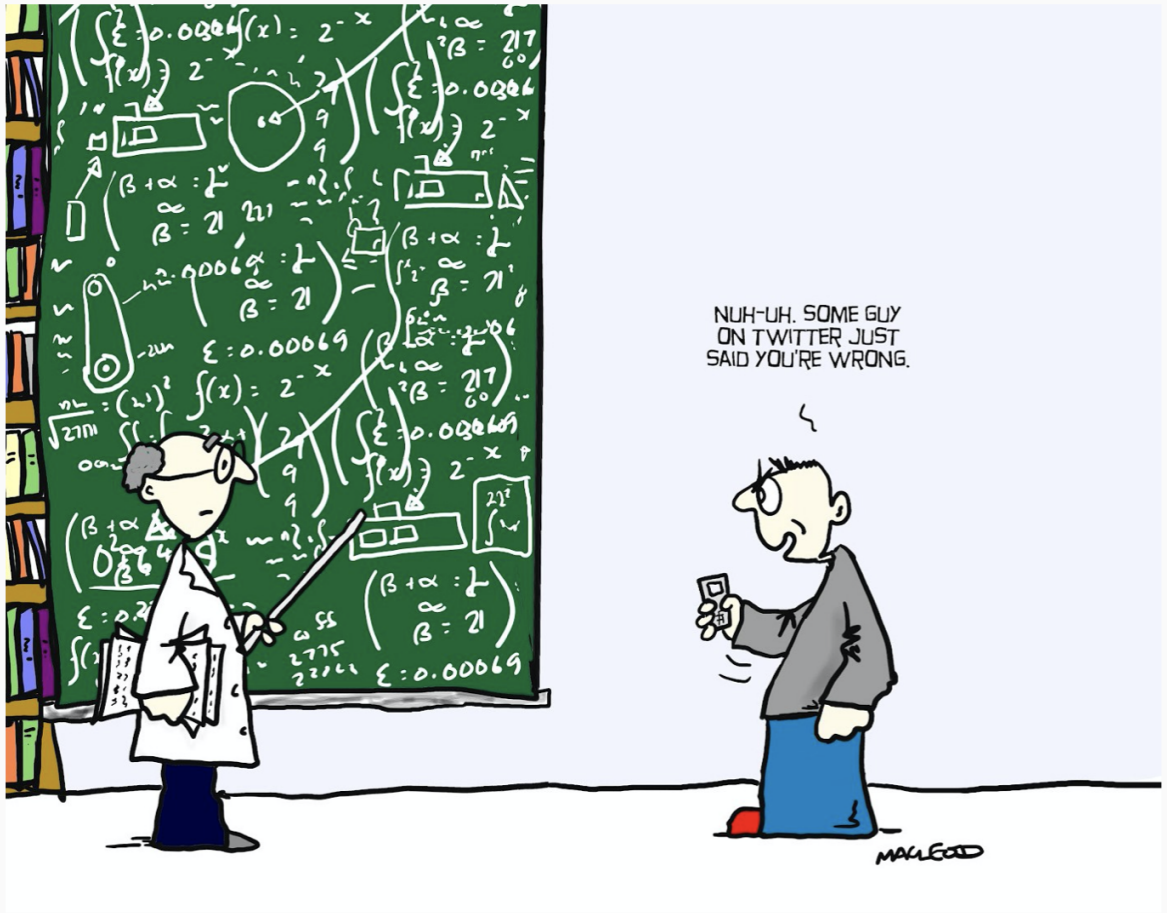

LIFE
THE UNIVERSE
42
EVERYTHING

Reproducibility

Given the same raw data, can you follow the steps and understand the assumptions of how the authors arrived at their conclusion?

Why does it matter?

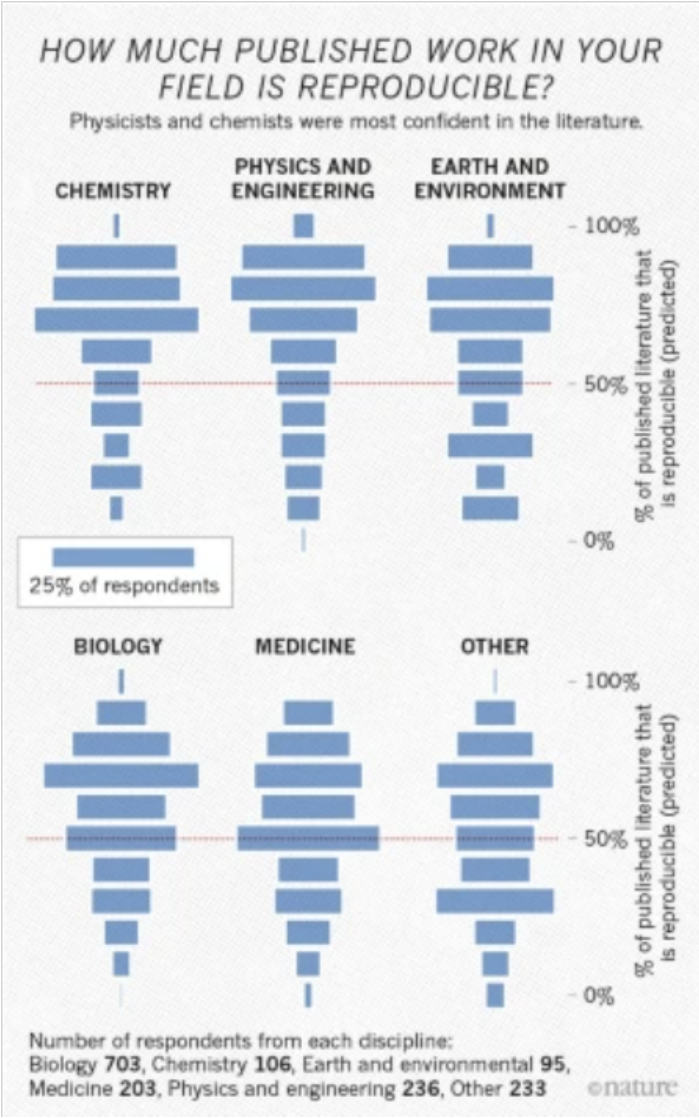
- Building on others' work
- Transparency over authority



Acceptable use from Clipart Library. 2017.

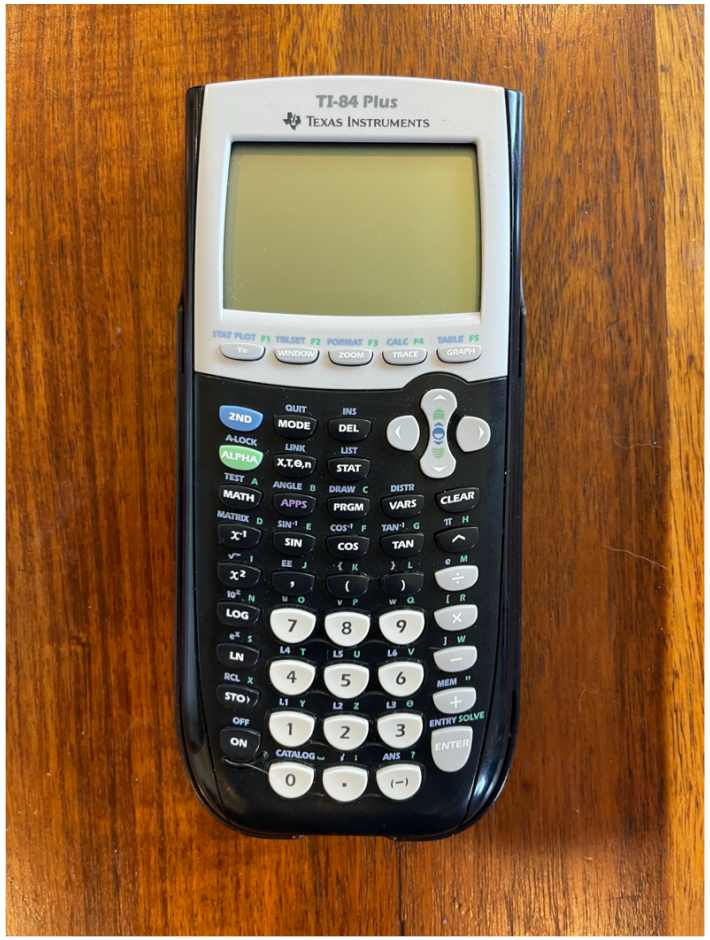
Reproducibility in research

- Nature 2016 Survey 52% say there is a crisis
- Nature 2021 Survey confidence in science leads to vaccination



Reproducibility in teaching

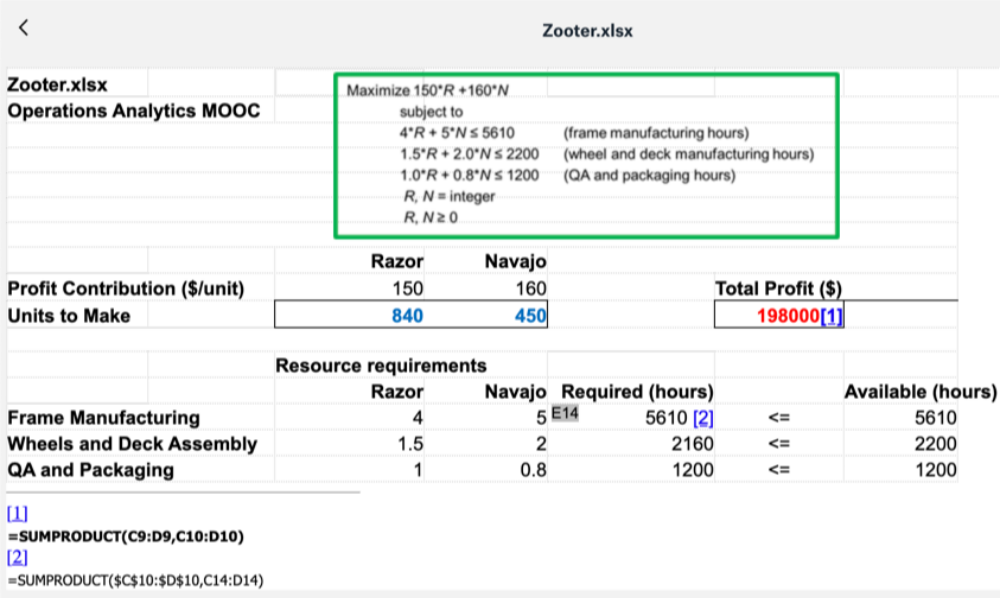
- Data plays great role in all fields
- Rise of computational sciences
- Larger models and big data



In 2021, really?

Why is it hard?

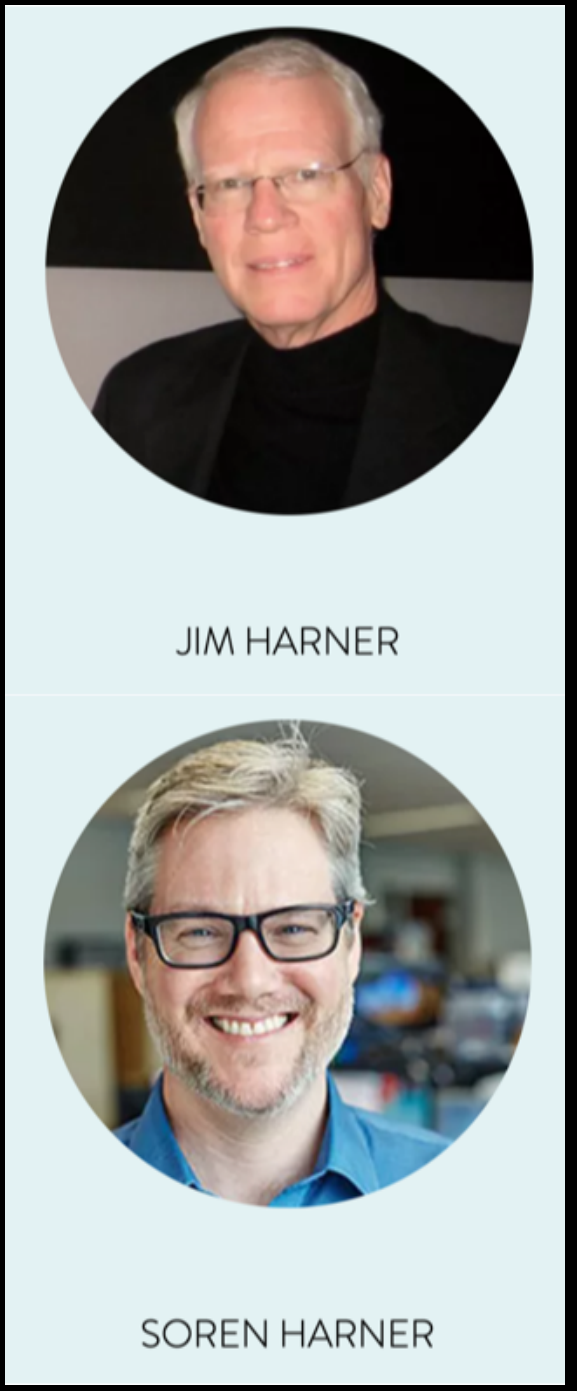
- Methods and habits
- "It works on my machine"
- Accessible tools and data
- Everything is versioned
- Sharing and verifying identity



Excel fails on reproducibility

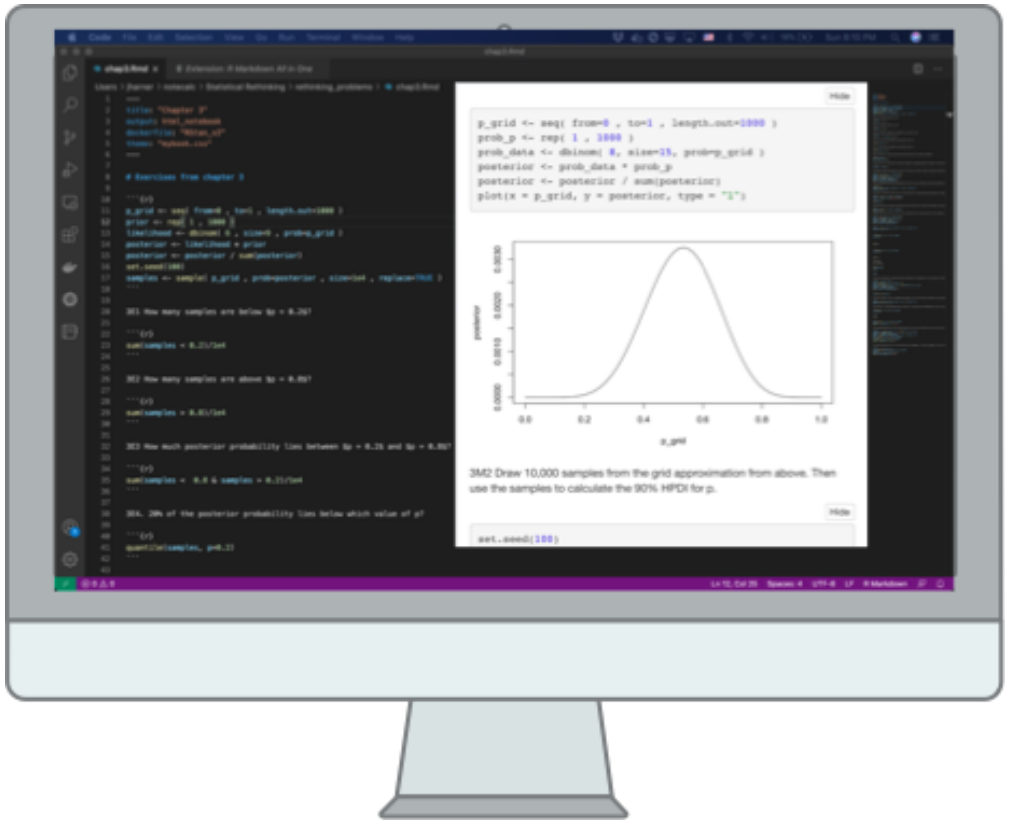
Continuing Jim's Work

Reproducibility helps teaching through sharing while it engenders skills and habits



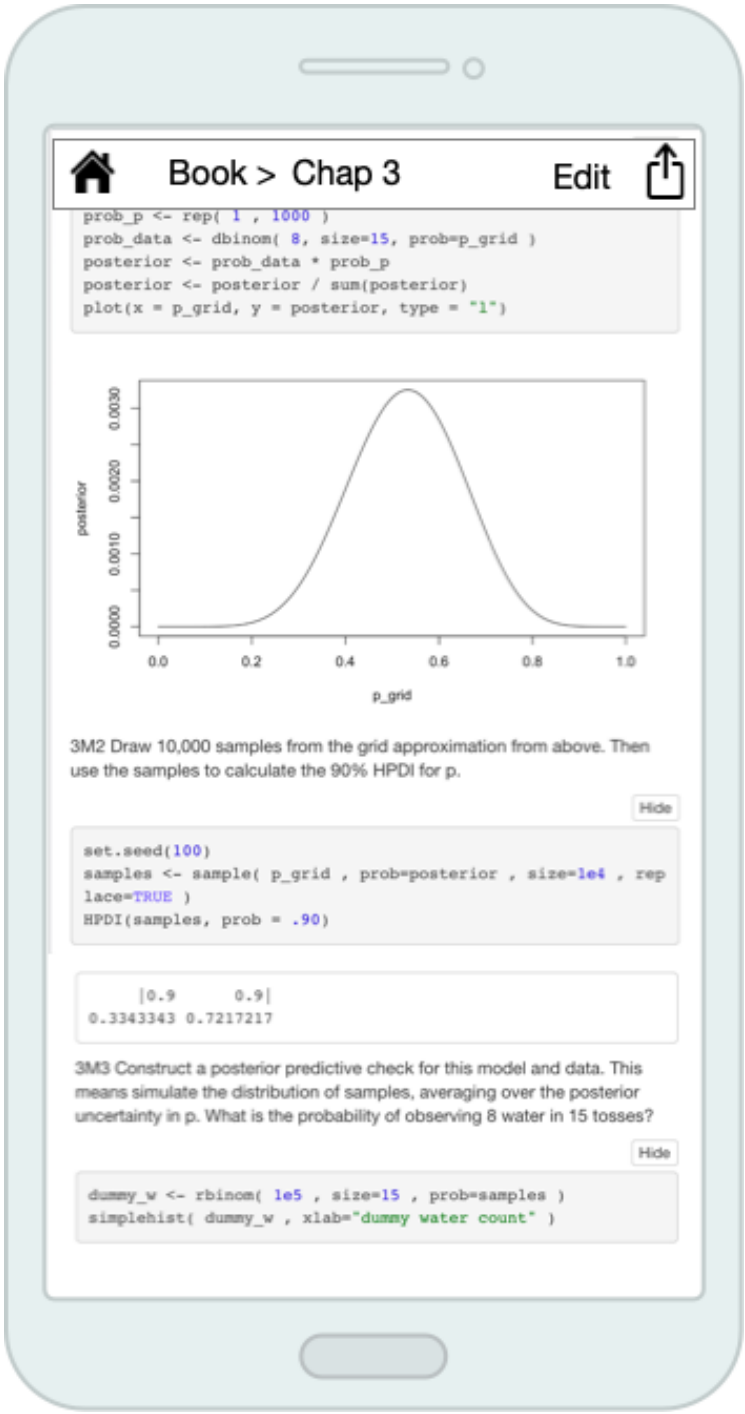
Author reproducibly

- VS Code Extension
- Versioned markdown
- Remotely executed code chunks
- Github, Bitbucket integration
- R, Python, Julia, etc.
- Javascript, CSS, vegalite
- Pull request to publish
- CLI and API

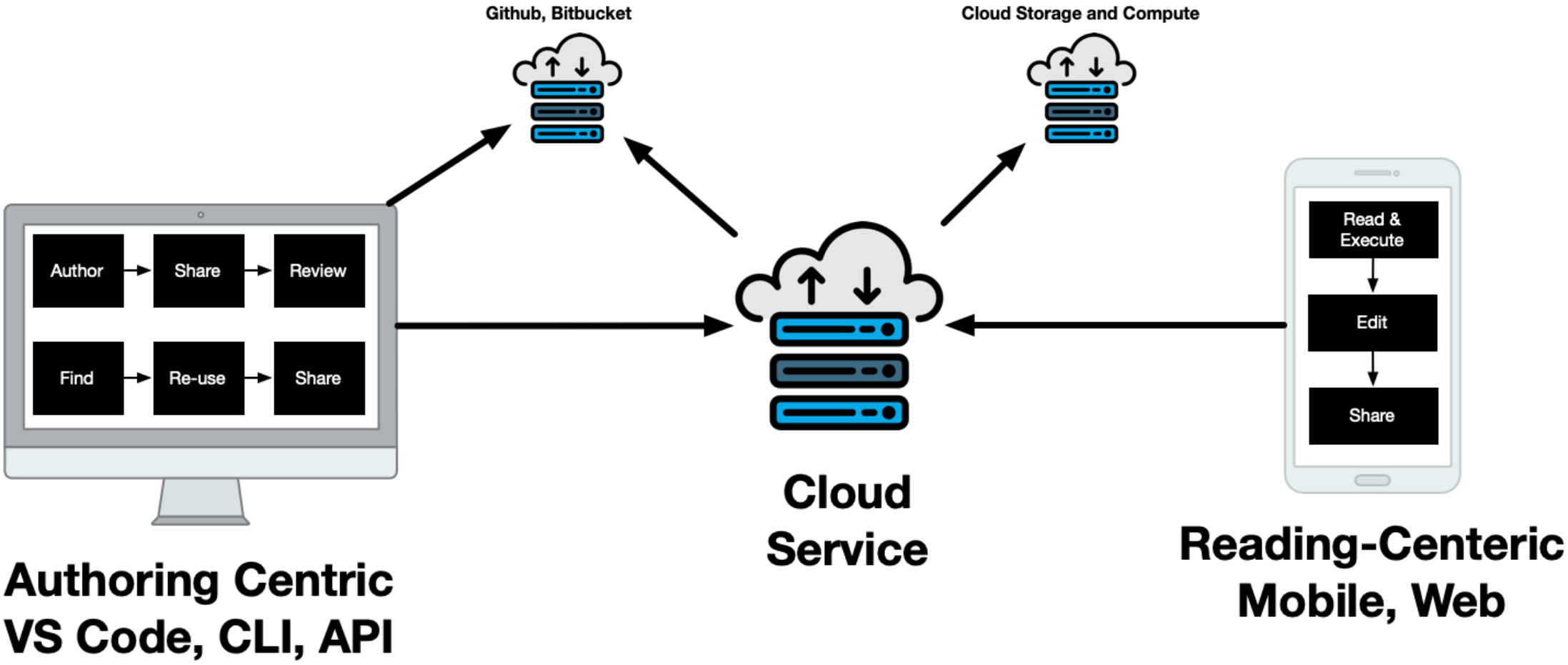


Share, read, tinker

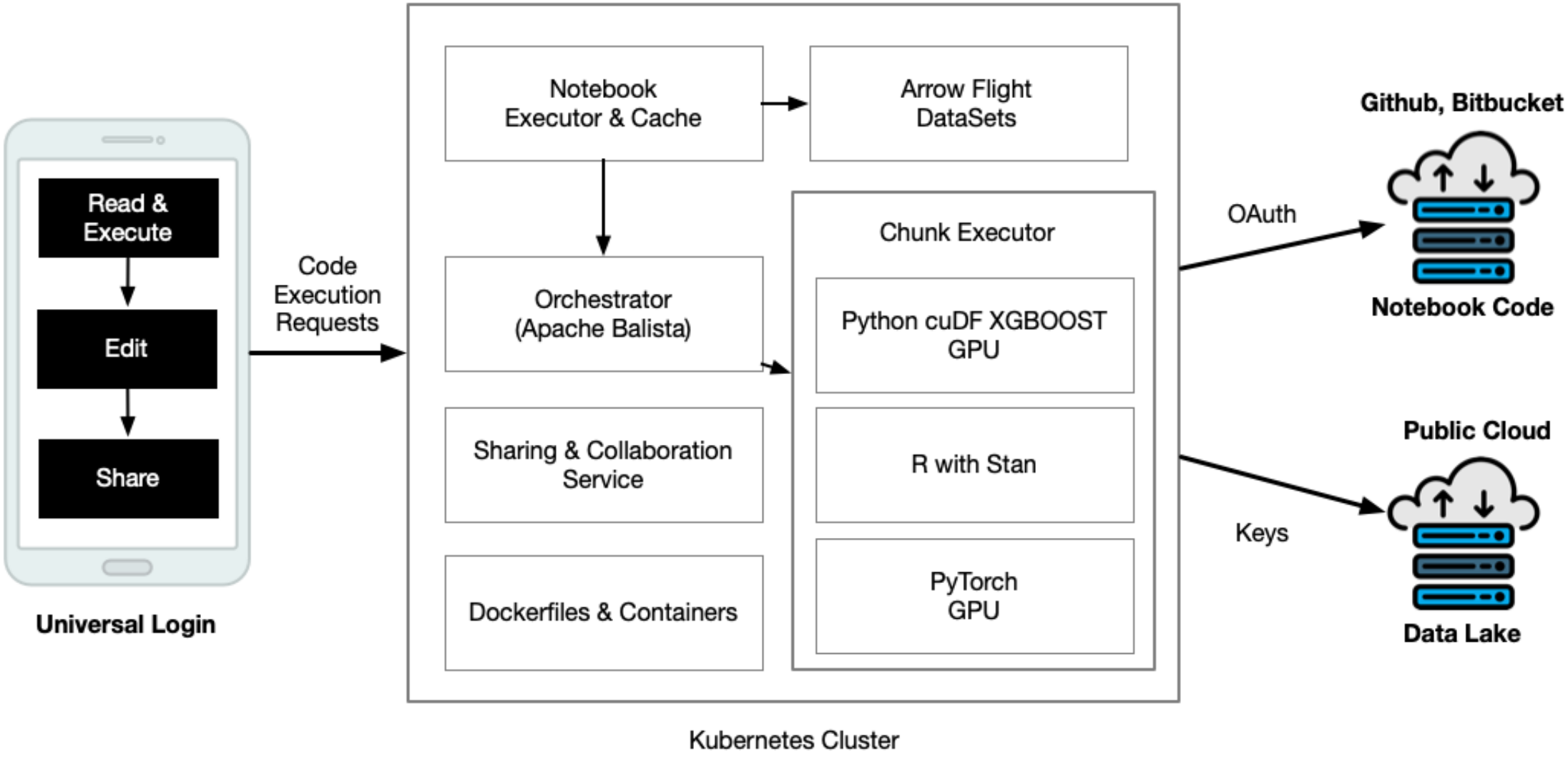
- Read, share, re-use interactive notebooks
- Mobile and Web
- Obviates the calculator
- Better than static books and reports
- Verifiable, tamperproof



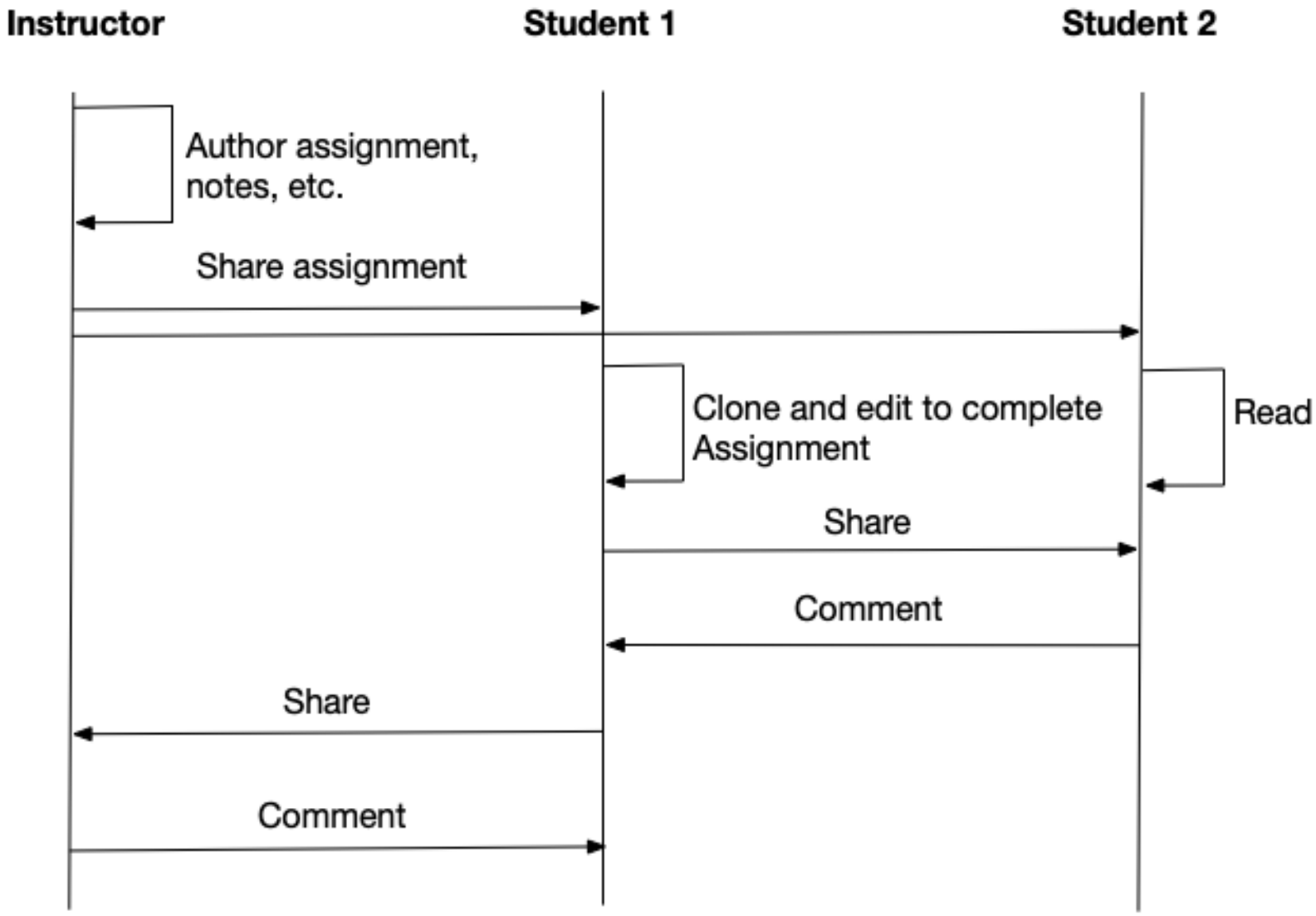
Hosted as a cloud service



Accessible, scalable cloud containers



Use-case: instructor, student sharing



Next steps

- Now: Collect feedback from the community
- Sept 2021: early user testing of Rc^2
- Early 2022: conduct pilots in representative courses
- Develop as Open Source
- Finalize free tier and commercial component

Please get involved with Rc^2

- Join the pilot or give feedback (feedback and sign up)
- Looking for open source collaborators
- Some funding available for developers

Thank you for remembering Jim

Link to links on Jim's work, tributes, presentation, references, etc.

Feedback and sign-up

Links to Presentation, Sign Up, Survey