

An empirical study on discussions for Stack Overflow questions

Wenhan Zhu (Cosmos)

University of Waterloo

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Developer communication channels

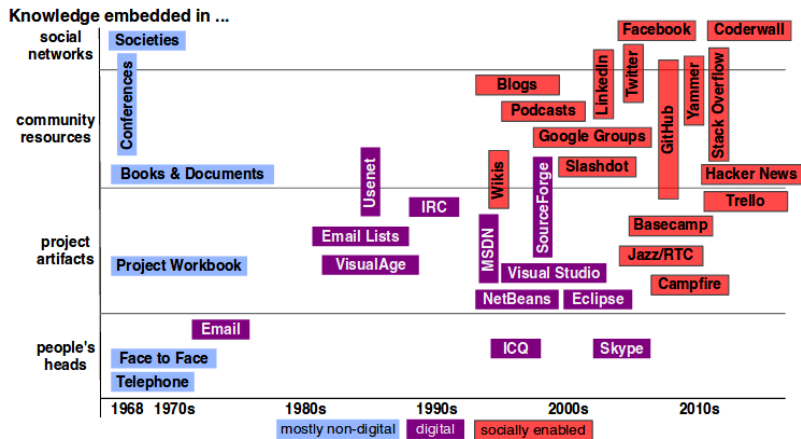
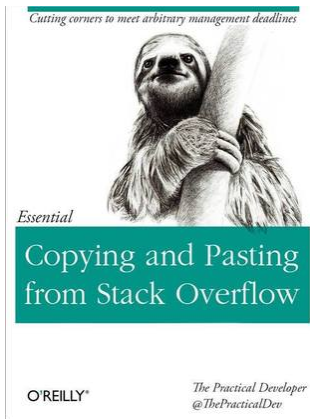


Figure 1: Communication channels over time¹

¹10.13140/RG.2.2.28208.61441

Stack Overflow



Copying and Pasting from Stack
Overflow
— by *Vinit Nayak*

Figure 2: Made up book

How Stack Overflow works

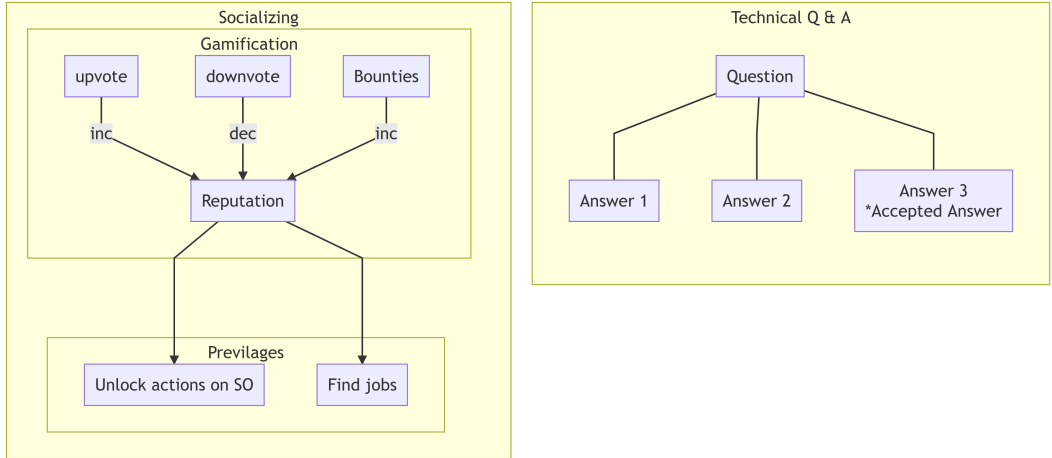


Figure 3: Stack Overflow overview

Developers learn new technologies all the time

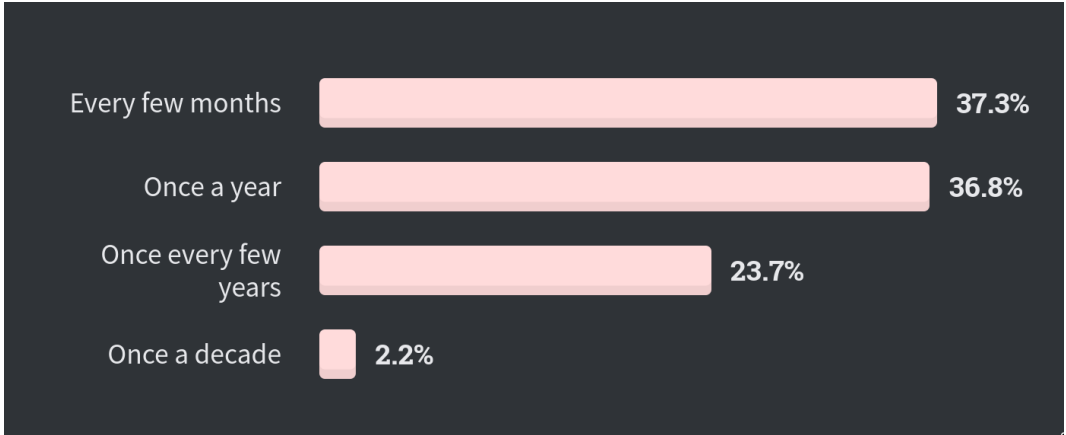


Figure 4: Learning new tech frequency²

²Stack Overflow Developer Survey 2020

Developers visit Stack Overflow when they get stuck

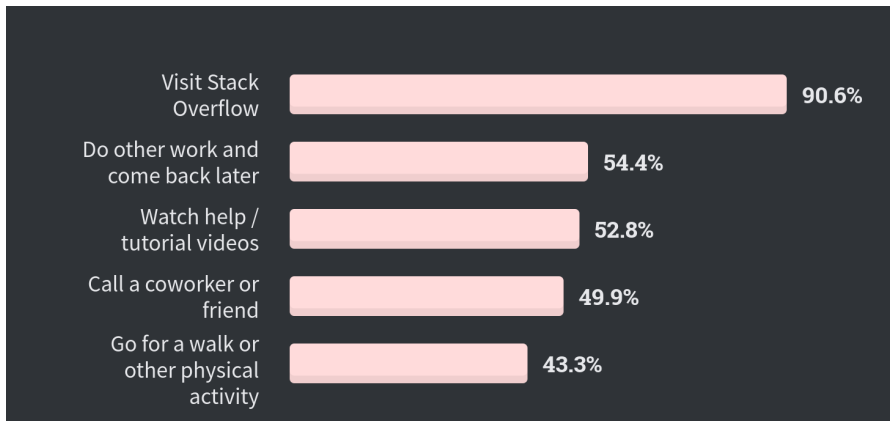


Figure 5: What do you do when you get stuck³

³Stack Overflow Developer Survey 2020

Questions and answers may not be as isolated as it seems

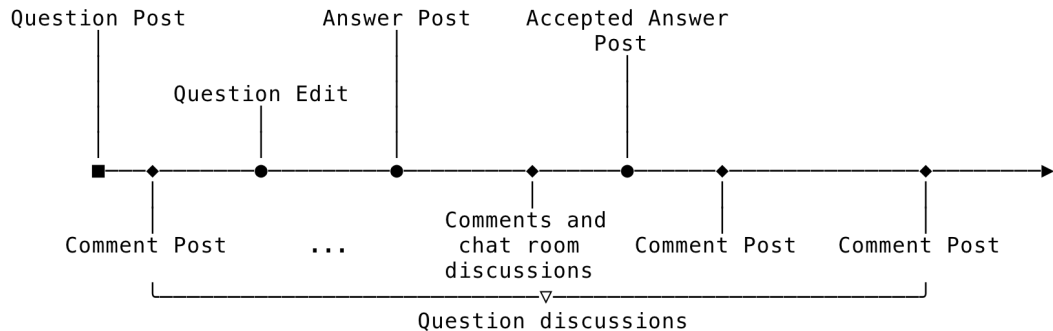


Figure 6: Stack Overflow question timeline

Discussion mechanics

<p>“Unable to set the NumberFormat property of the Range class”</p> <p>Asked 8 years, 1 month ago Active 8 months ago Viewed 13k times</p> <p>▲ This code has been working for ages. I thought maybe I accidentally pressed a key but I cannot seem to see it. I suddenly get the error:</p> <p>3 Unable to set the NumberFormat property of the Range class</p> <p>▼ in the below code:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">A</p>	<p>2 Also what is the value of <code>y</code> , <code>k</code> , <code>x</code> , <code>j</code> at the time of error? – Siddharth Rout May 29 '12 at 14:55</p> <p>1 Is your Sheet Protected? – Siddharth Rout May 29 '12 at 14:57</p> <p>1 Did you check if it is protected? – Siddharth Rout May 29 '12 at 15:03</p> <p>1 let us continue this discussion in chat – Siddharth Rout May 29 '12 at 15:11</p> <p>show 3 more comments</p> <p style="text-align: right;">B</p>
<p>The strange thing is that I havent changed anything. I was considering including more cells with number formatting, but I never implemented it :s</p> <p>May 29, 23:28</p> <p>See this link support.microsoft.com/kb/...</p> <p>ahhhh. I know why I never got the message earlier</p> <p style="text-align: right;">C</p>	<p>▲ The problem as discovered in Chat was the workbook had more than 64,000 formats because of which the user was getting the “Too many different cell formats” error message in Excel</p> <p>6</p> <p>▼ Solution</p> <p>✓ Topic: You receive a “Too many different cell formats” error message in Excel</p> <p>👉 Link: http://support.microsoft.com/kb/213904</p> <p style="text-align: right;">D</p>

Figure 7: Example question flow⁴

⁴Unable to set the NumberFormat property of the Range class

Question discussions are gaining more popularity overtime but plateauing in recent years

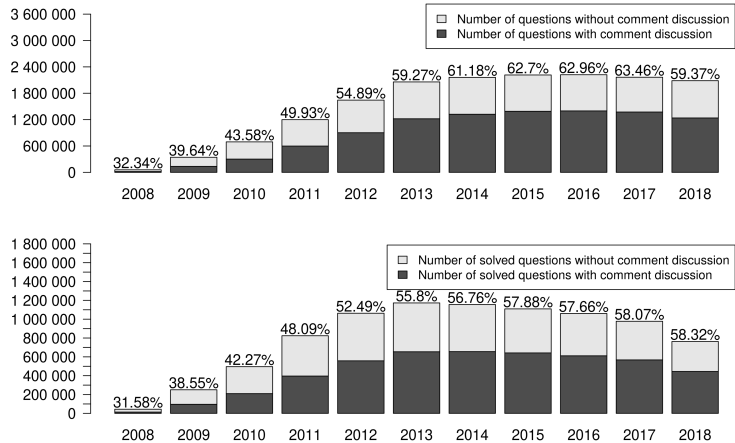


Figure 8: Popularity of question discussions over the years

Active users on Stack Overflow participate in question discussions

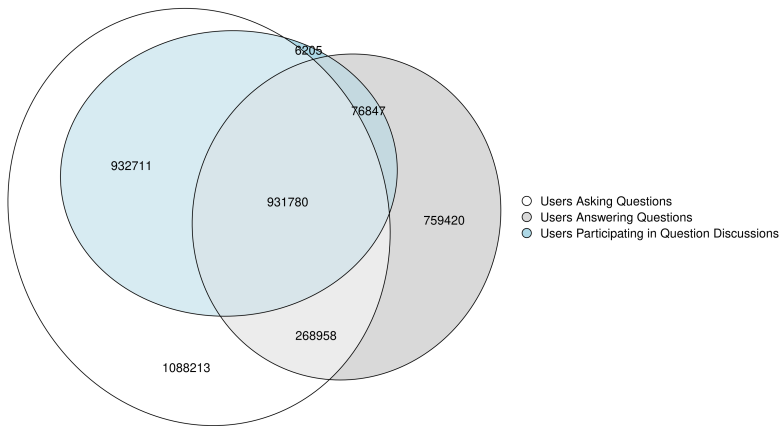


Figure 9: User participation on Stack Overflow events

Askers and answerers participate in high proportion of question discussions

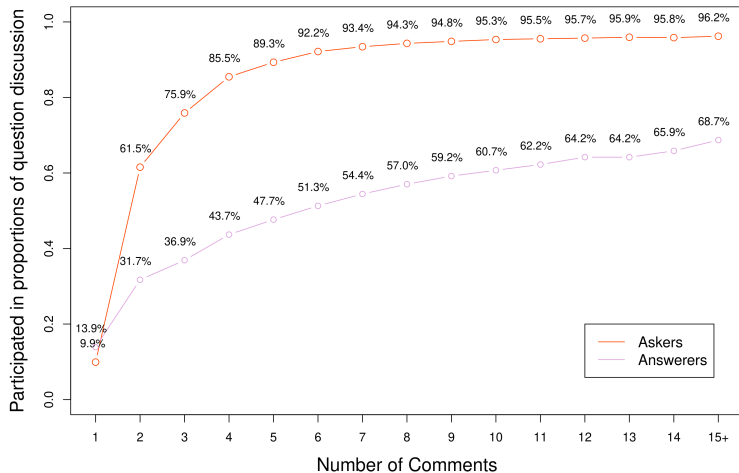


Figure 10: User participation in question discussion by role

Question discussions occur during all phases of Q&A

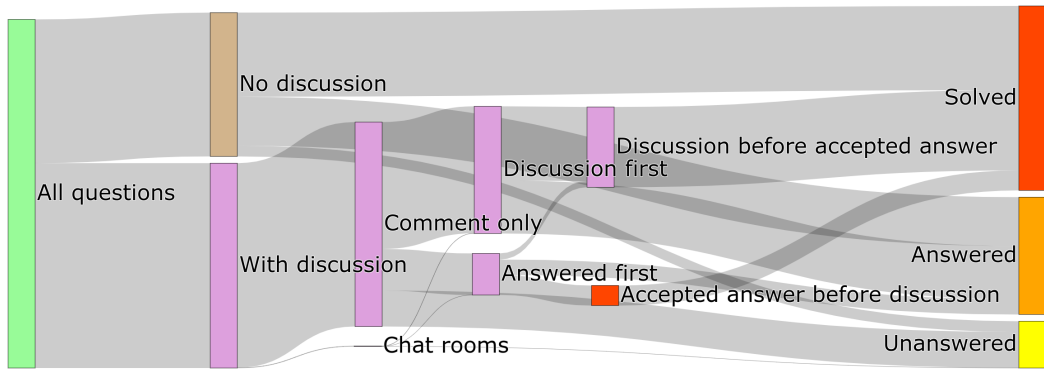


Figure 11: Question by Q&A events

Questions with a small amount of discussion in comments receives answers faster

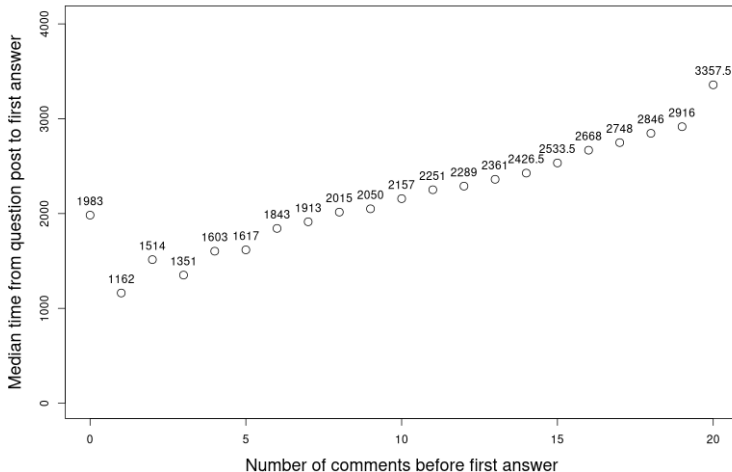


Figure 12: First answer receive time by amount of question discussion in comments

Questions with extended discussions receives more editing

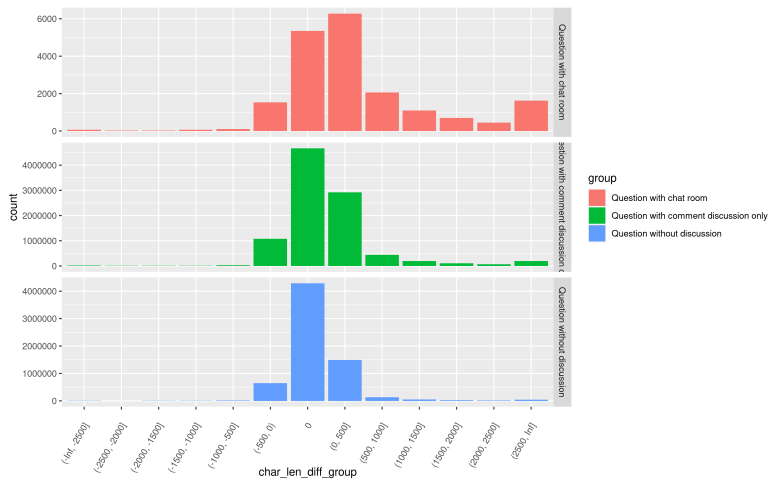


Figure 13: Question body edit by amount of discussion

GitHub introducing discussions

Discussions

Discussions is the dedicated space for your community to come together, ask and answer questions, and have open-ended conversations. Discussions make it easier to curate and maintain conversation threads, with controls for customizing categories, transferring, and pinning discussions, and converting Issues into discussions.

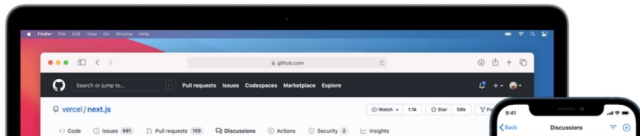


Figure 14: New discussions section introduced on GitHub ⁵

⁵<https://github.blog/2020-12-08-new-from-universe-2020-dark-mode-github-sponsors-for-companies-and-more/>

Summary

How Stack Overflow works

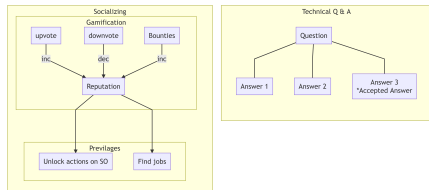


Figure 3: Stack Overflow overview

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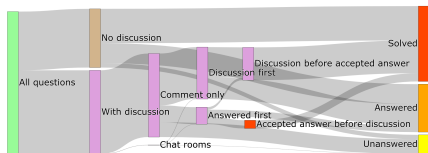


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Discussion mechanics

"Unable to set the NumberFormat property of the Range class"

Asked 8 years, 1 month ago · Active 8 months ago · Viewed 13k times

3

This code has been working for ages. I thought maybe I accidentally pressed a key but I cannot seem to see it. I suddenly got the error:

Unable to set the NumberFormat property of the Range class

in the below code:

The strange thing is that I haven't changed anything. I was considering including more cells with number formatting, but I never implemented it :s

See this link [support.microsoft.com/kb/...](https://support.microsoft.com/kb/213904)

ahhh. I know why I never got the message earlier

May 29, 2018

May 29, 2018 at 14:57

May 29, 2018 at 15:03

May 29, 2018 at 15:11

show 3 more comments

The problem as discovered in Chat was the workbook had more than 64,000 formats because of which the user was getting the "Too many different cell formats" error message in Excel

Solution

Topic: You receive a "Too many different cell formats" error message in Excel

Link: <https://support.microsoft.com/kb/213904>

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