

How has The Carpentries made an impact (on me)

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Abstract

What impact did The Carpentries have on me? As a learner, it taught me most of my essential day-to-day computational tools. As an Instructor, it changed how I teach, allowing me to reach more students including those that need help the most. As an organiser, it taught me skills that are essential to collaborating and to managing teams. As a creator, it taught me how to hand off the work to the next leg in the never-ending relay race.

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Jabberwocky Ecology

This year is the 25th anniversary of [The Carpentries](#), a non-profit teaching “foundational coding and data science skills to researchers”. As part of this anniversary [community members were invited to describe “How has The Carpentries made an impact on you?”](#). I wrote about this for [The Carpentries Blog](#) and am cross posting it here.

In short, in my case, The Carpentries has changed every aspect of my professional life. The Carpentries changed how I approach scientific research, how I teach, and how I collaborate and organize.

My experience with The Carpentries started in 2009, when I discovered [the Software Carpentry v3 website](#), a series of web pages designed to provide “an intensive introduction to basic software development practices for scientists and engineers.” My kid had just been born, and I spent the many hours of small bits of time that one has when caring for a newborn reading the site from start to finish. It taught me about version control, unit testing, the shell, and many other things I now use literally every day for research.

I made my [first teaching videos](#) as part of a very small contribution to [v4](#), but it was when Software Carpentry transitioned to running workshops that it really changed how I thought about teaching. The interactive nature of the workshops that Greg Wilson pioneered (and numerous Carpentries community members have since repeatedly refined), and the way they made it easier for learners who ran into conceptual or technical issues to really understand the material, was an inspiration. The joy of these learners at the end of a workshop is something really special. I’ve been teaching this way in my university classrooms ever since.

As a by-product of being involved in early content development and workshops, I ended up serving in a variety of leadership roles as Software Carpentry transitioned from something maintained almost entirely by one (really amazing) person to something bigger. It was in this role that I learned how to do things like [run effective meetings](#) and how to work with others to build organizations that can accomplish things beyond those achievable by a single individual or academic lab. I also met a lot of truly amazing people who were excited to collaborate, doing things without obvious personal benefit, with the goal of making some small aspect of the world better for others. Knowing those sorts of folks keeps me going at times when self-interest seems to reign and the things that need changing feel so hard.

Finally, The Carpentries taught me how to pass the torch. There is so much to do, and so little time, and after a while even the most exciting thing can start to feel like a weight. But The Carpentries approach of constantly on-boarding new folks, providing them with the training they need to succeed, and then getting them into contributing and leadership roles, taught me the value and the tools for how to hand off something that you’ve built to the next folks, so that they can make it even better.

So, what impact did The Carpentries have on me? As a learner, it taught me most of my essential day-to-day computational tools. As an Instructor, it changed how I teach, allowing me to reach more students including those that need help the most. As an organiser, it taught me skills that are essential to collaborating and to managing teams. As a creator, it taught me how

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to hand off the work to the next leg in the never-ending relay race. And as a person, it taught me that there are always good folks ready to take the baton. Thank you for everything, The Carpentries.