

Effective Community Outreach and Engagement

Breakout session, CIRC PIs meeting, Nov 6-7 2023

Organizer: Bolei Zhou (UCLA), Scribe: Alexis Palmer (CU Boulder)



MEANING: What does community mean to you?

- Common response: peer researchers as users of the infrastructure
- Thinking about industry users, developers, general public.
- If the infrastructure becomes part of education materials (like used in assignments and some course project), enrolled students, either undergraduate or graduate students, are the (potential) users
- Community size can vary dramatically across different fields, and the types of activities to be undertaken accordingly, as well as the evaluation of the outreach efforts

CHALLENGE: What are some challenges you've faced in community outreach, and how did you overcome them?

- Users give up in the middle because it's too complicated – identify that happening early in the process and prevent the user from leaving
- How to bring in users outside of core community groups? make infrastructure interface easy to use and co-habitat with other competitor infrastructure
- Continuous development needs a sustainable PhD advising pipeline, going beyond the student who is the lead author of the resulting publication
- Small research community, lack of responses and feedback from other researchers

METRICS: How do you measure the impact and effectiveness of your community outreach efforts? What metrics or indicators do you track?

- Publications, citations, downloads, forks, etc.
- Possibly google analytics
- Sampling papers that cite the infrastructure (i.e. the relevant paper) to see in what ways the resource is cited
- Help desk or office hour as part of your infrastructure, is a good way to identify the key users and understand how the infrastructure is useful to others

SUCCESS: Can you share an example of successful community outreach? What do you think contributed to its success?

- Let your PhD students keep publishing new papers based on the infrastructure, and help other researchers publish papers too
- Developing undergraduate course materials using the infrastructure so you have first batch of users
- Hackathons, competitions, workshops, and tutorials can help to generate excitement and enthusiasm
- Identifying engaged key users who are happy to give feedback and share their needs

DIVERSITY: How can we ensure that underserved or marginalized communities are included and heard in the outreach efforts?

- Marginalized communities take part in data collection - we need to think of these communities as a key part of our research community, as key participants in the infrastructure
- Work with nonprofit organizations that support underserved communities, help with things like offering internships for developing certain features for the infrastructures
- How can we make sure that the supported projects are doing good for the mankind
- Hackathons in different regions of the world can help to build diverse user communities – not only at the big international main conferences, but also at smaller regional conferences, which are more widely attended by local scholars, researchers, and students

More points and raw script are available: [Breakout Session on Community Outreach and Engagement, CIRC PIs meeting, SLC Nov](#)

[2023](#)