Women in Open Source

Angela @webchick Byron
June 11, 2009
Open Web Vancouver
So, who the heck am I?

The *boring* stuff.
A woman...

Contrary to what my haircut might indicate.
...involved in open source...
Composition of State and Local Recovery Act Funding

**FISCAL YEAR 2009**
- 64% Health
- 18% Education and Training
- 1% Transportation
- 1% Community Development
- 3% Energy and Environment
- 8% Other

**FISCAL YEAR 2012**
- 16% Health
- 19% Education and Training
- 1% Transportation
- 1% Community Development
- 3% Energy and Environment
- 17% Other

**RECOVERY SPENDING IN 2009 VERSUS 2012**
In Fiscal Year 2009, almost two-thirds of Recovery Act funding to states and localities will be in the health field; by FY 2012, the major portion of funding will shift to long-term economic growth opportunities in transportation, energy, and community development.
...really involved...

- Started with Drupal in 2005 as Google Summer of Code student; graduated to GSoC mentor and program admin for Drupal

- One of four Drupal core committers

-Drupal-obsessed: Developer, tester, technical writer, evangelist, community manager, and general cat herder

- Drupal Association board member

- Using Drupal co-author

- “Day job” is Drupal consulting and education with Lullabot
...and a huge geek.

I pick out paint colours by hex value. ;)

http://www.flickr.com/photos/nivlek_est/
But not...

...able to speak on behalf of all women.
So, why are we here?
This topic is a bit silly, isn’t it?
“Hackerdom is still predominantly male. However, the percentage of women is clearly higher than the low-single-digit range typical for technical professions, and female hackers are generally respected and dealt with as equals...”
“Hackerdom is still predominantly male. However, the percentage of women is clearly higher than the low-single-digit range typical for technical professions, and female hackers are generally respected and dealt with as equals...”

- Eric S. Raymond

The Jargon File

(Source: The Jargon File, version 4.4.7)
Let’s compare some numbers.
Obligatory pie chart #1

Gender in proprietary software

(Source: FLOSSPOLS, 2004-2006, Ghosh et al)
Proprietary software. Feh.

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Open source is about freedom.
Gender in Open Source Software

(Source: FLOSSPOLIS, 2004-2006, Ghosh et al)
WTF?
Why is this disparity important to address?
World Domination
Driving away women means driving away contributors. Both women and men.
And, **frankly**, we can’t afford to lose them

Sample statistics from Drupal project*

- Downloaded software (99.63%)
- Registered an account (0.32%)
- Did something with it (0.05%)

*Actual percentage is *much* lower; I had to do unholy things to numbers to get even a sliver of pie to show up.
We kick ass!


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WTF?
Social Reasons
Social Reasons

- Women are *discouraged* from technology (in childhood, popular media, and socially)
Social Reasons

• Women are discouraged from technology (in childhood, popular media, and socially)

• Women have access to computers later in life
Social Reasons

• Women are discouraged from technology (in childhood, popular media, and socially)
• Women have access to computers later in life
• Many women suffer from lack of confidence
Social Reasons

- Women are discouraged from technology (in childhood, popular media, and socially)
- Women have access to computers later in life
- Many women suffer from lack of confidence
- Entering a male-dominated industry
Open Source-specific reasons
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- **Anonymity** can create safe haven for abuse
Open Source-specific reasons

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Open Source-specific reasons

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- Common perception: you must be **Einstein** to contribute to open source
Open Source-specific reasons

• **Anonymity** can create safe haven for abuse
• Open source can be **combative**
• Common perception: you must be **Einstein** to contribute to open source
• **OMG! A GURL!!!**
The big **blind spot**

Have you ever observed discriminatory behaviour against women in open source?

![Bar chart showing the number of men and women who have observed discriminatory behaviour against women in open source.]

(Source: FLOSSPOLLS, 2004-2006, Ghosh et al)

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Things that drive women away
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• “Jokes”
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• “Jokes”

• Dates/marriage proposals
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- “Jokes”
- Dates/marriage proposals
- Doubting women’s intelligence/expertise
Things that drive women away

• “Jokes”
• Dates/marriage proposals
• Doubting women’s intelligence/expertise
• Insults specific to women (that time of the month...)
Horror Stories
#epicfail

Summary: http://martinfowler.com/bliki/SmutOnRails.html
Death threats

http://headrush.typepad.com/
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“f*ck off you boring slut... i hope someone slits your throat and cums down your gob”
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“f*ck off you boring slut... i hope someone slits your throat and cums down your gob”

“the only thing Kathy has to offer me is that noose in her neck size.”
What can people involved in open source do to help encourage women?
Be sensitive to discrimination.
And take action when it happens.
Ask women to participate.
Fight the Einstein perception.
Tools of the trade
Tools of the trade

- Value all contributions, not just code
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• Value all contributions, not just code
• Create list of “low-hanging fruit” tasks
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• Make sure your “how to contribute” steps are well-documented
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• Value all contributions, not just code

• Create list of “low-hanging fruit” tasks

• Foster friendly and encouraging environment

• Make sure your “how to contribute” steps are well-documented

• Mentorship programs
If you are a woman in open source...

...be out and proud!

http://geekspeakr.com/

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Ok, ladies! Your turn. Let’s talk about you can get involved!
Um, do we still want to?
Yes!

Warning: I’m about to get mushy. ;)

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Open Source is...
...fun!
...inspiring and educational.
...fundamentally rewarding.
...an excellent career move.
Ok, so how do you get started?
Find a project that interests you

Or start one of your own. :)

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Find out what resources are available

- Documentation
- Mailing lists
- Forums
- Working groups
- IRC channels
- “Planet”
Lurk first.

Evaluate the community.
Don’t tolerate BS.
Seek out other women in open source

http://www.linuxchix.org/
http://www.linuxchix.org/other-groups-women-free-software.html
Contribute as *early and often as possible*.

The sooner you establish yourself as one of the 0.05%, the easier (and more fun!) time you’ll have.
Myth busters
What is a contributor?

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that's dumb.
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that's dumb.
i want to see it fixed.
What is a contributor?

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i want to see it fixed.

i can do something about it.
What is a contributor?

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These people power open source.
What qualifies as contribution?

```php
/**
 * Root directory of Drupal installation.
 */
define('DRUPAL_ROOT', getcwd());

require_once DRUPAL_ROOT . '/includes/bootstrap.inc';
drupal_bootstrap(DRUPAL_BOOTSTRAP_FULL);
$return = menu_execute_active_handler();

// Menu status constants are integers; page content is a string or array.
if (is_int($return)) {
    switch ($return) {
        case MENU_NOT_FOUND:
            drupal_not_found();
            break;
        case MENU_ACCESS_DENIED:
            drupal_access_denied();
            break;
        case MENU_SITE_OFFLINE:
            drupal_site_offline();
            break;
    }
}
elseif (isset($return)) {
    // Print anything besides a menu constant, assuming it's not NULL or undefined.
    print drupal_render_page($return);
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What qualifies as contribution?

- Donations
- Advocacy
- Documentation
- Marketing
- User support
- Testing
- Translations
- Graphic design
- Event coordination
- Bug reports and feature requests
- Issue queue “farming”
- Usability
- ...oh yeah, and coding too. ;)

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How improvements are made
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Gina the Genius
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Wow!
How improvements are made

Gina the Genius

Wow!

Amazing!
How improvements are made

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Wow!

Amazing!

Your best work yet!!
How improvements are made

Gina the Genius

Tuesday, June 30, 2009
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Edwina the End User
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Issue queue

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Bug report

Edwina the End User
How improvements are made

Edwina the End User

Paula the Programmer

Issue queue

Bug report

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How improvements are made

Edwina the End User -> Issue queue

Bug report

Paula the Programmer
How improvements are made

Edwina the End User → Issue queue → Bug report → Paula the Programmer
How improvements are made

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How improvements are made

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WTF?

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Hey, look! A bug report!
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I’ll post feedback.

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Tuesday, June 30, 2009
Edwina the End User: I’ll post feedback.

Tatiana the Tester: Thanks! Take 2!

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Tuesday, June 30, 2009
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Breaks in IE 6.

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Ship it!

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Paula the Programmer

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Tatiana

Ok! Try this!

Wow! Much better!

Tatiana
Conclusion

• Women are massively under-represented in open source. That’s bad.

• But we can all take steps to change this. That’s good!

• Open source is awesome, and women can and should take the plunge.
Homework

• Invite a woman to your next local tech user group.

• Next time you encounter ass-hat behaviour, call the person out on it.

• Revisit documentation for your project/community. Is it easy to get started?

• Blog about a woman in your life who’s inspired you.
Discussion