

What did you learn in school today?

An Outreachy retrospective

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Mind the Gap



Why do we care?

For technology!

“...equal access to even the most basic elements of computation requires an epistemological pluralism, accepting the validity of multiple ways of knowing and thinking.”

- *Epistemological Pluralism and the Revaluation of the Concrete*, Sherry Turkle and Seymour Papert

Why do we care?

For the Internet!

“Everyone brings their crumb of information to the table. If they are not at the table, we don’t benefit from their crumb.”

- *Sue Gardner to The New York Times on Jan 30, 2011*

Why would we not care?

For freedom!

Studies say, **80 percent** of the Wikipedia Editors from the Middle East are **Women**.

Mind the Gap

Lisa, 18, a first-year Harvard student in an introductory programming course. Lisa had feared that she would find the course difficult because she is a poet, "good with words, not numbers." Lisa wants to manipulate computer language the way she works with words as she writes a poem.

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Robin, is a pianist. Robin explains that she masters her music by perfecting the smallest "little bits of pieces" and then building up. She cannot progress until she understands the details of each small part. Robin is happiest when she uses this tried and true method with the computer, playing with small computational elements as though they were notes or musical phrases.

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They both get dismissed.

What does that say?

Not just we fail to bring more women; we lose them.

Outreachy

Outreachy (previously the **Free and Open Source Software Outreach Program for Women**) is a paid internship program, primarily for women, to contribute to free and open-source software projects for three months. The program is organized by the Software Freedom Conservancy and was formerly organized by The GNOME Project and the GNOME Foundation.

What did I learn from Outreachy as a student?

To ask.

To know.

To refuse to stay invisible.

The Art of Asking

Ask, to anyone and everyone: it's a community!

Ask, to the Internet: exploit the chaos!

Ask, no matter how stupid you sound to yourself: make mistakes publicly.

The Art of Knowing

Know, what you don't know.

Know. Don't just collect information. Gain knowledge.

Share, because knowing is useless without sharing.

The Art of Staying Visible

Write. About the things you make, things you fail to make, things you wish to make.

Talk. To people who matter, even to the bullies, and fight. But, pick your battles.

Meet. Actual people at conferences and meetups. Give them a hug or two.

What did I learn from Outreachy as a mentor?

To answer.

To help.

To guide.

The Art of Answering

You don't know everything, and let your student know that.

Appreciate each and every question that comes your way: it takes a lot of courage to ask, don't you forget that

The Art of Helping

Don't just instruct, help.

Be there. It may not be your only job. But it's a responsibility.

Remind your student: it's not just you who is there. But a whole big community.

The Art of Guiding

Tell your student about the next opportunities.

A project with Outreachy is always a beginning. Remind them about the journey ahead, and how it just makes more sense than anything else.

Let's Bridge the Gap!



Thank you.