How to maintain Python packages to attract free and open source software contributors

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Plone Conference 2026
Maastricht, Netherlands

Why are we here?

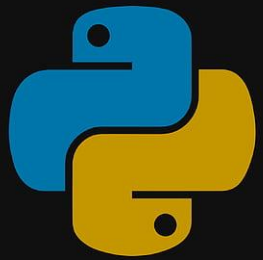

42

Is it the food?



Is it the technology?

```
>>> print("Hello World")
Hello World
```



Is it the free beer?



Contributors

What attracts you to contribute to open source software?

- You use it
- You want to make it a little better than how you found it
- Give back
- Community
- Sense of belonging, finding your tribe
- Learn
- Build a résumé or CV
- Help other people
- Fun

What makes you not want to contribute to open source software?

- No time, too busy
- Life happens
- You'd rather spend time with family and friends, go outside, "touch dirt"
- You don't know how
- You don't feel experienced enough
- You don't think your English is good enough

How many of you have contributed to FOSS?

How to contribute?

https://icalendar.readthedocs.io/en/latest/contribute/index.html

- Responsibly report security vulnerabilities.
- Report all other issues.
- Comment on and resolve issues.
- Triage open issues and pull requests.
- Review, comment on, and make suggestions to change a pull request.
- Submit pull requests from your fork of the repository.

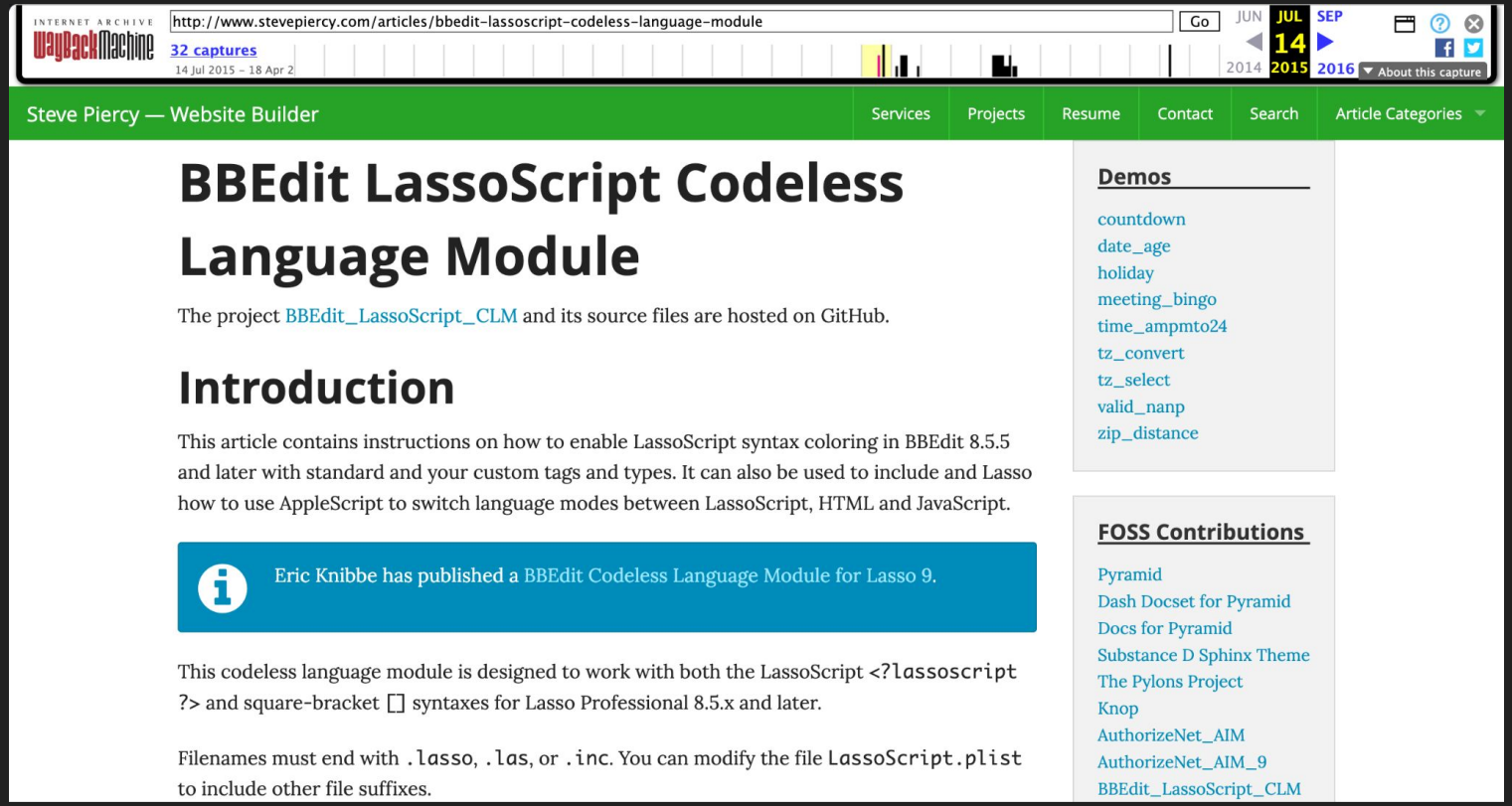
How to contribute?

https://icalendar.readthedocs.io/en/latest/contribute/index.html

- Extend the documentation.
- Create or comment on a topic in discussions.
- Join a live chat with team members on Matrix or other chat platform.
- Write a blog post about the project.
- Share announcements on social media from core contributors to the project.
- Sponsor development of the project.

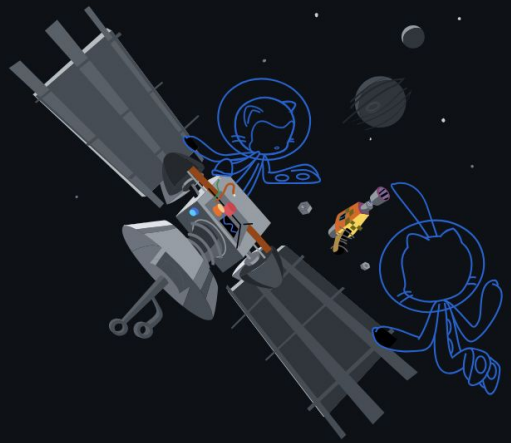
Now how many of you have contributed to FOSS?

Where to start?



- https://web.archive.org/web/20150714230126/http://www.stevepiercy.com/articles/bbedit-lassoscript-codeless-language-module
- https://web.archive.org/web/20191109131113/http://lasso.2283332.n4.nabble.com/List-of-all-LDML-tags-and-keywords-td3097270.html

Opened their first issue on GitHub in benschwarz/developers.whatwg.org Public Feb 22



First issue

font size for headings smaller than paragraph text

- https://github.com/benschwarz/developers.whatwg.org/issues/35



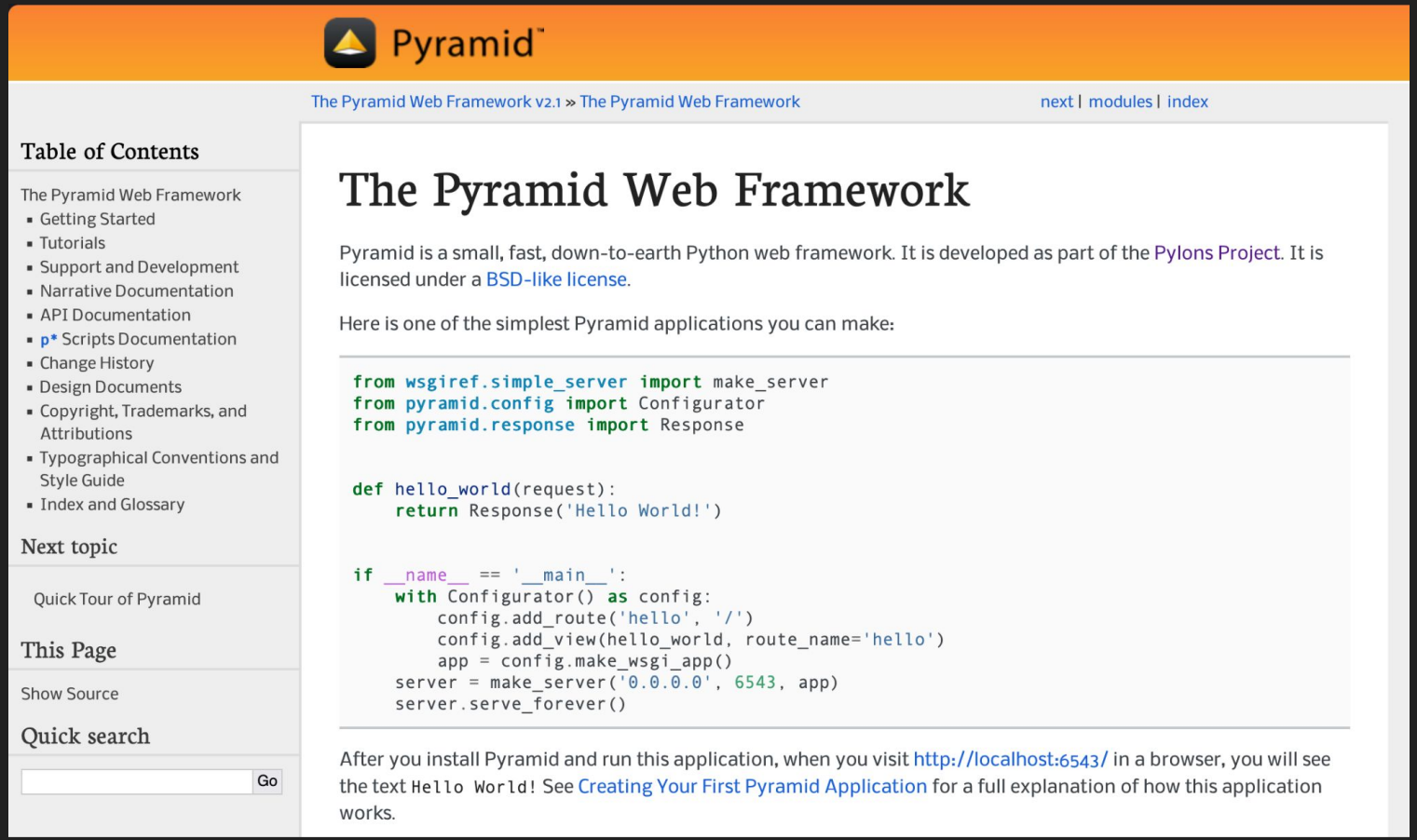
- https://github.com/Pylons/pyramid_cookbook/pull/7



- https://github.com/stevepiercy/tz_convert

implement	best practices	follow up	touch base	value added
meta-fucking-anything	at the end of the day	dynamic	Let's have a meeting!	stakeholder
committee	restructure	FREE	service level (agreement)/SLA	reinvent
game plan	transformation	process	search engine optimization/SEO	action item
going forward	evangelize	on the same page	deliverables	facilitate

- https://github.com/stevepiercy/meeting_bingo



- https://github.com/Pylons/pylons-sphinx-themes



- https://github.com/sphinx-contrib/httpdomain/issues/83#issuecomment-3740128004
- https://pypistats.org/packages/sphinxcontrib-httpdomain
- https://github.com/sphinx-contrib/httpdomain/releases/tag/2.0.0a1

What does it take to be a maintainer?

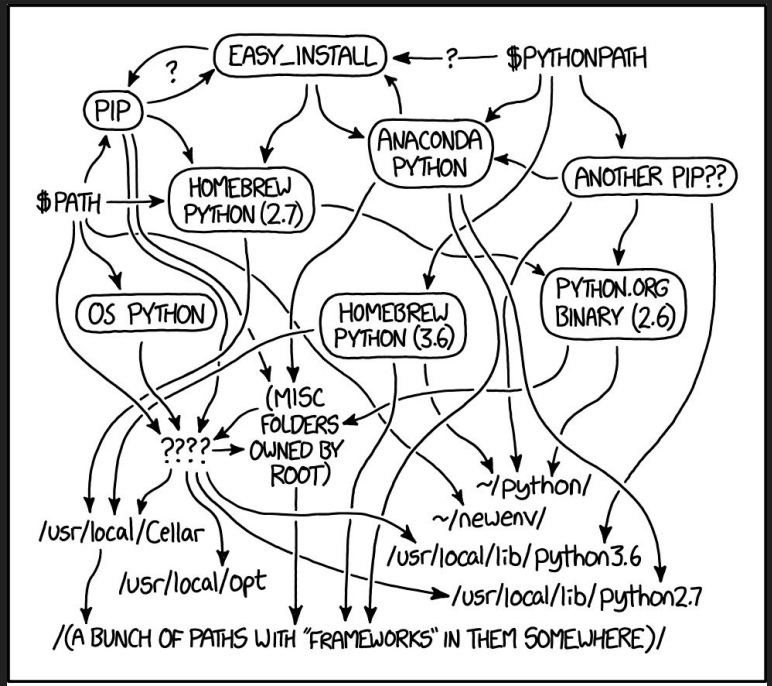
Maintainers are contributors who make releases.

Who owns FOSS?

Know your audience

Best practices of good maintainers

- Show up
- Document
- Contribute
- Security
- License
- Code of conduct



https://xkcd.com/1987/

Best practices of good maintainers

- Communicate
- Discussions
- Chat
- Social media
- Website
- Delegate
- Recruit
- Djangonauts
- Mentor



https://djangonaut.space/comms/2026/08/14/2026-opening-session-7/

Best practices of good maintainers

- Seek funding
- Open Collective
- GitHub Sponsors
- NLnet
- Sovereign Tech Agency

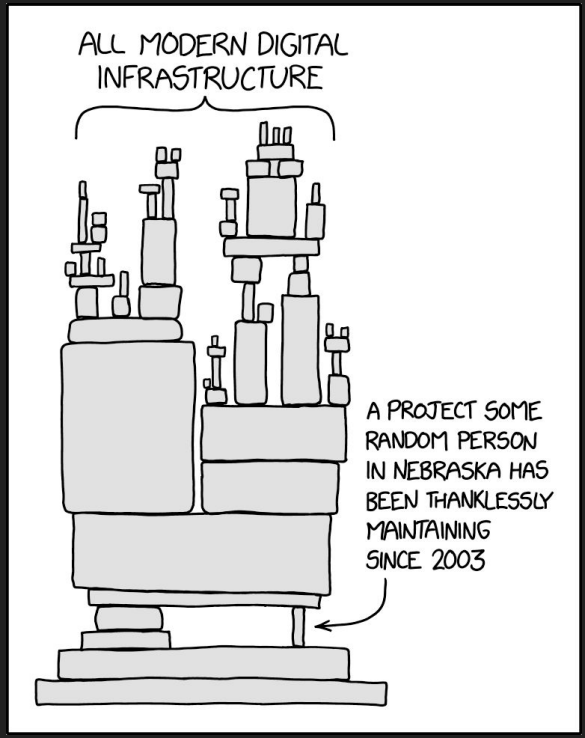
- https://opencollective.com/
- https://github.com/open-source/sponsors
- https://nlnet.nl/news/2026/20260903-call.html
- https://www.sovereign.tech/

Best practices of good maintainers

- Tooling - Automate the tedious stuff
- Run tests and coverage
- Build documentation
- Code quality
- Release management

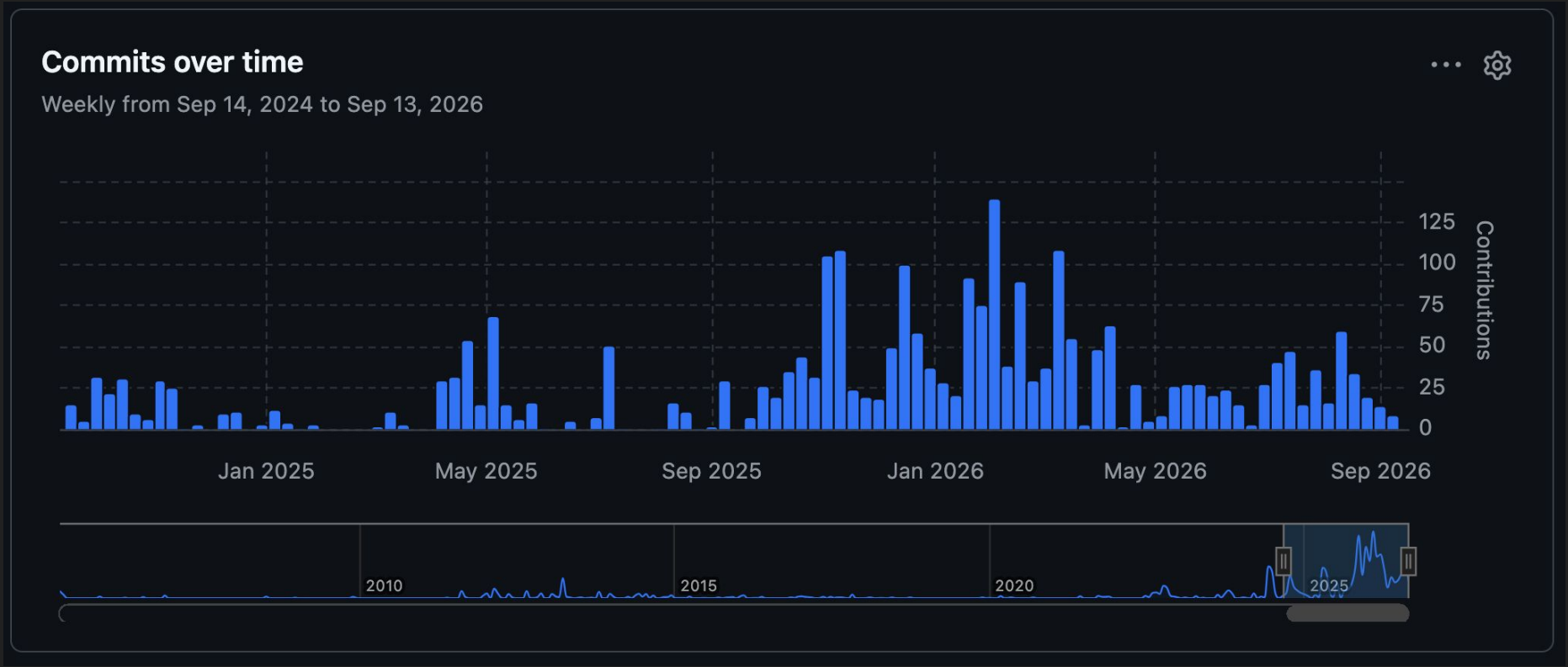
Best practices of good maintainers

- Protect the community from abuse
- It's OK to step away



https://xkcd.com/2347/

AI


Commits over time
Weekly from Sep 14, 2024 to Sep 13, 2026
125
100
75
50
25
0
Contributions
Jan 2025
May 2025
Sep 2025
Jan 2026
May 2026
Sep 2026
2010
2015
2020
2025

AI

- GitHub ponders kill switch for pull requests to stop AI slop
  https://www.theregister.com/software/2026/02/03/github-ponders-kill-switch-for-pull-requests-to-stop-ai-slop/4334869
- Sustaining open source in the age of generative AI
  https://www.cncf.io/blog/2026/03/10/sustaining-open-source-in-the-age-of-generative-ai/
- Protecting our FLOSS commons from LLMs - Codeberg prohibits "vibe-coded projects"
  https://blog.codeberg.org/protecting-our-floss-commons-from-llms.html

AI

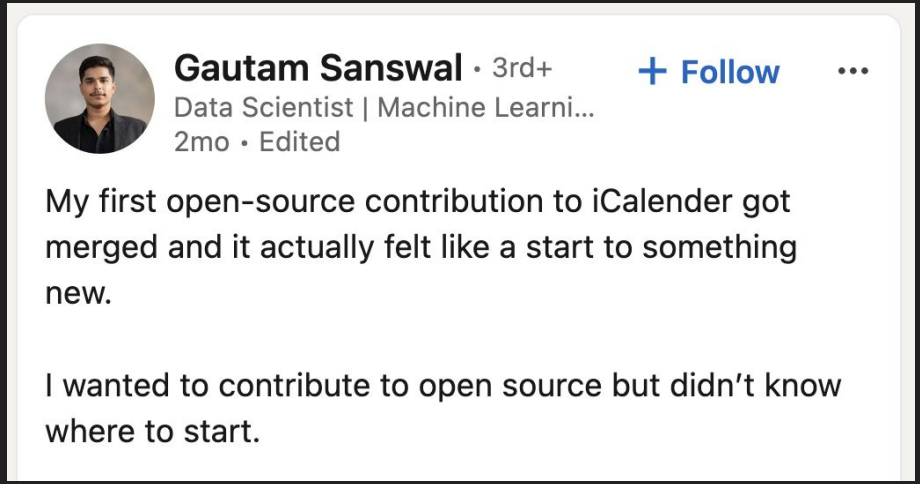
- Jan Wildeboer on code reviewing of AI contributions
  https://fosstodon.org/@jwildeboer@social.wildeboer.net/116860158248942940
- LLMs and AI impacts on open source maintainers - Jupyter
  https://jupyter.zulipchat.com/#narrow/channel/407187-Random/topic/LLMs.20and.20AI.20impacts.20on.20open.20source.20maintainers/with/573595208
- [PERF] Replace np.column_stack with np.vstack().T - #31132 - Matplotlib - regarding AI consuming first-time contributor issues.
  https://github.com/matplotlib/matplotlib/pull/31132

AI

- How New Contributors Devour Open Source
  https://www.courtbouillon.org/blog/00070-how-new-contributors-devour-open-source/
- Simon Willison’s Weblog, quoting Paul Ford, "Now that everyone can code, it’s become clearer why many shouldn’t."
  https://simonwillison.net/2026/Sep/12/paul-ford/
- Leiden Declaration on Artificial Intelligence and Mathematics
  https://leidendeclaration.ai/

AI

- Lowered the bar
- Drinking from a firehose
- Security vulnerability reports
- First-time contributors gain confidence



"I moved from using open source to contributing to it."

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/gautamsanswal_opensource-firstpr-python-share-7482000495675432960-HLiK/?rcm=ACoAAESm9l4Bnf33urWgJU55-ezp--Mx_c5z6EQ

Solutions to AI flood

- Open source maintenance, new contributors, and AI agents 🤖
  https://wagtail.org/blog/open-source-maintenance-new-contributors-and-ai-agents/
- Guidance for AI-led contributions - Wagtail
  https://wagtail.org/blog/guidance-for-ai-led-contributions/
- icalendar - How to deal with AI PRs #1508
  https://github.com/collective/icalendar/discussions/1508

Solutions to AI flood

- Published an AI policy.
  https://icalendar.readthedocs.io/en/latest/contribute/index.html#artificial-intelligence-policy
- PR template
- Anti-slop
- gh-profiler
- Change log entry
- Stopped nagging
- Close slop PRs promptly
- Use GitHub's Saved Replies feature

Solutions to AI flood

- "I'm not an AI prompt, I'm a human being!"
- Don't tell the contributor what to do. Play dumb. Ask clarifying questions.
- AI can't respond to vague questions. Humans can.

Further AI impacts

"Once men turned their thinking over to machines in the hope that this would set them free. But that only permitted other men with machines to enslave them."

~ Frank Herbert, *Dune*

Further AI impacts

- ‘I hate what AI is doing to the minds and happiness of the young’: Katherine Rundell on the view from the classroom
  https://www.theguardian.com/books/ng-interactive/2026/aug/08/i-hate-what-ai-is-doing-to-the-minds-and-happiness-of-the-young-katherine-rundell-on-the-view-from-the-classroom
- Freelancers are getting buried with ‘soulless’ AI slop cleanup: ‘It’s a shame we need to do it’
  https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2026/sep/02/ai-jobs-freelance-cleanup
- Students who don’t use AI are ahead on every measure
  https://pivot-to-ai.com/2026/09/08/students-who-dont-use-ai-are-ahead-on-every-measure/
  https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2025-results-volume-i_73451bc5-en.html

Further AI impacts

- Copyrightability of LLM-generated code: Can we license “vibe code” into Free Software?
  https://fsfe.org/news/2026/news-20260825-01.html
- Webinar: Copyrightability of LLM-generated code by FSFE - NLnet
  https://nlnet.nl/events/20261029/index.html
- Oregon data centers by the numbers: 111 facilities consume nearly one-quarter of state’s power, according to new report
  https://www.opb.org/article/2026/09/17/oregon-data-centers-consume-quarter-state-power-report/
- NL breaks 1947 heat record with 31 tropical days in a year
  https://www.dutchnews.nl/2026/08/nl-breaks-1947-heat-record-with-31-tropical-days-in-a-year/
- The Netherlands records hottest summer ever in 2026, says KNMI
  https://www.iamexpat.nl/expat-info/dutch-news/the-netherlands-records-hottest-summer-ever-2026-says-knmi

Choose wisely



"Teach the world you want."



Thank you!

Steve Piercy

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Mastodon: https://fosstodon.org/@stevepiercy

Python Calendaring Ecosystem:
https://fosstodon.org/@pycal
https://pycal.org