

Why Does Rmetrics Need a Documentation Project?

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A common problem in open source software is documentation. Providing good documentation is a very time-consuming process, and it is often the case that software developers would rather spend their time writing code than documenting it. A further problem is that it requires a great effort to keep the documentation up-to-date, especially in a rapidly-changing software environment, since writing code and documentation seldom occur in parallel.

Of course, there are many excellent text books available, which provide documentation of R itself, or of individual R packages. A good example is the use R! series published by Springer.

In this presentation, we want to present an alternative business model for publishing documentation of open-source software. Our book (Würtz, Chalabi, Chen, and Ellis, 2009) is published on the [Rmetrics website](http://www.rmetrics.org)¹ as an eBook. This will allow us to quickly adapt the book to changes in the software.

We will share our experience in creating a large documentation project which aims to provide the same quality as that which can be found in certain commercial software. Furthermore, we will discuss technical aspects of writing, typesetting and publishing a book using Sweave (Leisch, 2002), \LaTeX and version control. A further point we will discuss is the infrastructure which makes self-publishing possible: readily-available eCommerce software, marketing tools and on-demand publishing.

Finally, we will address the question of whether writing and publishing good documentation can improve the adoption rate of software in the finance industry, and whether this business model allows us to support the development of our open-source software.

References

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¹<http://www.rmetrics.org>