PostgreSQL and Academia: Establishing Partnership

Who am I

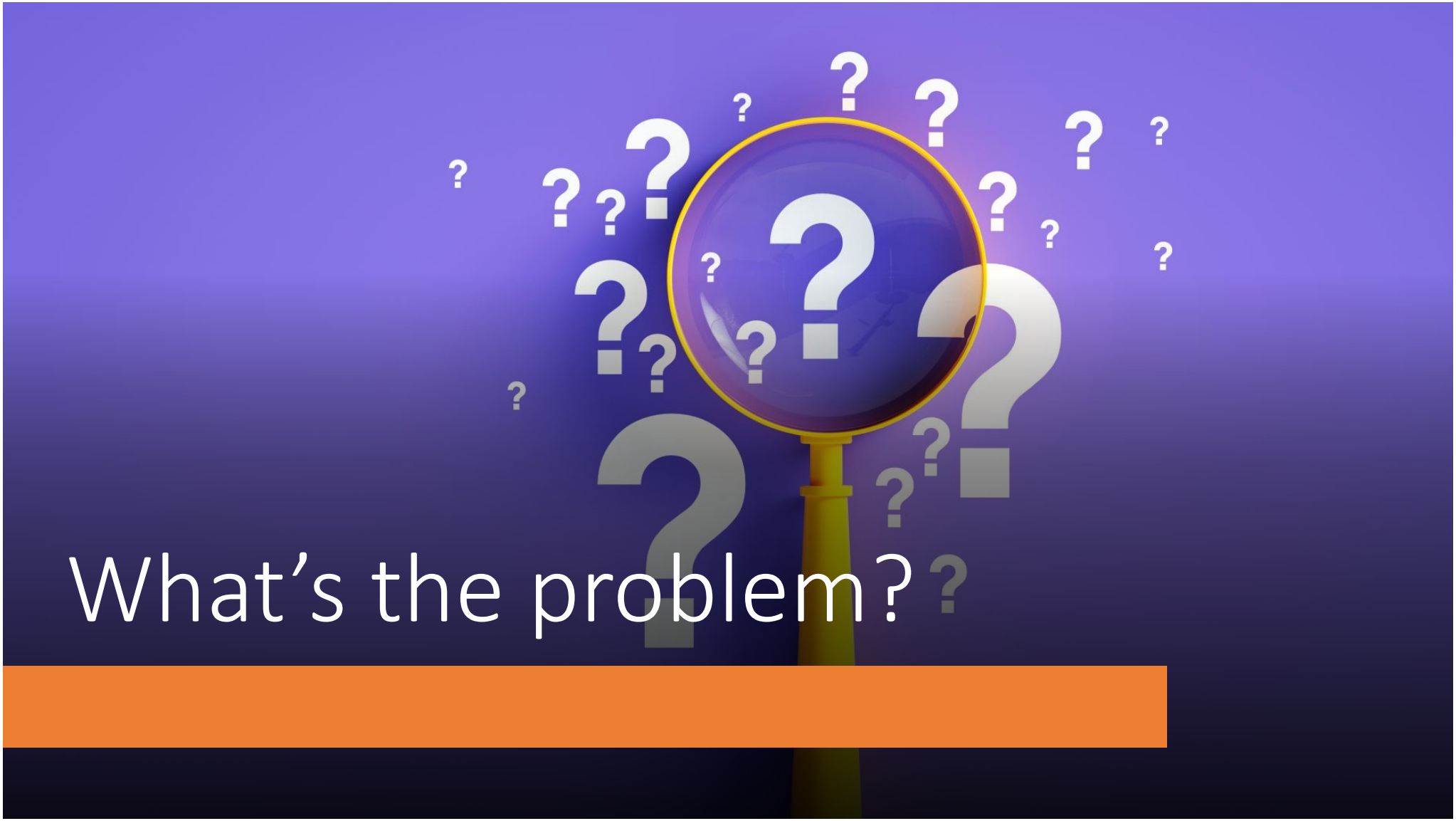
- Hettie Dombrovskaya
- Database Architect at DRW Holdings, Chicago IL
- Prairie Postgres NFP President
- ACM Chicago Communications Chair
- LPI Board of Directors Member
- Illinois Prairie Postgres User Group Organizer
- PG DATA Conference Organizer

PG DATA 2026

https://2026.pg-data.org/

Tickets on sale!

Call for Sponsors still open!


What’s the problem?

An existing gap between academia and industry

It’s a generic problem, however…

Especially acute when teaching CS

And especially when teaching databases

- Majors and Curriculum
- Student’s expectations
- Insufficient training materials
- Lack of OSS exposure

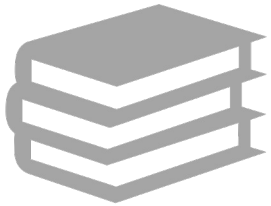
Majors and Curriculum

Faculty:

Trying to stay on top of current research trends

Trying to stay on top of visible industry trends

Trying to make curriculum appealing for students



Students

Want to be employable after graduation

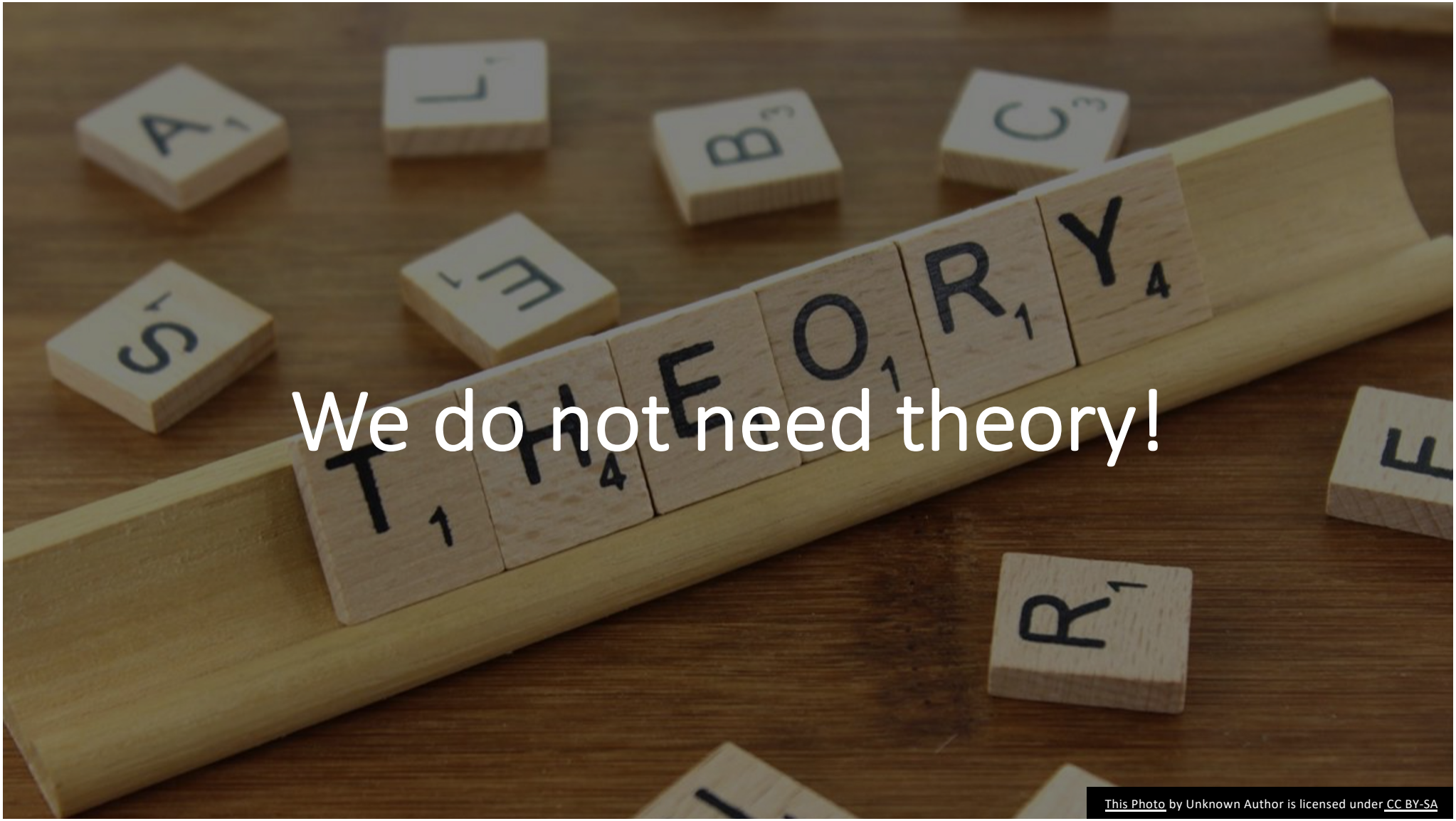
Do not necessarily know what will be required

Students' expectations

Want to be ready to join the workforce

No entry-level positions mention databases

Only several years after graduation students realize that they might need to learn something about databases



We do not need theory!

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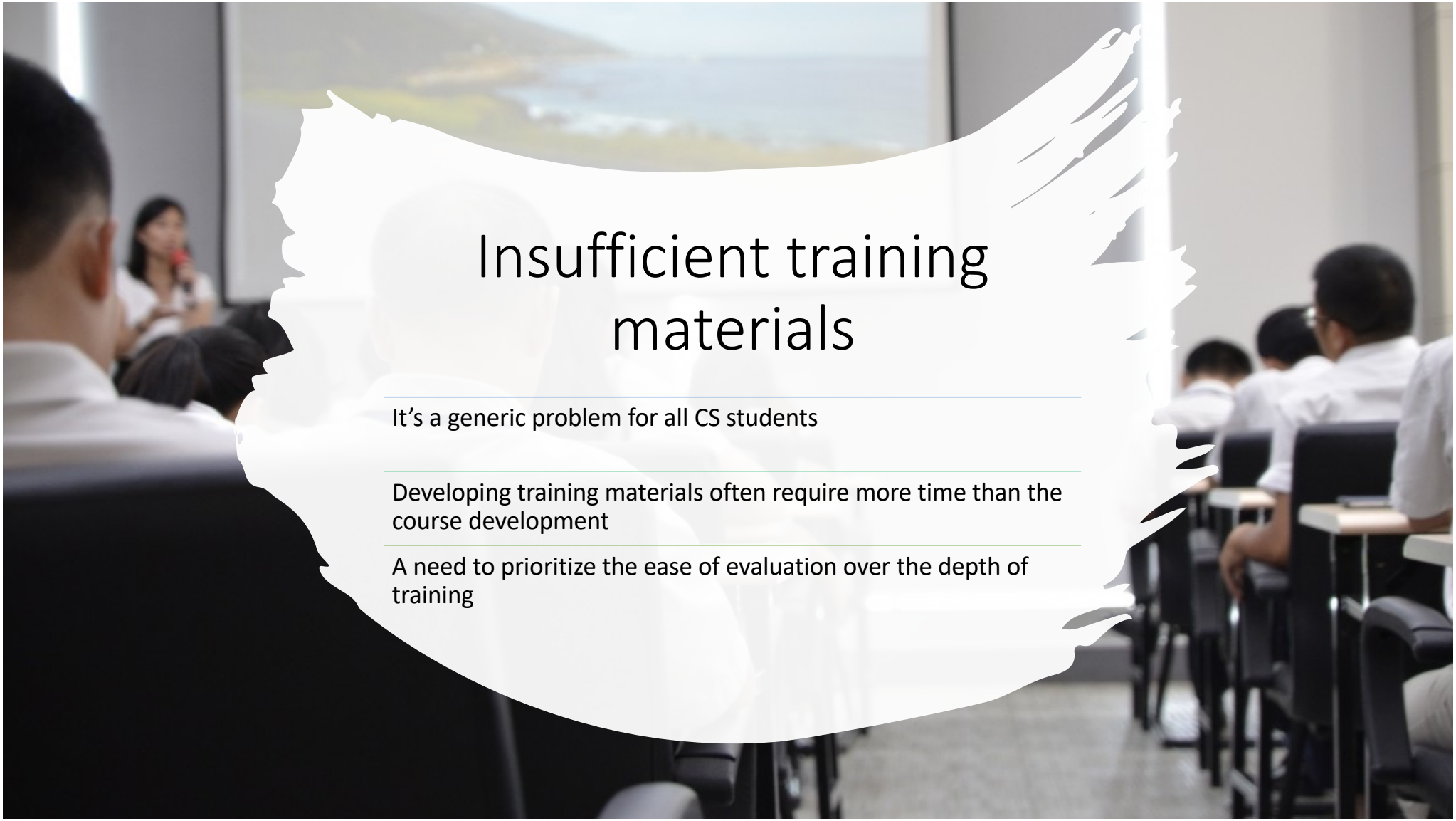

Insufficient training materials

It’s a generic problem for all CS students

Developing training materials often require more time than the course development

A need to prioritize the ease of evaluation over the depth of training

The latter is a problem for all CS

… but especially for Database courses

- Easy evaluation => no real database behind it
- Evaluating “grammar only”
- No exposure to the real-world problems

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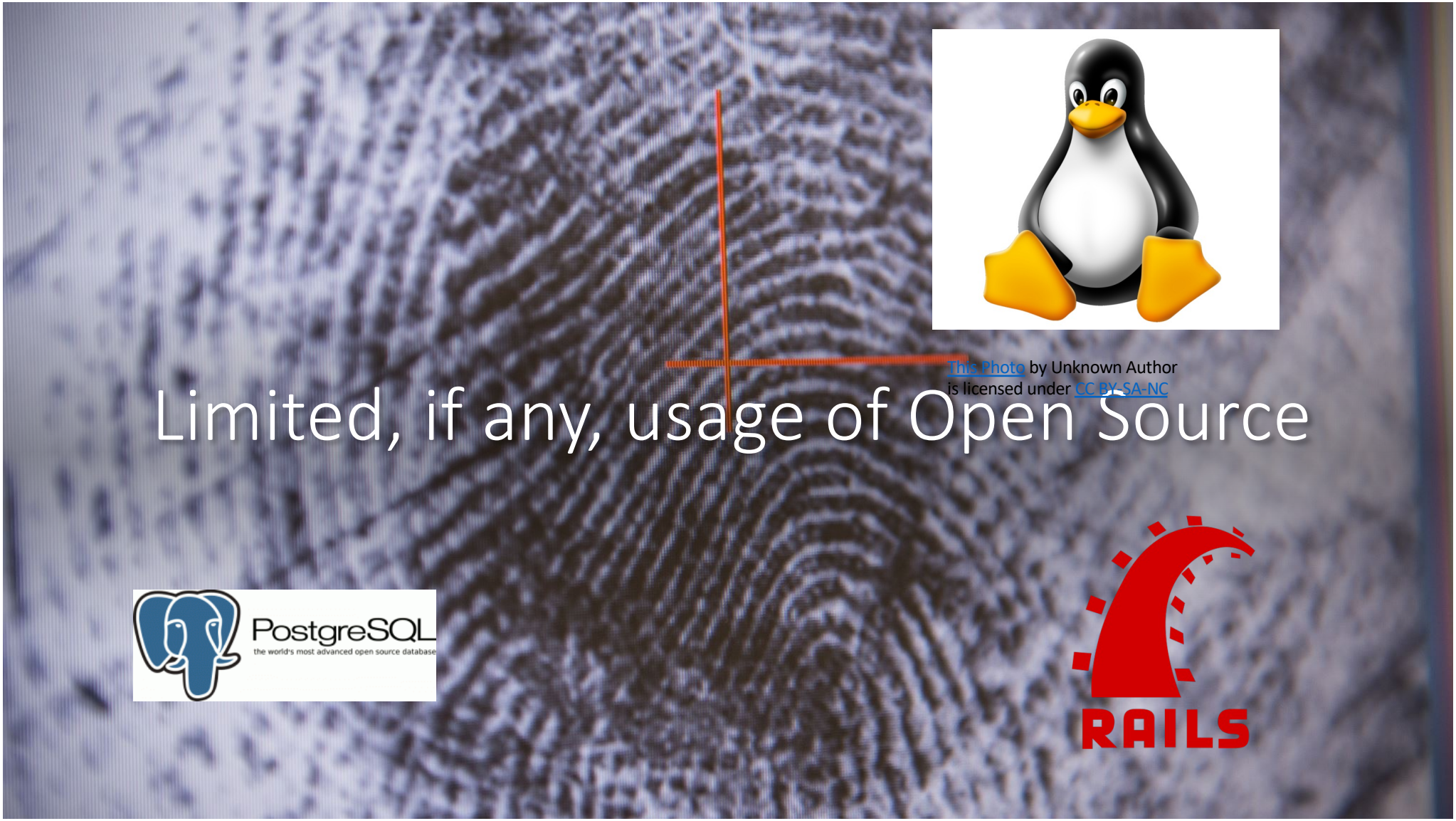

Limited, if any, usage of Open Source

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Traditionally, educational institutions are relying on academic subscriptions

- Free for educational institution
- Free promotion for proprietary products
- Securing the future user –base

Existing bias towards Open Source as “less reliable”

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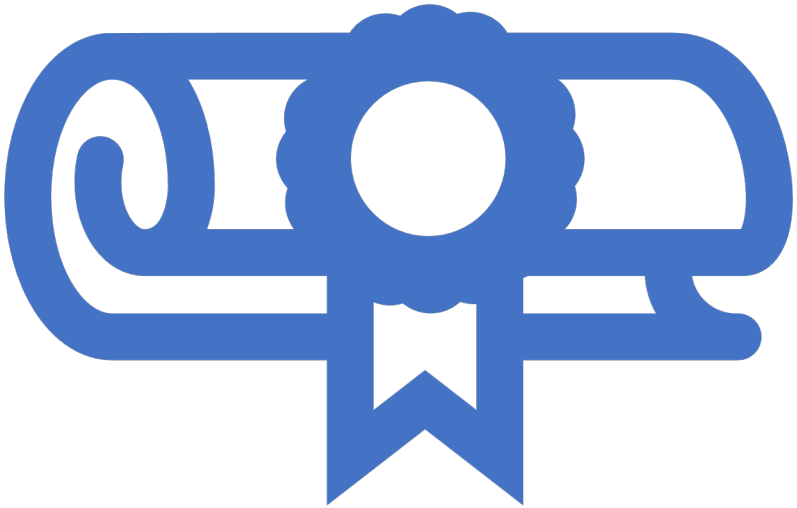
Insufficient marketing of OSS for Higher Education
(LPI has successful experience with that)

Why market does not catch it

The actual needs become apparent only several years after graduation

Computer Science vs Software Engineering

- Companies do not hire CS grads to write programs; they hire Software Engineers.
- Importance of the engineering component
- Does any college give a degree to a DBA?

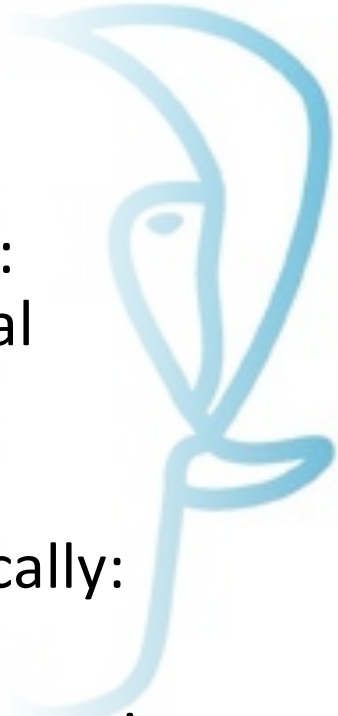


Who is affected

- Hiring companies
- Graduates
- OSS community

Why using OS databases is important?

- As any other OS: availability, equal opportunities, fostering DEI
- Postgres specifically: academic origin
- Supporting community



PostgreS

Why is it important for PostgreSQL Project?

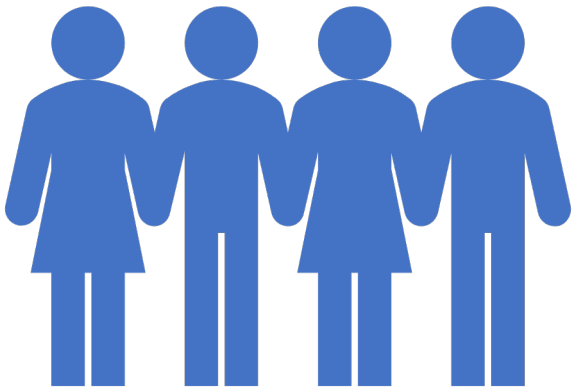
- New ideas
- Future hacker
- Future User Base
- People use the tools they are accustomed to, even when they are not the best possible tools

Prairie Postgres NFP Mission

- Serves the Midwestern States.
- Host events and offer training, professional development, and networking opportunities
- Foster diversity, equity, and inclusion through our work in the local technical community.

- Focusing on Midwest Community
- Focusing on application developers
- Focusing on students and recent grads

Challenges getting students involved



Challenges getting faculty involved

Challenges getting academic researches interested in presenting

What we are doing

- Extensive outreach: targeted personalized emails to the universities (one out of ten respond)
- Invite students to our meetups (that's the easiest part, we have pizza!)
- Offer students volunteering opportunities
- Discounted student tickets

Conferences:
Academic
Partnership

What else we want to do

- Simplifying the path to formal Academic partnership
- Establish all-year partnership: weekend workshops, half-day summits, etc.
- Continue increasing the outreach

It’s difficult

There is a lot of inerti

Apply marketing strateg

Organize

The most effective tool

Mention AI!

LinkedIn:

Prairie Postgres

prairiepostgres.org

GitHub:

https://github.com/hettie-d

PG DATA 2026

2026.pg-data.org

Q&A Time!