

Software Archaeology and Anthropology

17-313 Fall 2023

Foundations of Software Engineering

<https://cmu-313.github.io>

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Administrivia

- Slack
 - Please add a profile picture.
 - Ask questions in #general or # technical questions. Please use threads.
- Office hours can be found on the course home page:
<http://cmu-313.github.io>
- COVID or other health issues? Please stay home.

Smoking Section

- Last full row



Homework

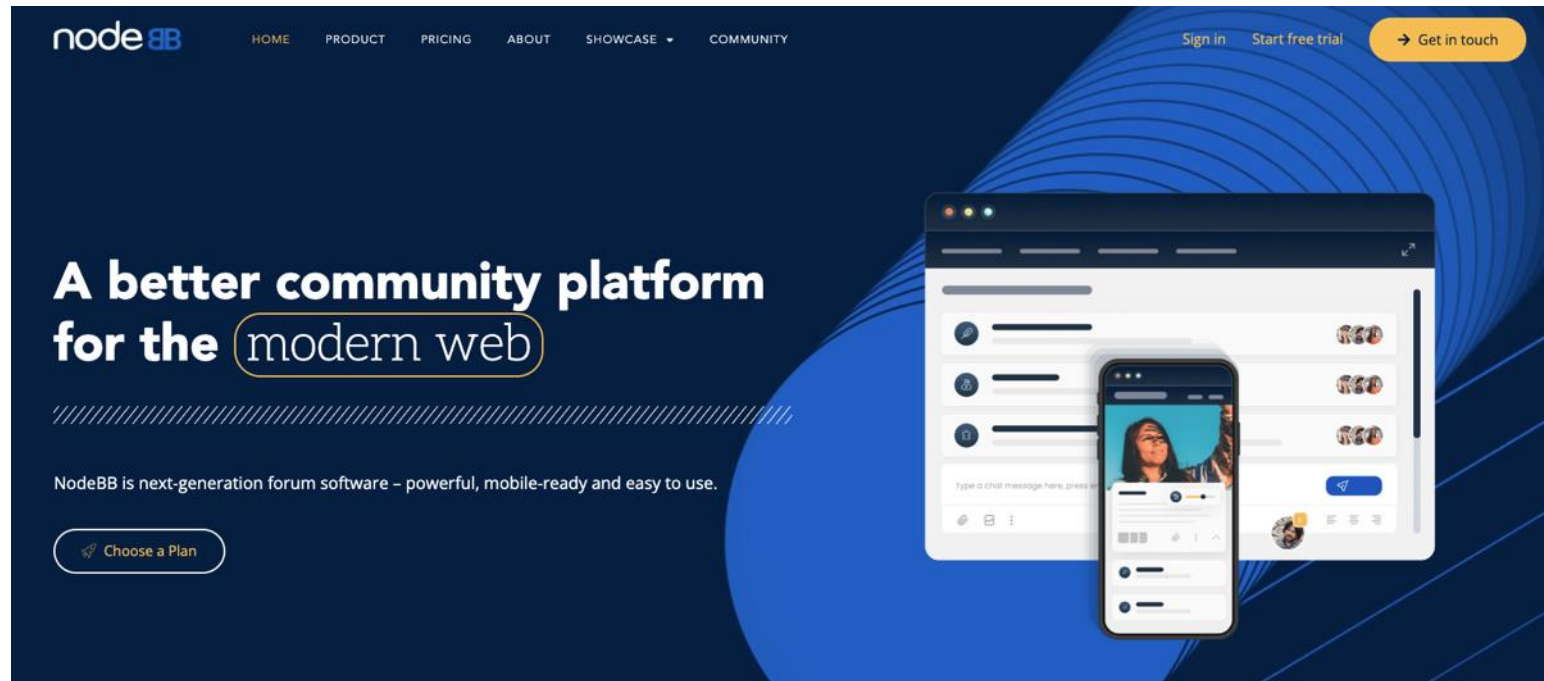
- Homework 1 is released.
 - Part (a) is due Friday Jan 18th, 11:59 pm. **That's tomorrow!**
 - Part (b) is due Thursday, Jan 25th, 11:59pm.
 - This is an individual assignment; we will compose groups next week. **PLEASE FILL OUT TEAMWORK SURVEY**
 - Get started early, ask for help, and check the #technical-questions channel; chances are your questions have been asked by others!

Learning Goals

- Understand and scope the task of taking on and understanding a new and complex piece of existing software
- Appreciate the importance of configuring an effective IDE
- Contrast different types of code execution environments including local, remote, application, and libraries
- Enumerate both static and dynamic strategies for understanding and modifying a new codebase

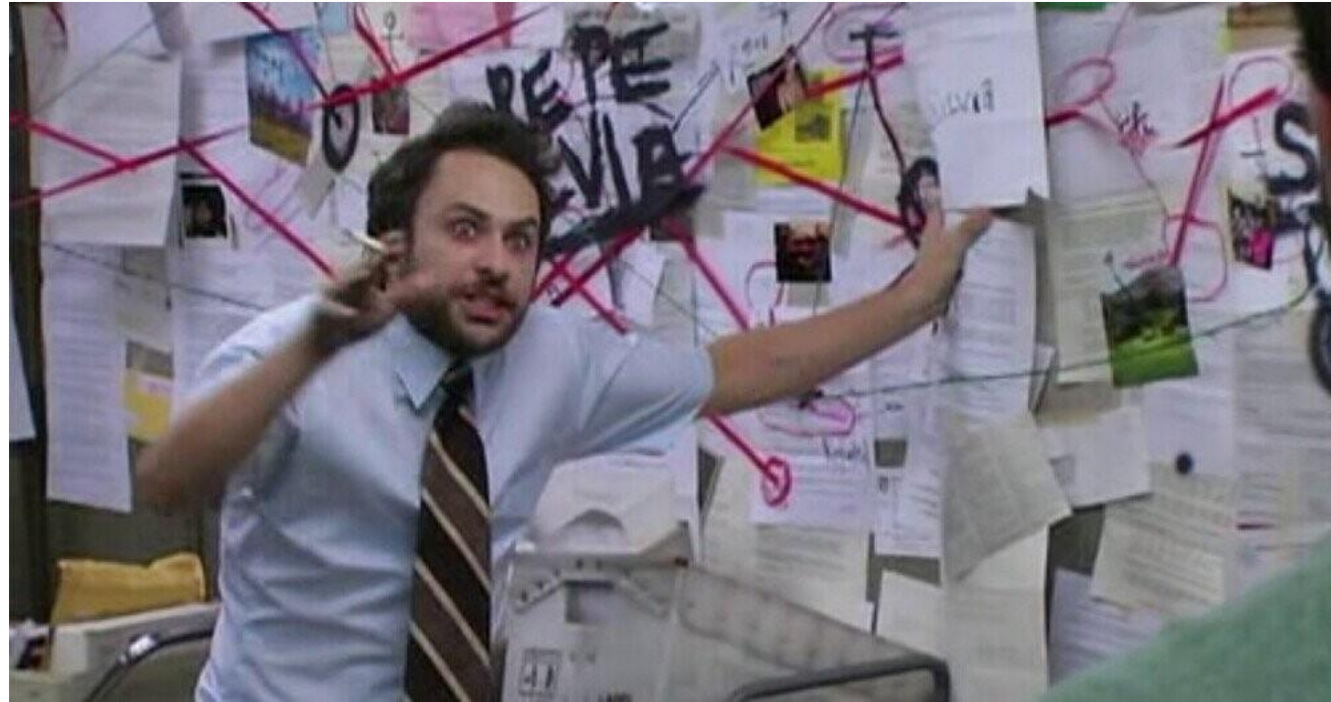
Context: big ole pile of code

- ... do something with it!



**You will never
understand the
entire system!**

Challenge: How do I tackle this codebase?

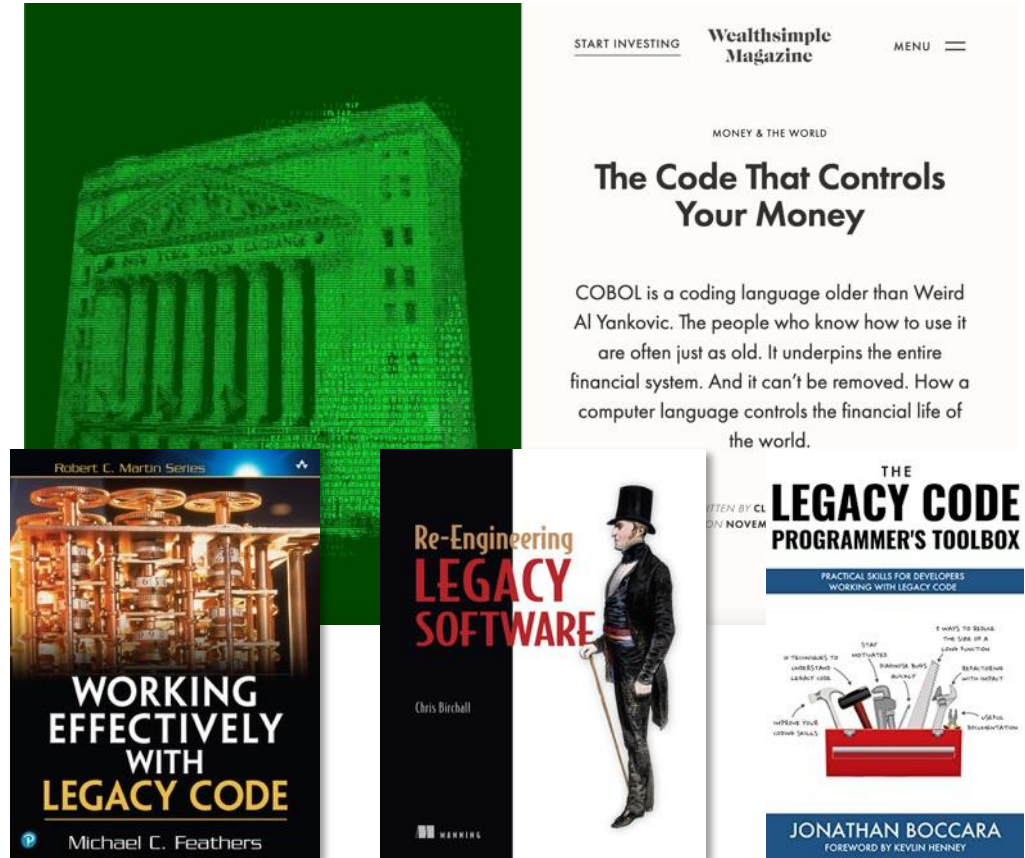


Challenge: How do I tackle this codebase?

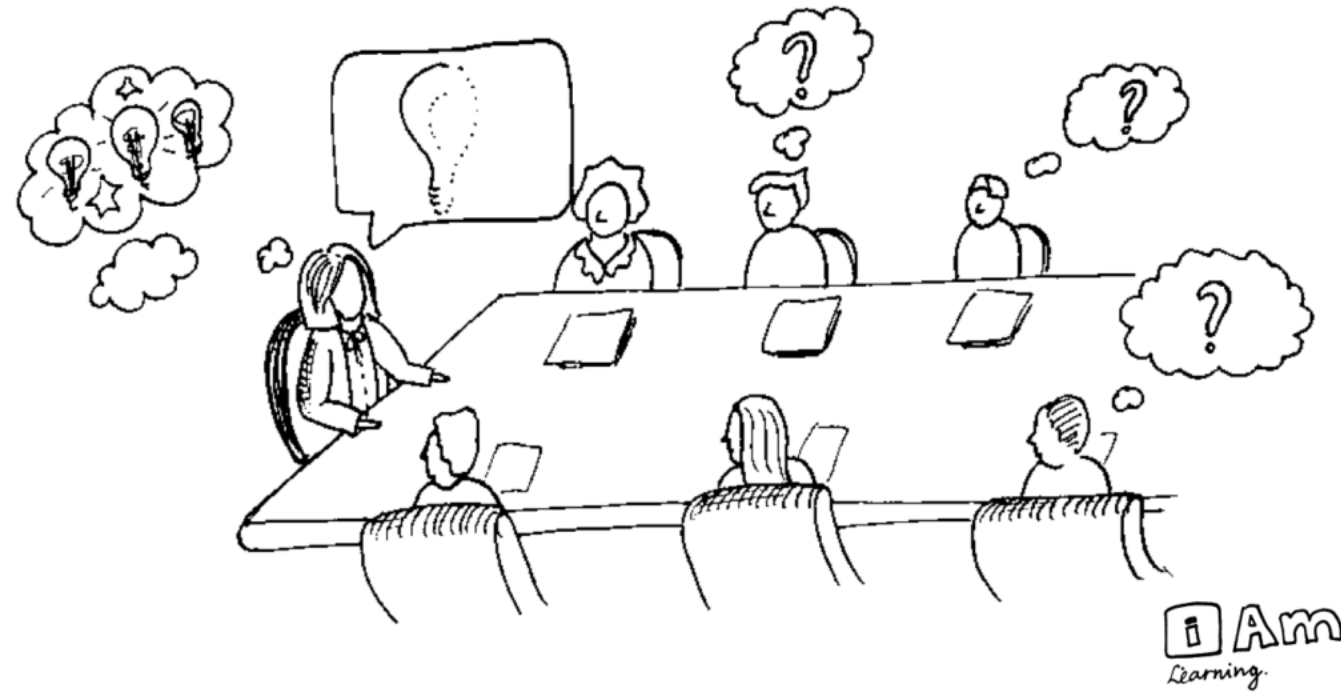
- Leverage your previous experiences (languages, technologies, patterns)
- Consult documentation, whitepapers
- Talk to experts, code owners
- Follow best practices to build a working model of the system

Bad news: There are few helpful resources!

- **Working Effectively with Legacy Code.**
Michael C. Feathers. 2004.
- **Re-Engineering Legacy Software.**
Chris Birchall. 2016.
- **The Legacy Code Programmer's Toolbox.**
Jonathan Boccara. 2019.



Why? Because of Tacit Knowledge



Today: How to tackle codebases

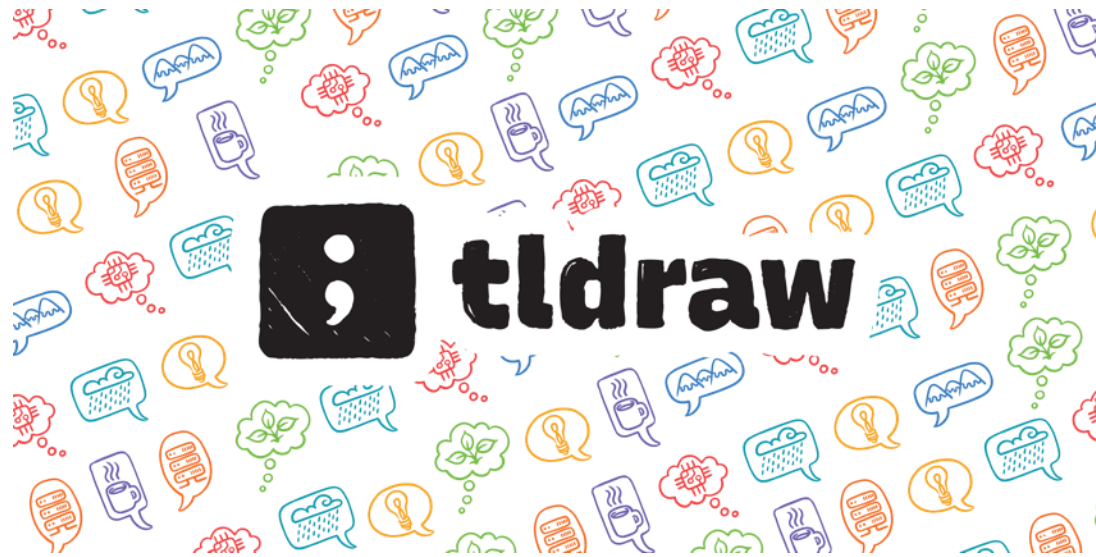
- Goal: develop and test a working model or set of working hypotheses about how (some part of) a system works
- Working model: an understanding of the pieces of the system (components), and the way they interact (connections)
- Focus: Observation, probes, and hypothesis testing
 - Helpful tools and techniques!



essentially,
all models are wrong,
but some are useful

George E. P. Box

Live Demonstration: tldraw



<https://github.com/tldraw/tldraw>

Steps to Understand a New Codebase

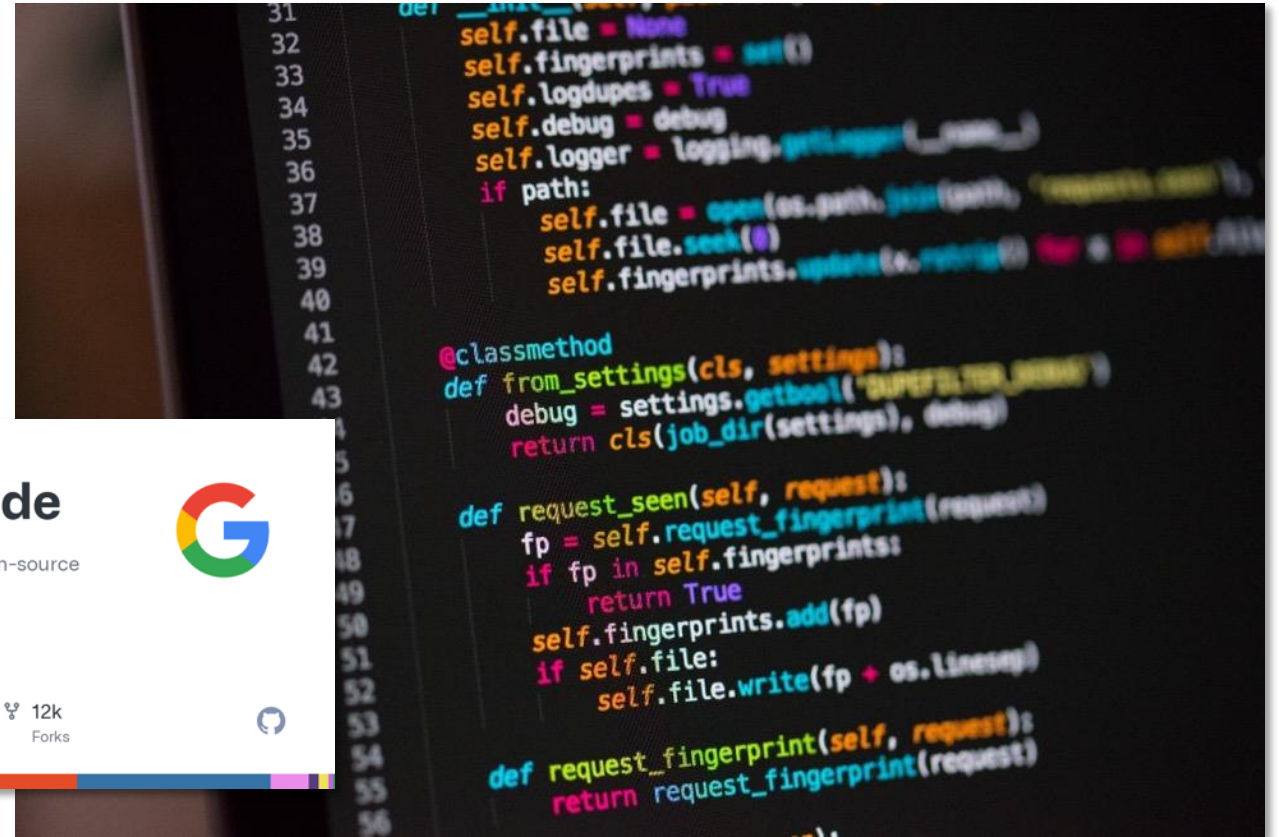
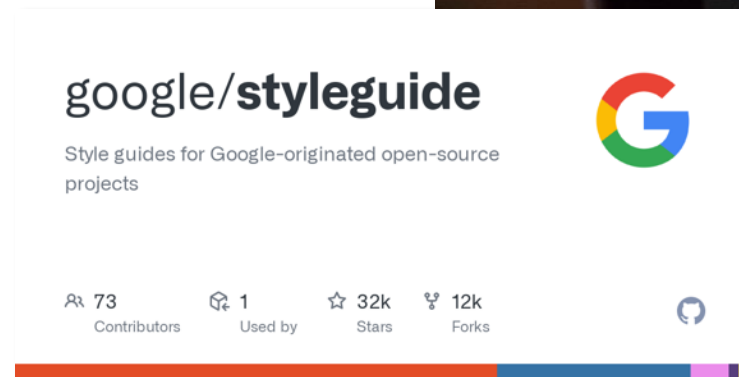
- Look at README.md
- Clone the repo.
- Build the codebase.
- Figure out how to make it run.
- What do you want to mess with?
 - Clone and own
- Traceability - Attach a debugger
 - View Source
 - Find the logs.
 - Search for constants (strings, colors, weird integers (#DEADBEEF))

Participation Activity

- Take out a piece of paper. (we have extra if you need)
- Write down one pro and one con about trying to understand a new codebase by compiling and building it vs. just reading the code.
- Pair with your neighbor and discuss your answers. Do you agree?
- Share with the class!
- Write your own andrewID on the paper, leave it at the end of class.

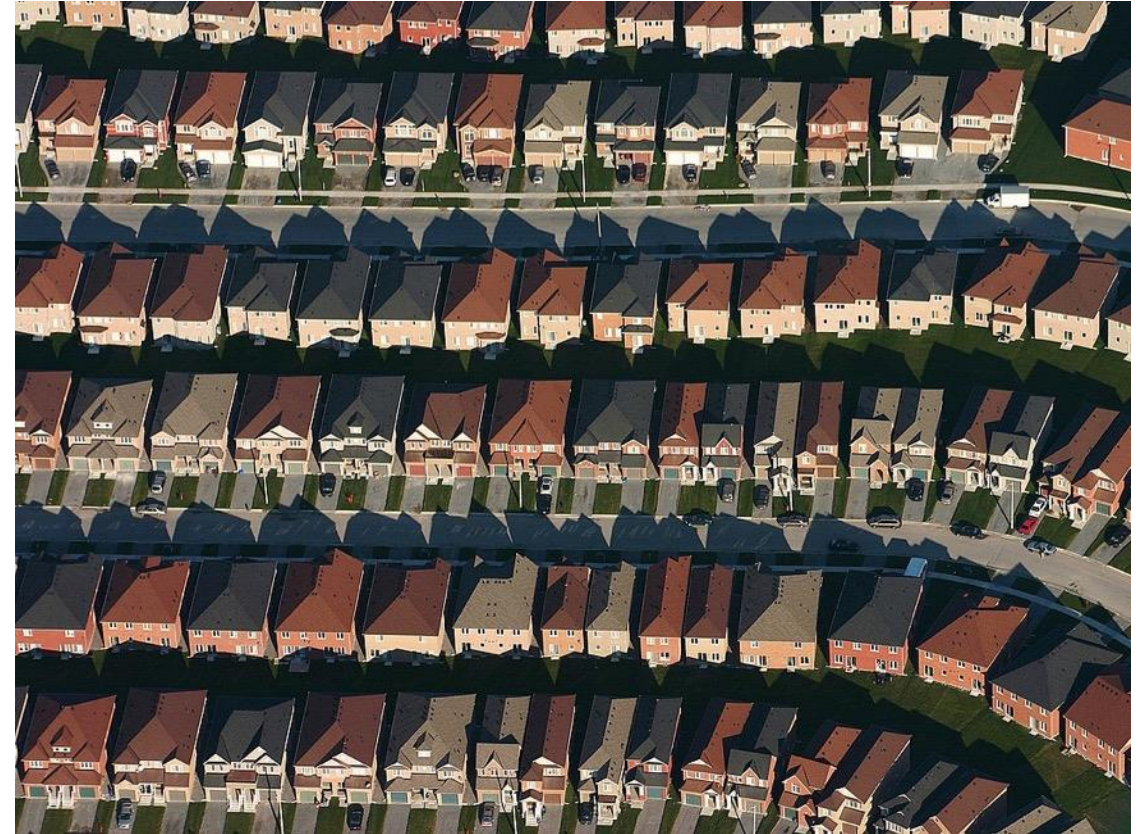
Observation: Software is full of patterns

- File structure
- System architecture
- Code structure
- Names
- ...

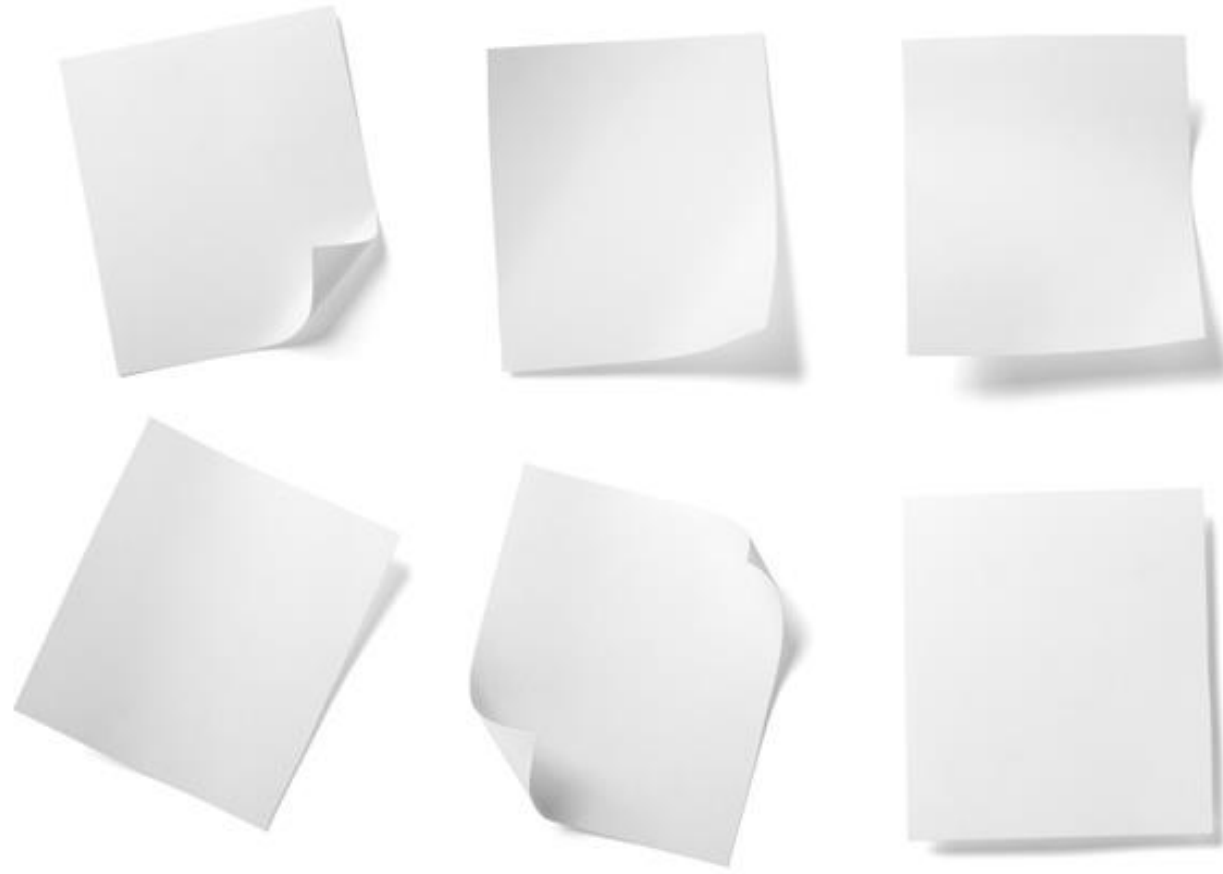


Observation: Software is massively redundant

- There's always something to copy/use as a starting point!



Observation: Code must run to do stuff!



Observation: If code runs, it must have a beginning...



Observation: If code runs, it must exist...

```
0x08048416 <+18>: jg     DWORD PTR [ebp+0x8], 0x1
0x08048419 <+21>: mov   eax, DWORD PTR [ebp+0xc]
0x0804841b <+23>: mov   ecx, DWORD PTR [eax]
0x08048420 <+28>: mov   edx, 0x8048520
0x08048425 <+33>: mov   eax, ds:0x8049648
0x08048429 <+37>: mov   DWORD PTR [esp+0x8], ecx
0x0804842d <+41>: mov   DWORD PTR [esp+0x4], edx
0x08048430 <+44>: mov   DWORD PTR [esp], eax
0x08048435 <+49>: call  0x8048338 <fprintf@plt>
0x0804843a <+54>: mov   eax, 0x1
0x0804843c <+56>: jmp   0x8048459 <main+85>
0x0804843f <+59>: mov   eax, DWORD PTR [ebp+0xc]
0x08048442 <+62>: add   eax, 0x4
0x08048444 <+64>: mov   eax, DWORD PTR [eax]
0x08048448 <+68>: mov   DWORD PTR [esp+0x4], eax
0x0804844c <+72>: lea  eax, [esp+0x10]
0x0804844f <+75>: mov   DWORD PTR [esp], eax
0x08048454 <+78>: call  0x8048338 <fprintf@plt>
```

The Beginning: Entry Points

- Locally installed programs: run cmd, OS launch, I/O events, etc.
- Local applications in dev: build + run, test, deploy (e.g., docker)
- Web apps server-side: Browser sends HTTP request (GET/POST)
- Web apps client-side: Browser runs JavaScript, event handlers

Code must exist. But where?

- Locally installed programs: run cmd, OS launch, I/O events, etc.
 - Binaries (machine code) on your computer
- Local applications in dev: build + run, test, deploy (e.g., docker)
 - Source code in repository (+ dependencies)
- Web apps server-side: Browser sends HTTP request (e.g., GET, POST)
 - Code runs remotely (you can only observe outputs)
- Web apps client-side: Browser runs JavaScript, event handlers
 - Source code is downloaded and run locally (see: browser dev tools!)

Can running code be Probed/Understood/Edited?

Transparent



Source code built locally

(P+U+E)

Translucent



Binaries running locally

Open source

(P+U)

Closed source

(P)

Opaque



Server-side apps running remotely

Open source

(U)

Closed source

(Talk to NSA)


Creating a model of unfamiliar code



Source code built
locally

Information Gathering

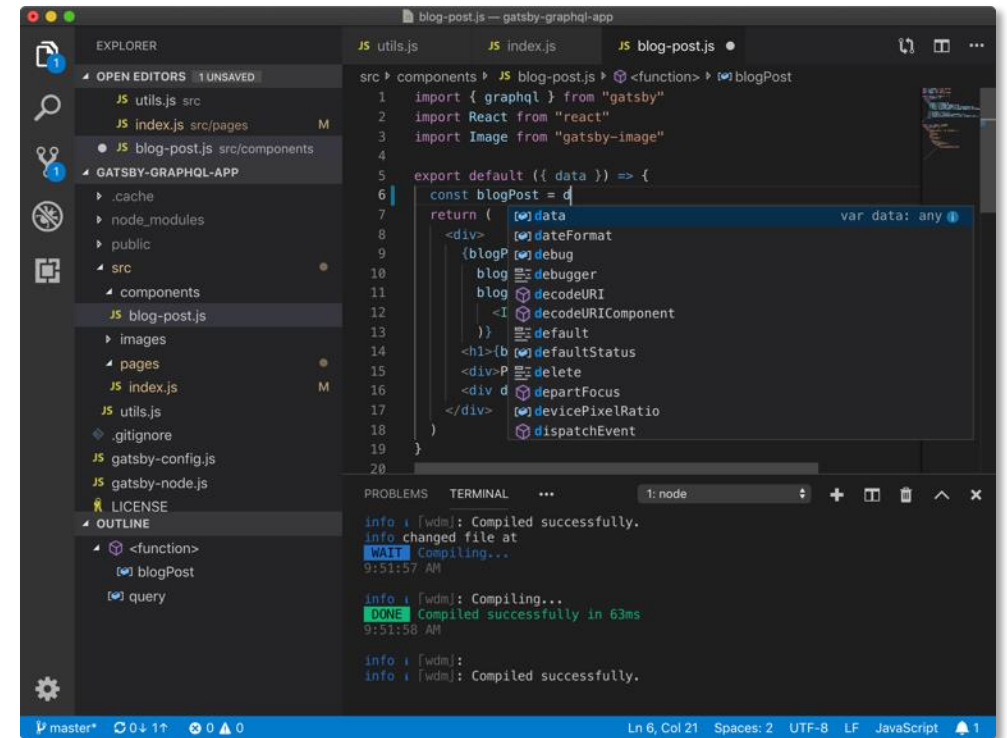
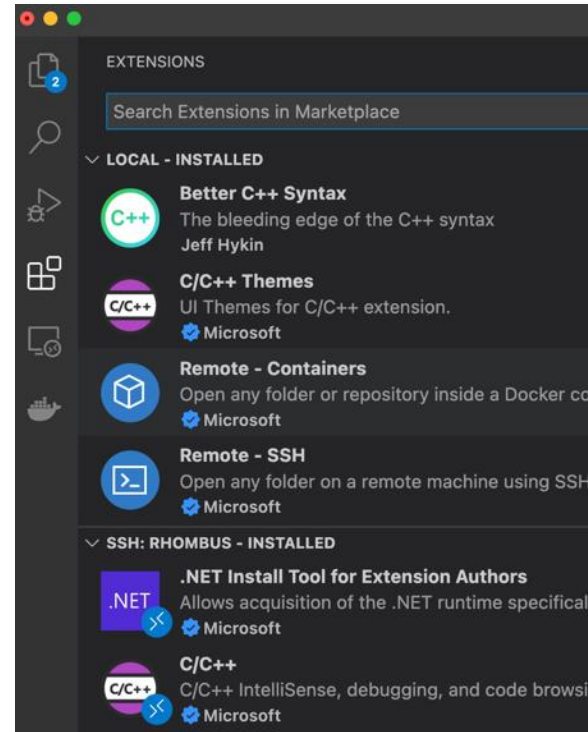
- Basic needs:
 - Code/file search and navigation
 - Code editing (probes)
 - Execution of code, tests
 - Observation of output (observation)
- Many choices here on tools! Depends on circumstance.
 - grep/find/etc. Knowing Unix tools is invaluable
 - A decent IDE
 - Debugger
 - Test frameworks + coverage reports
 - Google (or your favorite web search engine)
 - ChatGPT or LaMA



At the command line: **grep** and **find**!
(Google for tutorials)

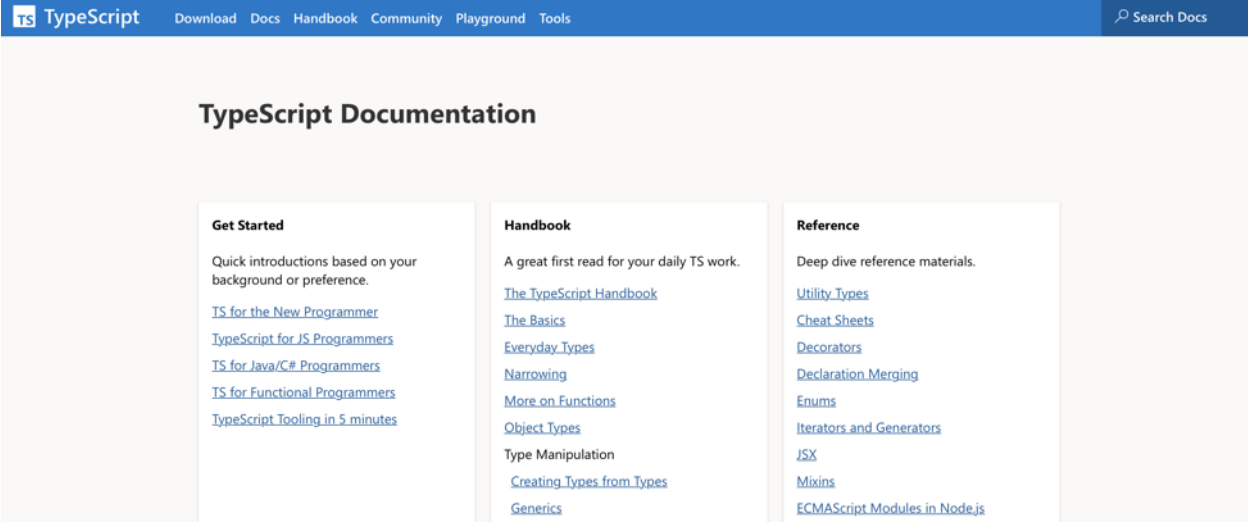
Static Information Gathering: Use an IDE!

Real software is too complex to keep in your head



Consider documentation and tutorials judiciously

- Great for discovering entry points!
- Can teach you about general structure, architecture (more on this later in the semester)
- Often out of date.
- As you gain experience, you will recognize more of these, and you will immediately know something about how the program works
- Also: discussion boards; issue trackers

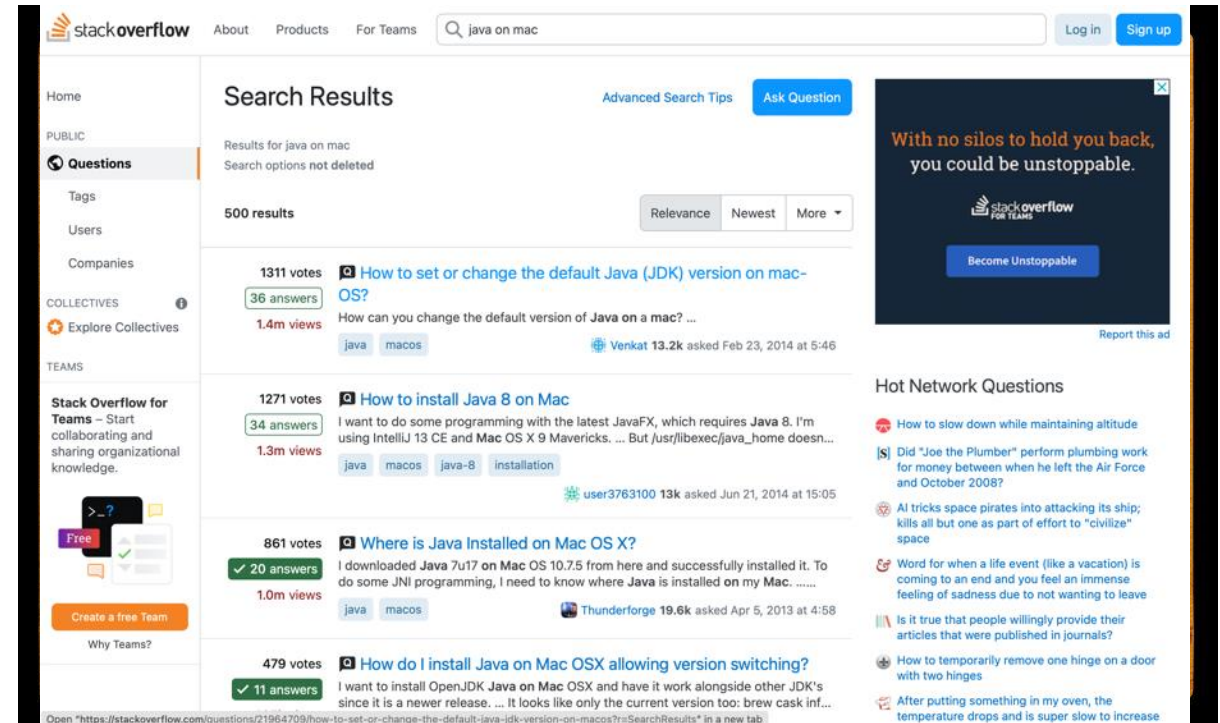


The screenshot shows the TypeScript Documentation website. The header includes the TypeScript logo and navigation links: Download, Docs, Handbook, Community, Playground, Tools, and a search bar labeled 'Search Docs'. The main heading is 'TypeScript Documentation'. Below this, there are three columns of links:

- Get Started**: Quick introductions based on your background or preference.
 - [TS for the New Programmer](#)
 - [TypeScript for JS Programmers](#)
 - [TS for Java/C# Programmers](#)
 - [TS for Functional Programmers](#)
 - [TypeScript Tooling in 5 minutes](#)
- Handbook**: A great first read for your daily TS work.
 - [The TypeScript Handbook](#)
 - [The Basics](#)
 - [Everyday Types](#)
 - [Narrowing](#)
 - [More on Functions](#)
 - [Object Types](#)
 - [Type Manipulation](#)
 - [Creating Types from Types](#)
 - [Generics](#)
- Reference**: Deep dive reference materials.
 - [Utility Types](#)
 - [Cheat Sheets](#)
 - [Decorators](#)
 - [Declaration Merging](#)
 - [Enums](#)
 - [Iterators and Generators](#)
 - [JSX](#)
 - [Mixins](#)
 - [ECMAScript Modules in Node.js](#)

Discussion Boards and Issue Trackers

- Software is written by people.
- How can we talk to them?
- Fortunately, they probably aren't dead.
- So, you can report problems on GitHub.
- Or, ask them questions on StackOverflow.



The screenshot shows the Stack Overflow website interface. The search bar at the top contains the text "java on mac". Below the search bar, the page displays "Search Results" for "Results for java on mac". The search options are set to "Relevance". The results list shows three questions:

- How to set or change the default Java (JDK) version on mac-OS?** (1311 votes, 36 answers, 1.4m views) asked by Venkat 13.2k on Feb 23, 2014 at 5:46.
- How to install Java 8 on Mac** (1271 votes, 34 answers, 1.3m views) asked by user3763100 13k on Jun 21, 2014 at 15:05.
- Where is Java Installed on Mac OS X?** (861 votes, 20 answers, 1.0m views) asked by Thunderforge 19.6k on Apr 5, 2013 at 4:58.
- How do I install Java on Mac OSX allowing version switching?** (479 votes, 11 answers) asked by user3763100 13k on Jun 21, 2014 at 15:05.

On the right side of the page, there is an advertisement for "stack overflow FOR TEAMS" with the text "With no silos to hold you back, you could be unstoppable." and a "Become Unstoppable" button. Below the ad, there is a section for "Hot Network Questions" listing several trending questions.

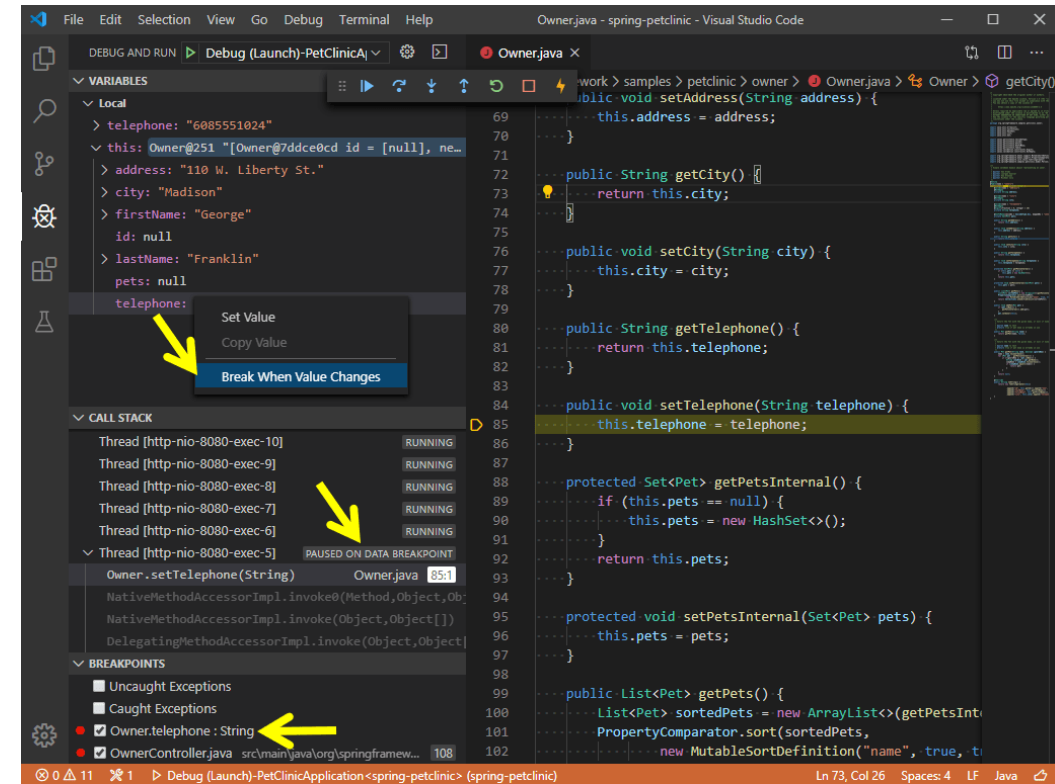
Dynamic Information Gathering Change helps to inform and refine mental models

- Build it.
- Run it.
- Change it.
- Run it again.
- How did the behavior change?



Probes: Observe, control or “lightly” manipulate execution

- print(“this code is running!”)
- Structured logging
- Debuggers
 - Breakpoint, eval, step through / step over
 - (Some tools even support remote debugging)
- Delete debugging
- Chrome Developer Tools

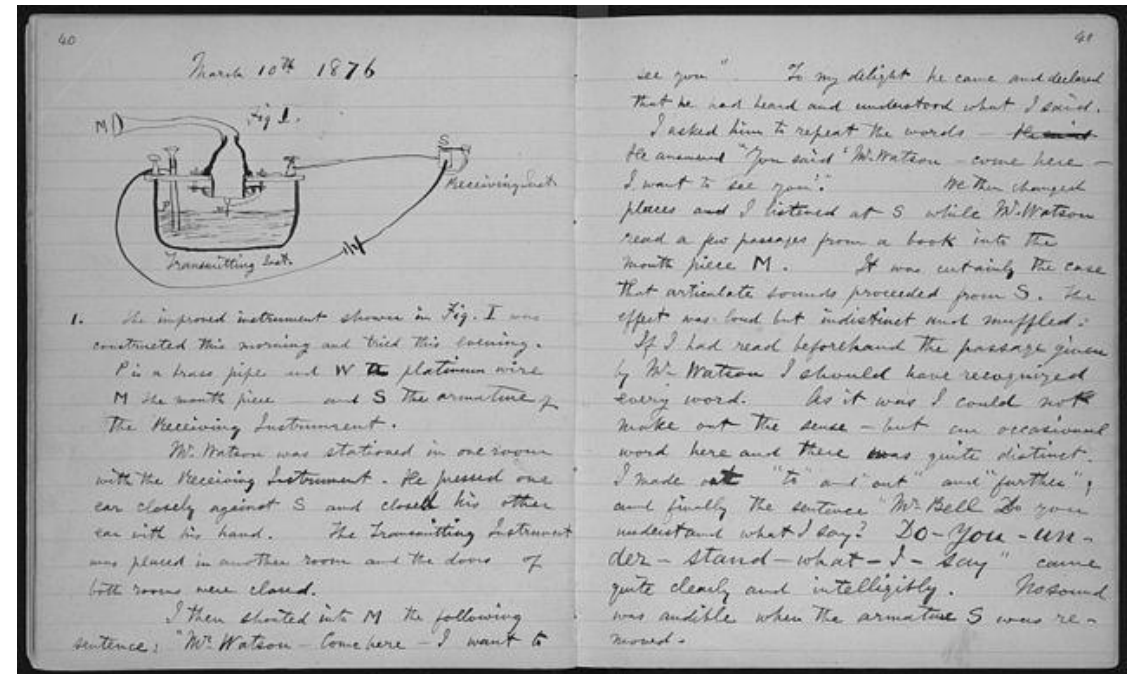


Step 0: Sanity check basic model + hypotheses

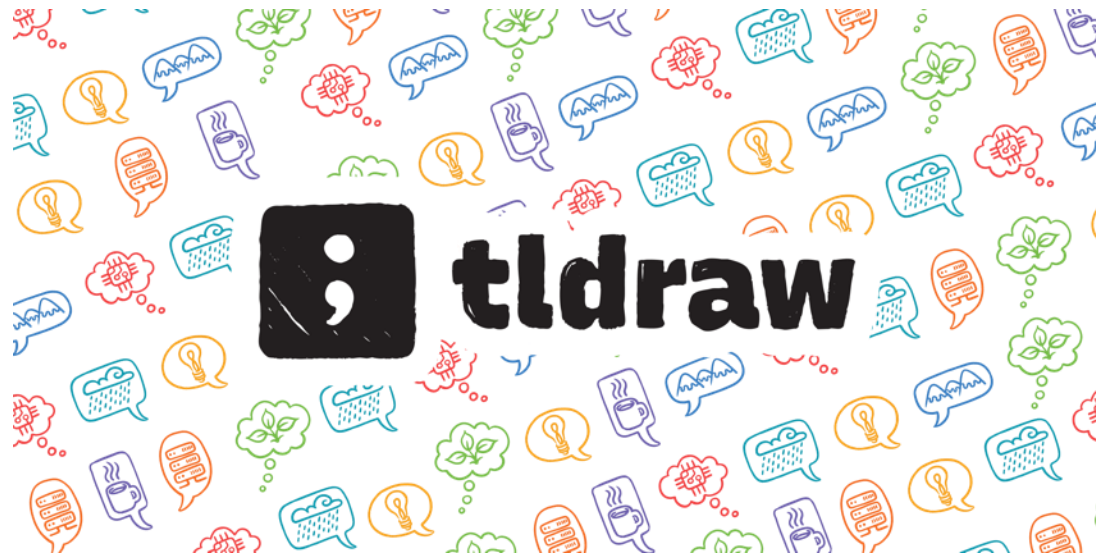
- Confirm that you can build and run the code.
 - Ideally both using the tests provided, and by hand.
- Confirm that the code you are running is the code you built
- Confirm that you can make an externally visible change
- How? Where? Starting points:
 - Run an existing test, change it
 - Write a new test
 - Change the code, write or rerun a test that should notice the change
- Ask someone for help

Document and share your findings!

- Update README and docs
 - Or better: use a Developer Wiki
 - Use [Mermaid](#) for diagrams
- Screencast on Twitch
- Collaborate with others
- Include negative results, too!



Let's try some of these techniques again...



<https://github.com/tldraw/tldraw>