# Making Jupyter Notebooks Less Awful

Laura Richter, PyConZA 2023

"de facto standard"

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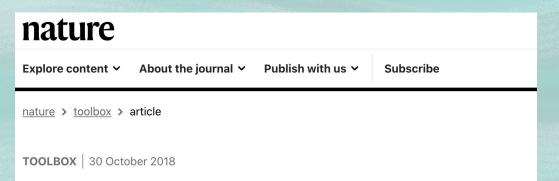
# Why Jupyter is data scientists' computational notebook of choice

An improved architecture and enthusiastic user base are driving uptake of the opensource web tool. "killer app for teaching computing"

"powerful connections between topics, theories, data and results"

"move the computer to the data"

"Such tools foster computational reproducibility by simplifying code reuse."



# Why Jupyter is data scientists' computational notebook of choice

An improved architecture and enthusiastic user base are driving uptake of the opensource web tool.

"Jupyter notebooks also encourage poor coding practice ... by making it difficult to organize code logically, break it into reusable modules and develop tests to ensure the code is working properly."

"notebooks do require discipline"



"Because Jupyter Notebooks are a relatively recently-developed tool, they don't (yet) follow or encourage consensus-based software development best practices."

"Data scientists, typically collaborating on a small project that involves experimentation, often feel they don't need to adhere to any engineering best practices."

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OCT 2020

### Hold 🔞

Over the last few decades computational notebooks &, first introduced by Wolfram Mathematica &, have evolved to support scientific research, exploration and educational workflows. Naturally, in support of data science workflows and with the likes of Jupyter notebooks 

☑ and Databricks notebooks 2, they've become a great companion by providing a simple and intuitive interactive computation environment for combining code to analyze data with rich text and visualization to tell a data story. Notebooks were designed to provide an ultimate medium for modern scientific communication and innovation. In recent years, however, we've seen a trend for notebooks to be the medium for running the type of production-quality code typically used to drive enterprise operations. production. This is a case of good intentions — democratizing programming for data scientists implemented poorly and at the cost of scalability, maintainability, resiliency and all the other qualities that a long-lived production code needs to support. We don't recommend productionizing notebooks and instead encourage empowering data scientists to build production-ready code with the right programming frameworks, thus simplifying the continuous delivery tooling and abstracting complexity away through end-to-end ML platforms.



r/datascience · 7 mo. ago

### The hatred towards jupyter notebooks

Discussion

I totally get the hote. You give constantly emphasize the need for scripts and to do away with jupyter

ever people say this, I always ask how they plan on doing data code, I can't plot data in a script. I can't look at figures. Isn't a jupyter

r/MachineLearning • 7 yr. ago



I understand that it is easy to use to explore data when messing around with graphs, however i come from web development and i feel like the work flow when using Jupyter is horrible. A guick list of drawbacks using Jupyter:

- 1. If you work in a team and want to use git, it is a mess.
- 2. You end up writing horrible code that is messy to read and keep track of in the notebook, even after splitting code across multiple notebooks.
- 3. You need to run each codeblock in the notebook block by block.
- 4. Read more here: http://opiateforthemass.es/articles/why-i-dont-like-jupyter-fka-jpythonnotebook/

I have explored different options like Hydrogen for Atom, where i can write normal python code and then execute something if i need to check a graph for example.

However I'm not completely sure about this approach ether

DS r/datascience · 8 mo. ago by Youngfreezy2k

### Rant: Jupyter notebooks are trash.

### Discussion

They should only be used for experimentation and sharing information. Please don't I finished products. When data engineers are creating inference pipelines based on the scientists create they shouldn't have to reverse engineer your feeble code. I am going understand what the nested for loops are trying to accomplish. Just tell me what I ne data and I will do it :)

I love scrolling through a notebook and looking at the visualizations and pretty pictures though when I'm trying make use of the code in the notebook it is turning the rest of my hair grey.

Thank you.







that process? To be able to write code to plot data and explore, and :ript?

r/MachineLearning . 5 yr. ago

### [D] I Don't Like Notebooks

Discussion

DS r/datascience · 1 yr. ago

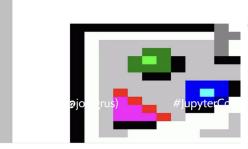
### A critical reflection of jupyter notebooks

### Discussion

In my experience notebooks are a surprisingly controversial topic. I've seen things ranging from Databricks building tools for data scientists and data engineers that can seemingly only run on notebooks unless you install the notoriously buggy databricks connect to people using the word "notebook" antithesis of good programming habits.

Recently I've been listening to more talks about interactive vs batch programming and have just been reflecting on how I write code myself. Here's my own set of hot takes:

- 1. The name of notebooks explains what they are meant for. They are for experimenting, prototyping, potentially automating reports with markdown, etc. Essentially, you use them to jot down ideas as you would on a piece of paper.
- 2. You should build systems/features/... with notebooks and not with regular scripts to save time. You should treat your notebook as a debugger that is always on. Writing code in notebooks is a great way to build code interactively and incrementally. If you have IO sitting around and waiting to load data out of your DB to train a model each run doesn't make sense.
- 3. Notebooks DO encourage poor programming standards if you don't watch out. People say



docs.google.com

### Notebooks suck: change my mind

### Discussion

Just switched roles from ml engineer at a company that doesn't use notebooks to a company that uses them heavily. I don't get it. They're hard to version, hard to distribute, hard to re-use, hard to test, hard to review. I dont see a single benefit that you don't get with plain python files with 0 effort.

ThEvRe InTErAcTiVe...

So is running scripts in your console. If you really want to go line-by-line use a repl or debugger.

Someone, please, please tell me what I'm missing, because I feel like we're making a huge mistake as an industry by pushing this technology.

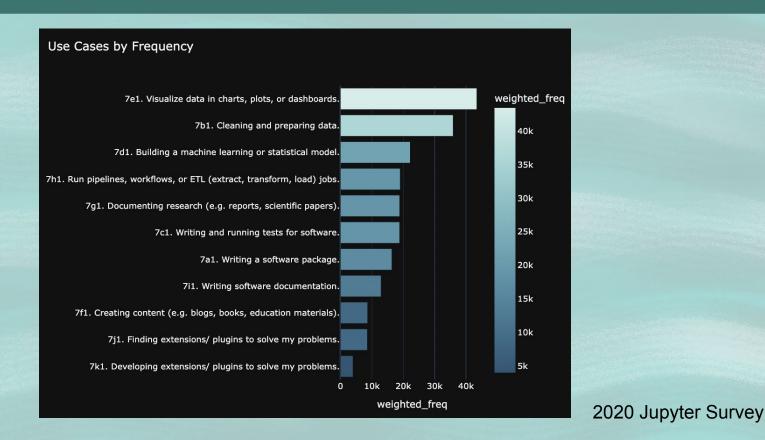
edit: Typo

Edit: So it seems the arguments for notebooks fall in a few categories. The first category is "notebooks are a personal tool, essentially a REPL with a diffferent interface". If this was true I wouldn't care if my colleagues used them, just as I don't care what editor they use. The problem is it's not true. If I ask someone to share their code with me, nobody in their right mind would send me their ipython history.

# So why use Jupyter?

Prototype, Experiment,
Present, Teach, Learn,
Taking your compute to the data,
Anything that needs a visual result

# So why use Jupyter?



# When do you need good practice?

```
... larger project ... many engineers ... scaling ... deployment ...
```

# When do you need good practice?

```
... larger project ... many engineers ... scaling ... deployment ...
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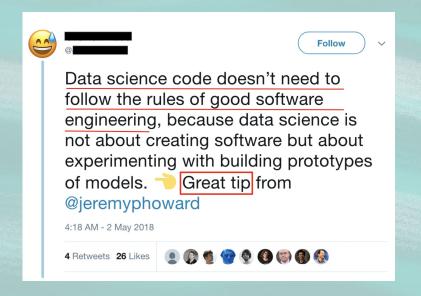
Anything you need to be correct

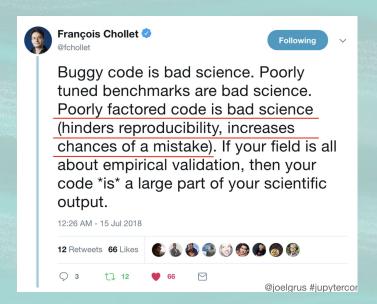
# When do you need good practice?

... larger project ... many engineers ... scaling ... deployment ...

Anything you need to be correct





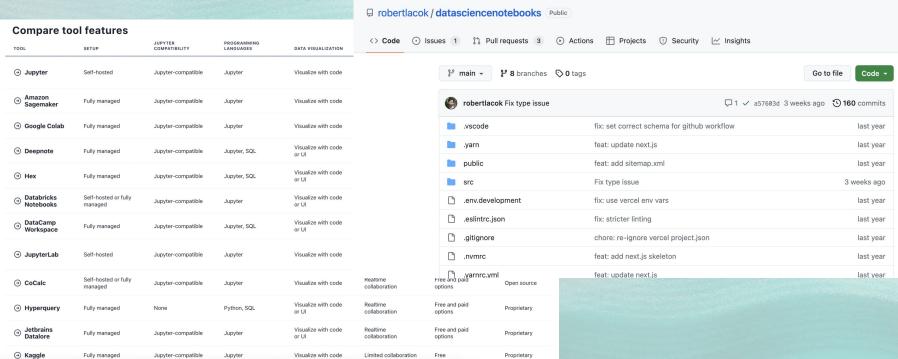


# So how do we make Jupyter Notebooks more correct?

- 1. "Follow established software development best practices"(\*)
- 2. Version control & Reviews
- 3. Testing
- 4. Automating testing and quality control
- 5. Dependency management
- 6. Data management

# Where are you running your Jupyter?

### datasciencenotebook.org



Product V Solutions V Open Source V Pricing

# Where are you running your Jupyter?

Yourself Local Jupyter, Local JupyterLab, JupyterHub, VS Code

Lightweight hosted Binder, Google Colab, Kaggle Kernels...

Mediumweight hosted Deepnote, Saturn Cloud, Jetbrains...

**Enterprise hosted** Amazon Sagemaker, Google Vertex AI workbench, Databricks notebooks, Azure ML studio, VS Code (!)...

Niche Paperspace Gradient, Cocalc, Mode analytics, naas.ai...

Why? My code doesn't need to be pretty. Move fast, experiment! No time for aesthetics!!

Why? My code doesn't need to be pretty. Move fast, experiment! No time for aesthetics!! Answer: Code is read more often than it is written AND style best practice supports quality

- Write clean code (resources at the end of this presentation)
  - DRY, meaningful variable and function naming, modularity, explicit imports
- Move functions from Notebooks into modules (where appropriate)
- Python Style Guide (PEP8)
- Zen of Python

### import this The Zen of Python, by Tim Peters Beautiful is better than ugly. Explicit is better than implicit. Simple is better than complex. Complex is better than complicated. Flat is better than nested. Sparse is better than dense. Readability counts. Special cases aren't special enough to break the rules. Although practicality beats purity. Errors should never pass silently. Unless explicitly silenced. In the face of ambiguity, refuse the temptation to guess. There should be one -- and preferably only one -- obvious way to do it. Although that way may not be obvious at first unless you're Dutch. Now is better than never. Although never is often better than \*right\* now. If the implementation is hard to explain, it's a bad idea. If the implementation is easy to explain, it may be a good idea. Namespaces are one honking great idea -- let's do more of those!

### Tools:

- Code quality: isort, flake8, black, sqlfluff, ...
- Specific to Notebooks: nbga

(venv) → ~/examples nbga isort --check my\_notebook.ipynb

(venv) → ~/examples nbqa black --check my\_notebook.ipynb

my\_notebook.ipynb:cell\_1:1:1: F401 'numpy as np' imported but unused

my\_notebook.ipynb:cell\_4:4:80: E501 line too long (202 > 79 characters)

my\_notebook.ipynb:cell\_4:2:23: E272 multiple spaces before keyword

(venv) → ~/examples nbga flake8 my\_notebook.ipynb

my\_notebook.ipynb:cell\_1:6:42: W291 trailing whitespace

my\_notebook.ipynb:cell\_4:2:35: E201 whitespace after '(' my\_notebook.ipynb:cell\_4:3:15: E201 whitespace after '('

Linting and formatting

would reformat my\_notebook.ipynb

1 file would be reformatted.

Oh no! 💥 💔 💥

```
Python 3 (ipykernel) O
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             In [ ]: import numpy as np
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            In [1]: def my awkward function(p):
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         for unused varable in range( 6):
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          print( "hello", + "world!")
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            print("really really re
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        return
  ERROR: /Users/laurarichter/examples/my_notebook.ipynb Imports are incorrectly sorted and/or formatted.
my_notebook.ipynb:cell_4:5:5: F841 local variable 'x' is assigned to but never used
```

iupyter my notebook (unsaved changes)

- Code quality: isort, flake8, black, sqlfluff, ...
- Specific to Notebooks: nbqa
- Linting and formatting

```
[(venv) → ~/examples nbqa flake8 my_notebook.ipynb
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                my_notebook.ipynb:cell_1:2:34: E202 whitespace before ')'
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                my_notebook.ipynb:cell_1:3:14: E271 multiple spaces after keyword
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                my_notebook.ipynb:cell_1:3:14: E211 whitespace before '('
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                my_notebook.ipynb:cell_1:3:17: E201 whitespace after '('
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                my_notebook.ipynb:cell_1:3:26: E203 whitespace before ','
jupyter my_notebook (autosaved)
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                my_notebook.ipynb:cell_1:4:80: E501 line too long (202 > 79 characters)
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                my_notebook.ipynb:cell_1:5:5: F841 local variable 'x' is assigned to but never used
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         Python 3 (ipyk my_notebook.ipynb:cell_1:6:11: W291 trailing whitespace
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            Not Trusted
                   In [1]: def my awkward function(p):
                                                               for unused varible in range(6):
                                                                             print ( 'hello' , + "world!")
                                                                             print("really really re
                                                               x = 17
                                                                return
```

- Code quality: isort, flake8, black, sqlfluff, ...
- Specific to Notebooks: nbqa
- Linting and formatting



- Code quality: isort, flake8, black, sqlfluff, ...
- Specific to Notebooks: nbqa
- Linting and formatting

```
In []: import numpy as np import pandas as pd import os import json from sklearn.cluster import KMeans from my_project_utils import preprocess
```

```
(venv) → ~/examples nbqa isort my_notebook.ipynb
Fixing /Users/laurarichter/examples/my_notebook.ipynb
(venv) → ~/examples
```

```
In []: import json
import os

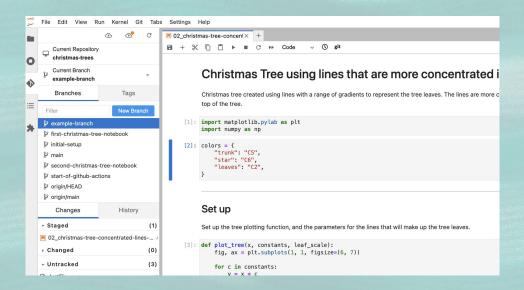
import numpy as np
import pandas as pd
from my_project_utils import preprocess
from sklearn.cluster import KMeans
```

Why? Waiting for reviews just slows me down!

Answer: Then you probably need to be slowed down

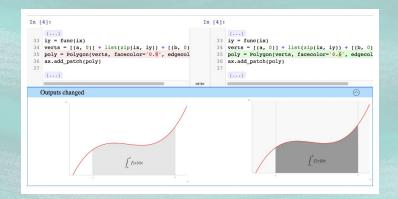
Version Control Creating dated artifacts

- Github
- Git tooling in VS Code, JupyterLab Git extension, hosted Notebook Git tooling



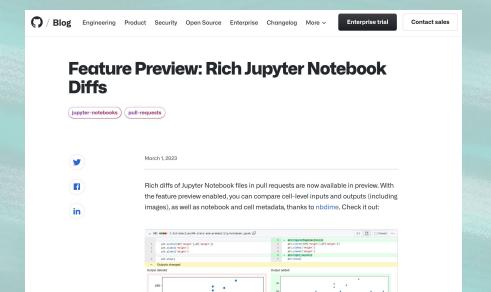
- Github
- Git tooling in VS Code, JupyterLab Git extension, hosted Notebook Git tooling
- Git diffs:
  - o nbdime

```
$ nbdiff c.ipynb b.ipynb
nbdiff c.ipynb b.ipynb
--- c.ipynb 2016-11-30 15:12:21
+++ b.ipvnb 2016-11-30 15:12:30
## modified /cells/9/outputs/0/data/text/plain:
- <matplotlib.figure.Figure at 0x10ea05940>
+ <matplotlib.figure.Figure at 0x10eb21860>
## replaced /cells/14/outputs/0/data/image/png:
- iVBORwOK...<snip base64, md5=3f7d4e61ee33aaae...>
+ iVBORwOK...<snip base64, md5=1d6960ad89e9de61...>
## modified /cells/14/outputs/0/data/text/plain:
- <matplotlib.figure.Figure at 0x1110200b8>
+ <matplotlib.figure.Figure at 0x11112bf28>
## modified /cells/14/source:
@@ -25,14 +25,14 @@ x = np.linspace(0, 10)
y = func(x)
fig, ax = plt.subplots()
plt.plot(x, y, 'g', 'r', linewidth=2)
plt.ylim(ymin=0)
# Make the shaded region
ix = np.linspace(a, b)
iy = func(ix)
verts = [(a, 0)] + list(zip(ix, iy)) + [(b, 0)]
poly = Polygon(verts, facecolor='0.9', edgecolor='0')facecolor='0.6', edgecolor='0.5')
ax.add_patch(poly)
```



content aware diffs

- Github
- Git tooling in VS Code, JupyterLab Git extension, hosted Notebook Git tooling
- Git diffs:
  - nbdime
  - Github diffs (feature preview)



### Tools:

- Github
- Git tooling in VS Code, JupyterLab Git extension, hosted Notebook Git tooling
- Git diffs:
  - o nbdime
  - Github diffs (feature preview)
  - nbdev



```
nbdev clean on saving notebooks in Jupyter

Jupyter notebooks store a variety of metadata (including execution counts and notebook extension info) that aren't conducive to collaborative version control systems like git. These pollute diffs in pull requests and git histories (which can make debugging harder), and tend to cause merge conflicts. For example:

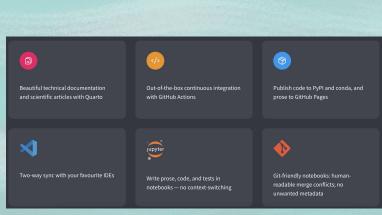
{
    "cell_type": "code",
    "execution_count": 1,
    "execution_count": 2,
    "metadata": {
        "hide_input": false
    }

{
    "cell_type": "code",
    "execution_count": null,
    "metadata": {}
}
```

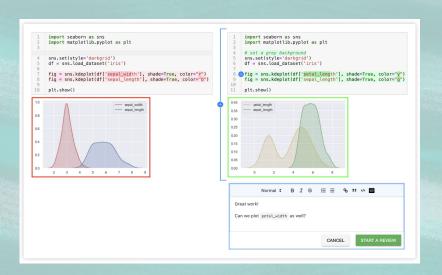
using nbdev Jupyter save hooks

### nbdev shoutout





- Github
- Git tooling in VS Code, JupyterLab Git extension, hosted Notebook Git tooling
- Git diffs:
  - o nbdime
  - Github diffs (feature preview)
  - nbdev
  - ReviewNB



# 3. Testing

Why? Just write your code correctly!

# 3. Testing

Why? Just write your code correctly! Answer:

```
In [1]: import numpy as np
In [2]: def is_something_or_other(x):
            y = x**2
            threshold check = y > 17
            return threshold check
In [3]: array 100 = np.array([100])
        print(is something or other(100) is True)
        print(is_something_or_other(array_100) is True)
        print(is_something_or_other(array_100[0]) is True)
        True
        False
        False
```

# 3. Testing

- nbval
- nbmake
- testbook
- pytest-notebook
- nbdev

# 4. Automating

- Automate your linting
- Automate your testing
- Automate your team norms
  - Even things file naming conventions!

- Github actions
- Github pre-commit hooks
- Jupyter save hooks

```
name: test_notebooks

on: [push]

jobs:
    test_notebooks:
    runs-on: ubuntu-latest
    steps:
    - uses: actions/checkout@v3
    - uses: actions/setup-python@v4
    with:
        python-version: '3.10'
    - run: pip install -r requirements.txt
    - run: pip install pytest nbval
    - run: pytest --nbval .
```

# 5. Dependency management

Why? It just adds complexity! I don't want to be spending time on this!

# 5. Dependency management

Why? It just adds complexity! I don't want to be spending time on this! Answer: You'll spend time on it for sure, one way or another:)

# 5. Dependency management

- virtual environments
- pinning your requirements
  - o requirements.txt
  - o pip-compile
- Docker
  - jupyter/base-notebook
  - jupyter/minimal-notebook

# 6. Data management

Why? I just slack my colleagues the csv's. It works fine.

# 6. Data management

Why? I just slack my colleagues the csv's. It works fine.

Answer: Yeah, you know it doesn't really work fine:)

# 6. Data management

- Cloud data in any form accessible with python:
  - AWS s3 (boto, pandas)
  - GCP GCS (google cloud python sdk, pandas)
  - GCP BigQuery (google cloud python sdk, pandas)
  - Spark cluster
  - 0 ...
- quiltdata
- Github Ifs
- dvc

# Some final thoughts

- Start with simple dependency management: virtual environments and requirements files
  - For cloud Notebooks, requirements files
- Next, auto formatting and linting (nbqa isort, nba black, nbqa flake8...)
- Next, version control (e.g. Github) and reviews
- Next, automate linting
- Next, data management
- Next, simple end-to-end testing

...

- Then, down the line...
   Dockerise? Tooling/frameworks for experiment management? Unit test for modules?
   Cookie-cutters?
  - ... And see what new tooling and best practice emerges!

# Thank you

### References

- Why Jupyter is data scientists' computational notebook of choice: https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07196-1
- Jupyter surveys: <a href="https://github.com/jupyter/surveys">https://github.com/jupyter/surveys</a>
- Google Blog Jupyter Notebook Best Practives:
   <a href="https://cloud.google.com/blog/products/ai-machine-learning/best-practices-that-can-improve-the-life-of-any-developer-using-jupyter-notebooks">https://cloud.google.com/blog/products/ai-machine-learning/best-practices-that-can-improve-the-life-of-any-developer-using-jupyter-notebooks</a>
- Notebook tool reviews: <a href="https://datasciencenotebook.org/">https://datasciencenotebook.org/</a>
- I don't like Notebooks, Joel Grus, JupyterCon 2018: <a href="https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1n2RIMdmv1p25Xy5thJUhkKGvjtV-dkAlsUXP-AL4ffl/preview?s">https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1n2RIMdmv1p25Xy5thJUhkKGvjtV-dkAlsUXP-AL4ffl/preview?s</a>
   <a href="lide=id.g362da58057">lide=id.g362da58057</a> 0 1
- Clean code in Python: <a href="https://testdriven.io/blog/clean-code-python/">https://testdriven.io/blog/clean-code-python/</a>
- Clean-code-python: <a href="https://github.com/zedr/clean-code-python">https://github.com/zedr/clean-code-python</a>
- Python Style Guide, PEP8: <a href="https://peps.python.org/pep-0008">https://peps.python.org/pep-0008</a>

### **References: Tools**

- nbqa: nbqa.readthedocs.io
- nbdime: nbdime.readthedocs.io
- Github rich Jupyter Notebook diffs:
  - https://github.blog/changelog/2023-03-01-feature-preview-rich-jupyter-notebook-diffs/
- nbdev: nbdev.fast.ai
- ReviewNB: www.reviewnb.com
- nbval: <a href="https://github.com/computationalmodelling/nbval">https://github.com/computationalmodelling/nbval</a>
- pytest.notebook: <u>pytest-notebook.readthedocs.io</u>
- nbmake: https://github.com/treebeardtech/nbmake
- testbook: testbook.readthedocs.io
- Jupyter file save hooks: <a href="https://jupyter-notebook.readthedocs.io/en/4.x/extending/savehooks.html">https://jupyter-notebook.readthedocs.io/en/4.x/extending/savehooks.html</a>
- git hooks: <a href="https://git-scm.com/book/en/v2/Customizing-Git-Git-Hooks">https://git-scm.com/book/en/v2/Customizing-Git-Git-Hooks</a>
- dvc: dvc.org
- quiltdata: <a href="https://github.com/quiltdata/quilt">https://github.com/quiltdata/quilt</a>