Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 16, EGU2014-13655, 2014
EGU General Assembly 2014
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Fiverr MacGyver

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Crowdsourcing has become popular over the past years, also for scientific endeavors. There are many Citizen Science projects and crowdfunding platforms, such as Kickstarter, that are make helpful contributions to moving environmental science forward. An interesting underused source of useful crowd-derived contributions to research is the website Fiverr.com. On this platform, thousands of people, acting as small-scale freelance contractors, offer their skills in the form of services. The platform offers a chance for people to take a hobby, skill, or pastime and make it something more by reaching out to a wider audience and by receiving a payment in return for services. As is typical of other crowdsourcing platforms, the tasks are small and usually self contained. As the name Fiverr suggests, offers start at US$5 to provide a particular service. Services offered range from graphic design, to messages sung or spoken with various styles or accents, to complete apps for Android or iPhone. Skill providers on the platform can accept a range of variation of definition in the tasks, some can be described in general terms, for others it is more appropriate to provide examples. Fiverr provides a central location for those offering skills and those needing services to find each other, it makes it possible to communicate and exchange files, to make payments, and it provides support for resolving disputes. In all cases, it is important to keep expectations aligned with the nature of the platform: quality can and will vary. Ultimately, the critical contribution of Fiverr is not to replace professional services or otherwise save money, but rather to provide access to a large group of people with specialized skills who are able to make a contribution on short notice. In the context of this session, it can be considered a pool of people with MacGyver skills lying in wait of a MacGyver task to attack. There are many ways in which Fiverr tasks, which are called 'gigs', can be useful in a scientific context. Some people will make 3D designs; others will print these designs with a 3D printer. Earlier, we used Fiverr to design a logo for the Trans-African Hydro-Meteorological Observatory (TAHMO). Recently, using Fiverr, an app was developed at minimal costs that sends simple csv files with time stamp, location and sensor value at given intervals. In general, interactions with gig providers are very professional. Fiverr.com provides a good recommender system that guides users in finding productive providers. In this poster presentation, we present the results obtained from the most promising Fiverr gigs after an investment of $100 in the field of environmental science, with special emphasis on hydrology. We point out the heuristic value of Fiverr: browsing the available range provides a view on a wide range of practical human skills that are available to solve science challenges, and triggers productive thinking about how to break down a task into smaller practical subtasks that can be solved in a light weight, cost-effective manner.