

Coding the Humanities

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Humanities scholars often use pre-fabricated and often inappropriate tools. The aim of the Coding the humanities project is to help humanities scholars gain ownership of research tools by building their own.

For this project, we are currently developing a platform where scholars can learn programming and build small research tools that support individual steps in their research processes. With this platform we adopt techniques from the software development community, which has tackled several problems for collaboration and sharing of resources. Platforms like GitHub and jsFiddle support people in learning from others and to present and share their research.

Programming and computers are great thinking tools. A programmatic approach to research forces you to make your arguments explicit, which makes it easier to critique them, but also to reuse, share and extend them.

In this presentation we want to discuss the challenges that we want to tackle in this project:

How can we use the platform to introduce programming to interested scholars and students in a way that is relevant to their own research?

Many scholars perceive a technical threshold, and fear they don't have the capacity to overcome this threshold. How can we help them realise this is unfounded and that the technical threshold is so low nowadays because of high-level programming languages and supportive environments like GitHub, jsFiddle, Light Table, Tributary and blocks.org?

Tool building is research, but in the humanities it does not have that status yet. How can we change this?

We also present our approach to and results of our humanities- and research-oriented programming courses so far.