Exploratory Programming for the Arts and Humanities (MIT Press)

By Nick Montfort

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This book introduces programming to readers with a background in the arts and humanities; there are no prerequisites, and no knowledge of computation is assumed. In it, Nick Montfort reveals programming to be not merely a technical exercise within given constraints but a tool for sketching, brainstorming, and inquiring about important topics. He emphasizes programming's exploratory potential -- its facility to create new kinds of artworks and to probe data for new ideas. The book is designed to be read alongside the computer, allowing readers to program while making their way through the chapters. It offers practical exercises in writing and modifying code, beginning on a small scale and increasing in substance. In some cases, a specification is given for a program, but the core activities are a series of "free projects," intentionally underspecified exercises that leave room for readers to determine their own direction and write different sorts of programs. Throughout the book, Montfort also considers how computation and programming are culturally situated -- how programming relates to the methods and questions of the arts and humanities. The book uses Python and Processing, both of which are free software, as the primary programming languages.

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Editorial Review

Review

Exploratory Programming for the Arts and Humanities provides artists and humanists with privileged access to a highly sophisticated understanding of the concepts and practices that make computer code into such a powerful means of human expression. Nick Montfort is a reassuring guide through this forbidden realm, a master magician who is eager to share his tricks, a fellow humanist/artist who understands computation with an unusual intimacy and historical perspective, and who is bent on demystifying the arcane, celebrating the playful, and generally making the wonders of computation available to a wider range of cultural and creative explorers.

(Janet H. Murray, Georgia Tech, author of *Hamlet on the Holodeck* and *Inventing the Medium*)

Montfort has constructed an entirely unique text in the crowded 'how-to-program' genre by focusing on programming as a mode of inquiry and on computation as culture. By infusing multiple programming languages, he presents a broad and balanced introduction to creative computing for humanists and artists. Montfort has deep knowledge and he writes with clarity. I've taught and written about coding and the visual arts for over fifteen years and I learned new things continuously throughout this singular and lucid book.

(Casey Reas, Professor, UCLA Design Media Arts)

Montfort's new book is not just a textbook for humanists and artists who want to learn to program. It is a guidebook for reflecting on the mode and the means of creation and critique in the digital realm and the profound impact these endeavors have on society.

(Tanya E. Clement, School of Information, University of Texas at Austin)

About the Author
Nick Montfort is Professor of Digital Media at MIT. He is the author of *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction* and E *xploratory Programming for the Arts and Humanities*; the coauthor of *Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System* and 1 *0 PRINT CHR$(205.5+RND(1)); : GOTO 10*; and the coeditor of *The New Media Reader* (all published by the MIT Press).

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kim Gray:

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Helen Williams:

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Marcella Cook:

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