ProgTeach Play by Play

The first ProgTeach Symposium took place on the 24th of August, this has been something that colleagues and I have been working towards for some time so it was great to finally see this come together. The premise is fairly simple, across the University of Edinburgh lots of people teach computation in some form so let's make time for getting as many of these people in the same room together and discuss what they do (and how they do it).

As my first main event that I've run at the University of Edinburgh, my main concern was that I had put something together that no one would want to attend…..we filled 80% in 24 hours. As you can see below the event was pretty well attended, what you can't see is how diverse the audience was, colleagues from 13 different schools turned up with a smattering of units within those schools.

> *At the #ProgTeach Symposium this morning pic.twitter.com/y0cjRiCBXX*
>
> *— marioant (@marioant) August 24, 2018*

So to kick us off we had an introduction from Anne-Marie Scott, Deputy Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services. Anne-Marie has been very keen on the idea of running these types of events to get people talking together about their teaching practice and is also my boss's boss so no pressure.

https://twitter.com/ammienoot/status/1032890247846223874

Up next our first speaker was Dr Areti Mantaki from the Centre for Medical Informatics to talk about her experience of delivering large (huge) scale distance learning introduction to programming courses.

https://twitter.com/ammienoot/status/1032910951983599617

Areti shared some great incites about teaching coding generally and also some of the challenges (and surprises) of teaching entirely online. Something that a lot of attendees agreed with was how important it was to include mistakes in your examples but also spend time walking through the solution.

> *Areti Manataki reminds us that showing your learners the mistakes you make when coding and how you identify and fix them is part of the programming process and just as important on videos for MOOCs #ProgTeach*
>
> *— Neil P Chue Hong (he/him⎜they/them) (@npch) August 24, 2018*

Next up we had Professor Chris Sangwin and Dr Stuart King, both from the School of Mathematics who talked about their introductory programming course. This including speaking about introducing Jupyter notebooks into their teaching as well as using CodeRunner as an assessment tool. Important to note that the students really enjoyed the 'game' of pursuing getting full marks in practice question sets.

> *#ProgTeach Stuart King and @sangwinc now talking about and demonstrating using CodeRunner to teach introductory programming*
>
> *— Edinburgh Carpentries (@edcarp2) August 24, 2018*

Then it was my turn (James Slack) to talk about the University's Noteable service currently in a pilot phase. For those not familiar with Noteable this is the University's own JupyterHub environment, giving access to Jupyter notebooks for teaching purposes. Although this is still in a pilot phase the demand has been high and we will be delivering the service to

over 500 students this coming semester.

The next speaker was Andrew Kirk from the Digital Skills and Training Team who are using the Noteable service as part of their Digital Skills Programme to deliver beginner Python courses to students from across the University. The courses were overwhelmingly popular, the first session had 90 bookings for only 20 places and will run again in the coming semester.

> *Striking thing from this image of who signed up for @UoEDigiSkills introductory Python course (based on @EDINADigital Noteable #jupyterhub platform) is just how diverse the audience is in terms of disciplines #ProgTeach pic.twitter.com/whmFaFSlz9*
>
> *— Neil P Chue Hong (he/him⎸they/them) (@npch)* *August 24, 2018*

After the lunch break, we had a quick talk from Sean McGeever about the carpentries workshops in Edinburgh and the creation of a supportive RSE community. The theme of this talk about building a community to support colleagues from across the University was very closely aligned with the whole theme of the day. Sean also got the funding for cake so bonus points for Sean.

https://twitter.com/ammienoot/status/1032940392482856966

For the penultimate session, we wanted to focus on the on the discussion between colleagues about how they approach certain challenges of teaching computational content. Ironically no-one had the confidence the attempts to answer "How do you build confidence in learners".

Heres a full breakdown of the discussion points — Discussion (Word Document)

And then to wrap up the day we had a quick talk about creating Jupyter based OERs to support new users, there is obviously a

lot of material out there for 'Intro to Python' already but
what can be really useful is a collection of these in notebook
form that we know will work straight away in Noteable and also
some ancillary materials about how to use notebooks to make it
easier for people to introduce them into their teaching.

And that was that! A very interesting line up of talks and
very useful discussion between disciplines which is something
I'm always interested in promoting. I'll leave it to Anne-
Marie to wrap up the day:

https://twitter.com/ammienoot/status/1032985095454515201

And yes, there will be another one!