Conclusion

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Programming has undeniably made its way into Computers and Writing through our research and teaching, but the role of computational literacy in the field is still in flux. Although we have offered arguments for the importance of computational literacy or competency, we have not offered solutions for how and where to teach this critical skill. We offer only suggestions: the digital literacy requirement that Losh mentions is just one administrative attempt to give students outside of computer science access to programming. Many of us in the field have found space in our syllabi for basic web design or graphical programming in Processing, even if we do not all teach Ruby like Stolley. Yet these practices cannot scale up to 50 sections of first year composition, or across to our colleagues who are expert teachers of writing but not as skilled in digital forms of composition.

What, then, should we teach about programming in our writing classes? As Lockett argues, the politics of software shape our compositions and communications, and we cannot fail to grasp the basic socio-technical mechanisms behind that. If we consider critical thinking part of our composition teaching mission, critical thinking about our software now seems tantamount to critical thinking about other forms of media that we currently teach in our classes.

But teaching programming per se? Given the diversity of approaches to composition across our field—from rhetorical argument to multimodality to critical engagement—it would be folly to propose a one-size-fits-all solution for how we might fit computational literacy into composition. Each university and each instructor must consider the concerns, futures, and backgrounds of their students along with their local resources before coming to conclusions about the role of computational literacy in their courses.

For now, we hope this collection of provocations has helped put computational literacy on the map of the field of Computers and Writing, but also of writing studies more generally. The algorithmic processes of programming now form a new ground for writing—one that might make us anxious, but one that should invigorate us as well. We teach and compose in writing, and as we expand the modes by which we define writing, we expand its potential as an informational art.