Review of: "Project-Based Learning for Graduate Students in Digital Humanities"

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The essay describes a teaching program in digital humanities at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at New York University with project-based learning (PBL) at its core. Combined efforts between faculty expertise in computer science and the humanities provided graduate students the opportunity to learn and develop skills in digital humanities in a hands-on procedure. In a summer internship, students worked on digital humanities aspects within their own independent projects (PhD students) or within a project lead by a faculty member (MA students). Their work was guided and supported by workshops on computational tools and methods and digital forms of communication and dissemination on the one hand and by bi-weekly group meetings and individual mentoring on the other hand. The program was supported by the Polonsky Foundation and ran between 2015–2020. Every year, seven graduate students with a background in a range of different fields in humanities and arts were awarded a scholarship. The students' digital learning needs and goals differed with respect to their own projects and included mainly working with text, media or data in general, GIS, programming and web presentation.

The authors, who co-chaired the program, report on the learning outcomes of the students by presenting their own assessments, by describing cases and by quoting students' statements. They consider the PBL methodology as particularly effective and advantageous for digital learning in humanities and arts. It provided a purposeful and real-world learning context which encouraged the students to acquire technology skills and to test different digital solutions. The program not only bridged the interdisciplinary gap between teaching and working traditions within STEM fields and the humanities, but also in a range of cases led to co-operations with institutions and actors outside the academy. In the program, students furthered their own projects with targeted support and at the same time widened their horizons, professional skills and network.

The reviewer considers the article to be an important source of inspiration for similar programs bridging computer science and humanities pedagogies for digital humanities purposes. However, while there are many convincing examples given in the article of methods and procedures that led to positive outcomes for the student, the reviewer would have appreciated also to learn about potential pitfalls in such a collaborative teaching project and solutions that have been negotiated. Another aspect that might be addressed is the bias that humanities and arts students applying for such an internship on their own initiative tend to be students intrinsically motivated to learn about digital humanities.