

CILIPS Professional Development Fund report: Introduction to Programming course

I received funding towards the CodeClan Introduction to Programming course in autumn 2016; the other half was contributed by my employer. The course was held over ten classes, which introduce the fundamentals of computer programming through the Ruby language.

Over the ten weeks, we learnt to use the command line, GitHub and Ruby, including conditionals, arrays and hashes, testing and loops. The course had a strong emphasis on collaboration and working with others, and it was great to meet and work with people from a range of professions.

My reasons for wishing to attend the course were:

- 1) To gain an understanding of the infrastructure underlying digital library systems;
- 2) To gain basic, practical programming skills;
- 3) To be able to support digital research.

The course provided me with the skills and knowledge that I need for each of these areas: the introduction to programming has enabled me to improve my understanding of the work carried out by colleagues who are developers, and to consider the possibilities for digital library collections, as well as to equip myself with basic coding skills.

While the course has certainly not made me into a developer, I am more able to understand the code and language that developer colleagues use, and more capable of 'translating' this into everyday language. My IT skills have improved considerably and I am now able to write simple programs to manage and make use of datasets.

Understanding the fundamentals of programming has provided me with more up-to-date skills: as resources are more and more available digitally, an understanding of coding is increasingly important. The challenge now is to keep it up, and to continue to learn more: this is a constantly evolving area, and my learning only scratches the surface! Luckily, the course ended with pointers to continue our own learning, and options for further courses to take.

However, perhaps more important than my initial reasons for wanting to take the course, was the discovery that I really enjoyed this introductory computer programming. It's an area I would love to pursue further, and I am already putting my learning into practice and pursuing further relevant areas such as broadening my understanding of HTML and Javascript: the course has introduced me to a completely different way of thinking, which is both challenging and really fun.