

Presentation of an Interactive Online Practice Environment for Palaeography

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The aim of this presentation is to show an example of how Digital Humanities has been used for academic teaching. It tells the story of the construction, usage and reception of a practice environment for Palaeography, created on the learning platform Canvas at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. This educational innovation project was realized in close collaboration with Ghent University, DARIAH Belgium and the Palaeography students.

In the Palaeography course, first and second year bachelor students learn to transcribe historical handwritten texts. This complex skill can only be achieved by continuous practice in class and at home. The purpose of the tool is to support and facilitate student learning on Palaeography using blended learning. Considering the requirements set in advance, Canvas proved to be the most appropriate provider for such a training environment as it offers a range of possibilities to share instructions, to create various exercises and to arrange these trainings in modules. Additionally, it contains options for automated feedback and scoring of the students. The information about these results is accessible for the teachers. The main drawbacks of this platform towards Palaeography are the absence of spoiler buttons to hide tips and of a function to zoom in on the provided images.

The online environment for palaeography includes a basic package to start, a range of tools and more than forty exercises. Developing a single exercise required nearly a work day to create, but as each student can spend up to an hour on each exercise it's a worthwhile investment. During the exercise, the student can see further explanation in the form of tips, and he/she will receive continuous feedback (Fig.1&2). Another major aim of the practice environment is to offer a variety of different exercises, divided by: level of difficulty, language and period of the text. Every student can find an appropriate exercise to work on to tackle the difficulties he/she is experiencing.

In 2018-2019, the environment was first introduced in both universities. At the VUB, the introduction was incorporated in a practical ICT-lesson in the course Palaeography. After the exam in January the usage was quantified: 39 of the 68 students used the online exercise environment for practicing (Fig.3). When comparing this with the exam results, we see that the students who have practiced more on Canvas achieved better exam results (Fig.4). The conclusion is that we must encourage the students to make online exercises, in order to increase their learning success. This may demonstrate the value of a flipped classroom approach. To prepare the next lesson the students need to complete an online exercise at home, which will be analyzed in depth in class afterwards. The teacher can use the test results exported from Canvas to build up the lesson (Fig.5&6).

At Ghent University the palaeography course is a full year course which runs until June 2019. The effect of a different method is tested: the students are required to complete a couple of exercises for which they are awarded points which count towards their final grade. They

already did two compulsory exercises, in which respectively 83 and 77 out of the 91 students participated. This method will be evaluated and, if positive, introduced at the VUB as well.

The students were able to give feedback, both written in discussions and orally in the lessons and small adjustments to the exercises have already been made based on this feedback. A survey was sent with questions about their experience of the practice environment. They assessed the tool as user-friendly and were positive about the extensive feedback during the exercises. The module with exercises ranked according to difficulty was rated best.

To facilitate the ongoing learning process, students continue to have access to this online exercise environment throughout their academic career, so they can continue to further develop this complex skill.

Bibliography

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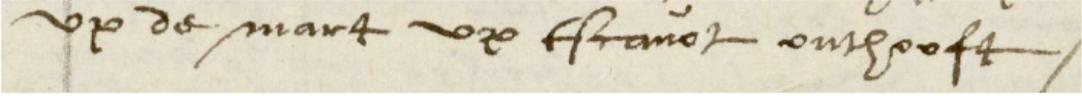
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Graphics and illustrations

Question 2 1 pts

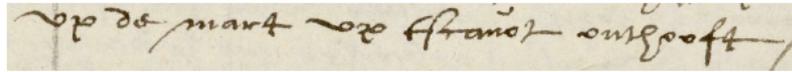


Tips:
De letter 'p' heeft soms de neiging op een 'x' te gaan lijken.
In deze regel wordt gebruik gemaakt van het **diakritisch teken**. Hierdoor maakt de scribent duidelijk dat de letters die lijken op een 'n' in deze tekst een **letter 'u' of 'v'** zijn.

Fig. 1: Example of a blank question on Canvas

Question 2

0.67 / 1 pts



up	die	mart	up
tscanot	onthoof		

Tips:

De letter 'p' heeft soms de neiging op een 'x' te gaan lijken.

In deze regel wordt gebruik gemaakt van het **diakritisch teken**. Hierdoor maakt de scribe duidelijk dat de letters die lijken op een 'n' in deze tekst een **letter 'u' of 'v'** zijn.

Answer 1:

Correct!

up

Correct answer

vp

Answer 2:

You Answered

die

Correct answer

de

Answer 3:

Correct!

mart

Answer 4:

Correct!

up

Answer 5:

You Answered

tscanot

Correct answer

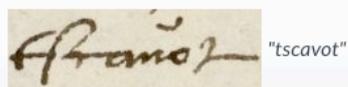
tscavot

Answer 6:

Correct!

onthoof

Feedback:



In dit woord staat een diakritisch teken boven de 'u' of 'v'. Daarnaast komt in dit woord ook een **ligatuur** voor bij de letters 's' en 'c'.

Fig.2: Example of a filled out question on Canvas

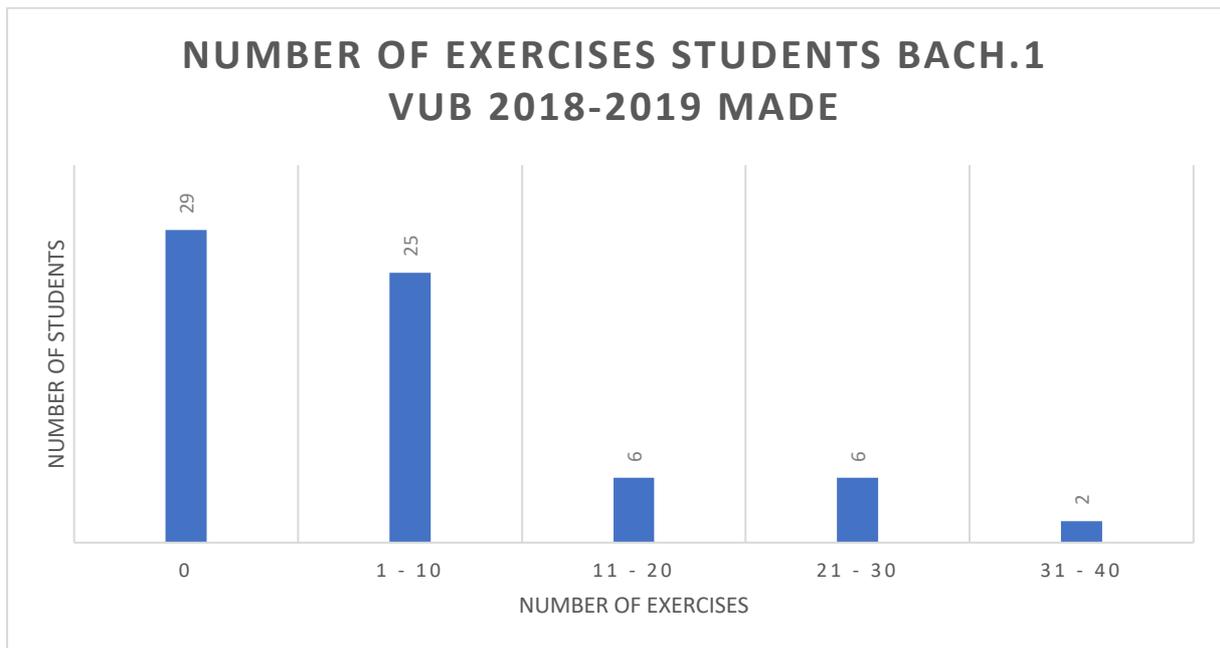


Fig.3: Number of exercises students Bach.1 VUB 2018-2019 made

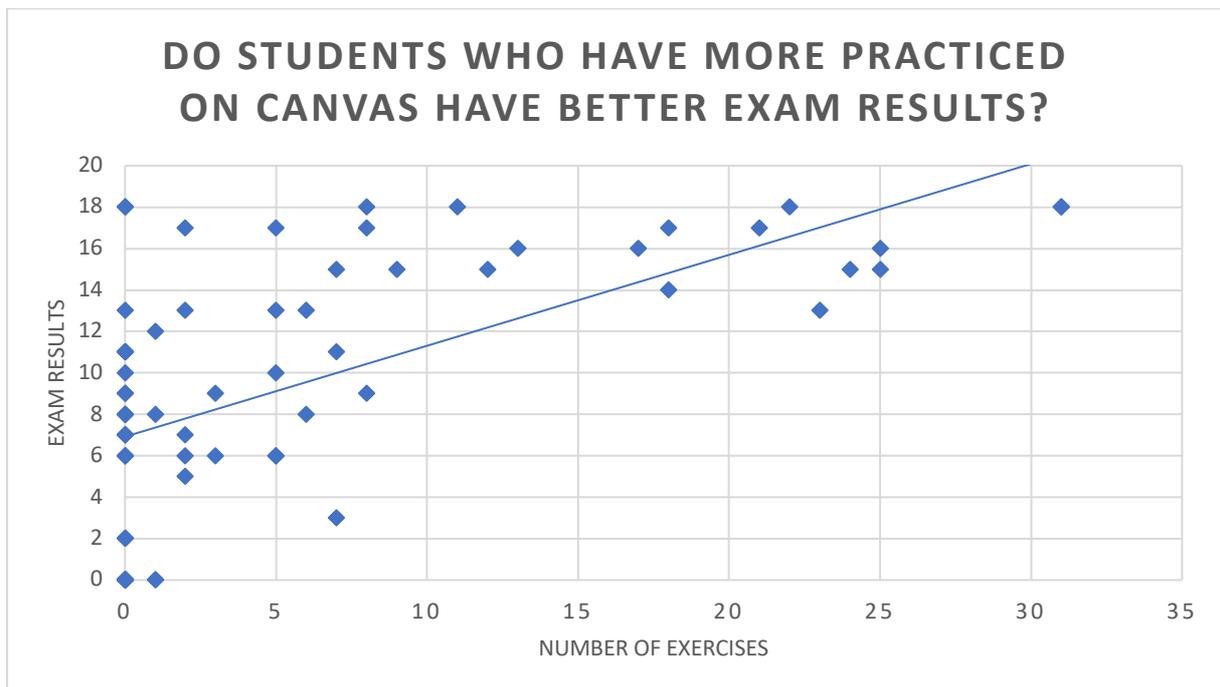


Fig.4: Relationship between number of exercises students Bach.1 VUB 2018-2019 made and their exam results

