

# Will Crichton

Email: [wcrichto@brown.edu](mailto:wcrichto@brown.edu)

Website: <https://willcrichton.net>

GitHub: <https://github.com/willcrichton>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/tonofcrates>

## Abstract

I design systems to amplify the intelligence of programmers. My research spans programming languages (PL) and human-computer interaction (HCI), and I also draw ideas from system design, cognitive psychology, and learning science. My current research is about making advanced programming languages like Rust [easier to learn](#). My dissertation was about using static analysis to build tools for program comprehension, such as [information flow in the IDE](#). I have also developed systems for [improving auto-generated documentation](#) and [authoring richly-structured documents](#).

## Education














- 2016-22 **Stanford University**, Ph.D. in Computer Science.  
Advised by [Pat Hanrahan](#) and [Maneesh Agrawala](#).
- 2012-16 **Carnegie Mellon University**, B.S. in Computer Science.  
Advised by [Kayvon Fatahalian](#).

## Academic Employment





- 2022-now **Brown University**, Postdoctoral researcher.  
Advised by [Shriram Krishnamurthi](#).





## Research

### CONFERENCE PUBLICATIONS












- OOPSLA '24  **Profiling Programming Language Learning.**  
[Will Crichton](#), Shriram Krishnamurthi.
- POPL '24   **A Core Calculus for Documents.**  
[Will Crichton](#), Shriram Krishnamurthi.
- OOPSLA '23   **A Grounded Conceptual Model for Ownership Types in Rust.**  
[Will Crichton](#), Gavin Gray, Shriram Krishnamurthi.
- PLDI '22    **Modular Information Flow through Ownership.**  
[Will Crichton](#), Marco Patrignani, Maneesh Agrawala, Pat Hanrahan.
- CHI '21   **The Role of Working Memory in Program Tracing.**  
[Will Crichton](#), Maneesh Agrawala, Pat Hanrahan.  
Featured in the [MIT Programming Languages Review](#).
- SIGCSE '21    **Automating Program Structure Classification.**  
[Will Crichton](#), Georgia Gabriela Sampaio, Pat Hanrahan.

### LEGEND:




-  = paper  
 = talk recording  
 = GitHub repo  
 = project website

- KDD '21  **Analysis of Faces in a Decade of US Cable TV News.**  
James Hong, Will Crichton, Haotian Zhang, Daniel Y. Fu, Jacob Ritchie, Jeremy Barenholtz, Ben Hannel, Xinwei Yao, Michaela Murray, Geraldine Moriba, Maneesh Agrawala, Kayvon Fatahalian.
- SIGGRAPH '18    **Scanner: Efficient Video Analysis at Scale.**  
Fait Poms, Will Crichton, Pat Hanrahan, and Kayvon Fatahalian.


#### WORKSHOP PUBLICATIONS


- FUNARCH '23  **Typed Design Patterns for the Functional Era.**  
Will Crichton.
- HATRA '21   **A New Medium for Communicating Research on Programming Languages.**  
Will Crichton.
- HATRA '20  **The Usability of Ownership.**  
Will Crichton.
- PLATEAU '20   **Documentation Generation as Information Visualization.**  
Will Crichton.
- AI Systems @ SOSP '19   **Rekall: Specifying Video Events using Compositions of Spatiotemporal Labels.**  
Daniel Y. Fu, Will Crichton, James Hong, Xinwei Yao, Haotian Zhang, Anh Truong, Avanika Narayan, Maneesh Agrawala, Christopher Ré, and Kayvon Fatahalian.
- SNAPL '19   **From Theory to Systems: A Grounded Approach to Programming Language Education.**  
Will Crichton.
- PLATEAU '18  **Identifying Barriers to Adoption for Rust through Online Discourse.**  
Anna Zeng, Will Crichton.

#### THESES

- 2022   **Revisiting Program Slicing with Ownership-based Information Flow.**  
Ph.D. thesis at Stanford.
- 2016  **Lantern: A Query Language for Visual Concept Retrieval.**  
Bachelor's thesis at CMU.  
Received [Alumni Award for Undergraduate Excellence](#).

#### Invited Talks

- 2023 **The Art and Science of Teaching Rust.**  
Presented at [RustConf](#).
- 2022-23 **Cognitive Design Principles for Programming Tools.**
  - MIT HCI Seminar
  - Northeastern PL Seminar
  - Tufts PL Seminar
  - Georgia Tech PL/SE Seminar
  - Barnard CS Seminar
- 2022-23  **Modular Information Flow through Ownership.**
  - UC Santa Cruz LSD Seminar
  - Amazon Web Services
  - Rust Formal Methods Interest Group
- 2022 **The Design of [Nota](#).**  
Guest lecture for Jeff Heer's course at UW [CSE 599D: "The Future of Scholarly Communication"](#).

- 2021  **Type-Driven API Design in Rust.**  
Presented at [Strange Loop](#).
- 2019 **Video Analysis at Scale in the Era of Deep Learning.**  
Presented at the [Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute](#) Research Seminar.
- 2018 **Data Mining 70,000 Hours of TV News.**  
Presented at the “Audiovisual Collections” conference at the [National Library of Sweden](#).

## Teaching

### INSTRUCTOR

- fall 2017-19 **Programming Languages** ([CS 242](#)). Stanford (3x).
- fall 2013-14 **Game Development on the Web** (1-unit mini course). CMU (2x).

### TEACHING ASSISTANT

- spring 2017 **Computer Systems from the Ground Up** ([CS 107e](#)). Stanford.
- fall 2015 **Compiler Design** ([15-411](#)). CMU.
- spring 2015 **Parallel Computer Architecture and Programming** ([15-418](#)). CMU.
- fall 2014 **Parallel and Sequential Data Structures and Algorithms** ([15-210](#)). CMU (Head TA).
- spring 2014 **Parallel and Sequential Data Structures and Algorithms** ([15-210](#)). CMU.
- fall 2013 **Functional Programming** ([15-150](#)). CMU.

## Funding

- 2023 **NSF grant #2227863** under Formal Methods in the Field Track II for the [Rust Book Experiment](#).
- 2022 **Amazon Web Services research gift** for the [Rust Book Experiment](#).
- 2018 **Magic Grant** from the [David and Helen Gurley Brown Institute](#) for the TV News project.
- 2017 **Magic Grant** from the [David and Helen Gurley Brown Institute](#) for the Esper project.

## Professional Service

### ACADEMIC COMMUNITY SERVICE

#### Organizing Committee

- 2023: HATRA

#### Program Committee

- 2022: HATRA
- 2021: HATRA

#### External Review Committee

- 2024: OOPSLA
- 2023: OOPSLA

#### Reviewer

- 2024: OOPSLA, CHI
- 2023: OOPSLA, CHI, UIST
- 2022: CHI, UIST
- 2021: SIGGRAPH, SIGGRAPH Asia

- 2020: UIST
- 2019: SIGGRAPH Asia

## UNIVERSITY SERVICE

- 2016-2022 **Ph.D. Admit Weekend Organizer**  
 Ran events, comms, Q&A panels, and social activities for admitted students.  
 Awarded the Stanford CS Department Student Service Award all six years for volunteering in this role.
- 2019 **Undergraduate Summer Research Program Organizer**  
 Managed the [CURIS](#) program by running weekly events and facilitating student/faculty relations.

## Industry Employment

- summer 2017 **Snap, Inc.** Research intern. Designed an elastic and fault-tolerant distributed system for video analytics using Kubernetes, reducing operational costs up to 10×.
- summer 2015 **Jane Street Capital.** Software intern. [Reduced GC overhead](#) in OCaml language runtime. Designed new parallelization strategy for [incremental computation library](#).
- 2015 **Exp.ii.** Web developer. Architected web front-end for education startup, managed hiring pipeline for new developers.
- summer 2014 **Palantir Technologies.** Software intern. Developed logic engine for case management system.
- summer 2013 **Tunessence.** Web developer. Built interactive guitar tab learning tool for guitar learning startup.
- summer 2012 **Pioneer Hi-Bred.** Software engineer. Built BI app for analysis of laboratory efficiency in Pioneer agricultural technology labs.
- 2010-12 **Webspec Design.** Web developer. Created 30+ websites for clients across the country.

## References

### Pat Hanrahan

Stanford University  
 353 Jane Stanford Way, Room 370  
 Stanford, CA 94305  
 +1 (650) 723-8530  
[hanrahan@cs.stanford.edu](mailto:hanrahan@cs.stanford.edu)

### Maneesh Agrawala

Stanford University  
 353 Jane Stanford Way, Room 364  
 Stanford, CA 94305  
 +1 (650) 723-2642  
[maneesh@cs.stanford.edu](mailto:maneesh@cs.stanford.edu)

### Shriram Krishnamurthi

Brown University  
 115 Waterman Street, Room 377  
 Providence, RI 02912  
 (email for phone number)  
[shriram@gmail.com](mailto:shriram@gmail.com)

### Malte Schwarzkopf

Brown University  
 115 Waterman Street, Room 525  
 Providence, RI 02912  
 +1 (781) 484-7008  
[malte@cs.brown.edu](mailto:malte@cs.brown.edu)

*Last updated January 3, 2024.*