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INTRODUCTION

For this Final Major Project I was extremely excited to get stuck in. It would be the first time in 3 years that I would be given the opportunity to fully showcase my talents to me peers and teachers. At the beginning I was 100% sure I wanted to make something that was at a large scale, and I could maintain and take with me after the project. I believed that because I spend most of my days inside learning and coding that this would be a great chance to get stuck into something like this.

My original thoughts was let's create a cool social network (What everyone wants to do these days). Little did I know I was biting of more than I can actually chew. The idea would be a Dribbble/Behance and DeviantArt inspired social network aimed just at students. Students would be able to upload work to their profile, receive critique from other users and also like other peoples work. Along with that I wanted to create a MVC OO PHP framework, I believed these two projects would fit perfectly like a glove when it came to making it. A framework from scratch with a social network built on top all hand coded by me, that would have been a great way to showcase what I can really do.

Unfortunately, along the way I lost so much motivation and lost vision of the project. I believe it's because it wasn't something I'm passionate about, it wasn't the right genre for me. I would never want to finish a project I'm half hearted about because I'd not put as much time and effort into completing it. Around 30-40% through the project I decided to stop and actually do something I enjoy.

I was able to complete the framework to a good standard (I believe anyway). I was happy with that as it was a start. After multiple discussions with my tutor, pitching ideas we together came to a conclusion that would be best is creating a portfolio website and adding all my mini web applications I've created along the way into it.

This seemed like a great idea, I'd finally have time to create my online presence and at the same time create little applications that I felt passionate or felt that I wanted to challenge myself with.

INITIAL IDEAS

So my beginning stages was to create a Dribbble inspired social network for students and only for students. Don't know where that sort of inspiration came from, but before I make decisions like this in the future I definitely won't watch 'The Social Network' first.

So this social network was going to be for students, where they can upload their work and get critique from fellow students from around the world who was also signed up to the social network. I was pretty pleased with the idea at the beginning, as I personally would love a service like that. It would give me the opportunity to collaborate with students, but also assess what my competition looks like, so it would motivate me to improve my skills. I soon lost motivation for this project nearly 30% through it. I then realised why I lost motivation; it was because I wasn't passionate about that sort of website genre. I wouldn't enjoy finishing it although I was more than capable of doing it.

CODEBAY

Next came Codebay. Codebay would be an eBay like service where you're able to list your voucher codes for a game for example a DLC(Downloadable content) for the new Halo game, and sell it at a price that suits you to other buyers. As much as a cool concept and idea that would have been, I then slowly learned that, I'd be creating a marketplace for everyone to scam each other. With multiple loopholes within the idea, it wasn't worth pursuing.

RIPEBYTE

We now move onto RipeByte (Don't ask about the name lol). What RB basically was intended to do was; a raffle type site that everyone can participate in and purchase tickets for 50p. Think of it as the lotto. 1 person would win cash and items based on how much money was put into tickets for that session. For example; If 100 people bought tickets at 50p each, there would be a prize £500. This would be automated and the prizes would update by itself depending on how much was inputted into this. After sketching the idea up on paper, I then came to realise that would I trust a website like that myself? It would seem like a scam.

INITIAL IDEAS

ANOTWEET

Then I came up with the idea of Anotweet. Anotweet would be an anonymous tweeter. What it would basically do is, you'd browse our website and enter the username of whom you'd like to tweet. You'd then add your message you want to send them and it will send it anonymously from one of the accounts. I wanted to implement security features so it'll check if the message contained anything with hatred in. If it did, the information would be stored. The Tweet wouldn't be sent and they'd be blocked from using the service.

Now I wanted to do something that was gaming related, I enjoy my games and love everything and anything to do with games. I thought this would be a good opportunity to do something within that genre now.

XBOXLOOP

Next was XboxLoop. I wanted to create XboxLoop because I wanted to sell an exploit on Xbox that allows users to get games for less than 50% of the price and share with their friends. This website would have a membership system and a PayPal API integrated into it to check for payments and if all is good, an email would be sent with the user's created account details for them to access the tutorial.

TWEETLI

Next I came up with the idea of Tweetli. Now what Tweetli would do is simple, looking for a new username on Twitter? Search it in the form and check if it's available in a matter of seconds. Simple as that, no submitting forms, no refreshing the page. It will tell you if it's available using Ajax and PHP.

GAMEALIKE

Along came Gamealike. Now what Gamealike would do is allow gamers to post a lobby type request. You would post a request to play with someone who has the same play style as you and wants to play it for the same reasons. For example, I want to play Halo 4 story mode, On legendary, with someone who has a microphone, speaks English and has previous experience. I thought this would be a good way to match people up to actually enjoy the games more, as sometimes you get put into game lobbies with noobs who know nothing about the game.

FINAL DRAFT

So what I'll be discussing here is the projects I'll be doing that have made it to the final round, and a short description on it to give everyone a understanding on it.

FRAMEWORK

The first thing I'll be doing is working on a OOPHP mvc framework. What this basically is; It's the foundation of any web application you make. A bit like Zenz framework, but more simplistic and minimal so that it suits my needs, rather than it being super heavyweight.

TWEETLI

Next we go onto Tweetli. Now Tweetli will be a simple script compared to the other applications. All Tweetli will do is be able to check the availability of a Twitter username and if available you'll then be able to register it. This will be done using pure PHP, AJAX and Javascript.

PORTFOLIO

Last but not least comes my portfolio website. The reason for choosing to create this is because It's time a create an online presence for myself and showcase my work and abilities to my future employers.

I feel like all these skills here would showcase a wide range of different talents I have collected over the years including design, code, management and execution of a project.

ANOTWEET

Secondly I'll be create a Twitter web application called Anotweet. What Anotweet will basically do is; Send anonymous tweets from a anonymous Twitter profile, without the receiver knowing it's from you. I'll be using the Twitter API to pull of this web application.

XBOXLOOP

Now we're at XboxLoop. Now all XboxLoop will do is be a subscription website. You'll purchase a tutorial using PayPal, if all is good. Your account will be created and emailed to you automatically. For this application I'll be using my custom built framework and the Paypal API/IPN.

WHY I CHOSE THIS

The reason for choosing projects to be working on is because it gives me the opportunity to gain experience where I once may not have been. For example when it comes to xboxloop I'm working with the Paypal API. Something I've never tried, but always wanted to as I would earn the skillset of having an instant payment notification system on any of my projects I may be working on.

Anotweet would give me the experience and practice working with the Twitter API, something I've never used to date. It would be beneficial for any social login features I may need in the future or even auto tweeting stuff in the near future, who knows.

Tweetli gives me the opportunity to closely work with AJAX and Javascript, easily sending input queries straight to the backend for it to deal with. Definitely beneficial for any web developer to understand, master and enjoy.

All these skills are also great to showcase to an employer as they may be hiring someone with that specific skillset. I feel like settling for mastering one thing is a discouraging push for yourself. I'd prefer to understand the whole trade so more opportunities can be put in front of me to take advantage of. Whether it's a startup idea or a job opportunity

RESEARCH INTO TECHNOLOGIES

For this stage I began to start thinking about what technologies would be required to complete my set project list. I created a small document on Google Drive with all the links and reasoning why I believe it would be useful.

ANOTWET

For Anotweet, I spent at least 4 days researching up the Twitter API. This being the first time I've ever tried digging into that type of API, it was going to be a challenge. I began searching tutorials on Youtube about how to integrate it into an already existing application, but unfortunately there was just heaps and heaps of outdated tutorials. Next I moved onto StackOverflow although SO was helpful within other projects, it wasn't helpful here. They were just answering other people's problems. Luckily I looked on Github, and I found some of the most easiest to understand tutorials on how to work with the API.

TWEETLI

With Tweetli I didn't need to research that much up, luckily I had loads of experience with PHP already and done some work with AJAX, so this wasn't too hard. The only real challenge I had was looking for a way to check if the username was available, without using the Twitter API. After looking through my books I have purchased I soon realised it was a lot easier than expected using the file_get_contents features that's built in on PHP. I would check if the page returns a profile or an error page and work from there.

PORTFOLIO

For my portfolio, there wasn't much that I needed to look at, in fact nothing at all. I'm very comfortable and confident with HTML and CSS. This didn't really become an issue for me.

RESEARCH INTO TECHNOLOGIES

FRAMEWORK

The Framework was by far the most difficult thing I've ever done in my whole coding life. Without a doubt. I bought 3 books on OOPHP, access to detailed tutorials and downloaded a handful of other simple framework to get reference from. Luckily everything I needed to find and use was either in the books that I had purchased or available in the tutorials. All problems I did come across that I could solve seemed to be common was as I was able to find the solutions to the problem on the first page of Google.

XBOXLOOP

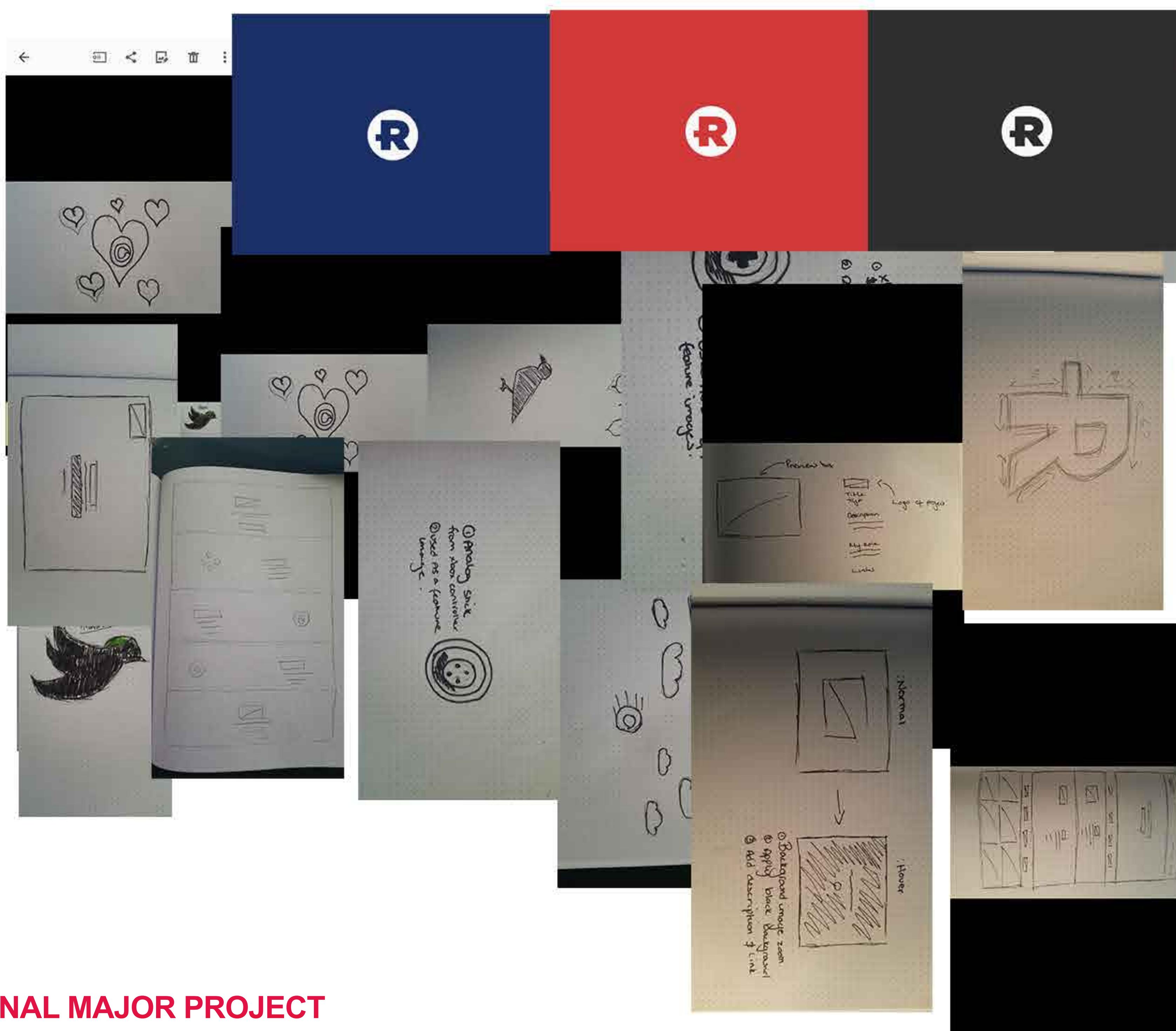
Lastly was XboxLoop, now this was another challenging project. Working with the PayPal API was extremely tedious and long. It took around 3 days to get it fully working with tutorials provided by PayPal Docs and Youtube. It wasn't too hard to gather the information up for this task. Building it on top of my custom framework aswell made it alot easier for me to test my framework at the same time. Since it was my framework it was so easy to implement any features I needed for the application, like automated email sending and automated account creation etc.

DESIGN AND BRANDING

While working on all 4+ of these projects, I always believe that presentation and first impressions are always the key to success. No matter how tedious the idea is, if you make it look professional and appealing you could easily sell salt to a slug. With every project, I took the same approach for all them. Sketches, wireframes, branding sketches, design mockups and final pieces.

I created and branded all of the projects using Photoshop and a wacomb tablet. Usually when creating logo designs and little images I go straight into Photoshop without any sketches. But I really felt like when I did do sketches during the branding process, I was able to be more creative and express my ideas so much easier on paper. It allowed me to collaborate ideas a lot quicker and easier, as well as plan out the method I was taking to successfully create a piece of appealing graphics.

I'll be inserting some of my design processes below so you can see the journey I went through to complete all the graphics I used on these projects. Me myself I was pretty impressed with what I came up with, usually when I create these sort of things, it doesn't always work out as planned.



FUTURE PLANS

During the near future, there will only be a few projects I'll be looking to update. Some of the projects that was created during this unit was for educational purposes and to test the waters on how I coped with certain technologies.

ANOTWEET

All development for Anotweet will stop, there be a risk of hate messages and it goin very sour quick. This was just for training and educational purposes and I don't think I'll be maintaining it or updating it any time soon.

PORTFOLIO

My portfolio will receive quite a few changes regarding the feedback I got. Firstly I'd be working on the design being responsive for all devices. Reposition where things are on my website, for example; The portfolio part more to the top of the page rather than the bottom and lastly spicing the design up a little to actually show my design abilities.

FRAMEWORK

As time goes by and I learn new skills within OO PHP, I want to update the framework for it to work a lot more efficiently, faster and lighter.

TWEETLI

The updates I'll be performing are just little ones that might make dramatic changes. Firstly I want to implement a name suggestion tool. When you search a first name and it's not available, Tweetli will automatically suggest usernames that are available that are similar to the original one. I'd also like to change the way the script checks if the username is available, making it much quicker and reliable. Lastly I'd like the design to be responsive.

XBOXLOOP

Xboxloop I'm yet to decide what direction I'll be going down with this one. I have no interest in making money from the internet, I just love making things and giving them away for free to use. So I'll have a hard think about the direction I'll be going with this one.

CONCL USION

Throughout this whole process and project, I feel like my understanding of the web has definitely changed dramatically. I feel like the amount of knowledge I have acquired along the way has definitely made me wiser when making decisions while creating a website. I feel that as a person I've accomplished a lot more than I originally thought I was capable off, which has given me a huge confidence boost.

This project most of all has taught me about dedication, I feel that before I would start something and coming towards the end, I'd just give up as it got too easy or I lost interest of it along the way. But now, completing 4+ projects I feel like I have learned to be more dedicated and enthusiastic throughout projects and learn to complete them to the very end.

I feel more motivated to do more personal work, waking up earlier and working hard and thoroughly through the day to meet my goals.

Overall, this is by far the best unit I've been allowed to work on. I feel it's finally given me the freedom to show my true skill and I've defiantly expressed it throughout all the applications I've created over the 6 months.