Arya Atighehchian

Dr. Koehl

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CPSC 498

Reflection Paper

Through out my college career, the one class I was most anxious to register for was my Capstone. I had no idea what I wanted to my project on. It wasn’t until the class actually started that I started getting ideas from other students. Once I came up with one, my friend, Nick, decided he wanted to work together. Then we started working on our proposal for our project, which later turned into an Android mobile application for CNU students to use to communicate.

For our project we had to learn several different resources to accomplish our end goal. One main new resource we had to learn was the PHP programming language. This was our hardest challenge since neither of us had worked with PHP ever before. We searched the Internet for many tutorials and examples of how to use the sql conncetions. We integrated this into our project by having our java code run string requests calling the PHP scripts that in turn returned a JSON string in its response of what it pulled from the database we set up. We definitely ran into some issues since we were novices. We didn’t know that the print statements we were using to debug were actually altering what the JSON was returning. This had us stuck for a bit and set us back a week. Another new tool we used was the database itself.

The database we used was MySQL, which was installed through MAMP. The database wasn’t too difficult to use but learning how the primary and foreign keys work was the hardest part. After researching how to set up the database it was pretty simple. The most challenging aspect was when the database crashed on two different occasions. The first time it wasn’t as big of a deal because we didn’t have it set up perfectly. The second time it was annoying because it wasn’t backed up which put us behind another week. We believe it happened because of not fully shutting down the database before closing the laptop. Once this was resolved we learned to back up all our PHP files and database into git along with the java files.

If our project was as best as it could be, there would have been more accessible functions for the user. We really wanted to add in profile pictures for the user. We tried many ways to implement BLOBS in our PHP and database. Through researching and testing, it seemed as though it should have worked. We weren’t sure what to change at that point since it wasn’t just a simple int or string being pulled or inserted into the database. Another cool thing to add would’ve been sorting the threads by most recent thread or most recent post inside that thread. That step was never approached though.

Completing this Capstone has definitely been a milestone. Through all the ups and downs, I am happy with the way it turned out. I think it was a great start to getting familiar with databases and even more so PHP. I had already been familiar with Android Studio and android applications, but now I feel much more comfortable. I feel my Java skills have definitely improved as well. Other than adding in the other aspects to the app, there isn’t anything I would want to do differently. I would only want it to look visually really cool. Overall, this I thought the project was a success as a learning experience.