Website Design & Development Progress Reflection Report

By Iarla Sparrow Burke

Design

I did most of the website's wireframes in Balsamiq's Wireframes tool, which I gained access to via a 30-day free trial. I found their UI to be simple but responsive, and it had all of the tools I required to put together my mockups for the final site. At the time I didn't see the true value of putting the wireframes together, but as I started coding the site in the following weeks I realised how much having a pre-arranged design helped when it came to deciding what was to go on each page of our site. There were some minor changes and compromises made to the function and design of the website, primarily due to the limitations of using only HTML & CSS. Ultimately though, the finished site is mostly true to the original vision from the wireframes.

Coding

I used Visual Studio Code to manage the repository of the website, which I hosted on GitHub to track all of my changes. I set up a HTML file for each page of the site, then built the menu framework and basic divs for each page's structure, before pasting them between all of the pages to ensure homogeneity. Once the header was completed, I continued working on the main HTML page. I handled most of the code for main.html, transport.html, and events.html. Louiza wrote contacts.html, food.html, and social.html, and sent me the files, which I integrated into my repository. To ensure there was no confusion as to CSS styling, Louiza wrote the styles for their pages directly in the HTML for each page, and I moved it into the styles.css once I had received their files.

Challenges

There were several elements of building the site I found challenging in particular. The initial process of building the header was relatively easy, but once it came time to build my center div I would use to contain most of the site's content, I had some trouble centering. After spending quite a bit of time on Stack Overflow, I figured out how to center the div (margin: 0 auto;). Following this, things went relatively smoothly in adding titles and top images to each page. My next challenge involved the spacing of the boxes I placed near the bottom of main.html. As in the wireframe, I wanted the rows of boxes to be around 3 to a row on a full desktop monitor, but squished down to 1 per row in a mobile layout – this is quite tricky to do with dynamic widths (fractional units or percentages), and so the compromise I eventually settled on was to define the widths of each box in exact pixel values, and then allow the flexbox they were contained in to wrap them below each other as the page grew narrower. Beyond this, things went fairly smoothly in the coding of the rest of the site. As there was a significant gap between the design and coding processes, I found myself feeling a little rusty in my CSS styling – particularly my fluency with the box model. This soon returned, however, and by the time I was coding the second and third pages I ran into very few roadblocks.

Changes to Initial Design

The layout of the multiple-box layout I used on several pages changed a number of times. I wanted them to be responsive to a mobile layout, without needing to define widths statically. As stated earlier in this report, I eventually settled on defining widths statically, so that the boxes would collapse as I wanted. On a second look, though, I realised that if I utilised the breakpoint I had been adding styles to for my center div and other elements, I could adjust the width of the boxes so that once the breakpoint was passed, they would all collapse as I intended. This allowed me to keep the widths of the boxes dynamic, and made transitioning to a mobile layout look a lot smoother, and support a lot more devices. Other than this, a few elements included in the original wireframes eventually had to be excluded – The calendar on the transport.html was removed as I couldn't figure out a function for it to actually have in the page, and the Social Life will likely be adjusted drastically. Alongside this, I also swapped the header image in the events.html page to use a YouTube video, as I checked the brief and noticed a requirement for some kind of embedded audio or video. This took quite a bit of tinkering to get to scale properly, as iframe tags need a static width. With a little help from the internet, though, I was able to get it to resize properly for mobile layout.

Experience of Groupwork

Working in a group reduced a lot of the pressures of design, simply by splitting the workload. I also find I'm generally better at the technical side of things, so Louiza's assistance in the writing of most of the pages was a great help. Groupwork in a remote setting introduces some unique challenges, however. I have a basic understand of Git source control from my own personal experience programming as a hobby, but as we weren't taught how to use Git or a tool of similar function, Louiza had no experience with Git, and so collaborating in a single project directory was difficult. The solution I used was to write all of the framework code first (headers, center divs etc.) and then upload all of this to a GitHub repository (you can view this repository at: https://github.com/iarlasb/wdsem1). Louiza then downloaded this, worked on their half of the site, and sent the HTML to me, which I then integrated into the repository and pushed to GitHub. This one-way system was rather janky, but it meant we could work on separate halves of the site simultaneously without introducing too much conflict between the different stylesheets and the like.

As of writing, I have completed all of my workload. When I submit, the site will be complete bar social.html – this responsibility fell to Louiza, and if they complete this page and are able to resubmit the completed site, I would hope I would be able to do the same.