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CSD310

Assignment 12.3

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I think a lot of what can be learned out of group work broadly falls into two categories: learning how to work with people and learning other people's workflows. Because many of us in this class come from customer-facing positions with extensive customer service, we are used to working with people. However, in a group project like this, we are working with peers, which is not often the case in our day-to-day lives (where we tend to act with the authority of a business that the customer does not have). This more level playing field ripens the opportunity (no grapevine pun intended) to harvest (ok maybe a little) from the skills and methods that others are using.

For example, in our project, the "beautification" method of displaying output was a tricky hurdle. When selecting a record or records in a SQL command line, the output beautifies itself into nice and neat ASCII tables. However, when executed through Python, that's not the case. Attempting to replicate the SQL beauty tables actually took up the lion's share of the work that week, as the actual queries were simple. Eventually, Joshua found an ingenious way to do it, essentially looping the printing of ASCII characters tied to a constant in order to buffer the tables to an appropriate width.

I say "found" rather than "invented" or "copied" because in the land of software development that's really a non-issue. Just like we don't denigrate the inventor of an airplane for "copying" the concept of wheels, the crucial part isn't that you can waste time inventing the wheel from scratch. The crucial part is knowing that a wheel exists and then either sourcing one or being able to manufacture one. However he went about it, his approach from a different angle (essentially printing the table "line by line" in formatting) was much easier to implement than the solution that I was attempting to use, which was much more dynamic.

In a more complex environment, the more dynamic solution may well have been worth the extra time to implement, especially if the goal was to have many kinds of reports. However, a vital skill in project management and software development is to know when the fancier solution is not worth the extra time. Being able to weigh those opportunity costs is the only way to ensure that you end up with a program that actually ships on time.