This week our CS 480 group was tasked with learning about php and thinking about how it can work in our final project. PHP is a powerful tool for creating responsive websites using a server-side language. Specifically, we considered file handling, error and exception handling, cookies, and MySQLi.

We first looked at file handling in php. In the code example we show how a lot of text and instructions for the 10-panel drug screen can be read from a txt file. This allows us to remove a lot of static text from the html file. If we had time to add more features to the website, we could use file handling to upload requirements such as TB tests or CPR certification.

Next, we reviewed error and exception handling. Exception handling provides an alternative flow in case a piece of code fails. For our project we’ll mostly use front end validation with regular expressions and won’t need to do much exception handling. The example code shows an error that would be thrown if a ZIP code is not 5 digits. If we were to accept file uploads we would want to provide more exception handling. We could have multiple types of errors that could be thrown for wrong file type, too large, of file, etc.

Cookies are another feature of php we looked at. The cookies in php work just like they do in javascript. They are useful for storing pieces of information about a user. If we wanted to create a login for students to upload their materials we would probably want to use cookies to store bits of information about the user. In the sample code we store a username ‘Ksanger.’

Lastly, we considered MySQLi. MySQLi are functions in php that allow you to access MySQL databases. In our project it will be useful for adding new sites and information to the database from the administrator’s control page as well as pulling it to the sites page to be viewed by students.

Overall, we’ll certainly look to use a significant amount of php in our final project. As time allows it could be made even more useful with features that rely more heavily on php.