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Internet-based Bookstore

CS4280 Advanced Internet Applications Development Assignment II: Group Project

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# Prototype Design: Internet-based Bookstore

## Overview of Project and its Design Justification

For the group assignment of CS4280, we (Robert Cinca, Lok Hei Li) decided to implement task number 2, the Internet-based bookstore. We decided to base our design on the following criteria:

* Knowledge and Technologies we have learnt in class.
* The Use Cases given to us in the assessment guideline document.
* Existing internet-based bookstores, in particular Amazon.
* Our own knowledge of web development.

**Course Knowledge and Technologies**

We implemented a range of different technologies, which will be detailed in the key features section. A quick overview of the most important concepts that we implemented from class:

* Basic concepts of Java OO programming.
* The use of NetBeans as an IDE for web application development.
* Tomcat Server integration for website hosting and deployment.
* Functioning of servlets, including HTTP requests and responses.
* JSP pages for HTML-heavy pages.
* Form based authentication.
* Database integration via the JDBC using Microsoft SQL.

**Use Cases**

At all stages of project development, we ensured that the use cases played a vital role in determining our design. The use cases were as follows:

*Two actors: customer and book manager.*

1. **Browse books**: a customer can browse books at any time
2. **Purchase books**: a customer may, at one time, purchase any number of books. A customer who is a registered member may use some or all accumulated loyalty points to pay for books purchased. Books purchased using loyalty points are not refundable.
3. **Request for refund of purchased books:** a customer who is a registered member may submit request for refund of purchased. The request for refund needs to be authorized by a book manager.
4. **Enquire loyalty points:** a customer who is a registered member may enquire the loyalty points accumulated.
5. **Authorize refund request:** a book manager needs to authorize each request for refund of purchased books.
6. **Manage books’ quantity and price:** a book manager may add, remove, and change book details and available quantity and price.

These use cases will be referred to in the rest of the report, in order to highlight how we designed our project based on them.

**Existing Internet-based Bookstores**

To implement our use cases, we based our key design choices on existing internet-based bookstores, in particular Amazon. Some of the key concepts that we implemented include:

* Implementing membership through a signup/login and loyalty points system.
* Ability to browse books at any time.
* The ‘cart’ concept: a place that stores the books the customer wants to buy, similar to an online concept of a shopping basket.
* Pay by card or by points, a key feature of any online marketplace.

**Own Knowledge**

We also used our own knowledge for the initial design and look of the website along with extending certain functionalities to improve the user experience and make the website more robust. Some of the concepts we implemented include:

* HTML for displaying the content on the web page.
* CSS to improve the user experience and user interface (design of web page).
* JavaScript for implementation of small handy functions, such as checking if there is an intervening space in the creation of the username.
* GitHub, a git repository that allows us to share and collaborate during the project. There were several reasons why we decided to use GitHub:
  + The Git repository is safe from file loss, as the project is stored in the cloud.
  + It is simple to revert back to previous versions of the code. There is an easy user interface that displays previous versions and who made modifications.
  + Conversely, it is also simple to keep up with the most up-to-date version.
  + It is easy to access the Git repository from other devices.
  + The use of the branch and fork features permits us to code different parts of the application separately and try out new ideas without damaging the working code.
  + GitHub is widely used so there is extensive support available.

Our GitHub repository can be found here: <https://github.com/robertcinca/bookstore>

## Key Features and their Design Justification

The following section highlights the key features we implemented, along with a justification of their design. Particular attention is paid to the flexibility of the code, to make it easy to implement and change future code. We also link any key feature design to the use cases as a way of achieving the project requirements whilst also not deviating from the main goals of the website.

**Form based authentication**

We implemented a simple form-based authentication system as a way of registering members to our website. There is also the option to ‘continue without logging in’, which lets a guest user access the basic features of the website (browse and buy books, use cases 1 & 2) without needing an account.

The authentication system also makes it easy to control access to different parts of the website via web.xml. For example, a normal user can view account details whilst a guest user does not have access to this page. Additionally, pages such as the refund and add books page are reserved only for users granted ‘admin’ status. This is in line with the majority of internet-based marketplaces that all give users different access rights based on their role.

**Cart design**

The ‘add to cart’ feature, as implemented in many online shopping websites, helps the user to keep track of the books they want to buy (use case 2), similar to a shopping basket in a real life supermarket.

Whilst browsing for books, the user can easily add books to the cart using the ‘add to cart’ button. Moreover, the user is free to select the quantity of books desired and change it at a later time if they so desire. As an additional real-life constraint, we implemented the concept of a ‘limited supply’ of a type of book: the user can only add the available quantity of books to the cart. The manager can adjust the quota from the admin panel.

The cart is a simple table design that displays the total cost of each row (price of a book x quantity ordered) and the overall cost of all the orders. The user is able to delete entries or change the quantity of the orders.

**Pay by card or points**

Once the user chooses the ‘pay now’ option from the cart view, they are faced with two options: pay by card or with loyalty points (use case 2).

The loyalty points option only works if the user has enough accumulated points to buy the products, otherwise the user is invited to pay by card. The user is warned that books purchased with loyalty points are not refundable.

*Please note: there is no real payment processing for the card input.*

VINCENT TO DO:

**View account detail**

* Use case 3, request for refund
* Use case 4, enquire loyalty points

**Manager/Admin panel**

* Use case 5, authorize refund request on admin refund page
* Use case 6, add books page lets admin add a new book, browse manager view lets admin change or delete entry. Manager can also change stock.
* Highlight Key features.
* Justify design choices (link to flexibility of design – future changes and new requirements requires minimal effort to implement.)

# Addressing Assessment Guideline

We addressed the assessment guidelines in the following way:

* We designed the website based on the use cases presented in the overview document. Their implementation is highlighted in the ‘key features’ section of this report.
* We implemented the key technologies highlighted in the document, namely, XHTML (HTML 5), cascade style sheet, JavaScript, Java applet, Java Servlet, Java Server Pages, SQL query language. These are described in the ‘overview of project’ section of this report.
* We also placed the Web Archive File for our Bookstore in Tomcat webapps as a way of deploying the website.

In order to implement the assessment guidelines, we organized regular meetings to discuss the progress of the project thus far and propose the next steps in order to achieve our goal. We set intermediary deadlines to keep a regular progress on our project and used online development tools such as GitHub for storing our project. We also used Whatsapp as a way of communicating and arranging meetings.

# Strengths and Weaknesses of Design

## Strengths of our Design

The greatest strength in our design is that it achieves all the use cases, along with a “reasonable set of business rules and the appropriate application logic” that ensures a decent user experience.

Another strength is the straightforward user experience: by basing our design on pre-existing online bookstores that most users have seen before, they can easily learn to navigate and use our website.

Add more strengths maybe?

## Weaknesses in our Design

The user interface of our design can be improved further, by implementing more CSS code (e.g. animate objects). Due to the limited time in developing the project, we decided to focus mainly on the practicality and functionality of the website (achieving use cases, having appropriate application logic) rather than the UI. This was also due to the nature of the course CS4280: the main intention is to teach us how to integrate server-side processing and not how to make a website look pretty.

Another weakness is the lack of test cases: a large enterprise (e.g. Amazon) with a full-scale website would implement a range of tests to ensure the website does not ‘break’ on minor changes in the code. An example of a test would be an URL checker: a test that checks if any of the links point to files that have changed their location, thus warning the developer that they need to update the URL link. We did not implement any tests for two reasons: the first one being the limited time of the project development. The second reason is the fact our website is relatively simple so the need for tests was low. For example, we employ only 5 database tables: a full-scale enterprise might have thousands of tables with millions of rows.

# Individual Contributions

We had regular meetings where we agreed to what each of us should contribute. This was based on giving each other a similar amount of work and also on what we were more interested in doing.

## Robert Cinca

I worked on the following areas:

* Authentication: login/logout/signup. I implemented further design logic to ensure the smooth process of authentication. Some examples of this include:
  + Signup: a user cannot sign up with an existing username. Additionally, the username has to be at least 4 characters and the password 3 characters.
  + Login: some simple validation, for example checking for a space in the username.
* View cart: this page displays a table with books the user has added to cart. This page also gives the user the option to change the quantity or delete entries.
* Payment page: this page allows the user to pay by points or by card.
* Confirmation page: this page displays the books that have been purchased and updates the relevant databases (for example, the new total for the loyalty points).
* JSP pages: I designed the bookstore footer that includes social media links and the disclaimer displayed on all pages.
* JavaScript contributions: I employed basic JS functions to make authentication validation easier.
* CSS: I used CSS for the UI and design of web pages.

## Lok Hei Li

* Your contribution

# Prototype URL

The prototype is accessible on both our personal CS environments.

URL for Robert Cinca: <http://personal.cs.cityu.edu.hk/~robcinca2/cs4280/asgp2/index.html>

URL for Lok Hei Li: INSERT YOUR URL

*Please note: The Tomcat server needs to run for the website to work.*

# Reflection

**Robert Cinca**

This assignment taught me how to create a full-scale website that takes advantage of server-side processing as a way of achieving the requirements. It implemented concepts from all of the lectures along with the tutorials into one large assignment.

The most difficult part for me was to enable the web development from my MacBook. I ran into difficulties mainly relating to incompatibility between Windows and OS X operating systems. For example, Apple removed support for PPTP VPN connections from their latest OS X release. This type of connection was necessary in order to connect to the CS Labs and be able to access the MSSQL database (otherwise it would not connect to the database).

I have also learnt more about programming in Java and integrating web development within an IDE and within Java. I also learnt more about server-side processing, database querying and implementation.

**Lok Hei Li**

* Reflection, i.e., what have you learned in this assignment? what is the most difficult part of this assignment?

# References

As with any project in computer science, re-using existing code is an important aspect because it saves time and makes it easier to change or integrate extra features in future developments. The idea is simple: there is no need to reinvent the wheel every time you implement something.

The following sources were used in developing the web site:

* Code from the CS4280 tutorials
* Code from the CS4280 lecture slides
* Stack Overflow: a useful forum for programmers to share solutions to programming implementations. Link: <http://stackoverflow.com/>
* Tomcat Documentation. Link: [tomcat.apache.org](http://tomcat.apache.org)
* MSSQL Documentation. Link: <https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms130214(v=sql.90).aspx>
* Java Documentation. Link: <https://docs.oracle.com/javase/7/docs/api/>
* Stack Exchange: similar to stack overflow. Link: <https://cs.stackexchange.com/>

Add any other references

# Appendix

This section can be used for extra things (e.g. screenshots from the website).