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MART 120

Homework 1

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GitHub – To GUI or not to GUI?

I’ve previously used GitHub for a couple Computer Science classes. In both instances, I didn’t understand what it was doing or how it worked. We were instructed how to “push” and “pull” through the console in Linux and I just blindly copied what was typed out for us. I was able to work around it to some extent by manually uploading and downloading files through the web interface, but I know that’s not the correct or best way to use it. I look forward to learning more about it through using it in this course and hopefully I can get comfortable with at least one of the many ways to use it. The question is then: To GUI or not to GUI?

As much as I’m computer savvy and enjoy things like coding, I do like a nice GUI. Sure, you can pretend to be a master hacker, typing in commands in a console rather than dragging and dropping. But that simple act of visibly moving a file from one location to another requires significantly less brain power to accomplish. In these trying times we find ourselves in, reducing mental load is certainly a factor worth considering.

Installing the GitHub application was a breeze, though its usage was slightly less so. Perhaps it was more my incomplete understanding rather than the actual quality of the software, but I found it rather unintuitive to use. After tooling around for a bit, I found it pretty easy to drag files and folders into the GitHub app, but it took a little trial and error to find how to finally commit the change to my repository. Now that I know, I find it fairly easy to use, I just need to remember to jump through a couple hoops in the right order to commit changes.

While I had used the console commands in linux before, I know longer remember the process we did in that previous class. I found a very helpful cheatsheet from GitHub themselves and referenced that constantly while learning the process. I have included this cheatsheet, as well as a link to someones GitHub Gist page explaining the process a little bit. Again, after some trial and error, I was able to commit and then push the update.

If I was to recommend a hobbyist programmer to GitHub, I would urge them to use the GUI application. It’s nicer on the eyes, easier to learn, and easier to explain. There is nothing inherently wrong with this method and unless a user is committed to incorporating GitHub into their regular life, I recommend this simpler method.   
 However, I am one of those users that intends to use it both personally and professionally, and I find that the command prompt interface is something that feels nicer to me. I am liable to use cmd.exe regularly for other purposes, and it is much easier for it to share the screen with other applications. There’s also the advantage of writing scripts in the future or operating from a headless setup without a display. This then enables me to access all the tools I need, and I would rather learn one way that works on more platforms. I will continue to explore and learn about the different commands available and I’m excited to increase my proficiency in cmd in general along the way.