Intro

The web app for the “Feed the World” volunteer organisation is the focus of this web app development project.

The milestone one submission is a compilation of research into existing website/app examples, and some basic implementation of our own webapp. It also contains a data plan and database schema for all the intended features of the design.

In its current form the webapp has very little functionality, however the basic layout and colour schemes have been chosen to minimise kinetic load for the user and maximise usability. Final submission for the project will see all the features outlined in the data plan fully implemented to provide a rich, and user-friendly experience when navigating the app.

Research

Under the (1)Research folder of the repo submission there are screenshots of websites that were explored in process of deciding on schemes and features to implement. Large volunteer organisations such as RedCross and RSPCA have very well laid out websites that are easy to navigate and compelling for user to interact with.

Notable features that have been employed in the chosen design include a title or top menu with links to other pages, a side navigation bar for extra options, and tiling of features on a page. Having a consistent colour scheme as the researched websites do, also makes the usage of a webapp feel seamless and not at all jarring. Consistency between pages, of how common menus, and content on the pages is displayed is also important in keeping the user engaged without being tiring or confusing.

It is common practice for many webpages to feature some sort of logon system, which is often placed in the top right of a page. This was a design that was chosen to be emulated in the final design of the “Feed the World” webapp.

Design

The design of a webapp will make or break the user’s experience. Many factors influence how the user will perceive your webpage and whether interacting with the app is an enjoyable experience. Factors of the design of the “Feed the World” app that have been selected include, feature placement, colour scheme, and grouping of content.

Cognitive load and kinematic load are important aspects to consider in the design of a webpage. By making an app easy to use and understand, it reduces the mental fatigue of the interaction meaning users will stay longer and return in the future. Designs implanted to reduce cognitive load of the webapp include consistency between webpages, of feature placement, such as the dynamic side bar and top menu, and the colour scheme. By having these features, firstly places along the edges of the page, it reduces the kinematic load, and buttons near an edge of a screen are easier to interact with, and the consistency of colours and feature placement means that less thought is needed to navigate the app.

The webapp also tries to tile or centre important content, meaning that users don’t have to go searching, or traverse sections of the webpage to interact with the features they are there to use. For example, events and posts are tiled or listed in an appropriate manner rather than being spaced out too greatly.

Other design features include allowing windows to be scaled around features, so that if need be users can work in a smaller window. Features do not scale down with window size making them too small to interact with but instead the window frame will allow scroll bars to appear if part of the view exists outside of the frame.

After an initial review of the webapp, it was found that splitting the content into the pages delivered means that users are not overloaded with information or features on any one page. This also reduces cognitive load as users can navigate to a page with only the active features. Pages that are too overcrowded bear a large kinematic and cognitive load and so the pages have been made more simple. The review also found that bringing the consistency of colours and menu/navigation placement was a huge increase in the usability of the webapp, as it felt much more seamless, and users can expect where they will see content when changing navigation.