

Technical Specification



Animation Doodle

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Technical Manual - Animation Doodle

1 - Introduction

1.1 - Overview

Animation Doodle is an android application which encompasses both elements of artistic design and animation creativity. The application allows a given user to use their finger or a stylus to draw on the canvas and animations. We based the project off the idea of flip notes and how people could make the drawings look like they are moving. We wanted to target a younger generation for this App seeing as our system will have a basic set of features compared to some other Apps on the marketplace but will be a lot more user-friendly.

The application also allows users to register/sign-in and customise their own profile screen. Not only this, but users can also view & rate other users animations that they have uploaded to our database,

The application has been designed to be extremely user-friendly and following the design principles from the Material Design guidelines. The initial design and

conceptual structure of the project followed that a typical user would log-in to our system and then they could draw & animation and access other features like customising their profile, viewing other public animations or uploading their own animations. However, as the project continued we became increasingly aware of how an android application should be structured and crafted. Thus, we decided to move the preventative barrier to the core content of the application, that barrier being the log-in screen. Users can create animations without ever needing to make an account and log-in. However, it is advantageous to do so as they would unlock features such as:

1. Storing animations in their profile (5 max)
2. Rating other user's animations on the public animations tab

'Animation Doodle' is an application targeting a younger audience, enabling them to draw and animate and explore their own creative interests at an early age. This is one of our end goals and we want to keep improving the app for this purpose.

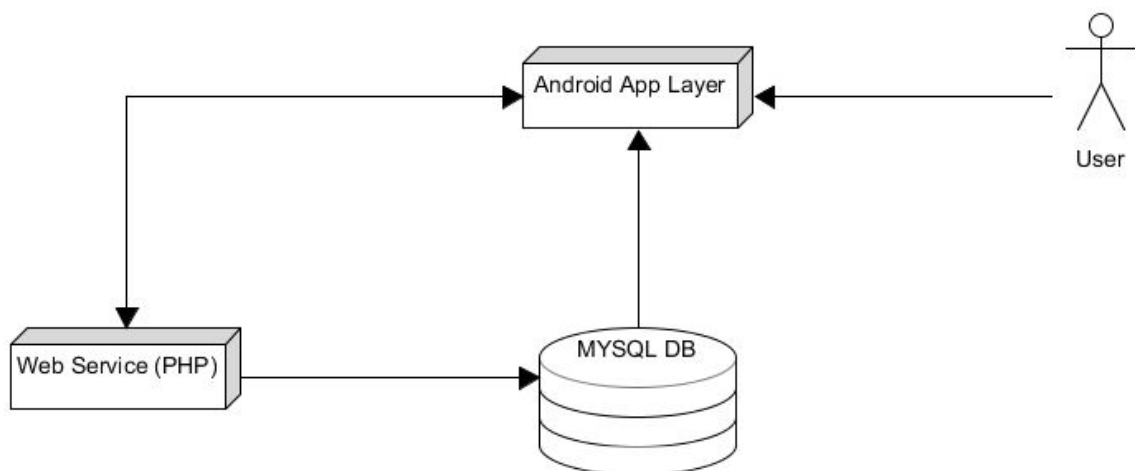
1.2 - Glossary

- **Onion-Layering:**
Onion-Layering is a 2D computer graphics term for a technique used in creating animated cartoons and editing movies to see one or more frames at once. This way, the animator or editor can make decisions on how to create or change an image based on the previous image in the sequence.
- **Frame-time Offset:**
A time-period between which each frame in the animation is played. This time-period can be modified by the user between (1 - 30 FPS).
- **MYSQL:**
MYSQL is an open source RDBMS that relies on SQL for processing the data in the database.
- **API (Applicable Programmable Interface):**
API is the acronym for Application Programming Interface, which is a software intermediary that allows two applications to talk to each other.

- Thread
Animation Doodle is a multi-threaded application. A thread is a single sequential flow of control within a program.
 - Asynchronous
When the programs current task does not wait for another another task to complete before executing it. In this way, the current task may finish before or after the other task.
 - Bitmap
A bitmap (or raster graphic) is a digital image composed of a matrix of dots. When viewed at 100%, each dot corresponds to an individual pixel on a display. In a standard bitmap image, each dot can be assigned a different color. Together, these dots can be used to represent any type of rectangular picture.
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2 - System Architecture / Architecture overview

2.1 - System Architecture



This is our original system architecture model. It shows the flow of information among the various properties of our system. Our android app interacts with our MYSQL database

through PHP. This is an essential property to our system given we must store both user details, user images and user animations. Our system architecture (for the most part) has stayed consistent in its design from the conceptual stages several months ago.

User

The user in this scenario is the client or individual running our mobile application and interacting with the various services it provides. Our application is targeted towards devices with an SDK of 23, however we have taken the necessary precautions to ensure it is compatible with devices with SDKs of 19+ (4.4 KitKat)

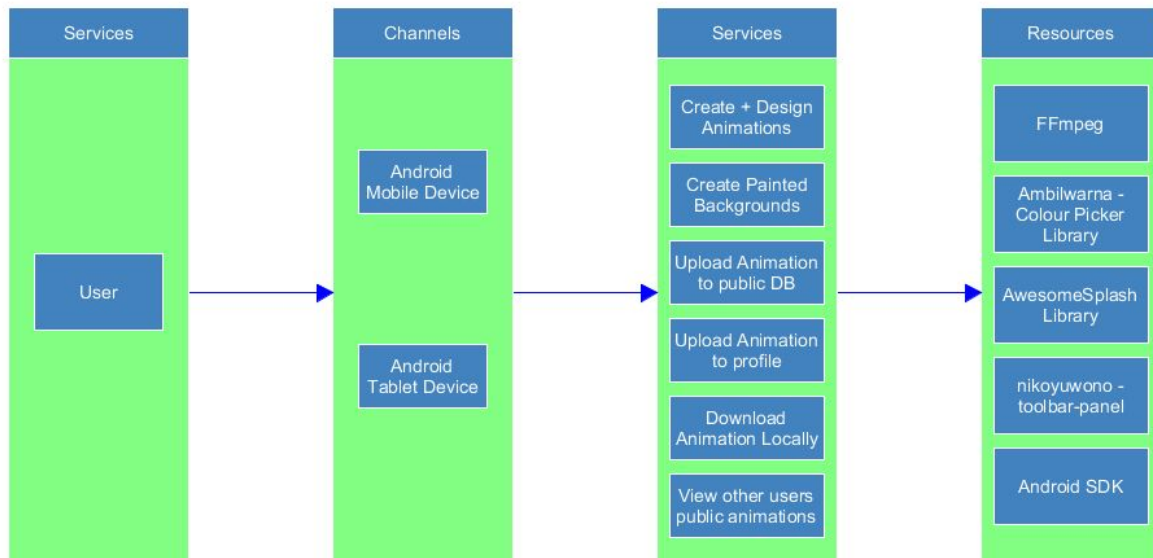
PHP service

Within our mobile application, we use PHP to both enable a connection to our external database as well as query and update it accordingly in coordination with the user.

Database

The database system we required had to be sufficiently large to ensure there would be enough space to hold user details, images, and the largest of the bunch: video files. Generally the video files would not be too large in consideration as we are able to compress them before uploading them to the database while maintaining a decent frame quality.

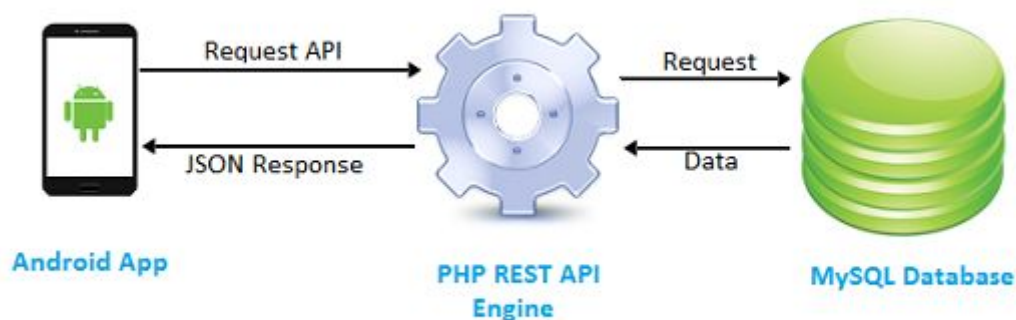
2.2 - Architectural Overview Diagram



The Architectural Overview diagram is an important diagram to show the key architectural model of a system. The above diagram is the architectural overview diagram of Animation Doodle and how exactly each of the columns interact with one another. We have a user who can interact with our android application in two ways: Through mobile or tablet systems.

These systems then interact with the many available services offered by Animation Doodle. Many of those key services are listed above. Resources are the external entities / libraries / APIs that the services interact with. For example: FFmpeg is a key service which takes the array of bitmap images the user has drawn and converts them to a MP4 video file. (Download Functionality).

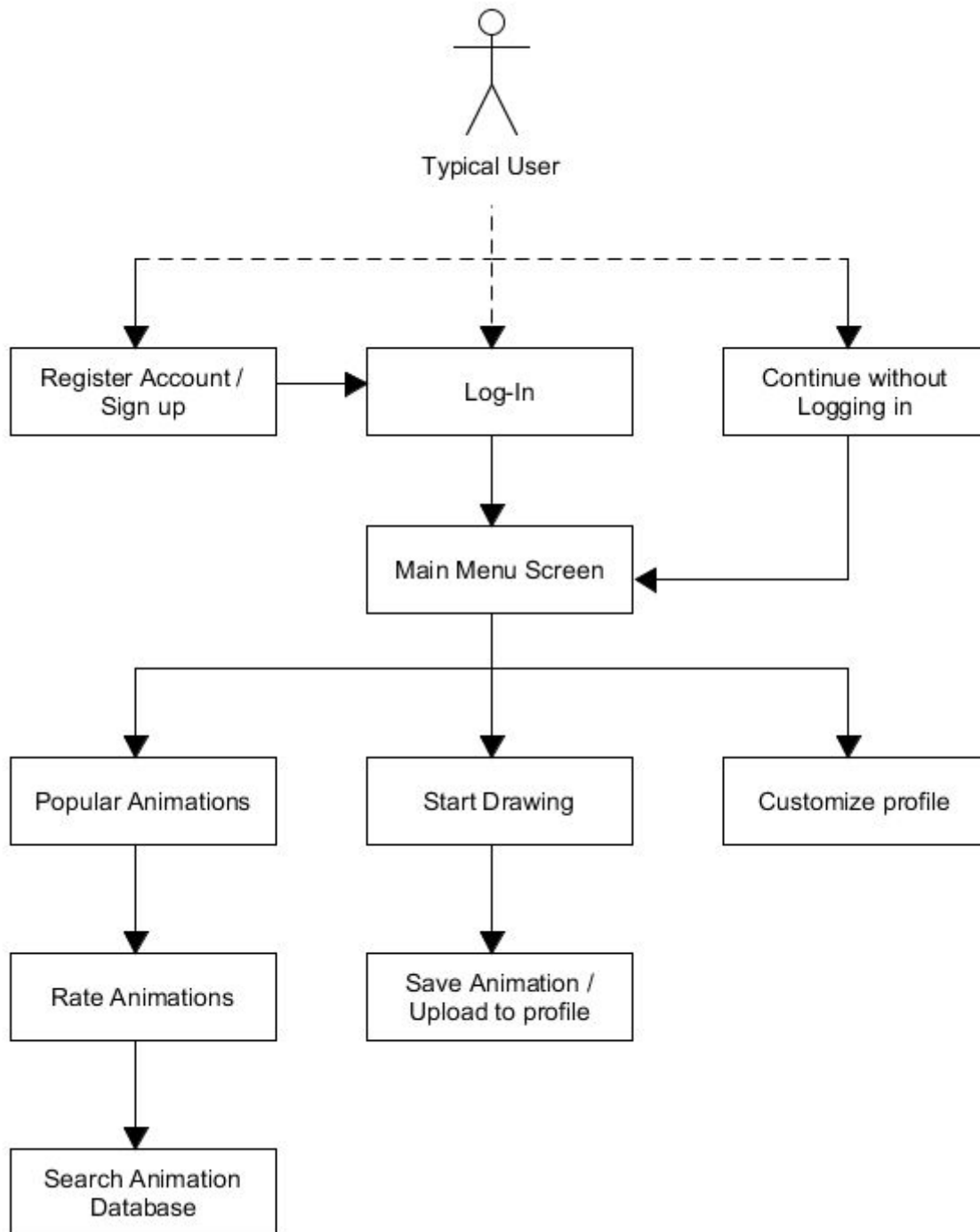
2.3 - System Components



The above diagram is our old conceptual model. Our current model takes a similar approach but does not take advantage of the PHP Rest API. We simply query the database through using PHP and receive and parse the JSON response accordingly.

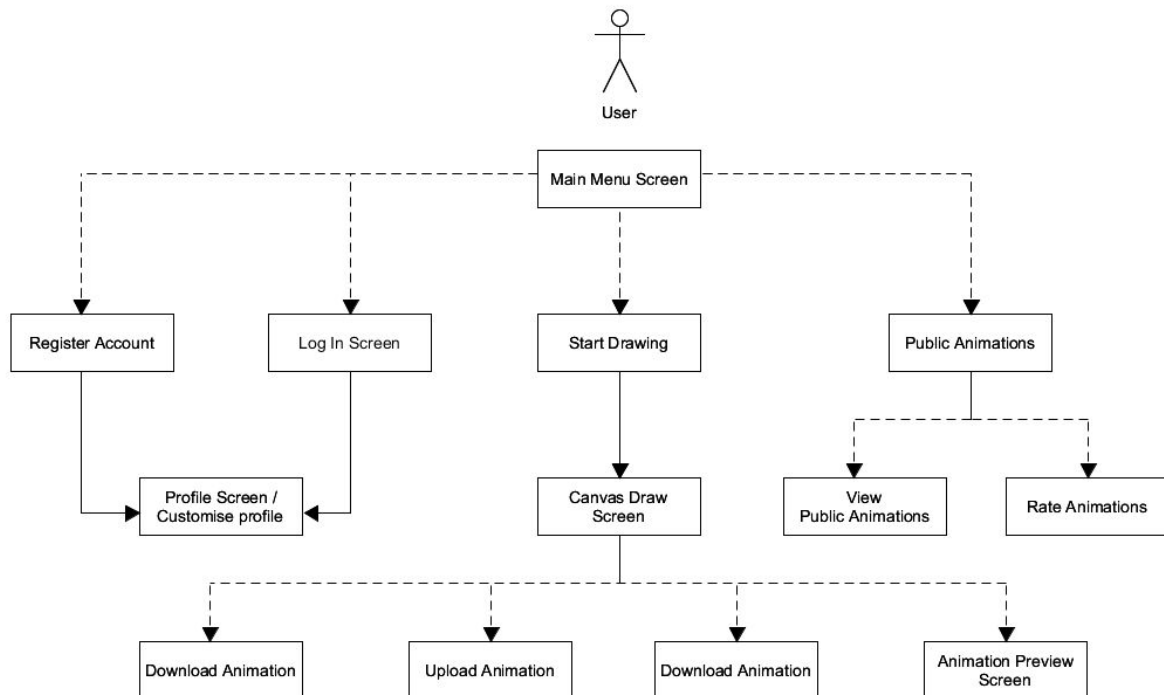
3 - High Level Design

3.1 - Original High Level Design Diagram



The design flow of this diagram is very simple to follow. The dotted arrows indicate a choice among entities and no absolute deterministic outcome. The original high level model was quickly revamped early into development when our project coordinator suggested we do not force the user to log in to utilise the apps main features. Instead, we let the user access the core functionality of the application but restrict some features involving database interaction to non-logged in users. This is exposed to a greater extent in the component model further down.

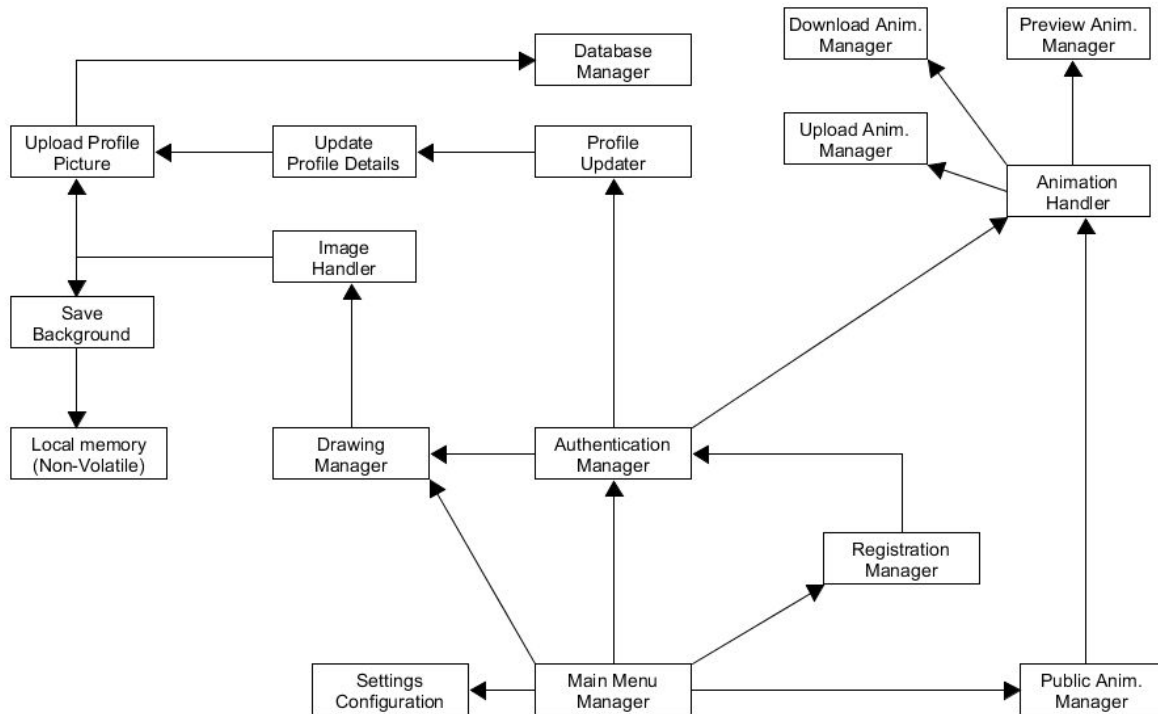
3.2 - Current High Level Design Diagram



This is our current High Level Design Diagram. As you can see, a user does not need to log in to access the core functionality. Users upon simply launching the app can draw / animate, register / sign-in or even view public animations. They can Download their own animations locally but some features cannot be accessed as expressed above such as:

1. Uploading an Animation
2. Rating other user's Animations

3.3 - Component Model



‘Animation Doodle’s component model is showcased above. It shows the key interactions between each of the components within our system. From the ‘Main Menu Manager’ which is shown after the app launches, the user can take advantage of a multitude of components:

1. Users can adjust the settings through the ‘Settings configuration
2. Users can access the public animations tab for viewing and other features depending if they are authenticated (logged in).
3. Users can register or sign-in
4. Users can directly go to the canvas screen to animate and draw through the Drawing Manager.

We have special components which handle individual things to boost efficiency and effectiveness. For example:

1. The Image Handler is a specialised component only responsible for image related operations. Examples include: Saving a background frame locally or uploading a profile picture to a users profile page.
2. Animation Handler is one of the most important components, if not the most important component on the entire model. This component is accessed from multiple sources (Public Animations / Preview Screen) and is essential the manager for all the animation functionality built into the application. Downloading animations locally / converting your animation to an MP4 file and saving it,

Uploading your animations to our database, and of course actually previewing your animation while it is in creation are all functions the Animation Handler deals with.

Managing Animations

Download Animation

When a user selects the download animation button in the drawing screen (representing by a typical download icon) the application calls an asynchronous task to convert all the bitmap frames to JPEGs. These are stored in the Temp directory in AnimationDoodle/Temp. Another asynchronous task is then called on completion of the frame task to convert all the JPEG images in the Temp directory to video (MP4). AnimationDoodle makes use of the FFmpeg library to convert all these JPEGs to video and then stores the video in AnimationDoodle/Animations. All the JPEG images stored in Temp are then removed since the video has been generated.

Preview Animation

A user is brought to a new activity where the array of pathways (Frames) are subsequently shown based on a frame-rate (adjustable by user). This preview screen showcases a title bar and a bottom toolbar. The title bar shows the animations name and the bottom toolbar has a play/pause button, a SeekBar indicating which frame the user is on and the duration of the animation, and finally an ImageButton. When this ImageButton is clicked a user is offered to change their background to one of four options.

1. Blank Canvas
2. Crumpled Paper
3. Ancient Scroll
4. School Paper

These 4 items just add a bit of variety to our app and make it more interesting to view your animations on different backgrounds.

Upload Animation

Once a user has completed their animation, they can upload this to our database for storage reasons and for public acknowledgement. Once the user selects the upload button, they are first checked to see if they are indeed logged in and have a profile. If they do, they are prompted with which video from their animations they wish to upload. Once selected, that animation is then brought to an synchronous activity where the database is updated through PHP. A JSON response will be returned indicating whether or not the animation has been successfully uploaded or not.

Handling Images

Download Background

When a user has drawn a frame or switched to a previously drawn frame, they can choose to save that frame and reuse it later as a background for an animation. Doing so would save the animation to AnimationDoodle/Backgrounds. To be more technical. The system looks at the current frame the user is on and converts that frame to a bitmap and then compresses it to a JPEG.

Set Background

Users can set the background for the entire duration of an animation during creation of it through the 'Set Background' button. User's will be prompted to import an image from their gallery / pictures / google drive to use as a background in the animation. Once imported, backgrounds can be easily removed by clicking the same button. Imported images are reverted to a bitmap and are then placed in the background of the canvas.

Upload Profile Picture

Users, once signed-in can upload an image as their profile picture. This image is simply changing the image src of the imageView but once uploaded this image is sent to the database and stored in that particular accounts row in the profile table. In this way, if the user logs out or closes the app, the profile image will remain.

4 - Problems and Resolution

4.1 - Registration Bug

Registration bug where user data was being inserted twice when they hit the enter key to submit their input. Fixed it by changing the return statement in the onClick code

4.2 - Video Title Spaces bug

Spaces in video titles was causing issues with playing videos on phones. Fixed it by replacing the spaces with %20.

4.3 - Bottom Navigation bar disabled functionality

Bottom Navigation Main Menu would swap between fragments as expected but any interactive properties on that fragment would not work. (We needed to move some functionality into the fragments)

4.4 - Overwriting final frame in timeline bug

(Early in development) When you clicked play_animation, the frame the user exited the play_animation_screen would overwrite the last frame in the animation.

4.5 - All drawn pathways incorrectly change colour bug

Change Colour would change the all the pathways on that frame to that colour and not the pathways drawn afterwards only.

4.6 - Extremely inefficient and slow library usage

Download Animation → We used the JCodec Library initially and we did it on the main thread. Doing such an intensive process on the main thread caused us to drop many frames. We moved the process to an additional Asynchronous thread. But the library was still far too slow at encoding the frames to a video format (.mp4). We were struggling with this for a few days and eventually through constant research we dramatically increased the download speed using a different library yet much more complex called FFmpeg.

5 - Installation Guide

5.1 - Install the application from GitLab

- Install Android Studio if not already.
- Open Android Studio accordingly.
- Create & Start your emulator. This can be done by:
 - > Open Tools
 - > Android
 - > AVD Manager
 - > Create Emulator
- Download the APK file linked to here on GitLab:
<https://gitlab.com/computing.dcu.ie/collij36/2018-CA326-jcollins-animationdoodle/blob/master/code/app/app-release.apk>
- Start Windows CMD and go to android-sdk/platform-tools directory
- Paste your APK file here
- Type the following command: adb install <APK PATH>
- E.G. adb install C:\Users\Shane\AnimationDoodle\example.apk

5.2 - Install from Google Play Store

- Open the Play Store and search for 'Animation Doodle'
 - Select Animation Doodle and install it
 - A permission dialog box may be prompted, accept it.
 - The Application will begin to download
 - Once downloaded the application can be found on the app screen or in the notification tray at the top of your devices screen.
 - Enjoy!
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6 - Resources / Libraries

- Awesome Splash Animation Introduction
(<https://github.com/ViksaaSkool/AwesomeSplash>)
- Marker SeekerBar
(<https://github.com/bq/MarkerSeekBar>)
- Writing Minds FFmpeg Library
(<https://ffmpeg.org/ffmpeg.html>)
- Bottom Dialog Material Design Navigation Bar
(<https://github.com/javiersantos/BottomDialogs>)
- Writing Minds FFmpeg Library
(<https://ffmpeg.org/ffmpeg.html>)
- Nice Dialog Box Library
(<https://github.com/javiersantos/MaterialStyledDialogs>)
- Fancy Gif Dialog Box Library
(<https://github.com/Shashank02051997/FancyGifDialog-Android>)
- Library to allow choice of paint colour
(<https://github.com/yukuku/ambilwarna>)
- Library to allow circular profile pictures
(<https://github.com/hdodenhof/CircleImageView>)