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CS510

Final Project Design Diary

The design for my final project went through several iterations, as did the final product. The end product is one I am moderately happy with, but there were several things that I would probably change and/or improve given more time to work on it. That is perhaps a result of my perfectionist nature, but there are also a few things that are simply due to the elements not working. We will look at the design for each of the three sections (HTML, CSS, and Javascript) and see what went well, what could or would be improved and some of my reasoning behind the discussions.

**HTML**

The first section to discuss is obviously the HTML, this being the main body of the webpage. There is not a lot to talk about through this section, but we do have a few choices that I have made here. Firstly, much of the layout was provided by the assignment, including the specific sections that were to be included. In this regard I did not stray too much from what was given or from the examples that I saw, both in my discussion group, as well as the previous examples provided. I initially intended to make my project multiple pages, rather than a single page as I was seeing in the examples. This was the first design, and one of the first things that I changed upon commencing with the actual coding. It was simply done away with for simplicity’s sake for the grader (and partially for me). I figured it would be far easier and simpler to grade if I kept all the code on a single page rather than splitting it up amongst four or more.

The second decision point that I came across during the assignment was whether to keep solely with the provided information/sections or to add more as if this was a true bio page that I was creating. In the end I again stuck with the provided information and did not add much in the way of additional content. This was again done for simplicity, as I felt that if I started to think through what I would add, that this project could easily balloon out of what is intended for the scope of said assignment. It was considering this that I choose to stick with the provided content.

The rest of the HTML section is largely just as we have gone over in class several times now. I attempted to stick with the best practices as laid out in class, and went with the typical layouts, including class for just about everything, as well as potentially adding redundant sections in case I decided to come back and add more or different formatting than what was originally went with.

**CSS**

This was the section in which I did find the most freedom in the entire project/program. As this was the area in which I was choosing what I wanted everything to look like. It was a great experience, and I appreciated being able to make those types of decisions on the look of the site. This is also the section where I second-guessed myself the most. As I indicated in the opening paragraph, I have a bit of a perfectionistic streak and so I am never sure if I am not happy with the appearance of something because it is not good or if I am just judging myself and my work too harshly. Still, it is with this in mind that I go through a lot of the choices moving forward.

Firstly, was the general layout of the project, and there were two directions that I could have gone with for this, and that is, complex and modern, or very stripped back. Of the two examples that I most enjoyed these were the directions that were taken there. In the end I went with the stripped back look. It just spoke to me more as the better look, especially with my limited skills at this time. In this regard I specifically avoided a lot of “over editing” in the process. There were two or three editing choices that I took (the links in the header, the form, and the border for the bio.

When I first started formatting I began mixing with a whole bunch of different colors, changing the body, the header, the text, etc. This was done for some time before I finally decided that this was all just looking, tacky, I guess. I then again looked at the past examples and came across one that was very stripped back and I really appreciated the look of it for this. It was at that point that I decided to remove pretty much all of the color changes. For the form I went with gray and black for the buttons. Similarly for the header portion I removed all the styling for the links there. I realize there might be a bit of an argument against that last one as there is some usability issues involved with not indicating that it is anything but plain text. However, in this regard I assumed that past context would be sufficient for most any user to understand that these items separated from the rest of the page at the top were button links. I did include a bit of color of the main title of the page, as I wanted that to draw in the reader beyond the typical top to bottom and left to right paradigm.

The only other formatting I really did in this section was the border around the “bio” section. This was done as this was opposite my picture and I did not want this mistaken for a caption I suppose. There is little other reason other than aesthetic, as I did not care for the plain text next to the picture, that was a bit too stripped back for me. That bordered into look pretty amateurish.

If there is one thing I would go back and change in this section it might be including a bit more formatting in the “projects” section of the page. I would not have done a lot beyond what is there, but I think that perhaps adding some buttons in this section followed by the description would look better than just the bare link that I have provided. I did not edit these links like the header specifically because that cultural assumptions I mentioned previously would not exist in this context.

**JavaScript**

This is the smallest section of the assignment, as the stripped down nature of the assignment did not really leave a lot of room for adding a lot of JavaScript formatting. Especially with my choice to try and remain stripped back in my design. There was one thing I felt I could have used this for however, and that was messing with my header. It was with this intention that I attempted to get my header to be persistent on my page, that is, not scroll with the rest of the page.

There was just one problem with this, I could not get it to work. I am not fully sure what is going on with this code that is not allowing it to work properly. I am assuming that it is an issue with my HTML and/or CSS formatting as the Javascript itself is not super complicated. It is literally one function. Still, given more time I would have liked to be able to implement this, but alas, it was not to be at this stage.

**Final Thoughts**

All in all I would have to say I enjoyed this project. Web design is one of the things that I was interested in when I first got into Computer Science, so working on this project was enjoyable in many ways for me. For the nature of this “diary” however I would have to say what I would change, beyond what was discussed in the previous sections.

Firstly, I suppose some more editing would be good to consider. Again, as I stated previously, there were two different directions I thought about taking my site, and I went with one, but I still would have liked to have designed the site twice and then chosen, or perhaps merged, between them.

Another big hurdle, obstacle, whatever, that I felt I had is just a lack of artistic ability. Even considering my stripped back approach I would have liked to add some, decoration, I guess would be the term, to the site. I did not want to just go and blunder existing images however. I realize this is just a school project and I am not going to use this professionally, or to make money, but I would still not feel right to take others’ work as my own.

That, I suppose, is that regarding this project. As I stated, overall, I am pretty happy with it. There were certainly some improvements and changes that I would have done given more time and consistent focus on this project, but all in all I feel good about it and the choices that I did make with my skillset and time constraints.