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CS1520

What I’ve Learned Since Project 1

In the first project for CS 1520, we were instructed to apply and showcase our skills with the tools we had been shown up until that point: HTML, CSS, and Javascript. Since then, many more tools have been added to our arsenal. Those tools primarily being PHP, Ajax, and MySQL, which allowed for a greater amount of control of what our webpages could do. At first, I planned to simply take the first assignment I had submitted, add in some form functionality, and call it a day. However, the more I looked at my version of the first project, the more I began to dislike it, and as such, decided to overhaul the entire site from a, in my opinion, poorly designed single page website into a multi-page website with a slightly better design sense. Here, I wasn’t as concerned with implementing PHP, so much as I wanted to perfect my CSS. I changed the background, which I believe was one of the biggest eyesores of my original site, downloaded a new, cooler looking font, and rearranged each page so that the information provided was as to the point as possible while still providing enough information on each one to feel complete. In, the end, I decided that I did not want to use a front-end framework to beautify my site. I wanted to test my HTML and CSS skills. I also used Javascript to hold the navigation bar still (load in same place on every page) in order to make the site appear a little bit slicker.

My next step was to add in the project requirements. The minimalistic approach of my site didn’t allow for numerous applications of PHP, but I included them wherever possible. I used PHP to implode the three unordered lists (two on the skills page and the one on the achievements page) as well as creating a PHP form handler which, using MySQL, took form submission from the contact page and imported them into a database.

Since the submission of the previous project, I have gained a fair amount of knowledge regarding web programming and the languages that encompass it. Obviously, the main new idea that has been pushed since the onset of the second project is PHP. Though I’m still not 100% comfortable with PHP, I understand its uses as a backend language and supplement to HTML. The other big idea that I implemented in this second part of my project was the addition of database functionality using MySQL. For some reason, this was the part I had the most difficulty with. I spent a long while trying to figure out why things weren’t working the way I wanted them to. At first, I ran into a problem where, after submitting the form, my $\_POST array was empty. After playing around with the form HTML a bit, I managed to fix the issue. The other hurdle I ran into with MySQL was the actual construction of the database. Again, I was looking online for a while trying to figure out what I was doing wrong, sure that I was using the correct syntax. This turned out to be me having forgotten that after you make a $sql=(stuff goes here) statement, you have to make a query in order for the code to fire off.

Overall, I’ve learned a great deal in this class this semester, having only cursory experience with simple HTML in the past.