

THE HOKIE FORUM

“ Where the Real Hokies Go ”

EXPLORE *the town like never before with our integrated Google Maps API*

SHARE *your favorite spots around town with fellow Hokies*

UNCOVER *the secrets of Blacksburg and centralize them into one place for all Hokies to enjoy.*

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CONTEXT:

The Hokie Forum fosters the sense of community in Blacksburg. The site allows those in the Blacksburg area to share their favorite spots around town with others in the community. It makes use of the Google Maps API to allow users to pin locations to their posts and replies. The intended users are young adults living in or visiting the town of Blacksburg. In order to post a topic or reply, a user must create an account. They can do this by clicking “Sign up” and entering a username, password, and email address. Once logged in, a user can explore pinned locations, view recent topics, and see their own activity. A user can view topics and replies without creating an account.

The main purpose of the site is to allow the Blacksburg community to start discussions then link their topics and replies to a particular location. When creating a new thread, a user must enter a title and description of the topic. They also have the option to include a location using the Maps API. A topic doesn’t have to be a question; a user could post a topic talking about a restaurant they really love and pin the location, and others could reply with their input. Once a user clicks the “Share” button on the “Start a New Thread” page, the thread is added to “Recent Topics” for others to read and reply to.

When a user replies to an existing thread, they can add a location to their comment. This will be stored into our database to be displaying along with all the other replies on this thread. The location is also displaying on the “Explore” page on the site so users can browse all topics and responses by their locations.

URL: thehokieforum.com

SETUP INSTRUCTIONS:

If you want to test the site, you simply have to navigate to the URL and create an account. If you wanted to test the website locally, you would need to do a few other steps.

First, import the “hokieforum.sql” file using phpMyAdmin. This creates the necessary tables in the “hokieforum” database and fills the “replies,” “topics,” “locations”, and “users” tables with sample data. Then ensure that MySQL and Apache are running in XAMPP. Finally, change the base url and all other relative directories to <http://localhost/> in the config.php file. Now you should be able to type localhost in your url and the test website will be running.

ABOVE AND BEYOND:

I think it is pretty clear that our group did not just do the bare minimum to get by on this project. We chose to take the risk and not use one of our previous individual projects. We instead created a new site with a completely different purpose. We felt that this idea was more interesting and would be more rewarding to develop.

We included all the functionality required to have a working forum website; this involved creating a more advanced database structure, implementing user roles and templates to adjust to those roles, and then making all of that work with the Google Maps API.

We also spent a lot of time working on the design of our website. We went through brainstorming sessions, wireframing, prototyping, and iterated on our designs multiple times before actually implementing the design in css. Our team even took it upon ourselves to purchase a domain name and link our Amazon EC2 instance to that domain.