



Milestone #2

Alpha Build

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Review of project goals

The goal of this project is to create an application that would allow users to buy, sell, and trade used text books with each other. For our alpha build we wanted a search function to allow users to search for books being sold, a user profile, and a method for users to contact each other to complete a transaction.

Issues Encountered

The main issue that we encountered for the alpha is the email feature. We had planned to allow users to email each other through the application, but we had some issues getting this feature to work properly. We will be looking into two methods of getting mail to work for the beta. One method will be using the PHP mail function and a second method will be using PHP to call a bash script to help send an email message.

Another issue we had was that we had concentrated on the back end while spending very little time on the front end. This resulted in our application lacking on the front end. We will be putting much more effort into formatting the appearance and enhancing the interface with libraries like bootstrap.

Current feature evaluation

We have only met some success criteria with the alpha. The search function is working as we had planned. A user can search for books using one of several search criteria and there is auto-complete for all search criteria. The profile page allows a user to view a list of books they want and books they are selling. The profile page is still missing methods to add and remove to these lists. The email feature has not met any success criteria as of the alpha.

Testing and feasibility of unimplemented features

On the original plan we were going to add a Google Map feature to help users pick a location to meet up at and a feature to allow users to search through data from Amazon. We will probably not have enough time to look into APIs for these features and will likely be dropping them in order to give us more room for polishing the core features.

Contingency Plans

For our book data we have already switched over to our main contingency plan, which is the change from a full database/search tool through APIs to a database slice with tools built by us. We will continue to look for better options for our system than as the semester goes on. We may also switch out our current log-in

tab for something a bit easier to use like Bootstrap combined with jQuery UI, which will hopefully make the work we split up less cluttered and confusing.

Deadline

Things are moving a bit slower than we would like. We are currently behind on the project as we were hoping to have more in depth user interaction available in our alpha, but conflicting schedules made it impossible. At the moment it seems we may have to drop some features later down the timeline, like the meet-up tool or pricing tool, to make sure that the application is usable.

Currently Unallocated Resources

As mentioned we need a better tool for our book data, whether it be a full database or a search tool we can merge with our interface. Though this will take a bit of a back seat to our now two major obstacles: full user interaction, profile editing and messaging, with our site and a uniform CSS theme, most likely though the jQuery UI ThemeRoller.

Scrapped Ideas

Several ideas have been scrapped at this point most of them around the way we should present data to the user. We went from trying to use Amazon Web

Services and finding that it might become too expensive over the course of the semester to use. To the Google Books API, which we found only covered all e-books and had no physical book prices attached to them. To trying to implement outside searching application/API like Custom Search from Google, but found that we actually need a website to search from to use which would require us to build static pages for each book and user in the system.

Final Look and Feel

One of our next main priorities will be getting the look of our application finalized and uniform to all pages. We'll be shooting for a low key aesthetic something that is not very bright and bold, but more soft and pleasant to look at. As for the feel of the site we want the process to be as simple as possible and easy to understand. Options will be straight forward and reliable with more of a focus on ease of use.

Overall picture of where things stand

All core features should be implemented for the beta. These core features have been tested and are feasible. We will likely drop the more advanced features that were originally mentioned.