

Charles Sheets Jr.
Final Project Report
Fundamentals of Website Development CSCI E12
sheets@g.harvard.edu

Goals and Purpose

The purpose of my final project is to give a much needed update and redesign of my personal website. My intent is to have my website become a platform to spark employer interest and collaborate with other graphic designers and web developers. The secondary purpose for this project is to create a digital portfolio and resume. My goals for this site are as follows:

1. Briefly introduce myself and provide easily accessible information that might interest employers. This is important knowing that most employers only spend an average 6.25 seconds reading a resume.
2. Once an interest is achieved, it's necessary to have a more in-depth information section which covers my education and experience.
3. Showcase my work samples and resume. Most of my work consists of web-based, responsive, and dynamic applications, which require an interactive presentation.

The primary audience for this project are potential employers, with a secondary target audience consisting of professional web developers and graphic designers for freelance collaborations.

Implementation

Links

Home: <http://final.sheetsc.com/>
About: <http://final.sheetsc.com/about.php>
Portfolio: <http://final.sheetsc.com/portfolio.php>

My project consists of 3 primary pages that are implemented; Home, About, and Portfolio. And secondary pages which will go more in-depth to cover my skills, education and experience for future implementation.

Part of my function component is the "Contact" link. While originally intended to be a separate page, I felt it was necessary to have important contact information available from anywhere on the site. I used JavaScript and the scrollTop method in jQuery to smoothly scroll to the contact section of every page. I explored several jQuery plug-ins to accomplish this function but found the pure JavaScript/jQuery solution to be cleaner and easier to execute.

Another function component is the simple "iamhere" script shown in lecture. This allows the current page to be represented and clearly displayed for the user. This was also necessary for

my navigation PHP include to work properly.

To present samples of my work, a final JavaScript function component is the jssor gallery slider on the portfolio page. I found many slider plug-ins but settled on jssor for its beauty and performance. This plug-in relies on the jssor slider script itself and an included script where you may set different options. The jssor slider is also touch optimized. The user may swipe with a finger on a touch enabled device or drag with a mouse pointer. Alternatively the user can click on the left and right arrow buttons for navigation.

The design concept of my project utilizes a flat user interface. Following the trend for the web to appear more like print layout. I avoided using heavy gradients, drop shadows and transparencies. For typography, I used a sans serif from Google Web Fonts. The clean lines, simplicity, and exaggerated heading size add to the print design language. For added interest I decided to theme each of the main pages with different brand colors and header images. I also created small icons representing important sections of information.

After establishing the purpose of my project, creating content was straightforward. As a digital resume and portfolio, my content is structured into a brief introduction, skills, education, experience and work samples.

Future Directions

Beyond the scope of this class, I plan to continue adding more content to my website. Adding dedicated pages which delve into five areas of focus; Web Design, Development, Mobile, Education, Experience and additional pages detailing specific projects. I plan to add more portfolio samples and update the featured section on a regular basis.

For this project I decided against using a CSS/JavaScript framework. I currently have a dedicated mobile version of my site, however a future iteration will be fully responsive. I'll explore different responsive frameworks such as Twitter Bootstrap and PURE. Even though my site scales and works well on both desktop and tablets I feel there is room for improvement. I also plan to explore SVG vector graphics so my icons and logo will stay crisp and clear when zooming on a mobile device.

As briefly mentioned I have a dedicated mobile version of my website, built using the jQuery Mobile framework. A future implementation will include an htaccess file which automatically routes users to the desktop or mobile version depending on their screen size. However I may scrap this direction completely once my site is fully responsive.

Lessons Learned

Overall I'm very pleased with the direction my project is heading. I like the design language being clean, minimal and simplistic. The logical sections of the site are easy to navigate and makes sense to the user. I'm also pleased with the contact/scroll functionality, however, an improvement should include sending the user to a dedicated contact page if they have

JavaScript turned off. I also see a need to return the user back to the top of the page after they click on the contact link. Perhaps an always visible navigation would be a better option.

The jQuery slider plug-in is also something that didn't work as well as planned. With it included, my portfolio page will not validate because of the required "u" property. I was also unable to separate the slider CSS styles from the markup. However, I was told from one of the developers this issue will be fixed in a future update. Because of this, the resulting markup is not as clean as I would like it to be.

If I were to approach this project again I would start out with a CSS/JavaScript framework. I see a value in a responsive framework which I can build from.