PULL UP THE LADDER

Design

Coding Efficiency and Simplicity

EASY BUTTON CREATION

With the functions I've implemented in /include/helpers.php, the designer can simply add buttons (provided by a third party site) by calling getButtonManual or getButtonAuto, depending on how much control the designer wants over the look of the button. All that needs to be specified is the link, HTML I.D., text, and font size, and a full-featured button will be created on the page.

SCRIPT INCLUSION

Another time-saving function in /include/helpers.php is defaults(), which returns all the default scripts and style sheets necessary for a page.

SQL QUERIES

A frequently used feature on the site is the easy call to query(String sqlQuery), which connects to the database, queries the database with the input query, disconnects, and returns the result. The function automatically returns an error if the query did not go through properly. This saves time while writing code and ensures that connections are always closed after queries are performed.

EASY AJAX ELEMENT REPLACEMENTS

The function replaceWithAjax(String elementName, String ajaxLink) allows the designer to easily load a new Ajax page. It will automatically display the load animation while the specified Ajax page loads.

User Experience

LOGIN / REGISTER

One of the crucial decisions I made on user experience was the implementation of the unified login/register feature. I admire how Tumblr makes logging in and registering so simple, and I wanted the same sort of thing for my site. The way I implemented the registration feature, someone who's never used the site before can simply open up the page, type in three fields, and begin using the system.

GENERAL FLUIDITY

The site makes heavy use of Ajax calls to load data. I wanted to make the site's page load as fluidly as possible, providing minimal frustration for users when new pages are loaded. The annoyance of the flickering white screen is too much for the user to bear when using an

interactive site. And, depending on the user's browser, he/she might be subjected to an ugly-looking loading animation (Yes, the horror).

My site provides the user with a smooth, elegant, interesting animation (courtesy of a third-party site, cited in the code), which not only lets the user know that the page is indeed loading, but also entertains and helps the user feel as though, even while waiting, that progress is being achieved.

Color

I thought blue colors were the safest, considering that, although my site can be used by gamers or sports players, it very well might be equally used by professionals.

General Difficulties / Future Improvements

In developing the site, I encountered a few design surprises. Many times, I discovered that I had written a lengthy function to, for example, make an Ajax call to load information into an element, when that function had already been written and included in a library.

I also had difficulties, design-wise, passing data from page to page. I wasn't sure quite how to keep track of variables through out the site. If I were to redesign the site, I would manage variables better, perhaps by having an array stored on the client side, in the form of a cookie, perhaps not unlike the PHP Session array.