Six Degrees of Francis Bacon

Executive Summary

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Background

The Six Degrees of Francis Bacon project is a Carnegie Mellon based research group that maps the relationship between historical figures in early modern England through a digital data visualization network which contains thousands of individuals. The project relies on crowdsourcing to find, connect, and visualize the relationships between 16th through 17th century British figures. The group hopes to serve the academic community by providing new features to the website that are not only useful, but fun. It plans on doing so by collaborating with a student development team from the Information Systems department for the fourth year in a row.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

Crowdsourcing is an essential element to the Six Degrees of Francis Bacon project - supplying the information for the database. Unfortunately, the main problem the project currently faces is the lack of user activity and contribution. Some of the project's ideal contributors, active academics, lack the time or incentive to contribute to the project's network. In order to incentivize users, the group hopes to implement interactive features that encourage users to contribute to the website's network. Once users feel more incentivized to contribute, whether that be through a bar to note their progress or by providing a new way to contribute to the website, Six Degrees of Francis Bacon can grow at a steadier rate and expand its network. This would help the project improve its service, which in turn would help generate more interest and perhaps encourage more contributions to the site

Project Vision

In order to increase the number of contributions to the Six Degrees of Francis Bacon website, the team planned to implement several new features so users can discover new responsive ways to interact with the website. These features included a points system so users can track their progress towards updating their account to Curator Status, an updated user profile, a leaderboard to compare their progress with other users, and a new form to contribute to the website. These new interactive features bring a fun element to how users utilize the website and gives them recognition for their contributions.

Project Outcomes

The project consisted of a three-phased solution. The first phase included implementing a point system and updated user profile page. The point system would help users keep track of their progress, while updating the user profile would help users see how many points they have and encourage community interaction. The second phase was a leaderboard system. The leaderboard would help users compare their contribution progress to other users and further incentivize users to see their name on the main page of the site. The third phase was a new way to contribute to the database that included more interactive features. This phase would be more visually appealing than the old form to invite users to try more interactive ways of contributing. The team also redesigned portions of the home page to focus more on the digital network map to draw new users in.

Throughout the process, the team consistently updated the clients on the design process to ensure the new designs were aligned with the project's mission and existing design. The team also conducted multiple usability testing sessions to gain feedback on the current website's design and the team's new design features.

Project Deliverables

The final deliverable includes a deployed version of all three phases and the additional home page design changes. The code will be accessible to the clients via GitHub

Recommendations

The team recommends the client does more extensive research and testing to gain more information on their users and their users' habits. With this information, the clients can gain a better understanding on what changes to make to the Six Degrees of Francis Bacon website to better accommodate their users.

In addition, the client should continue seeking methods to improve the user experience on the website. This includes making the digital visualization map on the home page more user friendly in terms of interactions, and upgrading the website's design to appear more in sync with the new features and pages added to the project.

Student Development Team

David Gao led Phase 3 development. He is a third-year student majoring in Information Systems with a minor in Business Administration. He will be interning at Webbula this summer.

Max Harlynking led Phase 1 development and implemented extra features to the home page. He is a third-year student majoring in Information Systems with an additional major in Human-Computer Interaction. He will be interning at Yelp this summer.

Amy Li led Phase 2 development. She is a third-year student majoring in Information Systems with a minor in Hispanic Studies. She will be interning at Johnson & Johnson this summer.