

By: Lara Brooksbank, Jacob Mattox, Kyle Cooper, and Alexander Swanson

We chose the space-based project Celestia. Cloning the project from Github was not difficult, however we immediately encountered problems when trying to build Celestia. While it seemed to be documented well, there was almost zero help with the actual build from the source code. There is an 'Install' file that gives a very basic breakdown of the process for getting ./configure and make to work, but it leaves out many of the finer details such as all the libraries required and how to make the configure file visible. Even when downloading the specific required dependencies we had trouble figuring out the correct versions, such as developer vs. community. We understand that some of this should be common knowledge, but beginners often struggle catching up because there is too much assumed knowledge in a project. Once we got the correct dependencies downloaded and ran the make command we were still getting errors because Celestia uses the Lua scripting language for scripts, and although Lua is installed with the original download, for some reason you have to explicitly specify the file path for Lua within the Celestia directory. All these combined issues were a real headache when just trying to build the original executable.

We have still been unable to run any test cases. There are a few folders with the test name, but there are no clear indications of what the test is or how to execute them. Instead of executing the test cases, we created a guide to install the dependencies for Celestia more easily. Additionally, Celestia seems to have a large online forum for users and developers to interact. This could be a boon to the project, but it is a massive online repo of information for a new person to go through and takes a lot of time. This is not a bad thing inherently, but is definitely something to new user should know before diving in.

At this point in the project, we all agree that although Celestia seems like a really interesting project to work on, we did not fully understand the scope of our endeavor before choosing. Each of us has been more than a little frustrated so far with the barrier of entry into basic understanding seemingly way above where any of us thought it would be. Hopefully, as we continue learning the system, we can expand our knowledge and skill base and not feel so overwhelmed with this project.