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Final Reflection

Overall I believe I was successful in accomplishing my primary goals that I had set for my project. My primary goals were to redesign the current website while maintaining the same content. Since we are a group of fans, it was important to me to create a sense of officiality that many other similar sites lack. I’m particularly proud of how the many responsive details I add make the use of the site intuitive on (as far as I know) any device. Likewise, the occasional JavaScript additions help make the feel of the site more fun and intriguing, such as with the call to action buttons. The primary part of my project that did not go as planned was my hope of getting some JavaScript to work that would parse a CSV dictionary file and generate a searchable and sortable table. Since I plan to actually make this site live for real people to use, I will continue to work on this issue even after the class is done.

Since I am making this site for a group, I have gained some insight into what it is like to work with a client. While the leads of this team don’t have many demands, I still had to work within the confines to the content they wanted and the sort of aesthetic that they were looking for. Likewise, I couldn’t just make a site that we liked. I also had to take into account the expectations of existing users so that they wouldn’t see a site overhaul and respond with anger. Since I will not necessarily always be a part of this group to maintain the site, I also had to make sure that I designed everything in such a way that it would be maintain-able by other members. This meant that I couldn’t create an SQL database for words since I don’t believe that anyone else there has the skills to maintain an SQL database.

Aside from working to achieve a product that would live up to the expectations of others, I also had to balance a lot of possibly contradicting factors. On the one hand the site should have a sense of simplicity that makes it feel like a reliable resource. On the other hand it should maintain the sort of fantastical feel that draws many gamers to this language in the first place. Similarly, there are many users who will use this site out of curiosity and to explore while other users may be more dedicated and look for efficiency in finding information. All of this had to be balanced all while attempting to not sacrifice functionality. In order to retain a clean feel, I modelled the navigation bar after a sort of game UI with the black background and white text. Yet the background and font choices for the content were carefully chosen to encourage a sense that the user is in another world. One difficulty with this project is the language itself. While there is a font for it that works just fine, I found out that many major web browsers have difficulties displaying fonts that have contextual alternates that rely on spaces (and this one does). Thus every time I wanted to display a word in the fictional language the site is based around, I had to generate a PNG file and import it as an image.

The development of this site has definitely improved my understanding of web development. I feel like the best example of this is the fact that I had attempted to redesign this site before and while it was better than the current site, it was far from anything I’d call “good.” A large chunk of the time I spent on this site was dedicated to responsiveness, something I had no knowledge of before this class. Now that I understand how to make sure that my site works on a variety of devices (often thanks to now understanding Flexbox) I am able to produce something that not only looks clean, but professional. Once I finish the entire site, it will be made live for all the followers that this project currently has. At first they will probably find bugs that I have missed and those will serve as individual learning experiences for me to know where I can continue to improve my skills in the future. Once the entire site is completed and all of the bugs are fixed, it should also serve as a solid start to a portfolio for any future web development jobs that I may aspire to work on. I know that the Beyond Skyrim (a related project) team is also looking to re-design their site and while they are a much bigger organization, this could be a great way to get my name out there and find larger opportunities.