

# Civic Story Database Project – Spring, 2019

## Collaborative Meeting 1 “Database Systems” and “Race, Gender and the News” Due: February 3 by end of class

### Student Names:

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### Objective:

The objective of this exercise is for students in the two classes to get to know each other, develop a shared understanding of the goals of the Civic Story project, and begin to brainstorm ideas for the redesign of the database at the backend of the Civic Story website. Here is what we know about Civic Story’s goals:

- They would like their website to be able to accommodate and highlight its growing media archive. This archive includes:
  - Video news reports that reflect its brand of solutions journalism.
  - Audio and video recordings of forums on the state of the media.
- They would like to better understand the information needs of their audience and potential audiences.
- They want to provide appropriate access to what they hope will be a growing number of donors, supporters, volunteers, and media partners.
- They are interested in accommodating new kinds of content related to the state of New Jersey media, the need for the kind of the work they are doing, and the impact of their work. This might include such items as GIS data and interactive databases.

For the computer science class, these priorities might lead to questions about the kinds of users the database will need to accommodate, the level of access each type of user will need, the workflow that the database will need to facilitate, and the level of security that will be required. The journalism class will want to consider how to get the information that Civic Story and the database designers need.

### Instructions:

You will work on this exercise in groups of six students. Each group will have four CSC students and two JPW students.

1. Using a browser such as Chrome, Safari, or Firefox, navigate to <https://www.civicstory.org>. Explore the site as thoroughly as possible.
2. Identify the functionality currently provided by Civic Story. List the functions and be as specific as possible. For each function or module, note whether it works as expected and any errors obtained.

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3. Brainstorm ideas for how Civic Story can be organized to meet the needs of its range of stakeholders. As you discuss and brainstorm, jot down notes, ideas and responsibilities on this sheet.

## **Deliverables:**

### Database Design

- Via Canvas, submit responses to the questions above in a .doc or .docx or .pdf file. One submission is required per group.

### Race, Gender and the News

- Via Canvas, submit responses to the questions above in a .doc or .docx or .pdf file. One submission is required per group.

## **Purpose of the Project:**

- Create a method for users to easily create visualizations regarding sustainability based on many factors
  - Compare different visualizations to see how different areas / timeframes differ in their sustainability efforts

## **Functionality Currently Available:**

*(Also note whether it works as expected, any errors obtained, whether the functionality you see is hosted on the site or embedded from elsewhere. For example, is media content hosted on site or on a site such as YouTube or Soundcloud? If the latter, does this pose concerns about persistence?)*

- Links to social media accounts of Civic Story (Youtube, Twitter, Facebook)
  - Links work. Takes the user to the appropriate social media page
  - A problem with content hosted on alternate sites is the possibility of a link changing. For sites such as these, there shouldn't be an issue, as these are well maintained and typically won't change much. As for less well-known sites, this can become an issue.
- Link to New Jersey Sustainability Reporting Hub
  - Link works.
  - As stated before, because it is hosted on an alternate site, this could prove an issue if the hosting site's server goes down, something out of CivicStory's control changes, etc.
- Links to donate to the organization
  - Seems to work as desired. Link takes the user to an alternate site.
  - Too many donation buttons scattered across the home page.
  - Another page hosted on another site
- Links to different parts about the website including videos, podcast, blog, forums, etc.
  - Links work, but there is some general 'weirdness' (noted below)
- Some links open a new tab for the website, while some links stay on the same tab
- Submit information to contact the organization
- Link to submit email information to receive newsletter from CivicStory.
  - Either does not work, there is no backend to it, or there is no email confirmation sent once you are subscribed.
- Links at the footer of the site (Donate, About Us, Contact Us)
  - Donate and About Us links both work
  - Contact Us page is not found

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- Black text on black footer, not visible

**What do you infer about the database schema? What functions should a database like this include, as a rule?**

The schema of this database will have many different entities with various attributes. This should be the case because the user should be able to choose the different attributes they want to show on their visualizations. The database will contain various information regarding sustainability efforts based on geographic location as well as timeframe.

## **Resources / Skills Needed:**

- Website design
- Data visualization
- Queries to return only specified data
- Data on sustainability efforts in New Jersey
- Knowledge on where the news originally came from
  - Civic Story cite simply takes news stories and shares the content on their cite
  - Disrupt/alter the way news is being consumed

## **Next Steps and Responsibilities:**

- Reach out to sustainability data collection organization at TCNJ to get data for our database
- Figure out the different sources of information that is utilized through the Civic Story website
  - Different databases utilized to store data?
  - SRHub
- Data visualization
  - Utilizes GeoTage (not on the public cite)
  - Wants to get a new way for people to get the information on locations
- Look into relevant data sets
  - Electric vehicles (frequency, # of charging stations)
  - Grocery stores (plastic bag use)
  - Quantify this info and show on the Civic Story website

## **Additional Comments / Questions:**

SR Hub, the project, is the primary focus of CivicStory; project director facilitate discussion with editors who each report to their own websites. Pay news organizations to share stories with CivicStory, which they amplify.

SR Hub is facilitated via CivicStory. Anyone with questions about sustainability, how to reduce global warming, sustainable businesses should find the website useful.

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Nonprofit- volunteer members, academics.

Someone who's uploading content to SR Hub may also have a need or institutional relationship with Civic Story needs to have access to the backends of that as well? Who are the types of users who need access to the site? Some people who only access SR hub and only access CivicStory (from the backend)?

## **Interview Material:**

A: Only Kevin is accessing Civic from the backend, but for the most part it's separate work.

SR Hub: What are the complaints or the features people are unsatisfied with currently? Where are we currently at?

A: The management of the site is done by an amateur. The things we're thinking about: simple newsfeed someone walks into right away, reducing friction, keep it simple, including video but also improving that experience, another thing is data visualization (map geolocation/geotags of all pieces of reporting, the pieces up right now are linked to certain localities but it's not public on the website yet), other thing is to take things in a slightly different direction (thoughts about purpose; when a jersey resident interested in sustainability arrives here, they see news, but another universe of value is providing direct resources, an index of education resources, technical colleges and schools, certificates).

How do we help the state to reverse global warming? How many electric vehicles are being bought? How many charging stations are there? Look into relevant topics that give end users a clearer picture of the project's issues. Have conversations with restaurants, tell them to have more vegan options, how many grocery stores will reduce plastic items. Allow users to explore how they can reduce their carbon footprints, refer them to complying stores. They did something in Cape May, are they doing this in my community? It's about COMMUNITY BUILDING! Our current news system is reductionist, doesn't deliver comprehensive information, break complex information down. What is our impact in news? Need LINKS to accreditation programs, research centers, snapshot for busy news producers to show the public actually does care, tracking a shift in the news!