Greg McCutcheon CSCI S-12 Final Report 8/2/16

# Goals and Purpose

The Rensselaer Chapter of Acacia Fraternity is the fraternity to which I belong, and is the client for my project. We already have a website, but the primary goal of this site is to inform current members and alumni of events happening, such as the annual Work Week where we work to maintain the chapter house. It gives information about the chapter’s and fraternity’s history as a whole, but it fails to address more recent things we have done. My goal is to add on to this website a few pages that will help with recruiting prospective members, who care less about the day-to-day workings of the fraternity, and more about what the fraternity can do for them, and what they can do for it. I want to achieve this by giving information about the active brothers (pictures from our composite, as well as a short bio stating their name, major, position, other clubs they are engaged in, et cetera), as well as some of the philanthropy work we have done with a local animal shelter and other organizations. We already have several Facebook groups for recruitment, but having a single place where prospectives can learn about us, especially before the school year and formal rush starts, would be beneficial.

# Implementation

My site has three pages meant for the user, as well as a 404 error page. The first is the home page (<http://cs12students.dce.harvard.edu/~gmccutch/IPBFTW495/Final/home.html>), which has a bunch of general information about Rensselaer Acacia. It has links to our official chapter’s and the international fraternity’s sites, as well as a photo gallery of past recruitment years, a calendar of events (though this is outdated because I was unable to get the calendar for Fall 2016 yet), a map to our chapter house, and even contact info for our recruitment chairs and president. The photo gallery is implemented using Swipebox and JQuery, and is my JavaScript functionality for the site. I also wanted to add a Google Map instead of a simple campus map, but it turned out to be more complicated than I wanted, and I wasn’t sure how the Google licensing worked for real sites, as opposed to the assignment we did for the class.

The second page (http://cs12students.dce.harvard.edu/~gmccutch/IPBFTW495/Final/brothers.html) is a list of the active brothers as well as some basic information about each of them: their name, chapter roll number, major, hometown, any positions they hold within the house, and any other campus organizations with which they are involved. This is merely meant to convey a sense of who our house is, but we still want the prospectives to come up to the house and meet us. This page also uses JavaScript in the form of Handlebars to iterate through a JSON and create the list of brothers, making it easy to edit the list of actives, as this changes from year to year. However, this isn’t really functionality, as it happens as the page loads, and the user should not see it.

The third page (http://cs12students.dce.harvard.edu/~gmccutch/IPBFTW495/Final/philanthropy.html) showcases our chapter’s philanthropy efforts. I provided some descriptions of the organizations with which we have worked, as well as the work we have done with them, links to their own pages (where available), and photos of us working with each. I might have done a gallery for this page as well, but the number of photos to which I had access was limited, and I was on the fence for whether I should split them up into separate galleries for each organization. The 404 error page is styled with a different CSS document from the rest (I had a bit of fun with it), was implemented using a .htaccess file, and provides a link back to the home page.

# Future Directions

As I said, eventually I may want to incorporate this site into our chapter’s main page. However, it may be better to keep them separate, as the chapter site is run by alumni, while the recruitment site would presumably be run by the actives, since they are in charge of recruiting new members. I also think there could be more things to include on this site, and in the future I will ask my fellow brothers for input before going much farther. There are some specific parts of the site I want to improve upon, however, which I will cover in the next section.

# Reflection

Overall, I’m pleased with what I managed to accomplish by myself within a week, but that does not mean there aren’t ways to improve this site. For example, as I mentioned above, some of the resources I wanted to provide simply weren’t available in the short time span, without an easy way to figure out which brother has them, if they exist at all.

Also, I spent a large amount of time with the styling aspect (I’m not artistically inclined) just to make the page functional (mainly the navigation bar), and it still to me seems rather bland. Other than the official Acacia colors, black and old gold, I was unsure how to make it look pretty. The top banner, for example, I took from one of our Facebook pages; although the desert background is neat, it doesn’t make a lot of sense for the site, though it was one of the few that I could find. Our rush chair created the banner, so he obviously has some photo editing skills that I think would improve the site, or at least give it a better banner. In hindsight, a styling framework such as Bootstrap may have been a good idea, though implementing it at this point may be difficult. Perhaps I could figure out how to make the Google Map work, although since our house is technically just barely on campus, a campus map works fine.