Critique of Web Development Assignment 3

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To provide a clear message as to what the website has to offer in what is essentially a visual pastime for the target audience, I feel that a hero image was required for the landing page. To achieve this, it was necessary to create a container for the main hero image on the index.html file and insert a background on the index.css file using an image. To set the hero image height it was necessary to use a percentage of the viewport by inserting 60vh. A large slogan was inserted within the hero image to make a clear statement to the viewer prior to any scrolling, this text was added to the index.html container using a h1 header. As this area is responsive, any use of pixels was avoided for padding, spacing and font size. This approach was intended to give the website an opportunity to grab the viewers attention and create a sense of curiosity prior to any navigation of the site.

Above the fold information is presented in a manner which allows the viewer to absorb the initial message offered prior to any navigation. Services offered by the site are not originally evident as the viewer must scroll for them to come into view. This style of using a large impactful visual is intended to give a less is more impression and avoid overwhelming the viewer as this may result in the visitor leaving the site without clicking or scrolling any further. The homepage layout was achieved with the use of the CSS Grid Layout, this system was utilised throughout the entire site with the header and footer sections remaining identical for each page.

The Astronomy Ireland logo was remodelled with initial colour added to match that of the navigation bar text and a transparent background was added using “Paint”. This approach enhanced the visual identity of the site as the appearance of the logo was clear throughout, it also created a level of proximity between the logo and the navigation bar. The primary services offered are displayed below the hero image on the homepage in a manner intended to make good use of symmetry and proximity. The “lectures”, “gifts”

and “evening classes” images used are similar in content and identical in size, also the headers of each are positioned in a symmetrical manner.

Informative text areas are presented in a way where the content has improved readability due to a darker background being accommodated, this can be seen throughout the site and is achieved using the “textblock” class. Similar areas exist throughout such a “recommended products” and blog prompts, these areas are clickable and are part of the “search” class. However, much of the informative text areas on the site are centred within their border, this was not the initial intention, but the readability seems to be clearer in the mobile view using this approach.

A responsive navigation bar is used with its appearance changed to that of a hamburger menu once the page is less than 1200 pixels wide, all links are hidden except for that of the “Home” link. This can be seen in the CSS media queries with “max-width: 1200px”. The width of 1200px is used as this is the point in which the navigation bar items are no longer displayed on a single line. This looks unusual as the hamburger menu appears when the page is still relatively wide and looks like a compromise in order the accommodate a large font and considerable number of links on the navigation bar. The navigation bar items are laid out in the order you want the visitor to follow with an option to register being presented early within the navigation experience.

The layout on each CSS file is presented using a mobile first approach with each container displayed on a new line for mobile first. Media queries exist for tablet (min-width: 600px) and desktop (min-width: 960px), a six-grid layout exists for mobile, and more layout options are available for larger devices with a twelve-grid layout. This approach allows for the recommended three different layouts over the entire website. Each page of the site includes a large image beneath the navigation bar containing the page name, this is included to improve the visual identity is the site as well as improving usability.

The site contains many calls to action options with many available on the footer area. Each call-to-action button is presented in a way that stands out from the main page content. This visual is achieved by using a combination of colour and an effect of elevation using box shadow. The dynamic of each call-to-action button is enhanced when the user hovers over it by changing its opacity. The remaining call to action areas within the site including social media icons, subscribe option and customer information change shade or colour when the user hovers over them. The gallery page is used as a call-to-action source, as much of its content creates an affinity with the visitor, call to action is in the form of the blog section, subscribe section and options on the footer area.

The site makes use of the Helvetica OS Font and the Exo Google Web Font, both fonts are sans serif which is in keeping for improved readability. The difference in the font types is evident and provides a contrast between different parts of the site thus improving proximity. A colour palette was generated using the “coolers” colour palette generator. Colours were obtained by taking a sample from the “milky way” hero image of the home page. Colour palette and typography information is available on the “Style” section of the website. All pages on the website had been validated using the WC3 HTML and CSS validators, the results are displayed on the “Validation” page using portable network graphic raster images.

The “Gallery “page contains an image gallery made up of four images, each image contains an applicable thumbnail which is displayed beneath the gallery. It was possible to obtain all images for the website from “unsplash.com”, it was then possible to resize images to create thumbnails of each. Each image can be viewed by hovering over the thumbnail, this effect is possible by including a JavaScript section in the gallery.html file and adding “mouseover” to the relevant event listener for each thumbnail. Previous and next functionality is also included to iterate the images in the gallery, this is also achieved using a JS script and adding a click to the event listener. While viewing the site on a mobile device with touch screen it is necessary to use the previous/next option while viewing the gallery as mouse over of thumbnails is not possible.

Input fields on the “Contact Us” page are validated by adding a JS script to the head section of the html file. The script contains functions each of which takes an input variable generated from the form data fields. Each input variable is checked for empty fields prior to the form submission. Function “isNumeric” ensures that numeric input is implemented for phone data. Regular expression is implemented with the use of the email pattern as required in function “validateEmail”; an incorrect entry gives an alert of "Email incorrect format". Validation of two email addresses is achieved with the option of filling an initial (email_val2) and a second (emailretype2_val) variable and making a direct comparison between both inputs. A JavaScript cookie is added for the name section of the form with the use of the setCookie function.

The structure and content of the website was created using CSS Grid, media queries and basic JavaScript from first principles with initial wireframes generated to give a general outline of the proposed site. Some alterations were made to the initial wireframes due to increased content in areas such as display of HTML and CSS validation images. With most of first website visits happening on mobile devices, it was important to test the mobile first functionality of the website, this was possible by initially using Google Analytics and later an actual mobile device once the site was hosted on “atspace.com” hosting service. The mobile approach of single container stacked vertically worked well for most of the site, however certain sections such as the Astronomy Ireland newsletter images were quite imposing.

The speed of the website was compromised by sections such as the google map in the location section and the initial loading of the hero area in the homepage. On the gallery page, the cursor moves to the top of the page once the previous or next options are used which forces the user to scroll down the page each time. Image gallery content becomes increasingly elongated on mobile view while “The Sky at Night” text area has the opposite effect with better readability on the mobile device. The colours used on the site is limited to two colours for most of the site, the colours seem relevant to the style of site and the content included, a liberal colour scheme was implemented to allow the content to stand out, this is with the exception of the call-to-action buttons.

The use of font and background colour on informative sections and tables help with proximity and symmetry throughout. The validation does not have this implementation and lacks a bit of symmetry with the positioning of the raster images. The icons included on the footer area appear on all browsers with the exception of the live chat icon which appears on the local google chrome “live preview” but does not appear when viewed using the “atspace.com” hosting service.