Progress Report For Recipes For Life

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The following report outlines my progress so far in my honours project. The project is Recipes For Life – A cooking application for android devices which focusses on creating a collaborative cooking environment by enabling multiple people to collaborate on recipes. The core feature will be the collaborative tool allowing multiple people to create a community cookbook where they can add recipes to the cookbook and make alterations for example as you would with a traditional family cookbook where over the years notes are added to the side of the recipe. The motivation came from the recognition that there was no available applications in the app store where you could create cookbooks where multiple people could add or edit recipes. I felt as we move more and more into a digital age the benefits of collaborative cookbooks could be lost which is why I feel it is necessary to create application that enables families, friends, colleagues, clubs and people online who have similar interests to be able to collaborate. The intended users for the application is really any age group and gender who have basic experience of using apps and enjoy cooking in particular using technology while cooking.

Semester one was predominantly focussed on exploring the project idea to analyse if it was feasible and then designing the application. The first month or so of the semester was drawing out sketches of how I envisioned the application, brainstorming features and needs for the application, researching current cooking apps and reading papers that focussed on the benefits of collaborative cookbooks. From this I found there was a lot of scope for the application because none of the apps featured the collaborative aspect I hoped to add but also a lot could be added to the app that is popular in other recipes apps for example timers for cooking and shopping lists automatically created based on recipes you own. The papers I read strengthened my motivation for my application where they stated from autobiographical and historical perspectives that the cookbooks were a way to share experiences with others, form relationships and maintain tradition over years. A list of literature I reviewed can be found in the appendix.

After exploring the project idea I spent the rest of the semester making design decisions. I created more detailed design sketches to explore the application in further detail using Axure. I made technical decisions to use a SQL database on the server as well SQLite database on the phone which will communicate using PHP and JSON then developed ER diagrams, class diagrams and a basic testing strategy based on the decisions. I choose to take an Iterative development approach which is an Agile approach which makes you more flexible to change than Waterfall but is less focussed on the customer than an Agile technique like scrum which is customer oriented. Since the project is my idea I wanted to use a flexible development process but not one totally centred on customer oriented processes because I don’t have a customer. To manage this approach I created several documents to manage the project over the year such as Gantt chart to maintain an overview of the full project, a risk assessment to outline possible risks in the project and how I can try to migrate them, sprint backlogs to manage progress of tasks during the iterations, a logbook which I have used throughout to store as a diary containing rough ideas/sketches and a github to maintain all the project files.

In October of semester 1 I focussed on my ethics application which was accepted in the middle of November. The ethics application outlined my plans to have a focus group where I could gain opinions on my design sketches for my application before implementation, a survey to gain peoples opinion on the application, the requirements important to them and cooking tech they are currently use, user testing sessions and an evaluation comparing application against one that’s currently on the market. So far I have had a focus group with 6 participants about my design sketches which in general gained strong feedback with some minor changes pointed out which will useful to creating a more user centred application. I sent out my survey which received 19 responses which were helpful to prioritising key requirements. An initial requirements document was written up based on my prioritisation of key features then it was re-written taking into consideration the feedback from the survey. The requirements are in a formal document but are also stored as user storys in trello to help manage the requirements for each iteration. Survey results ? Trello link ?

At the start of the Christmas break I started to focus on implementation. The process involved a lot of setting up and getting used to the Android development environment again which I feel set me back a bit in terms of progress. The main development achievements during the Christmas break was developing the signing up/signing of the users with the syncing between the databases. I had hoped to achieve more during the break but found it more challenging than expected to get set up. There was also a setback in progress when the php on the zeno server was not set up for msserver which occurred while the university was on break meaning I couldn’t get it fixed for a while. So I choose to use asp.net instead which took some time to get to grips with again. I also fell ill during the break and went on holiday which meant I did not achieve as much as I wanted to in the Christmas break.

The concerns I have for the project is the project is too large scope based on the amount of time spent on implementation so far to get only a small amount done. I am concerned I may not have enough time to get enough developed to demonstrate the core functionality. Other concerns are predominately focussed on user testing and evaluation I am concerned about being able to get enough participants, the possibility of only being able to have 1 or 2 user testing sessions with only a small amount of participants. I intended of having 4 user testing sessions but I do not believe I will have enough done in the first iteration to justify a user testing sessions. The main concerns is time constraints to be able to focus on a lot of development but still have time to accurately test and evaluate as well as write the report and have relevant documentation for the project.

The successes of the project so far is ethics was approved and I have already had a design sketch focus group and sent my survey out and used it towards my requirements. The majority of my design decisions have been made and will only I change based on implementation. I have had regular meetings with my supervisor and are actively using my log book, project management tools and github to maintain and keep track of the project. I have also made a very rough draft of the report up until the design chapter (not including specification).

Conclusion

Appendix – Gantt chart, trello,