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Intro to Internet Computing

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MP3: Social Network

This project seemed to be the longest and hardest of the three, expectantly. Initially I was excited about the project but upon inspection of the rubric I became disappointed because of the code it required the students to work with. After asking permission, I set out to recreate everything from scratch. PHP can be a powerful programming language when used properly. I believe a project like this should take advantage of the Object Oriented properties of the language. With this in mind I started to design my database around an object oriented, foreign table design. I also designed the functionality of the site around object orientation. Doing this has made it easy to add different pages to the application.

The Database is made up of 8 different tables: images, mail\_templates, messages, message\_type, statuses, users, users\_friends. The images table holds basic information for every image uploaded by a user. Originally I was going to add gallery functionality which is why I have a separate images table but I ran out of time. The three tables related to mail are used to send messages between users. Different templates for different types of messages are used and this keeps them organized. The statuses table holds all of the statuses created by users. The users table holds all of the information for each user and the users\_friends table is a join table used to keep track of who is friends with who.

The first thing I’d like to discuss is the architecture of the application. Each page has its own function which is part of a class. You can notice the names in the url parameters: page and function. For example, when you create a new message on the application the page is set to home and the function is set to newMessage. This displays the template ‘newMessage’ in the pages->Home folder. Before the template is shown the function of that class is called which prepares any variables necessary and also handles the post variables. No pages can be seen by those who are not logged in except for the login and register pages. I decided to make the application work this way because it separates each page into a category. I’ve seen this done before and it cleanly separates the model, view, and controller.

The application also has several helper classes. The first one I made was the Database class which is the only class to create a connection to the database. Using a Singleton Class Structure, there is only one connection to the database at any time. The class that is mainly used in the application is the User class which is where all of the users logic happens which includes retrieving friends, sending messages, etc. Each View class has an instance of the user class which represents the currently logged in user. This makes it easy to display user information anywhere on the page. The two other helper classes handle the Session connection and the messaging system.

The application has several functions with basic features. First time users are able to register which automatically logs them in. It is very basic information without email verification so anyone can sign up. Once they log in they are taken to their home page where they can see their own information, see their statuses, create and delete statuses, and view their friend’s statuses. From there the user can easily navigate to anywhere using the navigation bar and links within the content such as friends profiles. I made it important for users to not be able to see other users profiles without being their friend. Privacy is important in social networking. The edit Profile page is a very simple form that allows the user to update their information. Then there is the “My Friends” page which displays all of the users who are friends with the logged in user. The search feature is the best feature of the application. It loads user’s information through ajax as you type in anything about them which includes their email, username, first, and last name. It becomes more specific with more words. This is the only way to add people as a friend. The user is able to send and check their mail by clicking the mail icon in the top right corner. When the user has mail, the icon becomes red.

I went ahead and created a user name a password for you to use which already has information to go by. Your username is omarques and your password is Password1 . In this premade user account you’ll find messages waiting for you and friends statuses to see on the home page. This will allow you to experience things on the site you wouldn’t as a new user.