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What I’ve Learned

VB.net is kind of strange language. On the surface its syntax is extremely unique, but under the surface, it’s obvious that much of it is similar to C#. While I will likely never have the chance to program in VB during work hours, I still feel like I came away from this course having further developed a large number of useful programming skills.

One of the biggest things I learned from this course was definitely how to work with web services. I’ve never had a class that has taught these concepts before and I’ve been struggling for a long time to try and pick up a solid understanding of them. Until this class, a lack of direction had held me back significantly from this goal. This class required me to not only learn about web services, but also use them, during the final project to manage communication between a rest API and client using a soap interface. Before this class, I had very little knowledge about any of these concepts.

Another big thing that I learned from this class was how to manage data sources. I had no idea that it was even possible to make a windows form component pull data from an external source without hard coding the functionality yourself. In actually, data sources work fairly similarly to the way we had to add service references to connect to external web services in both the labs and the final project.

Along with data sources, we also learned how to manipulate databases from script which has already proven useful in my other classes. When we first began going over how to prepare and execute SQL commands in VB.net I thought to myself, “the way vb.net handles this is really cumbersome,” but as it turns out, the way VB.net handles SQL is extremely similar to the way it is done in most other languages.

None of this is to say that there weren’t moments when I really struggled in this class. Even now, VB’s syntax is one of the most crazy and obtuse I’ve ever encountered. The hardest part of the final was definitely dealing with the peculiarities of so many different communication protocols at one time. This project requires you take text input, execute it, parse JSONs returned by the API, send them back to the client as xml, and finally decode the xml from the client. The number of intermediate steps required to complete this project made it extremely confusing at times. Another small gripe I had with the project is the need to organize an object-oriented project into a layered class structure. It seems to make sense as a concept, but the use of the business, persistence, and presentation classes seems to throw out of a lot of the reason why you’d choose OOP for your project in the first place.

Even if the final project was difficult, I feel like I’m better programmer for having taken this class. It has given the chance to learn not only about webservices and data sources, but also helped teach me to manage many competing protocols at once which is a helpful skill to have in real programming work. Thank you for teaching this class, I hope to take another of your classes when I move to the main campus.