Week Two Reflection Journal

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The second week of this experiential learning activity was challenging due to the fact that I travelled to South Carolina on Thursday for a five-day golf vacation. Most of my time on Monday to Wednesday was spent on my full-time job preparing to take three days off around the weekend, but I knew that I needed to get started on my learning experience as early as possible since I would not be able to do much after Thursday. I was not able to complete eight hours of activities this week, but since I got ahead of the pace in the first week, I am still averaging over eight hours per week. This was a crucial week because it was the first time I was installing python and writing basic programs. The first week was mainly an introduction to python without any programming itself, so this week continued to set the stage for the remainder of this experience. My activities this week included continuing with the three books that I will be working through in this experience, participating in the discussion page, and watching my first video from the Pluralsight Core Python course.

**Learning Experiences This Week**

On Tuesday I worked through exercise 0 (the setup) of Learn Python the Hard Way and successfully got code to run in the IDLE shell. I tried using the terminal to launch python but was not able to get it to work. Using IDLE made more sense to me, as I found it similar to my experience using RStudio to program in R. After installing python, I read sections 1.5.1 and 1.5.2 of our course textbook Introduction to Scripting, which covered elements and objects in python. I read about these things last week in the Python Language Essentials appendix of my Python for Data Analysis book, but it is always helpful to reinforce what I’ve learned over again. My final activity on Tuesday was watching the Big Picture video of the Pluralsight Core Python course. This video explained what Python is at a high level, some of its pros and cons, and things it can be used for. I plan to watch more videos on Pluralsight throughout this experience, but I am not yet sure whether I will just go in order or if I will hop around based on specific things that I am trying to learn. There is also another course called Data Analysis with Python which might be more aligned with the things that I hope to learn in this course.

The next day where I was able to work on python activities was Thursday, the day that I flew to South Carolina. When I was at home, I wrote my initial discussion post about forms of communication and I responded to a couple of my peers posts as well. I read through all of the threads that had already been posted, and I found a lot of good ideas about different types of communication and how they can be effective. Then, on the plane, I read chapter 2 of the Python for Data Analysis book, which demonstrated introductory examples of python programs, including analysis of movie ratings and baby names since 1880. Some of the examples were complicated and the chapter was not meant to serve as a complete explanation of them, but I found it beneficial to see complex analysis done in python. The next few chapters of the book will introduce me to IPython, NumPy, and Pandas, so I am excited to see some of the built in capabilities of these modules.

Finally, this evening, I attempted to work through exercises 1, 2 and 3 of Learn Python the Hard Way. The exercises covered, printing, comments, and mathematical operations. It was expressly stated NOT to use IDLE for these exercises, but instead to use a text editor to write the programs and to run them in the terminal. As I mentioned above, I was not able to launch python in the terminal when I installed it on Tuesday. I eventually figured out that it would work if the installed files were located in the same directory as my programs. I feel like there must be a better way to do this, but this was the only way that worked for me. Once I was able to launch python in the terminal, I ran into errors that said I was missing parentheses from the print statements, which were not included in the code in the book. I did not think that parentheses for print statements were necessary, but once I added them to each line, the output in my terminal looked exactly as it was supposed to according to the book. I have now completed 4 python exercises and all 15 command line crash course exercises from the book. I hope that I am able to complete all or most of the remaining 48 exercises over the next 8 weeks. Each exercise is just simply creating a .py file using the exact code from the book, but the act of writing it out, troubleshooting the code, and watching it run on my computer seems to be a good way of learning python programming. Once I have completed the provided exercises, I will be in a much better position to start working on new tasks and projects using python, and that is the objective of this learning experience.

**Record of Project/Work Ideas and Their Current Status**

* Guessing game program
  + Not started
* Learn Python The Hard Way
  + 4/53 Python exercises
  + 15/15 Command Line Crash Course exercises

References

McKinney, William-Wes. 2012. Python for Data Analysis. *O’Reilly*.

Miller, Bradley and Ranum, David. 2017. Introduction to Scripting. *Jones & Bartlett Learning.*

Shaw, Zed A. 2014. Learn Python the Hard Way. *Addison-Wesley*.