IT 697 SQL Module One Reflection Journal

Michael Surdek

Southern New Hampshire University

This reflection concludes my first week of an Experiential Learning course where I will be learning the SQL programming language and applying its functions and capabilities to real-world databases, in order to produce tangible works of high quality that demonstrate my skills and abilities as a data analyst. I spent the majority of the week becoming familiar with the course structure and requirements, participating in the discussion board, and getting a first look at the tools and learning materials that were posted across this weeks course page.

Since this is my first Experiential Learning opportunity, I took some time to browse the course’s Brightspace page including the syllabus and final project document. I wanted to get an idea of the expectations in place on a week to week basis and over the course of the term. It is clear to me already that this opportunity involves a lot of freedom in regards to how I choose to learn and how I choose to show what I have learned. With that being said, the course expectations include thorough guidelines which, if followed, should lead to success in the end. These weekly reflection journals, for example, are a great way to document what I have learned, put my daily activities and ideas into a larger context, and follow a consistent vision for this entire experience. The semester long projects in the few courses I have taken have already shown me the usefulness of referencing previous work when picking up again on a project. For this reason, before I write next week’s reflection, I will read this one and attempt to maintain a cohesive theme and frame of mind, while incorporating my new experiences from the week and any feedback I’ve received.

Once I better understood the course and its expectations, I was able to participate in the discussion by providing an introduction to my classmates as well as reading and responding to some of their posts. The discussion page is a helpful aspect of these online courses because it is not only an opportunity to share my thoughts and the work that I have done, but also to hear ideas and see projects from many of my peers who are making interesting and unique posts and comments. I have had a tendency to procrastinate on my discussion assignments in the past, but I intend to participate in the discussions earlier in the week this term. On the occasions where I have posted my initial thread on the Monday, Tuesday, or even Wednesday, I have noticed that I receive more comments later in the week. These comments can point out something about my work that I did not notice. They can show me something that could be improved or where I could have been clearer. A lot of comments even pose a question that I had not considered and allow me to go further into my analysis. I wish to receive as much of this valuable feedback as possible, so I will make an effort to post in the discussions earlier than I have in the past.

At this point it was time to begin exploring the resources and materials that were posted as our course platforms and suggested readings. I began with logging in to the APEX Oracle database. I played around with the App Builder and Team Development tabs but it seemed the SQL Workshop tab is where the actual work will be done in this system because it contained an object browser which contained a list of the tables including the six that Professor Valles emailed to us. It looks like this is where we will be deploying SQL itself and working with a real database. When it comes to programming, the advice that I see most often is that the best way to learn is simply by practicing. I am excited for the chance to spend time practicing with the database and generating queries.

The next activity I did was learning about a couple of basic SQL commands, SELECT and JOIN, from the readings w3schools.com and dofactory.com, respectively. w3 contains a SQL Tutorial that includes comprehensive information and practice exercises for many commands and database operations. dofactory.com appears to have a similar list of commands for its SQL Tutorial. As we work through the commands throughout the course, it could be useful to consult both tutorials, or I might find that I prefer one to the other and get everything I need from it alone.

Finally, I read the preface and introduction to the Oracle9i: SQL textbook, which mostly provided important information about relational database management and related topics. In my most recent semester I took Enterprise Data Management, which went in depth into concepts such as RDBMS and data modelling. The preface and introduction to the textbook were therefore a refresher to those ideas and processes. The aforementioned course provided a framework of knowledge about how large organizations organize and operate their database infrastructure. I found that the course was largely theoretical and the work ended up including a lot of reading and note taking. Throughout the course, I found myself wishing I could do something that resembled the actual work that went into these frameworks. I believe the work that I envisioned is similar to what I will be doing in this learning experience with SQL. I am grateful that I now have a better understanding of how these systems work on an enterprise-wide scale, but I am excited to have the opportunity from this course to practice with the data itself.