Memo

To: Dr. Chris Lam

From: Rebecca Pope

Date: 12/10/15

Subject: Project 4 Reflection

For Project 4, I improved the following in my Project 2:

* Changed “Projects” to hyperlinks to patterns
* Changed “Colors” to pictures of yarn
* Changed table style for better readability
* Used JavaScript to make table sortable

Adding links to the patterns helped me organize what projects I had planned to use with a specific yarn. Some of the patterns I found online, but most of the patterns I want to use are in hardcover books, so I listed the book title and linked to the online pattern description. To get working hyperlinks, I used your solution for imbedding links in the class schedule. I tried to imbed the links into the XML document, but I couldn’t get them to show up. I also tried to delete the class “reading\_link” because I didn’t have a class associated with the links or text, but when I deleted it, the links stopped working. I don’t know why, so I left it alone. I included a link to my original Project 2 at the top of the page for comparison.

Adding pictures to the database made it far more user friendly than when I listed colors. Now I don’t have to dig out my box of yarn to see what “light green” looks like. I tried to figure out how to get all the pictures the same dimensions without making them look squished or stretched. The best solution I found was to set the height to 200 pixels and set the width to “auto” so that all the pictures had the best aspect ratio. I had some suggestions to edit and set the size of the photos in Photoshop, but I never used it before. I may look into it later.

To make my table more readable, I added and changed a lot in my CSS. I changed the table colors to much lighter ones with better contrast. Instead of purple, I used very light orange. I also changed the page background to a picture of a blue gradient for contrast with the orange. I made the background fixed so it doesn’t scroll or repeat. I deleted the inner table borders and used a larger font.

The most difficult part of this project was adding JavaScript to make the table sortable. I found many examples online of how to use JavaScript to sort HTML strings, but the ones I found were static. I finally found a script at <http://www.kryogenix.org/code/browser/sorttable/> that was both dynamic and worked. I tried changing some of the code in the script, but I lost functionality when I did. In the end, I left it alone.

I tried to get the table header row to stay on top while scrolling, but never did figure out how to get the row to span the table correctly. I tried changing the width, alignment, and word spacing, but I couldn’t get the headers to line up with the columns correctly. I may look into this later.

I feel I have a good handle on how to use XML, XSLT, and CSS together to create a useful database. I managed to make a moderately useful one in Project 2, but now with the new styles and sorting feature it’s more so. I can now sort it by all attributes, which will make it easy for me to find out if I have the right yarn on hand before I go to the store. Now I need to find a way to take my database with me or maybe create a linked database of all my yarn patterns. The latter would take a long time since I have a shelf of knitting books and dozens of patterns saved on my computer.

/RLP