

Independent Java Project Narrative

Troy Carson
AP Computer Science

Day one was my favorite day whilst working on this project. I was going through a multitude of ideas through my head, or various games and ideas for final projects, but none seemed that interesting to me. But then I thought of making an interactive fiction, a story with branching paths that lets you do what you want to do. This idea resonated with me since it seemed as if it would be a story of Skyrim or Fallout adventure, but one of my own design. So my head filled with thoughts of grandiose quests and complex plots, and I was eager to get started. Then I started coding.

I started without thinking (enough), and so my code was all over the place, disorganized and poorly thought out. I made a driver that was more of a central class than a driver and quickly realized I couldn't keep having if statements with if statements and just keep having everything pile up (Commit 2/3/14). So I didn't entirely know how to go about organizing my 'events', the one thing that worked virtually instantly was the Character class, and the most troublesome aspect was the combat method. I decided to go with the D&D style combat, as it was a robust system that has been around for a long while now (Commit 2/5/14). Even once I thought I had combat working, I still didn't know how to go about organizing my events. I talked with Mr. Kiang about this and he suggested utilizing an Array list to store the events, however this was a complicated idea in my head, and he was on a trip all the following week, but I needed to progress so I continued searching for a way to organize the events. I went back to the idea of using if statements, but with an int that would change in value, and change the current event to the new, corresponding event (Commit 2/19/14). It surely isn't the best way, but I got it to work, and functionality was all that was important to me at the time.

So I started coding, creating events and struggling with the combat method to work properly, which it sometimes did, sometimes didn't, sometime wouldn't even give me a box to enter input in, etc. The worst part, was the randomness, having things fail, but work on the next attempt with no edits to the actual code was very confusing as it made going about fixing the problems very difficult. I would ask Rafe or Wyatt to take a look at my code and see if they could find where it breaks, but that were too busy insulting my organizational skills to understand the code (joke). I also had some trouble with setting up my package, so that all my classes could interact properly. I had used a hyphen in the name of the folder that I was storing all of my code and had my GitHub repository linked to. So I had to create a new folder with a new name (and no symbols) and then make a new repository for all of my code (Commit 2/21/14).

So I kept playing with it, seeing what worked and what didn't, and I added a few print lines to see what was actually happening, but sadly not much was. But I eventually got it to the point where I could progress through

combat, while I had to enter in my commands 3 times before they processed (something that still confuses me), It id partially work, and I could kill people and progress through the event. But then, some events wouldn't trigger! My cursor would just start spinning and the code would just stop. My guess is that my code is just so poorly organized that the computer is having a hard time going through it all and occasionally breaks. Awesome.

But then David took a look at my code, and we made some progress together, getting things to work significantly better, yet not fully. But having David's input was valuable as he looked at everything differently than me, so he could see things that I was oblivious to (and he is just a much better coder than I am, which helped too).

And now the due date was fast approaching, I had a wonky code that code progress through the events (mostly), and a combat system that seemed to be working, but still had its bugs. So for the last few days of the project I worked on adding a large number of events just so that there was more to do and several ways to go about playing the game.

So, I turned in an Interactive Fiction with a combat system that mostly behaved itself, minus minimal bugs, and an incomplete story, but one that still had some meat to it (Record of Thinking 3).

If I were to start all over, I would probably put more thought down on paper before I even touched the keyboard, which is definitely the smart thing to do, especially when working on a project that is even somewhat complicated. I would also work night and day on the combat system until it worked, as once that does, and my other methods are also completed, putting everything together in the Events class is the easy part, it just takes time (and some thought).

But this was a good experience, I did learn that it is not as easy as it seems to produce a game even as simple as the one I conceived, so something far larger, like a Fallout or Elder Scrolls title is so much more impressive to me as this project has made me think about the mechanics of fighting and questing, even though it was in a far smaller scale and just text based (Record of Thinking 2).

While my project is "done" it is still incomplete and something I want to continue working on and polishing up until it is done, really done. Then it can be something I'm proud. For now, just the idea of the project is what I am most proud of, the actual code still needs some work done, which is something I know, and I not going to give up on, even if it is just adding a few lines here and there, I do genuinely want to finish this.