

A3. Interactive Project Journal

Domain Inspections

The Idea:

For project 3 of Data Informed UX, I had the idea to create an app designed around real-estate inspections. The app would be simple and allow users to access relevant property information for houses that they were hoping to inspect. I saw a need for this kind of app because, in my own search, I noticed a rather large hole in the market for a tool that caters to user needs in this way. The app needed to be simple, fast, and allow users to make notes and compare properties easily.

Another main reason for wanting to create this particular app is because it could be done using real data. After chatting with my unit convener and class, I did some research and found that I could access live data via a number of real-estate services. This would allow me to test and work with a realistic data set drawn through a functioning API, which also happened to be a requirement of the project.



Research:

My research began with empathy. I have recently been on the search for a property, so already had an understanding of the existing frustrations of property inspections. With that in mind as I continued my search, I began to take notes on how other people would navigate the process. Some of the key observations I made were:

- Existing apps are designed for slow browsing at home (Yablonski, 2021).
- People have no easy way to compare properties.
- Having to tap through multiple confusing screens to get to property inspections renders the function almost useless as it wastes precious time and causes more stress (Van Gorp & Adams, 2012).
- People would prefer to use pen and paper then fight with existing apps (Yablonski, 2021).

From there I began looking for a usable data set that would let me access property listing data, particularly property inspection information. After looking at a few I went with the one suggested in class, which was developer.domain.com.au which seemed to have everything I needed ("Domain API | Property Data API | Real Estate Data API Australia | Domain Developer Portal", 2021).



Development:

My initial plan with building this app was to build a fully functioning web-based version of an app that could actually be used for property inspections. I began by iterating over the information architecture, figuring out what the requirements were for each app view. I then began creating lo-fi prototypes and mock-ups before moving on to putting together the app.

I consider myself a much stronger front-end coder than back-end and wanted to pick the “low hanging fruit” to save myself some going back and forth later on. Drawing in my prototyping and information architecture, I coded up the layout and cards that would serve as placeholders until I could get the data to load. This also allowed me to check to make sure the layout made sense in higher fidelity.

Once I saw that the front end was about 90% done I moved onto the back end. This was where my first real hurdle began. I very quickly found that I didn’t know how to retrieve the data from the API. Thankfully during class Ben, the unit convener, came to my rescue and worked with me to figure out how to draw the data in. By the end of the lesson, I had some functioning test data to work with but my app was still not pulling from the API the way it should. Ben helped here again and found the solution that I later implemented into the final app.

Once the data was in and working, I was very quickly able to code most parts of the app, drawing data into all of the spaces it needed to be used and viewed. I had very little doubt, however, that there would be a few more issues along the way and was proven right. Some of the main issues that stumped me for a while were:

- fontawesome.com icons not switching when tapped. I later changed this to work more simply ("Font Awesome", 2021).
- The information dropdown not working correctly. This was more a case of getting to know JQuery better. The ability to add a CSS toggle helped a lot here (js.foundation, 2021).
- Probably the biggest issue I found was around getting directions with google. Accessing the Navigator API in the browser was much more intricate than I had imagined. The confusion caused by my lack of javascript knowledge lead me down the wrong path multiple times. Once it was suggested that a timeout function may be needed, it all fell into place quite well ("Cooperative asynchronous JavaScript: Timeouts and intervals - Learn web development | MDN", 2021).



```
index.html
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
  <head>
    <meta charset="UTF-8">
    <meta http-equiv="X-UA-Compatible" content="IE=edge">
    <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0">
    <link rel="stylesheet" href="asset/css/index.css">
    <script src="http://kit.fontawesome.com/1234567890.js" type="text/javascript">
      <title>Domain Inspections</title>
    </head>
    <body>
      <!-- Header / day info -->
      <div class="header">
        <h1>Domain Inspections</h1>
        <div>Address info</div>
        <div>Inspection Times</div>
        <div>Notes</div>
      </div>
      <div class="content">
        <div>Photos</div>
        <div>Key Points</div>
      </div>
    </body>
</html>
```

```
index.css
/* Header */
.header {
  border: 1px solid black;
  padding: 10px;
  margin-bottom: 20px;
}

/* Content */
.content {
  display: flex;
  justify-content: space-around;
  align-items: center;
}
```

Reflection:

Having worked on this project for a few weeks now, I have been strongly reminded that I have a long way to go in my journey as a coder. Coding is hard. It is my hope that with much more practice I will begin to create useful code and that I will have a good enough understanding of how to think through the sorts of problems I had during this project.

With that in mind, I hope to begin coding more in my own time. Looking into the next few months between semesters, I plan to work on my coding skill so that I am more well equipped for the future.

In the end, the app did not turn out to be what I had set out for it to be. This was due to two main reasons:

1. Time: to create the type of tool I was hoping to create, I now know much more time would be needed to get it to a point that it functioned as it would need to in a production environment.
2. Access to user data: from what I could tell, the API would not allow me to access any saved properties from a users shortlist. This effectively crippled the app in regards to its actual usability, as without the user's shortlist, the data that would be drawn into the app would not be relevant.

Understanding these things allowed me to redirect my thinking towards creating a proof-of-concept design, that would show how useful it could be if only were had access to the data.

Overall I really enjoyed this project. I felt pushed to grow as a coder. And I am keen to continue working on the app to get it to a point where it will be a portfolio piece I am proud of.

This project had allowed me to see that I can make more things than I ever realised and also that a major source of inspirations and help comes from the people around me. I can't wait to see what I make next!

Domain Inspections

Today's List

	50B Knox Street, Watson	12:10 - 12:25	  
	715/19 Challis Street, Dickson	15:30 - 15:45	  
	15 Lowrie Street, Dickson	16:45 - 17:15	  

[My Ratings](#) [Inspections](#) [Key Dates](#)

Reference List:

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5. js.foundation, J. (2021). jQuery API Documentation. Retrieved 9 May 2021, from <https://api.jquery.com/>
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8. Van Gorp, T., & Adams, E. (2012). Design for emotion. Burlington: Elsevier Science.
9. Yablonski, J. (2021). Hick's Law | Laws of UX. Retrieved 9 May 2021, from <https://lawsofux.com/hicks-law/>
10. Yablonski, J. (2021). Jakob's Law | Laws of UX. Retrieved 9 May 2021, from <https://lawsofux.com/jakobs-law/>