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Assessment of Project Status

Goals

The goal for the first alpha of Podplay.me was to create a basic UI that enables users to search for, view information about and play podcasts. To drive this UI, backend facilities for communicating with the iTunes API and parsing podcast feeds were also required.

New Issues

Although this issue was anticipated during the initial design phase of the project, the difficulty of styling custom HTML5 audio players was not entirely appreciated. For the first alpha, we had to resort to using a pre-styled plugin to temporarily avoid this complexity and still include a presentable podcast player. Also, malformed podcast feed data has been causing some unexpected server bugs to occur intermittently.

Current Features and Appearance

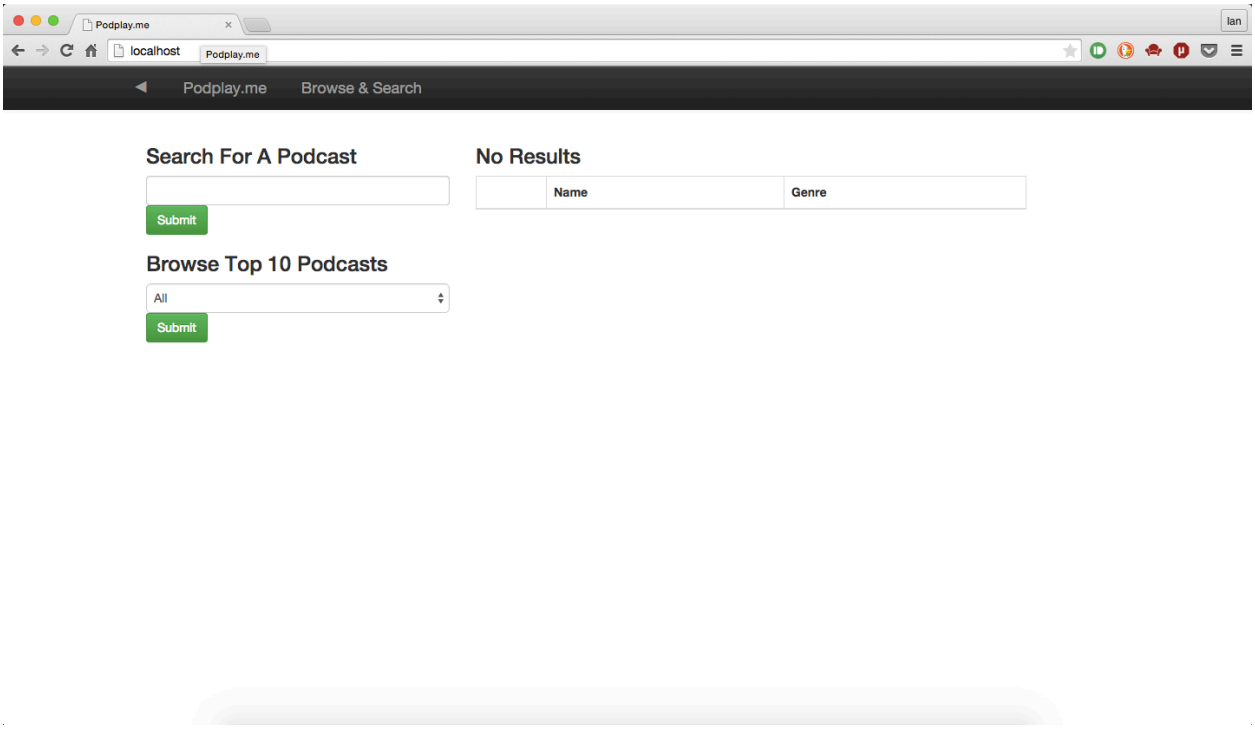

Figure 1: Main search page, no results.

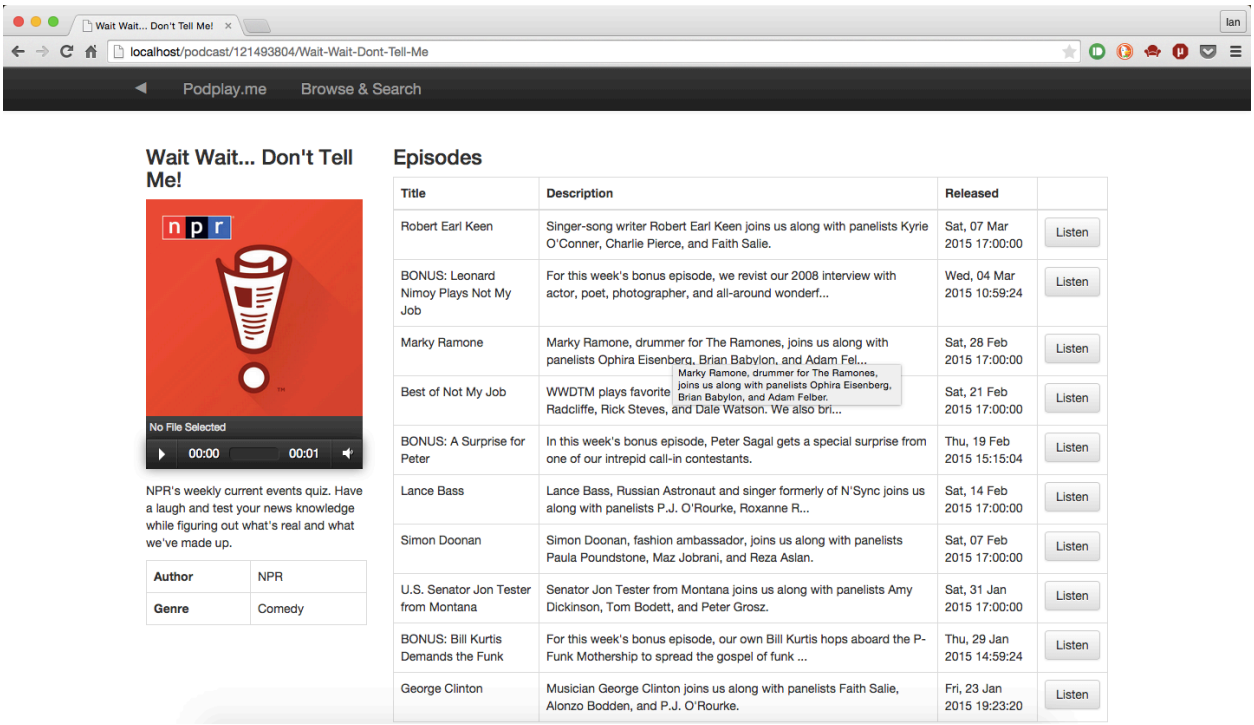

Figure 2: View of particular podcast page

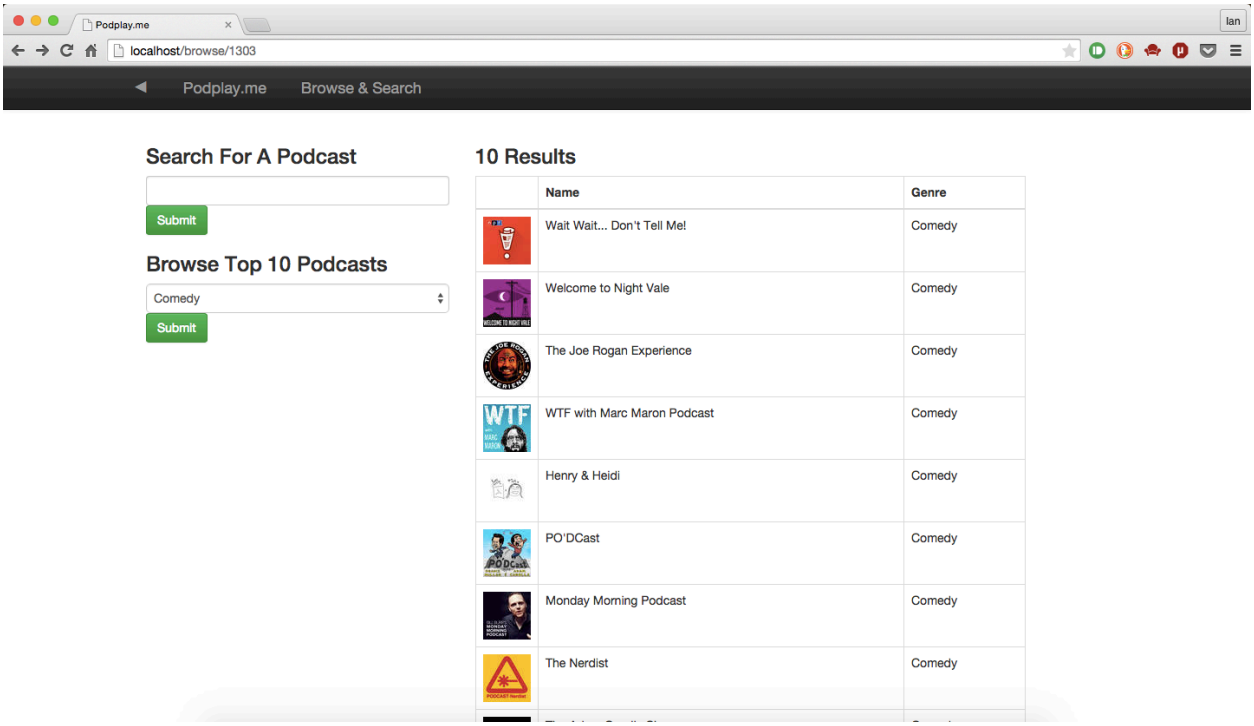

Figure 3: Main page with results

Currently, Podplay.me implements all the features that were slated for its first alpha, as well as the features for the second alpha. These features include a fully-styled client website (although not the final style), a full implementation of the iTunes search API in the backend and frontend facilities for searching, viewing and playing podcasts using native browser audio.

Future Features

In the backend, we have not yet finished the feature for caching iTunes API requests. Adding caching will allow users to see results instantly as they are typing into the search bar without having to make requests directly to the iTunes API. This will improve the efficiency of searches and also help avoid reaching iTunes API rate limits. The development of this feature is on schedule as proposed and it does not seem like it should cause any major problems. The custom podcast player is the other major feature that has not yet been implemented, largely because it is very difficult to do as pure CSS. This difficulty was however foreseen and accounted for in the amount of time we allocated for developing UI components and its development remains to be on-schedule. As it currently stands, no required features proposed should have to be omitted.

Delivery Schedule

Below is an annotated delivery schedule; items that have been completed are filled in green.

Milestone	Expected Date	Dave	Ian
Week 1: Development environment setup and bare-bones server running with dedicated domain.	**15 Feb 15**	**X**	**X**
Week 2: Node server has partial iTunes API implementation.	**22 Feb 15**	**X**	
Week 3 (Alpha 1): Extremely basic web client for testing server implementation. Ability to search, view and stream podcasts.	**26 Feb 15**		**X**
Week 3: Node server application has full iTunes implementation.	**1 Mar 15**	**X**	

Weeks 4-5 (Alpha 2): Fully styled client website. Implements all server functionality: searching and viewing podcast data as well as HTML audio streaming of individual podcasts.	**15 Mar 15**		X
Week 6: Partial user account system implemented in server. Database integration, secure transmission methods, and user data model. Provides methods for registering, signing in and signing out.	**22 Mar 15**	X	
Week 7: Full user account system implemented in server. Provides methods for updating user preferences, subscriptions, and playlists.	**29 Mar 15**	X	
Weeks 8-9 (Alpha 3): Client side implementation and GUI polishing for user accounts.	**12 Apr 15**		X
Week 10 (Beta 1): Add any extra needed polish to application and resolve any open issues/bugs. Usability test for Alpha 3.	**14 Apr 15**	X	X
Weeks 11-12 (Release): Time permitting, work on additional backlogged features for final release.	**1 May 15**	X	X

As evinced by the chart, we are very clearly on schedule

Contigency Plans

Although it is anticipated that we will be able to build a working custom audio player, if it proves too difficult or takes away too much time from developing other core features, we can easily use a prebuilt audio player instead. This would take away from the unique look of Podplay.me, but would help us emphasize its other novel features.

Final Look and Feel

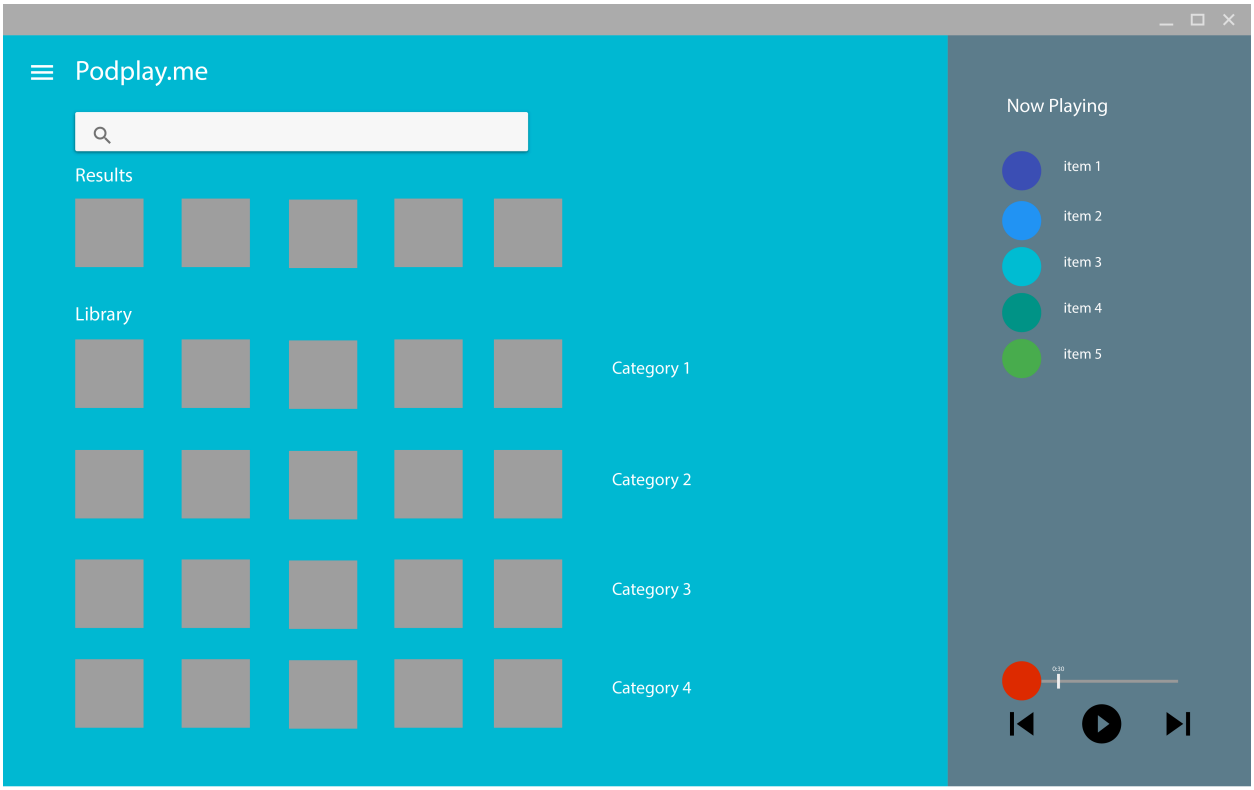

Figure 4: Podplay.me mockup as seen in proposal

The main page of Podplay.me in its final form will look rather different than it does in its current form. Ideally, we will be able to build something similar to the mockup in Figure 1. It is intended to mimic the intuitive and simple nature of Netflix's user interface. In order to make a user interface like this that works correctly and doesn't experience extreme delays, we have to first implement our backend caching system and get our custom audio player to work.