

Unit 6 – Diary Entry

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Link to Site:

<http://student.athabascau.ca/~mattewza/Unit6/html/home.html>

Work Done

In this unit, I was tasked with adding jQuery elements to my site. In my proposal, I outlined that I would only implement one jQuery element, but I have since changed my mind and decided to add an additional feature. I ended up implementing two jQuery plugins to achieve the functionality I desired for my site.

The first plugin is from PixelCog and is used for parallax scrolling (in accordance with their license, their `parallex.min.js` file can be used for free for any and all purposes). I implemented this jQuery plugin in my `home.html` code in order to display two images fixed at the top and the bottom of the page. As the user scrolls down, the main body section of the home page will scroll at a different speed than these images. First, scrolling down will begin to hide the image fixed to the top of the page, and then eventually after more scrolling down, the image at the bottom of the page will be revealed. I had to add a couple of new `<div>` tags to the code in order to achieve this functionality. I also had to set the style of the images to be transparent and have a minimum-height in my `main.css` file.

The second plugin is from Featherlight and it is used for creating lightboxes (in accordance with their license, their `featherlight.min.js` and `featherlight.min.css` files can be used for free for any and all purposes). I implemented this plugin in my `videos.html` code in order to add lightboxes for my videos. The lightbox makes it such that when an element is clicked, the YouTube video will pop up in the center of the screen and everything else on the page will become darker and less visible. Clicking anywhere else on the page after this occurs will close the lightbox and return the pages to its standard display. This makes it so that the user can focus directly on the YouTube video without actually leaving the page that they're on.

Rationale Relating to Personas and Scenarios

For the most part, I was quite happy with my site before this unit. The aesthetics blended modern design concepts with late '90s/early '00s concepts, which is quite appropriate from my point of view considering that the site itself is about a video game release in the late '90s. I feel that maintaining a certain "old-school" aesthetic while still using modern design concepts would appeal to personas like Tom, who are interested in the history of the site's subject matter. The site's design itself reflects upon the era from which the video game came into

being. It's because of this notion that I thought it would be negative to my personas if I implemented a lot of "fancy" jQuery features in an effort to "modernize" the site. That being said, the two jQuery features that I did implement still benefit my personas greatly.

The parallax scrolling on my home page will provide users with a more welcoming experience in the scenario that they are visiting the site for the first time. I think that this will be key to all personas, especially younger users and more casual personas like Sally.

The lightbox functionality is a boon to all personas. It makes watching the videos much easier because it blocks out all of the other content on the page without actually leaving the page itself. For example, in the scenario where a persona like Sally is somewhat interested in the site, but still casual enough to not dig deep into the text sections, they may go to the videos section to learn more information in a casual manner. After they have finished watching the video, they will close the lightbox and realize that they are still on site, not on an external page. This may prompt casual personas to then continue to browse the rest of the site.

Learning Outcomes

I have met the learning outcomes for this unit which were stated as follows: "by the end of this unit, you should be able to use JavaScript libraries (e.g. jQuery) to create dynamic pages." I have successfully implemented two different jQuery plugins in order to make my site more interesting and dynamic, while still paying attentions to the needs of the personas.

What Went Well, What Didn't

Overall, this unit went very well. There are so many jQuery plugins that are free to use all over the web and most of them are very easy to implement into existing code. I did not have too much trouble implementing either of the 2 jQuery plugins I chose to use.

However, when implementing the lightbox functionality for the videos, I realized that I would need a button of some sort that could be clicked in order to activate the lightbox that displays the actual YouTube video. I considered using a standard button, but decided against it, because I don't think that clicking a button in order to see a video is very intuitive or aesthetically pleasing. Instead, I decided to use the thumbnail image of the YouTube video as the element that could be clicked in order to display the lightbox. I realized, however, that the thumbnails that YouTube supplies do not have a play button on them.

This was an issue because I didn't think that it would be intuitive to any of my personas that clicking some random image would take them to a lightbox for a video. I therefore resolved to overlay text on the image with a sideways triangle character that would change its colour upon being hovered over with a cursor. I think that this end solution will make it clear to all personas that the image can be clicked and that it will lead to a video.

What I Would Change if I Did it Again

Likely, I would use some jQuery from the start instead of writing JavaScript from scratch. There are benefits to coding things on one's own, that cannot be debated. Sometimes, there may not

even be pre-existing code for the functionality that one wants to implement. That being said, there is a lot to appreciate about the open-source nature of JavaScript libraries like jQuery. If someone has coded the exact functionality that you require and they are giving it away for free, then it would be foolish not to use it, especially if it is rigorous in nature. This also prompts a community around coding because someone using other people's code now has an incentive to return the favour and provide their own plugins to the public. I think that if I were to build an entire site in the future, I would definitely start implementing jQuery functionality from the outset.

The Most Surprising and Useful Thing I Learned

The most surprising thing I learned is that thumbnails received from YouTube through an HTTP reference like: "<http://img.youtube.com/vi/ZJWjZ6xbqRs/maxresdefault.jpg>" do not have a play button on them. This ended up being useful information because it caused me to determine a solution to this problem that I can use in the future. I learned how to overlay text over the image that would emulate a play button.