

Unit 7 – Diary Entry

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Link to Site:

<http://student.athabascau.ca/~mattewza/Unit7/html/home.html>

Work Done

In this unit, I was tasked with incorporating external data from the web into my site. I did this by implementing two new features which access external data from APIs. I could have implemented more than two features, but honestly, it was difficult enough coming up with these two. I feel that if I were to add any more, they would just be frivolous features that would not serve the needs of my personas or my site as a whole.

The first feature I implemented was an element that displays a randomly selected motivational quote. This feature is implemented in the expert.html page. I created two new files in order to achieve this functionality: inspiringQuote.js and inspiringQuote.css.

The JavaScript file (inspiringQuote.js) uses AJAX to access the quotes which are located online in the <https://api.quotable.io> API. This API is public and free to use for any and all purposes. The API stores all of its quotes in a .json file, and when <https://api.quotable.io/random> is called, a quote object is returned. Since there are so many different types of quotes, I used the following query to only get quotes of a motivational nature: <https://api.quotable.io/random?tags=inspirational>. My JavaScript parses the object obtained by AJAX and then adds the random quote and respective author to the relevant DOM elements. For more information, please see my commented code. The CSS file (inspiringQuote.css) displays the code in an aesthetically pleasing and highly readable way.

The second feature that I implemented was a map that displayed the location of one of the more well-known and frequented arcades in Japan that has Tetris the Grandmaster arcade cabinets. The arcade is called HEY (short for Hirose Entertainment Yard) and is one of the preeminent locations for Tetris the Grandmaster in the world. I used the Google Maps API in order to accomplish this functionality. The map is displayed on the contact.html page I wrote a new JavaScript file called mapScript.js in order to initialize the map for display. The script centers the map at HEY's coordinates and also places a marker over it. A script with my personal API key was also used in order to access Google Maps API. I slightly modified the contact.html file in order to accommodate the addition of the map. I added some text that described the arcade and also renamed the page from "Contact" to "Resources" as it felt much more apt.

Rationale Relating to Personas and Scenarios

The random motivational quote generator may seem kind of “cheesy”, but that is entirely the point. The game can be very challenging, and I think that providing by some “cheesy” motivational quotes, the site will bring some enjoyment to the personas who frequent the Expert Guide like Luke. For example, if Luke was getting a bit frustrated with his lack of progress in the game and kept on coming back to the expert.html page, seeing a new randomly generated motivational quote each time would provide him with some much need levity, and he may be able to better understand and focus on the contents of the page after reading the quote.

The map will benefit all of the different types of personas. I think that this map will benefit casual personas, like Sally, by further justifying the legitimacy of the game by showing that there are real world, physical locations people go to play the game. By learning this, perhaps Sally will continue to browse the site and become eager to learn a bit more. I think the map will also benefit personas like Tom, who are more interested in the information surrounding the game than the game itself. Lastly, I think it will also benefit more serious personas like Luke, for maybe one day they will find themselves in Japan and will know of a place to go to play Tetris with the best in the world. Either way, gaining the knowledge that there are places in the world where people gather to play this game at a very high level may motivate more serious personas to continue browsing the site and improve at the game.

Learning Outcomes

I have met the learning outcomes for this unit. I have demonstrated that I can use JavaScript in order to access external data and web services for dynamic content by implanting two different ideas. I used well-structured and commented code in order to accomplish this.

What Went Well, What Didn't

In terms of actual coding, this unit went very well. As luck would have it, I did not have to do very much debugging at all. Additionally, styling and coding the quote functionality was a lot of fun. I thoroughly enjoyed implementing the APIs and think that the end results turned out very well.

The only thing that didn't go exactly according to plan was that I had to jump through a lot of hoops in order to use the Google Maps API. I had to sign up to become a developer and open a billing account in order to get a key that could be used to access the API. That being said, this wasn't all that bad, the process just took a bit longer than I anticipated it taking.

What I Would Change if I Did it Again

I would not likely change how I implemented these two ideas. That being said, however, there was some functionality that I could have implemented such as a message board, forums or comment/discussion sections. These features necessitate that php code (or something similar) be implemented on the server side, however, and I think that such code is out of scope for this

course. In the future, if I am adding external elements to sites, I will be sure to brush up on my php in order to implement more features.

The Most Surprising and Useful Thing I Learned

The most useful thing I learned in this unit was surprisingly outside of the realm of coding and had to do with design principles. At the start of the unit, I couldn't think of any external elements that I could add to my site that wouldn't just be be frivolous or for the sake of it. If I were, for example, designing this site outside of this course and I did not have academic requirements to meet, I probably would not have implemented any APIs at all. The academic requirements forced me to find something to add and set me off investigating the web in order to find unique and relevant design ideas. Because I was forced to do this, I actually came up with some good ideas to implement that I otherwise just never would have thought of. The lesson to me here was that just because you can't immediately see a reason to implement a design idea, that doesn't mean you should force yourself to find a reason. I think that this is a powerful design strategy and I hope to implement it in the future, not only in site design, but in design in general.