

Reflection for WRA 410, Module 3
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URL for Module 3:
<http://littlepinkmafia.org/videostore/>

Scrum Team Experience:

I feel that I helped my scrum team more than they helped me, although it was a positive experience to be a part of such a group overall. I have a much stronger command of PHP than most people in the class, without overstating my own knowledge—this was evident from group work. However, being able to proofread and troubleshoot my scrum team's code, as well as the code of many other people in the class, has really improved my ability to diagnose the most common problems with PHP (at least the kind made by beginners like in our group). These include forgetting the semicolon, not closing curly brackets, problems with nomenclature (especially when copying and pasting from sample code with different file names), and my most common problem, improperly extracting a query.

The scrum group was also very helpful in the wireframing stage—I think we all helped each other draw pictures of what our pages were eventually going to look like. While I never visually looked at my design while I was working on my code, having gone through that process helped each of us have some idea of what we were supposed to be doing. Wireframing directly connects to the canon of in the Aristotelian conception of rhetoric. It is figuring out what you are going to do before you actually have to engage in disposition.

Attitudes about Programming:

This project, and this class, has empowered me to think of myself as a programmer as well as a writer. I am confident that I have a strong foundation in, and a sophisticated attitude toward, scripting languages.

I began this semester with some knowledge of html, but not in any standards-compliant way, and some CSS. I had never coded anything in PHP or JS before. However, learning about both languages was my first step into a bigger world. I had a serious “there is no spoon” moment realizing how PHP controlled the function of many websites I go to on a daily basis, as well as mysterious errors I had encountered in my time as an unenlightened internet user.

I am seriously considering further study into the more technical aspects of web developing. I would like to use this knowledge to build an online store for my friends' webcomic website, for them to sell merchandise. I am also in the process of being convinced to buy the iPod/iPhone development platform (it is inexpensive) and try my hand at creating an iPod application. (This is at the behest of my father, a 30-year

veteran of computing, who is thrilled beyond measurement that I learned a lot in this class.)

I am not yet sure how this fits into my career as a professional writer and writing teacher, but I anticipate using these skills to develop a website for the classes I am teaching next year, and if I get to teach WRA 110, I hope to instill in my students a rhetorical reading of databases. I want them to take the red pill!

The growth of this project:

This project almost totally resembles my design. Aside from changing the fonts from the design comp and not including a logo, I have accomplished almost everything I set out to do with this website. My PHP skills have adequately supported such a goal. Not all my views look the same, for example, I consolidated many functions into the “view.php” page where you view a user’s account. But, all the functionality is present.

My design evolved more during the wireframing and database design process than it did once I began actually coding my PHP. I originally had a different database structure with one fewer tables; my “movies” and “inventory” tables were combined. Through class workshopping of my design, I realized the benefits of keeping that information separate. That helped me greatly with my final database structure and implementation.

If I had more time to work on this project, I would make my tables that display information from the database a little fancier and easier to read. They are totally functional but a little ugly right now. I hate using tables for anything, even if it is logical and you need them to manage data.

However, my project actually has all the functionality I set out to give it. I am incredibly excited that today I completed the last piece of functionality I needed to achieve this goal: a way to calculate late fees and manage them. This relied on a fortuitous find of a chunk of PHP code that is only about 6 lines long that adds a given string of time to a date. I am really proud that I got this working and can turn in a totally complete prototype (save for a dummy “login” link, but I don’t think I ever really intended to make that live).

Overall assessment of experience:

I had a great time working on this project. Honestly. PHP came surprisingly easy to me and it was fun to experiment with it in different ways.

I think this sort of a project would have been better if we had done other parts of it earlier in the semester. For example, when we were learning JavaScript, it would have been helpful to design some of our form elements for this project at that time. As it is, I went back to what I had done earlier and directly copied some elements. However, starting this project earlier and carrying it through the semester might have alleviated some of the panic it appeared to induce.