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Final Project Report

Intro:

For my final project, I decided to build a website that breaks down and informs people on the current presidential race. The core purpose of the website is to reach college students and young adults, who are not typically interested in news or politics, to become more aware, informed, and engaged as citizens within a democratic society. I am strongly interested in politics, and I believe in people being active within the democratic process as well as making informed decisions. I want this website to be an easy guide for any person, especially college students and young adults, to understand the 2016 presidential race. Most of the time people shy away from the political sphere because it can seem intimidating and dense, which is why I wanted my website to be simple, straightforward, and informative.

The Preliminary Process:

The idea for my website stemmed from a conversation I had with three of my friends. All four of us have a strong interest in politics, and frequently talk about the current election. I proposed an idea to the three of them about creating a political website. However, I knew the scope was too broad for the size of this project and the time I had to create the

website. Additionally, some of the aspects I would have hoped to incorporate, I knew were well beyond my technical skills and knowledge. I was able to continually bounce ideas off these three friends while narrowing down my website idea. Eventually, we came to the conclusion that since the presidential election was at the forefront of the political arena currently, it would be the simplest thing to tackle for the scope of my abilities.

After narrowing the scope of my website, I began examining other sites that had similar goals and missions with their platforms. One of my favorite go-to political sites is RealClearPolitics, which I used as a reference throughout the project. This website is more of the future and overall goal I would have for my website even though I'm starting with a much smaller idea. Additionally, it is a good reference since it is a reputable site. Another site I used as a reference throughout my designing process was GoKicker. I chose this site because it provided an effective example of a political website aimed at the millennial generation. I thought by using both of these sites, it provided a nice balance for what I was going for with my website.

The Strategy Plane:

As mentioned in the previous section, defining the scope of the website was the first obstacle I ran into. Most of my original ideas were too big or ambitious for my skill set and the time I had to create the website. However, once I was able to establish a clear scope of my website, defining the objectives became easier. The objectives were simple: provide people with information on the presidential election and more specifically on the candidates, encourage active engagement within the democratic process, and hopefully empower people to stay informed and form their own ideas and opinions. Once the goals

of the website were laid out, it was clear to me that another important aspect for the success of the site was to stay non-partisan. I thought non-partisanship was crucial in reaching as many people as possible, and in eliminating the risk of alienating or offending possible visitors to the site.

The Scope Plane:

The scope of the site needed to be narrow enough for me to build a website that was able to comprehensively cover the content I thought was necessary for people to gain a better understanding of the topic. The main function of the website is to provide information, which means there is minimal need for advanced features. This is one of the main reasons I wanted to build an educational/informative website platform because it allowed me to create a quality website within the range of my capabilities. I thought about the idea of incorporating a comments section that allowed people to post their thoughts and engage in active discussion on the pages. However, I came to the conclusion it was a little too advanced for me to tackle with the time I had to complete the project. Similarly, I thought about creating a more engaging "contact us" form/section. I wanted visitors to be able to submit questions, comments, or suggestions that would be forwarded to my email, but felt this would require too much time in figuring out as well. I wanted to allocate most of my time to higher priorities, such as content and overall layout.

The Structure Plane:

I wanted the structure of my website to be as simple and consolidated as possible. There were specific functions included to help visitors navigate the site, and to facilitate them

seeing the other pages. One of the most important aspects for me was the navigation bar. The navigation bar would be the main means of accessing the other pages on the site. At first I struggled with the nav bar, but eventually figured it out once I dragged the corresponding JavaScript files to my public file on the server. This allows visitors to navigate to any of the pages from any page they're on. In addition to the navigation bar, I included a logo and buttons that could be used to navigate to other pages on the site. I ensured that the notebook logo at the top of the page would serve as a persistent way to access the "candidates" page since I deemed that the official "playbook" of my website. Furthermore, I knew I couldn't deliver all the content I wanted visitors to have access too. I addressed this by including three boxes at the bottom of each page that links out to other resources I deemed pertinent to the content. The links on the home, about, and candidates pages differ from those on the individual candidates' pages. I thought this was a simple move to include as many additional resources and material as possible since the function of my site is to be educational and informative.

The Skeleton Plane:

In terms of page structure, I wanted to maintain some semblance of symmetry. This was easy to achieve since I created a universal page layout/shell. Once I had the shell, the content and some additional, minor details such as photos and links varied from page to page. I have two main content divs on all the pages, which I think creates a simple layout for people to digest the information. By having two different content divs, it breaks the information down into sections without being too dense.

The Surface Plane:

The user interface for my website is fairly simple since the function of the site is to be educational and provide information. The only interactive elements included in my site for users are the links (nav bar, logo, buttons, and boxes). All images were retrieved from Google images with an advanced search setting of "free to use or share" to ensure there are no copyright issues. I tried to find pictures for the boxes at the bottom of the pages with links that abstractedly captured what they were representing. Additionally, the photos in the main content sections are spherical, which required me to find specific sized images to use in order not to disrupt the visual design/layout of the pages.

I played around with the font elements a lot within the design phase of my project. I used a text generator website resource to help me choose fonts and elements, and it provided me the code to use within my HTML documents. I ultimately settled on "Avant Garde" for the content-headers and boxes with links, and "Open Sans" for the rest of the text. I wanted my font to be simple with a somewhat modern feel. I also wanted the font to be as reader friendly as possible.

The color palate was arguable the easiest design element within the web designing process. Since the topic of my website is the presidential election, I knew I wanted to incorporate red, white, and blue as the main color theme. However, I didn't want the traditional red and blue because I thought it was too harsh and dark. I used a color palate website to help me identify the colors for my site. I settled for softer shades of red and blue to create a clean and bright look to the website. The colors have created a fresh and inviting site rather than a dark and dense one.