

Design and Implement a Photo Gallery website for
Snapshots of Resettlement: A Digital Showcase of Images and Stories of Resettled
Refugees in Utica, NY

A Master's Project
Presented to
Information Design and Technology Program

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By

Douglas Cohen

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SUNYIT
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND HUMANITIES
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Approved and recommended for acceptance as a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Information Design and Technology

DATE

Kathryn Stam, Ph.D.

Steven Schneider, Ph.D.

Abstract

The concept for this project originated from the acceptance of Dr. Kathryn Stam's proposed photos essay idea of Bhutanese-Nepali refugees in Utica, NY to the journal Himalaya (<http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya>). The Snapshots of Resettlement project is an extension of the concepts in the Refugees Starting Over in Utica, NY website (<http://www.startingoverutica.com>) but has been implemented such that it is an independent entity.

This paper will explore the technology platforms used to create the Snapshots of Resettlement online photo gallery. It will also provide an overview of design and implementation decisions made through the duration of this project. In addition, this paper will offer details on select information design principles used in this project's implementation.

Acknowledgements

A very sincere thank you goes out to Dr. Kathryn Stam for providing me with the opportunity to work on the Snapshots of Resettlement project. Throughout the entire project, Dr. Stam was a pleasure to work with, and allowed me to “run” with much of the design and implementation decisions for the site. In the end, I am extremely proud of the Snapshots of Resettlement web-based photo gallery that was created as part of this project.

I would also like to extend my personal appreciation to Dr. Steven Schneider for his insightful feedback and role as Spring 2014 Information Design and Technology (IDT) Thesis Coordinator.

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Introduction

Dr. Kathryn Stam is the visionary behind the Snapshots of Resettlement project. Its origins stem from the acceptance of Dr. Kathryn Stam's proposed photos essay idea of Bhutanese-Nepali refugees in Utica, NY to the journal Himalaya (<http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya>). To properly introduce this project, the information from the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery's *About* page (<http://resettlementsnapshots.wordpress.com/about>) is included below.

Utica, NY is now home to about 14,000 refugees who were forced from their original homes due to political or ethnic conflict. They come from many different countries, for example, Bhutan, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Bosnia, Russia, the former Soviet Union, Iraq, and Yemen. Many people spent years or even decades in refugee camps before being resettled by the U.S. government. These snapshots of resettlement tell the stories of where the refugees came from, what their lives were like in refugee camps, and how things have turned out for them in central New York.

This site highlights the archived collection of images from the Starting Over project at SUNYIT. The “Refugees Starting Over in Utica, NY” project (<http://www.startingoverutica.com>), otherwise known as “Starting Over,” was founded in 2012 in order to increase student and community awareness and learn more about resettled refugees’ lives and stories. The project’s founders were Dr. Kathryn Stam (professor) and Katie Reilly (graduate student) from the SUNY Institute of Technology.

They were assisted in great measure by the student club, “American and Refugee Students for Closer Connection,” that was organized at Mohawk Valley Community College by student Ms. Pawsansoe Karen Bree. The project also had support from staff and volunteers at the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees. Project personnel took, collected, and scanned photographs from a wide variety of sources, including Facebook pages (with permission) and photo albums of refugees themselves.

Throughout the entirety of the Snapshots of Resettlement project, Dr. Stam offered me the opportunity to lead the aesthetic design and technology implementation of the site. This level of trust and freedom continued to grow my excitement and enthusiasm for this project, and allowed me to showcase the skills I have achieved throughout my professional and academic careers.

Technology Platforms

During the design phase of this project, the project team consisting of Dr. Kathryn Stam and I had multiple conversations about the desired functionality of the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery website. In addition, Dr. Kathryn Stam provided a written initial concept draft document that outlined the desired functionality and vision for this site. After an analysis of the documented vision and desired functionality, WordPress was recommended as the Content Management System (CMS) / website platform and JotForm was recommended for user submissions.

WordPress

WordPress is an Open Source web platform that can be used to create an entire website or a blog site. According to WordPress.org, “over 60 million people have chosen WordPress” to create their website or blog site. The March 2014 results of the Usage Statistics and Market Share of Content Management Systems for Websites survey, conducted by W3Techs, states “WordPress is used by 21.5% of all the websites, that is a content management system market share of 60.0%.”

The WordPress platform provides its users with extreme flexibility as it can be installed in a self-hosted environment or in a third-party hosting environment. In addition, third-party service providers such as WordPress.com allow users to simply sign up for a WordPress site without having to deal with any of the technology barriers. For this project, a decision was made to use the WordPress.com service offering as it provided the opportunity to create the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery with no out-of-pocket expenditures.

Even though the WordPress.com service offering did not cause any out-of-pocket expenses, there was a cost associated with this project. Its cost came in the form of having to work around standard features and functionality in the WordPress platform. For example, updates / customizations were unable to be implemented within the selected theme (Twenty Fourteen). Similarly, integrated JotForm forms could not be implemented using the standard WordPress integration facilities. Additionally, WordPress plugins, as well as other potential or desired changes, could not be implemented due to the selection of the WordPress.com service offering.

JotForm

JotForm (<http://jotform.com>) is an online WYSIWYG form builder that allows users to create and edit forms without requiring any advanced technical skills. As a service provider, JotForm offers a variety of service plans to meet the needs of its vast user base of nearly 1 million users. For this project, the JotForm Starter Plan was to create the *Submit Your Own Photos* feature and its associated functionality. See Appendix A for JotForm online resources.

One advantage of using JotForm with WordPress is the ease of using its integration facilities. The Embed Form plugin, created by JotForm, allows users to easily add an existing form or even create a new online form without leaving the WordPress platform interface. In addition, JotForm has an extensive User Guide that includes step-by-step instructions for adding forms to WordPress without the Embed Forms plugin. Unfortunately, the no-cost WordPress.com service offering selected for this project did not provide an opportunity to take advantage of either integration facility, and necessitated the Submit Your Own Photos feature to be implemented as a simple web link to an external site.

Project and Implementation Decisions

The scope of this project spanned from Dr. Stam's initial vision for the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery through its implementation and launch. Working through the project's design and implementation phases facilitated the need to address a number

of project and implementation decisions. The following provides information on key items that were addressed during the project.

Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

As with any project, effective stakeholder engagement and communication throughout the project is a key to success. Dr. Kathryn Stam and I already had an established “working relationship” due to prior completed coursework within the SUNYIT online master’s degree in Information Design and Technology. Specifically, the courses in which we developed this working relationship were IDT 530 - Research Methods for IDT and IDT 553 - Principles and Projects in New Media. Additionally, and along with other peers in the IDT program, Dr. Kathryn Stam and I worked together in creating a poster session for the 2013 Conference on Instruction and Technology (CIT) hosted at SUNYIT.

WordPress Theme Selection

At the onset of this project, a subjective analysis of free WordPress.com themes was completed to provide an initial set of options as a starting point for implementing the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery. This theme analysis yielded the five potential themes listed below for discussion, which was then narrowed to two, with *Twenty* *Fourteen* being the eventual selected theme.

Twenty Fourteen

<http://wordpress.org/themes/twentyfourteen>

Spun

<http://wordpress.org/themes/spun>

Oxygen

<http://wordpress.org/themes/oxygen>

Visual

<http://wordpress.org/themes/visual>

Hatch

<http://wordpress.org/themes/hatch>

Workflow Processes

To start this project, Dr. Stam and I scheduled a “kick-off” phone call. We discussed the vision for the project, possible project communication strategies, and various other topics during this initial call. In the end, we decided that virtual asynchronous communication modalities would be our preferred methods (i.e., email, WordPress comments, etc.). This decision provided Dr. Stam and I with the ability to work through this project collectively, but also at times when most convenient for each of us. At the same time, using asynchronous communication modalities exclusively opens the door for the potential issue of project team members to be idle while waiting for a response. Fortunately, this was a non-issue throughout our collaboration on this project.

Visual Appeal versus Storytelling

The Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery is a means to “tell the stories of where the refugees came from, what their lives were like in refugee camps, and how things have turned out for them in central New York.” (Snapshots of Resettlement, 2014) At points during this project, there was a conflict between visual or aesthetic appeal and telling the full story [of the refugees]. One particular area where this issue came to light

was in determining an appropriate number of images to display per gallery. For the “official launch” of the site, the maximum number of images per gallery is approximately twenty. Post-launch, there are at least two options to address this tension as the Snapshots of Resettlement content expands. These are (1) increasing the number of images per gallery, or (2) adding additional “sub-galleries” providing the user with the option to access the additional snapshots.

The WordPress Gallery feature provides the option to show photo metadata, such as aperture, camera, focal length, shutter speed, and the like, when viewing the photos in Gallery display mode. This display option has been disabled for this project, as the addition of the photo metadata didn’t provide any benefit in terms of visual appeal or storytelling.

Facebook Image Previews

Before its official launch, Dr. Stam informed me that Ms. Pawsansoe Karen Bree shared the website address (<http://resettlementsnapshots.wordpress.com>) for the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery on Facebook. When this website address was shared through a status update, the transcluded website description didn’t display an image preview as pictured below.



Figure 1: Screen capture of the Facebook transcluded website description for Snapshots of Resettlement. Image retrieved from <http://facebook.com>.

To correct this issue, the Snapshots of Resettlement WordPress “blavatar” (created from the combining of the words blog and avatar) needed to be updated. Once the new blavatar was added to the online gallery site, the Facebook transcluded website description started to display an image preview.

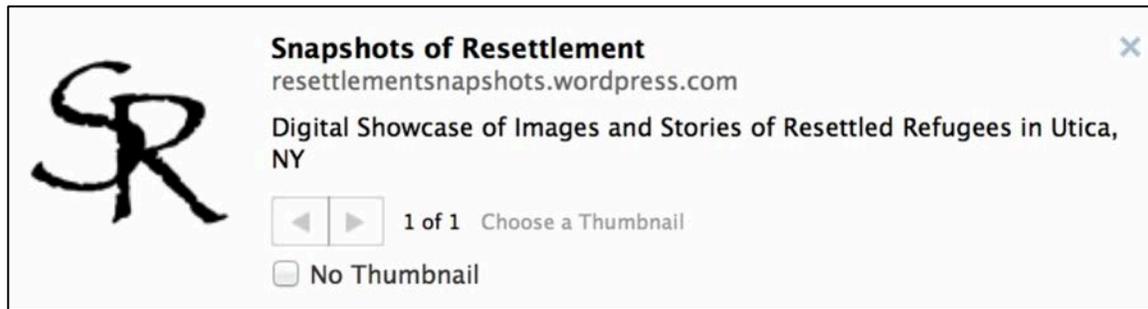


Figure 2: Updated screen capture of the Facebook transcluded website description for Snapshots of Resettlement. Image retrieved from <http://facebook.com>.

Once the Facebook image preview was updated, Dr. Stam asked if it was possible to update this image to one of the “snapshots” from the online gallery. In order to do so, the WordPress “blavatar” was updated once again, and Facebook needed to be informed of this change. The Facebook developer documentation for Product Object and Using Objects provide developers with documentation on how to use Open Graph with Facebook. One method of signifying to Facebook that its cache needs to be updated is to use the Open Graph Debugger tool to re-scrape the URL to update its associated metadata. See Appendix B for details. Unfortunately, the use of the Open Graph Debugger tool did not force an immediate update of the Facebook image preview cache for the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery. After approximately thirty days, the Facebook image preview was updated and the transcluded website description for the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery displays with the “snapshot” as desired.

Creating a Facebook Page

Once the technical implementation of the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery was completed, Dr. Stam and I discussed the advantages and disadvantages of creating a Facebook page for this project. One major advantage to creating a Facebook page is that it would give viewers another avenue for sharing photos and stories. These photos could then be used to grow the online gallery in a way that might not be possible otherwise. There are also potential disadvantages or outstanding questions to be addressed if a Facebook page is created for this project. Specifically, is there enough content for the Snapshots of Resettlement project to be able to differentiate the Facebook page from the online gallery? Also, will there still be a need for the online gallery if all the photo sharing starts to take place within Facebook? As of writing this thesis report, a Facebook page has not been created for this project.

Information Design Principles

The recurring and overall theme throughout the coursework within the SUNYIT Master of Science in Information Design and Technology is Information Design. The following describes, in detail, a number of the Information Design principles that were applied during the design and implementation phases of the Snapshots of Resettlement project.

Accessibility

When designing and implementing online environments, such as websites, the information design principle of *accessibility* should be at the forefront of the discussion.

The principle “asserts that designs should be usable by people of diverse abilities, without special adaptation or modification.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 16) In online environments, improvements to accessibility can be implemented using a number of techniques and strategies such as *Perceptibility*, *Simplicity*, and *Forgiveness*.

Perceptibility

“*Perceptibility* is achieved when everyone can perceive the design, regardless of sensory abilities.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 16, *emphasis in original*) There are a number of basic guidelines for improving perceptibility, one of which is to “present information using redundant coding methods (e.g., textual, iconic, and tactile).”

(Universal Principles of Design, p. 16) The Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery exhibits *Perceptibility* in its search functionality. The search feature is designated by the universally understood magnifying glass icon, and makes use of redundant coding by displaying the text “Search ...” within the search field.

Another basic guideline for improving perceptibility is to “provide compatibility with assistive sensory technologies (e.g., ALT tags for images on the Internet).”

(Universal Principles of Design, p. 16) By adding the alternative text attribute to all [appropriate] images within the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery, visually impaired viewers using an assistive sensory technology such as the JAWS screen reading software will receive an audio cue for this image that utilizes the alternative text.

Simplicity

“*Simplicity* is achieved when everyone can easily understand and use the design, regardless of experience, literacy, or concentration level.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 16, *emphasis in original*) One of the basic guidelines for improving simplicity

is to “remove unnecessary complexity.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 16) The Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery provides its users with clear entry points and navigation menus. The simplicity of this design, along with the use of structured content, makes it extremely easy for users to understand the presented information and take the necessary action(s) to view the desired content or galleries.

Another basic guideline for improving simplicity is to “use progressive disclosure to present only relevant information and controls” to the user. (Universal Principles of Design, p. 16) The Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery website makes use of progressive disclosure within the "features" section. Each feature displays a shortened description of the gallery and provides the user with a "more" link to read each expanded gallery description, if desired.

Forgiveness

“*Forgiveness* is achieved when designs minimize the occurrence and consequences of errors .” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 16, *emphasis in original*) One of the basic guidelines for improving forgiveness is to “use confirmations and warnings to reduce the occurrence of errors.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 16) A screen capture of the Snapshots of Resettlement website’s Submit Your Own Photos feature showing *forgiveness* is pictured below. If a website visitor attempts to submit the Tell Us form without providing the required information, the incomplete data is not submitted and one or more warnings are presented. This process, validating data entry and providing user feedback (if applicable), decreases the likelihood of errors when working with the collected data.

The screenshot shows a web form for 'Snapshots of Resettlement'. At the top, there's a header with the title and three photos. Below is a 'Contact Information' section. It has three main input areas: 1. 'Your Name *' with two sub-inputs for 'First Name' and 'Last Name'. A red error box below says 'This field is required.' 2. 'Your Email Address *' with one input containing 'ex: myname@example.com'. A red error box below says 'This field is required.' 3. 'Phone Number' with two sub-inputs for 'Area Code' and 'Phone Number'.

Figure 3: Screen capture of the Snapshots of Resettlement website's Submit Your Own Photos feature. Image retrieved from <http://secure.jotform.us/form/40383250949155>.

Convergence

Convergence is defined as “a process in which similar characteristics evolve independently in multiple systems.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 66) Using this definition provides an avenue for detailing how the use of Responsive Web Design techniques can illustrate this information design principle.

The illustration below depicts a series of website layouts (i.e., desktop, tablet, and mobile) for the Snapshots of Resettlement online photo gallery, available at <http://resettlementsnapshots.wordpress.com>. By using Responsive Web Design techniques, the website layout is optimized for the device in which it's being viewed on. This allows the content to be presented in a manner that takes advantages of “optimal strategies afforded by the environment.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 66) Additionally, further enhancements on the project roadmap, such as the integration of

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Facebook into this website, provide the means to bridge the use of traditional media (i.e., websites) with newer strategies and technologies (i.e., social media).

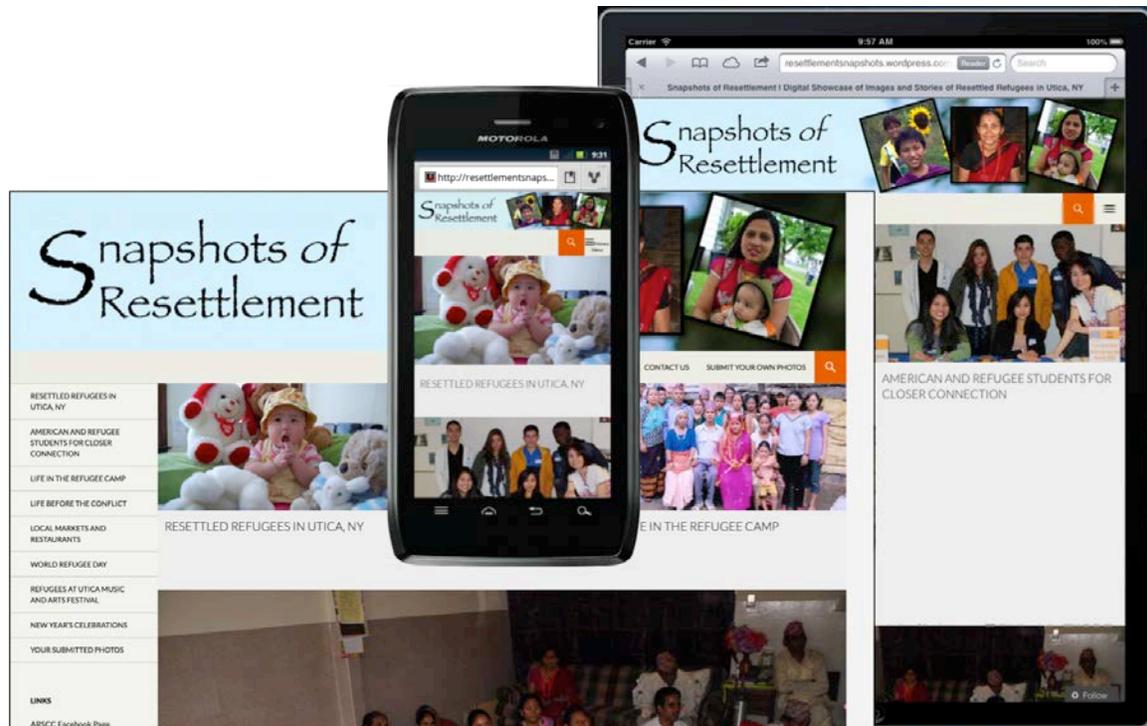


Figure 4: A series of website layouts (i.e., desktop, tablet, and mobile) for the Snapshots of Resettlement online photo gallery. Image retrieved from <http://resettlementsnapshots.wordpress.com>.

Entry Point

“In Information Design, the Entry Point is a point of attentional entry into a design. The principle is essentially and fundamentally important to the design of a website or a system as it serves as a focal spot for further interaction with the system.” (Hung, slide 12) There are three key elements to creating an effective Entry Point. These are *Minimal Barriers*, *Points of Prospect*, and *Progressive Lures*. If a designer uses the Entry Point design principle inefficiently, or neglects to use it at all, there is the potential that the design will “deter visitor’s attention, thus impede visitors’ willingness to progress through.” (Hung, slide 12)

Minimal Barriers

Effective information design is to create an Entry Point without barriers. “Examples of barriers to entry are highly trafficked parking lots, noisy displays with unnecessary elements, sales people standing at the doors of retail stores, or anything that impedes people from getting to and moving through an entry point.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 80) Without barriers, the Snapshots of Resettlement website design provides an entry point into the image galleries. For example, the viewer can access any of the online image galleries with a single click by utilizing the navigation menu / links located on the left. Additionally, the “feature images” located across the top provide the user with an entry point into the respective gallery.

Points of Prospect

“Entry points should allow people to become oriented and clearly survey available options.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 80) For a website, this may take the form of “good orientation cues and navigation options.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 80) The Snapshots of Resettlement website design features two prominent navigation bars, located across the top and on the left, allow the user to easily navigate through the entirety of the site’s content.

Progressive Lures

“Progressive lures get people to incrementally approach, enter, and move through an entry point. (Universal Principles of Design, p. 80) In the Snapshots of Resettlement website design, progressive lures are used to feature select galleries (i.e., Resettled Refugees in Utica, NY, American and Refugee Students for Closer Connection student volunteers, and Life in the Refugee Camp). Each section, or lure, contains a visual with

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its headline appearing below. The user is then required to step through this entry point by clicking the feature image or its headline.



Figure 5: Annotated screen capture of the Snapshots of Resettlement online photo gallery demonstrating use of the Entry Point design principle. Image retrieved from <http://resettlementsnapshots.wordpress.com>.

Highlighting

“*Highlighting* brings attention to important text and images in a design.”

(Universal Principles of Design, p. 126, *emphasis in original*) The Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery effectively uses uppercase text to highlight its navigation menus, featured images, and content headers. “Uppercase text in short word sequences is easily scanned, and thus can be advantageous when applied to labels and keywords within a busy display.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 126)



Figure 6: Annotated screen capture of the Snapshots of Resettlement online photo gallery demonstrating use of the Highlighting design principle. Image retrieved from <http://resettlementsnapshots.wordpress.com>.

Legibility

Legibility is “the visual clarity of text, generally based on the size, typeface, contrast, text block, and spacing of the characters used.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 148) The textual elements within the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery are implemented using ample whitespace and a sans-serif typeface to improve legibility and meet the varying needs of a diverse audience. In addition, all of the visual and textual elements are implemented to be high-contrast as “dark text on a light background or vice versa” is used throughout its interface. (Universal Principles of Design, p. 148)

Mnemonic Device

“*Mnemonic* devices are used to reorganize information so that the information is simpler and more meaningful and, therefore, more easily remembered.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 158, *emphasis in original*) The Snapshots of Resettlement

header is designed to make use of a *Keyword* mnemonic. Keyword mnemonics are defined as “a word that is similar to, or a subset of, a word or phrase that is linked to a familiar bridging image to aid in recall.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 158) As illustrated below, the keyword of “snapshots” is linked to the “snapshots” bridging image to help the viewer link the site’s name and content to familiar experiences.



Figure 7: Annotated Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery site header demonstrating the use of a bridging image. Image retrieved from <http://resettlementsnapshots.wordpress.com>.

Symmetry

Symmetry is “a property of visual equivalence among elements in a form.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 234) It is comprised of three basic types of symmetry; *reflection*, *rotation*, and *translation*. For this project, the *reflection* information design principle was applied during the creation of the “snapshots” component of the site header.

Reflection Symmetry occurs when an image is mirrored around a central axis. The central axis, or mirror line, does not have to be along the element’s horizontal or vertical axis as “reflection symmetry can occur in any orientation as long as the element is the same on both sides of the mirror line.” (Universal Principles of Design, p. 234) The “snapshots” in the site header exhibit reflection symmetry as their size and shape are mirrored around a central vertical axis.



Figure 8: Annotated Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery site header demonstrating effective use of reflection symmetry. Image retrieved from <http://resettlementsnapshots.wordpress.com>.

Conclusion

After being immersed in the design and implementation of the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery, it has become clear that this project was an excellent culminating activity for the SUNYIT online master's degree in Information Design and Technology. Throughout the design and implementation phases of this project, there were a number of lessons learned that spanned the gamut of both information design and technology. The following provides information on specific lessons learned during the project, as well as how they were an extension of the curriculum taught in the Information Design and Technology program.

Prior to working through this project, my professional and academic background provided me with extensive experience using WordPress as a web platform. See Appendix C for details. Even with a high level of experience using WordPress, this project provided opportunities for growth. Using the no-cost service offering from WordPress.com decreased the available options for customization, as the full range of WordPress administrative features were not accessible. While this restriction was a hindrance in implementing certain features, such as the Submit Your Own Photos functionality previously discussed, it forced a higher level of creative thinking and

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problem solving to achieve the project goals. The refinement and enhancement of my creative thinking and problem solving skills is an invaluable asset that will be carried with me from this point forward.

The overall design, or user interface, is a critical element when implementing any project that is attempting to convey information in a particular way. While working through the design and implementation of the Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery, multiple viewers had different preferences as to how the information was, and should be, presented. This project furthered my understanding that overall design is often subjective, but should be grounded with solid information design principles. The experience of following this strategy and furthering my understanding of information design principles not only benefitted the Snapshots of Resettlement project, but also will provide benefits to many future projects.

Through engagement, interacting with clients provides you with the opportunity to learn from their experiences and expertise. At the same time, client engagement presents unique challenges when trying to implement a project on time, on budget, and within scope. In addition, one of the main goals as a service provider is to exceed customer expectations. Even though the lines of the client / provider relationship were blurred for this project, the underlying notion of exceeding the agreed-upon expectations set forth at its onset were a constant throughout its entirety.

Working through the SUNYIT online master's degree in Information Design and Technology has allowed me to gain knowledge on how to properly apply Information Design principles in order to appropriately present content to its viewer. My involvement in this project, since its inception, provided me with the opportunity to analyze which

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information design principles were appropriate for use in this project and which were not. Along the same lines, the restrictions imposed by the selection of the no-cost WordPress.com service offering, such as the inability to customize the selected Twenty Fourteen theme, prevented furthering the use of certain information design principles, such as Color. As a result of having to analyze the technology environment, including the imposed restrictions, this project assisted me in furthering my analytical skills that will have a positive impact in many future endeavors.

My experience with the Snapshots of Resettlement project has been overwhelmingly positive. At its onset, my sole focus was to create a web-based environment that exceeded Dr. Stam's expectations and vision. As this project continued, so did my enthusiasm, as its impacts reached farther than I ever imagined. This project tapped into the skills I have gained throughout my professional career, as well as the new skills and knowledge attained in the Information Design and Technology program. In addition, and most notably, this project has excited the members of the refugee community in Utica, NY. The Snapshots of Resettlement online gallery has the opportunity to grow into a very powerful storytelling platform, and I am honored to have been a part of its development.

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Appendices

Appendix A: JotForm Online Resources

JotForm - Pricing

Website Address: <http://www.jotform.com/pricing>

JotForm – Embed Form Plugin

Website Address: http://apps.jotform.com/app/wordpress_embed_form

JotForm – User Guide

Website Address: <http://www.jotform.com/help/>

JotForm – Adding Forms to WordPress

Website Address: <http://www.jotform.com/help/4-Adding-Forms-to-Wordpress>

Appendix B: Facebook Developer Docs and Tools

Developer Docs

Product Object

Website Address: <https://developers.facebook.com/docs/payments/product>

Using Objects

Website Address: <https://developers.facebook.com/docs/opengraph/using-objects>

Developer Tools

Open Graph Debugger

Website Address: <https://developers.facebook.com/tools/debug>

Appendix C: Experience Using WordPress as a Web Platform

Professional Experience

Creating Open SUNY

Website Address: <http://commons.suny.edu/opensuny>

Open SUNY Center for Online Teaching Excellence (COTE)

Website Address: <http://commons.suny.edu/facultycenter>

Open SUNY Readiness Guide

Website Address: <http://commons.suny.edu/assessment>

Innovative Instruction Technology Grants (IITG)

Website Address: <http://commons.suny.edu/iitg>

Academic Experience

Compass Interpreters

Website Address: <http://compassinterpreters.org>

DOUGLAS J. COHEN

EXPERIENCE

FEB. 2011 - PRESENT SUNY ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGY & INFORMATION SERVICES
Associate Director, Academic Technology Services (promotion) ALBANY, NEW YORK

- ❑ Provide guidance, vision, and strategic direction for the implementation of the Open SUNY technology services and environments.
- ❑ Oversee the implementation of the Open SUNY 24/7 end-user support services.
- ❑ Lead the design, development, and deployment of Open SUNY web services.
- ❑ Responsible for an annual budget of over \$3.5 million.
- ❑ Oversee academic technology systems and support services for the SUNY Learning Network (SLN), Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS), and Center for Professional Development (CPD).
- ❑ Member of the core SUNY/Blackboard strategic partnership and contract negotiations teams.
- ❑ Responsible for the technology migration for 25+ SUNY institutions migrating from ANGEL to Blackboard Learn.
- ❑ Project manager for the SUNY-wide LMS review completed by DOODLE.

NOV. 2008 - FEB. 2011 SUNY LEARNING NETWORK ALBANY, NEW YORK
Assistant Director, Application Services & Operations Management (promotion)

- ❑ Analyze, recommend and oversee improvements to the SUNY Learning Network technology systems and associated State University of New York (SUNY) university-wide technology environments.
- ❑ Lead the overall technology implementation of the ANGEL and SLN/Classic applications utilized by more than 25 SUNY institutions.
- ❑ Provide leadership for supporting the campus efforts and/or usage of their Learning Management System application.
- ❑ Supervise the Application Services, HelpDesk Services and Web/Programming Services departments consisting of 12 staff members.
- ❑ Develop technical, operational and strategic plans, including budgets and schedules for various projects.
- ❑ Responsible for an annual budget of over \$2 million.
- ❑ Strategic coordination with SUNY university-wide services in order to continue to grow and optimize support, outreach, program development, marketing efforts and fulfillment of core missions through communication media and academic technologies.
- ❑ Project manager for the SUNY/Blackboard Performance Audit engagement.

DEC. 2006 - NOV. 2008 SUNY LEARNING NETWORK ALBANY, NEW YORK
Manager, Application Services (promotion)

- ❑ Direct the maintenance and ongoing support of the technical infrastructure for the SLN.
- ❑ Work with and direct the efforts of 2 staff members to enhance services to campuses and improve efficiencies through the development of software programs and scripts.
- ❑ Manage the planning, development, implementation, administration, and support of SLN technology and application related services.

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- ❑ Provide leadership to State University of New York campuses and SLN on university-wide services to integrate technologies that provide improved services to SUNY students and faculty.
- ❑ Lead the technical migration of the SLN Lotus/Domino environment to the SLN ANGEL learning environment.

OCT. 2002 - DEC. 2006 SUNY LEARNING NETWORK ALBANY, NEW YORK
Senior Programmer/Analyst

- ❑ Lead developer for the SUNY Learning Network Learning Management System delivering more than 4,000 courses and 100,000 enrollments annually.
- ❑ Web programmer for SLN website and web-based applications.
- ❑ Accessibility specialist/contact for website and web-based applications.
- ❑ Lotus Notes/Domino programming in an R5/ND6 server environment with a mixed client environment of Notes 4.5.x – 6.x and web browsers, such as Internet Explorer, Netscape and Mozilla.
- ❑ Application development using any or all of the following: HTML, DHTML, XML, XSLT, JavaScript, AJAX, CSS, PHP, CGI, ASP, VBS, Java, Lotus formula, LotusScript, Notes C Api, LSX, DECS, DXL, SQL, Oracle

OCT. 2000 - DEC. 2002 EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE SARATOGA SPRINGS, N. Y.
Lotus Notes Developer (contract)

- ❑ Lotus Notes/Domino programming in an R5/ND6 server environment with a mixed client environment of Notes 4.5.x – 6.x.
- ❑ Application development using any or all of the following: HTML, DHTML, CSS, Lotus formula, LotusScript, JavaScript

DEC. 1998 - OCT. 2002 UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY ALBANY, NEW YORK
SLN HelpDesk: Support Analyst / Lead Programmer Analyst

- ❑ End-user support for campus students, faculty, and instructional designers.
- ❑ Create, maintain and update all SLN HelpDesk applications that are accessed via Lotus Notes and web client software.
- ❑ Lotus Notes/Domino programming in a Notes 4/R5 server environment with a mixed client environment of Notes 4.5.x – 5.x.
- ❑ Application development using any or all of the following: HTML, DHTML, CSS, Lotus formula, LotusScript, JavaScript

CERTIFICATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

NOV. 2013 - PRESENT BLACKBOARD, INC. WASHINGTON, D.C.

- ❑ Blackboard MVP Program

JUL. 2009 - PRESENT BLACKBOARD, INC. WASHINGTON, D.C.

- ❑ Blackboard Idea Exchange (BIE) Steering Committee

MAR. 2008 OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT COMMERCE IN THE U.K.

- ❑ ITIL® v3: Foundation Certification

DOUGLAS J. COHEN

EDUCATION

AUG. 2012 - MAY 2014 SUNY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY UTICA, NEW YORK
□ Master of Science in Information Design and Technology

AUG. 1995 - MAY 1999 UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY ALBANY, NEW YORK
□ Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy Minor: Business

PRESENTATIONS

1. Doug Cohen, “Open SUNY Progress Report”, SUNY Libraries Summit, Albany, NY. 12 2013
2. Doug Cohen, “The Power of Blackboard xpLor”, Blackboard Never Stop Learning Tour, Saratoga Springs, NY. 11 2013
3. Doug Cohen and Amelia Manders, “We’re responsive! Are you?”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2013
4. Doug Cohen, Harry Cargile, Justin Kornheisl, and Mike Walker, “SLN Support Services Update – How we handle 25000+ contacts every year and looking for more”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2013
5. Kim Scalzo, Lisa Stephens, and Doug Cohen, “Open SUNY Progress Report”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2013
6. Doug Cohen, “Open SUNY Technology Infrastructure Roundtable”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2013
7. Harry Cargile, Meghan Pereira, and Doug Cohen, “Resources, Planning, and Action: SUNY Buffalo State's Migration from ANGEL to Blackboard Learn 9.1”, BbWorld, Las Vegas, NV. 07 2013
8. Doug Cohen, “Blackboard xpLor as a Migration Tool”, BbWorld, Las Vegas, NV. 07 2013
9. Doug Cohen, “University-wide Academic Technology Project Management”, SUNY Technology Conference 2013, Lake Placid, NY. 6 2013
10. Ryan McCabe and Doug Cohen, “Using Collaborate inside of the Learning Management System”, SUNY Technology Conference 2013, Lake Placid, NY. 6 2013
11. Doug Cohen, “Enhancing University-wide Academic Technology Services”, SUNY Technology Conference 2013, Lake Placid, NY. 6 2013
12. Carey Hatch, Gerard Marino, Alexandra Pickett, and Doug Cohen, “SUNY Learning Network (SLN) Services”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology 2013, Utica, NY. 5 2013
13. Doug Cohen, “Blackboard Roundtable: Hosting and Support Services”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology 2013, Utica, NY. 5 2013
14. Doug Cohen, “University-wide Programs Aligning to Support Open SUNY”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology 2013, Utica, NY. 5 2013
15. Tamara Cupples, Jeffrey Riman and Doug Cohen, “Systemness at FIT”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology 2013, Utica, NY. 5 2013
16. Kathryn Stam, Gretchen Kriesen, Mary Christopher, and Doug Cohen, “Community and Non-Profit Web Projects from SUNYIT Information Design and Technology graduate students”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology 2013, Utica, NY. 5 2013
17. Kim Scalzo and Doug Cohen, “Facilitating Communities of Practice through the SUNY Learning Commons”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology 2013, Utica, NY. 5 2013
18. Kim Scalzo and Doug Cohen, “SUNY Learning Commons: A central resource for collaboration”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology 2013, Utica, NY. 5 2013
19. Carey Hatch and Doug Cohen, “Open SUNY Update and Platform Strategy”, SUNY Information Technology Transformation Team (ITTT) meeting, Albany, NY. 03 2013

PRESENTATIONS

20. Doug Cohen, “LMS Migrations and xpLor”, Blackboard’s xpLor beta program, Albany, NY. 11 2012
21. Doug Cohen, “SUNY Learning Network: Looking Forward Part II”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2012
22. Doug Cohen, Amelia Manders, and Mike Walker, “Enhancing SLN Technology Services”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2012
23. Doug Cohen and Ryan McCabe, “Using Elluminate Inside the LMS”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2012
24. Doug Cohen, “SUNY Learning Network Online Learning Services”, Association of South African University Directors of Information Technology (ASAUDIT) Spring General Institutional Meeting 2012, Albany, NY. 10 2012
25. Doug Cohen, “University-wide Online Learning Services”, Blackboard’s approaches for region-wide educational management for the Republic of Tatarstan Ministry of Education, Albany, NY. 9 2012
26. Brett Becker, Doug Cohen, Kelly Hamilton, and Greg Ketcham, “ANGEL to Blackboard Learn: The Next Chapter for SUNY and Blackboard”, BbWorld, New Orleans, LA. 07 2012
27. Michael Buchanon and Doug Cohen, “Cirque du Support – Supporting Large ANGEL LMS Installations”, BbWorld, New Orleans, LA. 07 2012
28. Doug Cohen and Timothy Donehower, “Change Management: From ANGEL to Blackboard 9.1”, BbWorld, New Orleans, LA. 07 2012
29. Doug Cohen and Chris Bordeleau, “Blackboard Roundtable: Hosting and Support Services”, SUNY Technology Conference 2012, Rye Brook, NY. 6 2012
30. Doug Cohen, “SLN Services Update”, SUNY Technology Conference 2012, Rye Brook, NY. 6 2012
31. Kim Scalzo and Doug Cohen, “SUNY Learning Commons: A central resource for collaboration””, SUNY Technology Conference 2012, Rye Brook, NY. 6 2012
32. Doug Cohen and Dan Feinberg, “ANGEL to Blackboard Conversion”, ANGEL Texas Clients Webinar, Albany, NY. 6 2012
33. Kim Scalzo and Doug Cohen, “SUNY Learning Commons: A central resource for collaboration””, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology 2012, Stony Brook, NY. 5 2012
34. Gerard Marino and Doug Cohen, “SUNY Learning Network SLAs”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology 2012, Stony Brook, NY. 5 2012
35. Doug Cohen, “Client Upgrade Experiences”, ANGEL Upgrade Cohort, Albany, NY. 4 2012
36. Doug Cohen, “SLN Technology Infrastructure and Support”, UNISA delegation, Albany, NY. 4 2012
37. Doug Cohen and Mike Walker, “LMS Integration of Elluminate”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2011
38. Doug Cohen, “A Snapshot in Time – ANGEL versus Blackboard”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2011
39. Doug Cohen and Kelly Hamilton, “ANGEL-to-Blackboard Conversion Tool Testing”, BbWorld, Las Vegas, NV. 07 2011
40. Doug Cohen, “Customizing ANGEL: Nugget development”, BbWorld, Las Vegas, NV. 07 2011

PRESENTATIONS

41. Doug Cohen, “SLN – LMS Options”, SUNY Technology Conference, Rye Brook, NY. 06 2011
42. Greg Ketcham, Brett Becker, Doug Cohen, Kyle Brown, and Ryan McCabe “SLN – LMS Options”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology, Oneonta, NY. 05 2011
43. Doug Cohen, Harry Cargile, and Brett Becker, "ANGEL 7.4 Administration" SLN SOL Summit, Syracuse, NY. 03 09 2011
44. Doug Cohen, “Supporting Your ANGEL Learning Management Suite”, BbWorld, Orlando, FL. 07 2010
45. Doug Cohen, “Executing a Successful ANGEL Upgrade”, BbWorld, Orlando, FL. 07 2010
46. Mike Walker and Doug Cohen, “SLN – Evolving from HelpDesk”, NERCOMP, Providence, RI. 03 10 2010
47. Doug Cohen, Harry Cargile, and Brett Becker, "What's New in ANGEL 7.4" SLN SOL Summit, Syracuse, NY. 02 24 2010
48. Mike Walker and Doug Cohen, “SLN – Evolving from HelpDesk”, SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 11 2009
49. Doug Cohen, “Customizing ANGEL 7.3: Refining Administrator Tool Permissions” ANGEL Users Conference, Chicago, IL. 05 2009
50. Doug Cohen, "What's New in SLN ANGEL 7.3" SLN SOL Summit, Syracuse, NY. 02 25 2009
51. Mike Walker, Matt Casalnuovo, Doug Cohen, Judy Schmitz, Alexandra Pickett, and Gerard Marino. “SLN Support Services Update”, SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology, Batavia, NY. 05 2008
52. Doug Cohen, “Customizing ANGEL: API & Nugget Development” ANGEL Users Conference, Cincinnati, OH. 05 2008
53. Steve Brunner and Doug Cohen, "Hands on ANGEL Administrator Training: Parts I & II" SLN SOL Summit, Syracuse, NY. 02 27 2008
54. Doug Cohen, "ANGEL Environment Update" SLN SOL Summit, Syracuse, NY. 2007
55. Doug Cohen, "ANGEL Environment Update" SUNY Wizard, Syracuse, NY. 2007