IPRO 311 Midterm Report

Problem

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereafter, USHMM) possesses a large and ever growing collection of information, detailing the realities of the Holocaust. This information is in many formats. The Mediator was developed to facilitate searching this data.

Goal

This semester, IPRO 311 is going to take the Mediator developed in previous semesters, and add functionality to it in various ways. An interface will be developed to facilitate user searches, allowing the location of information to be accessed with greater convenience for the average user. In addition, multiple functions will be developed to improve searches of the USHMM database, by generating meaningful search terms which can be added to the query. The Mediator will be presented to the USHMM.

Sub-goals
- Create Ten search Functions
- Run two-hundred queries on each function to determine utility
- Create a user interface for Mediator
- Create a mechanism to add data sets
- Create a manual for that interface
- Present the Interface to the USHMM
- Create any materials necessary for IPRO day
- Win IPRO day

Team Members
- Erica Danielle Scott
- Jane C. Ji
- Jason Soo
- Jeff Rowland
- Mark R. Haase
- Justin Moses
- Yacin Nadji

Overall Progress

Our Team has made strong progress toward our sub-goals. We are on track to achieve all of our sub-goals, with several of them complete, and to achieve our main goal, of improving the mediator and searches, and presenting this to the USHMM. By making extensive use of emails and instant messaging, our group was able to maintain contact and stay organized. By using iGroups and personal sites to publicly post relevant material, all members had access to any data they would need, as well as allowing for feedback from group members outside of scheduled meeting times, allowing progress to be made in a faster, more fluid manner.

Members participated in weekly meetings in a chat room in order to discuss progress and problems, as well as plan for future goals. Due to the effective utilization of many channels of communication, the team has built strong bonds. Effective

communication is always necessary for a team to progress; by making certain everyone understands their duties and the duties of those they work with. Through effective communication, our team was able to avoid miscommunications that could otherwise have led to some tasks being neglected, and others being done multiple times.

Classroom activities have helped to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of group members. The team was divided into subgroups, so that its members could apply their greatest strengths to the task most appropriate to that strength. This was done to make most efficient use of the wide variety of skills available to this team. In addition to this, some individuals have been assigned tasks independent of their groups, where the individual's particular strengths apply, or where group activity would be inefficient or unecessary.

The Coders-Yacin, Justin, Jason

This sub-group had a two-fold purpose. Yacin and Justin were tasked with taking the ideas for search improvement generated and voted for by the team as a whole, and write code to allow this search improvement to occur in system; this is intended to improve functionality for the user. Jason was tasked with creating a visual interface for the Mediator, to allow the untrained individual to use it with greater ease.

The Testers- Erica, Jane, Jeff

The prime function of this sub-group is to run queries on the search improvement functions generated by the coders. This entails running 200 searches from a standardized list of terms, then analyzing the results to determine the degree of improvement (ie, was the search improved, worsened, or no effect). The list of terms was generated by statistical analysis of an actual query log, which covers six months and major holidays. Jane will also be creating the poster for the IPRO.

The Documenter- Mark, aided by everyone

The main function of this sub-group is to document the activities of the group, including taking minutes, creating user manuals, and providing midterm reports. In addition, this sub-group will aid the testers during the early stages, performing queries as needed.

Obstacles

Thus far, only minor obstacles have been encountered. Team members have carried out their duties admirably well. Only occasionally has a due date been missed, and even then, the work is done in a reasonably timely fashion. Occasional issues with assignment of responsibility have arisen, namely when it is uncertain whose responsibility a task is. However, issues such as this have been infrequent and have been resolved equitably and quickly, due in large part to the quality of the communication amongst group members.