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April 24, 2013
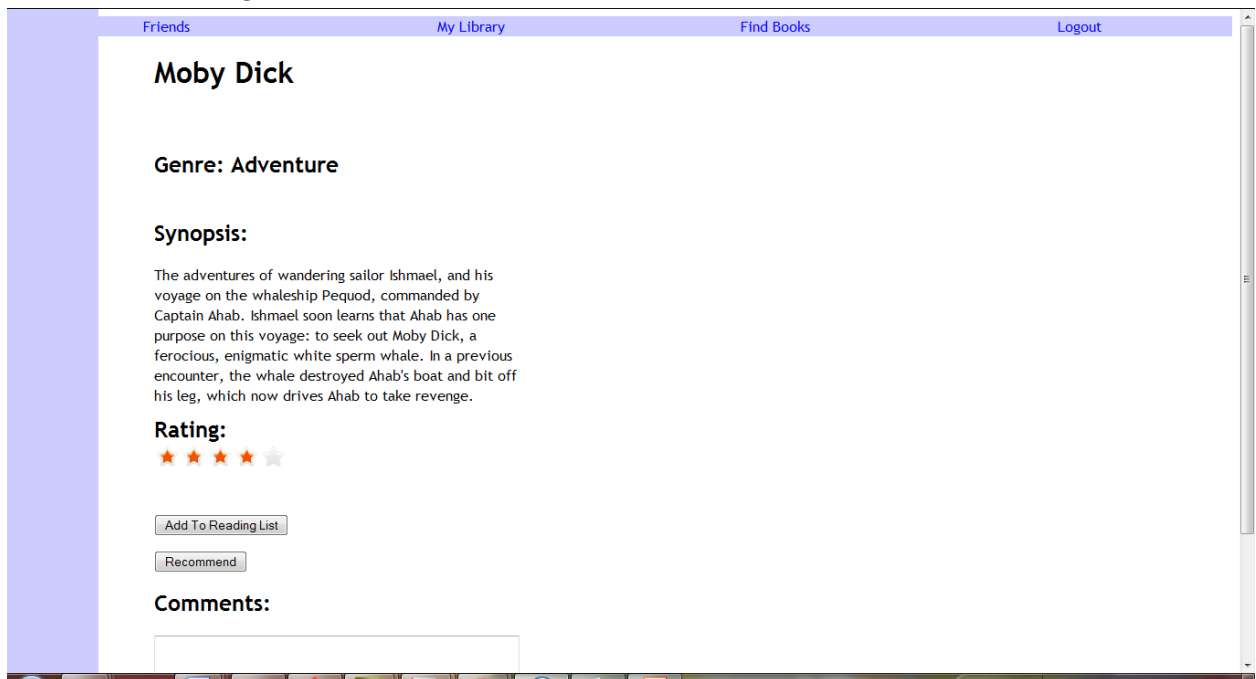6.813 HW2 – Heuristic evaluation
BookClub – http://web.mit.edu/cmannino/Public/Bookclub/booklist.html
Collaborators: None

General

1. **Efficiency:** *Cosmetic:* There is a lot of unnecessary, extra whitespace on the side of the screen, requiring the user to sometimes scroll down to view the bottom of the webpage. If the page was organized differently, however, utilizing the screen space more efficiently, then all the information could be reorganized to fit nicely onto the screen all at once with no scrolling. For example, in the screenshot below, one simple way to reorganize the elements on this page would be to keep the book title, genre, synopsis, and rating in their current positioning, but to move the "add to reading list" button, "recommend" button, and the comments box and button to a second column on the right side of the screen. Similarly, on the Friends page (screenshot not shown), there could be two columns of friends instead of only one, which would make it twice as efficient to view all the friends if the user has a long list of friends.
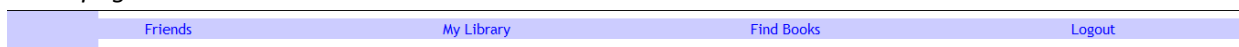

2. **Visibility of system status:** *Catastrophic:* There is no indication of what page of the website is currently being displayed. There should be a title on every page to inform the user of what he/she is looking at.

3. **Visibility of system status:** *Cosmetic:* There is no logo or website name shown anywhere to show what website the user is on.

4. **Aesthetic and minimalist design:** *Good***:** The website design is simple, and not too busy. It uses only a few colors (mostly blue, with purple for links that have been visited).

5. **User control and freedom:** *Major:* There are no user settings, such as the ability to change the user's name or password (and there is no log in system, so there are no usernames or passwords in the first place). Also, although the user can see his/her friends' profile pictures, the user himself does not seem to have a profile picture.

6. **Match the real world:** *Major:* Some of the terminology used is consistent with the real world and some is not. "Friends" and "Find Books" make sense. However, "My Library" does not necessarily sound like it should be a list of the books the user has read, is currently reading, or is planning to read in the future. Since in the real world, a public library is a place where people can go to borrow new books to read, the user may easily confuse the "Find Books" page with the "My Library" page and think that "My Library" is also a page he/she can go to in order to find new books to read.   On the "Friends" page, "My Library" is (perhaps accidentally) instead replaced with "My Reading List," which in my opinion better matches the real world.
   Friends page:

Friends	My Reading List	Books	Logout

   Other pages:

Friends	My Library	Find Books	Logout

7. **Flexibility and efficiency:** *Good***:** There is a "Recommend" button and "add to reading list" button on each book's page, which is good because the user does not need to go to a friend's page to recommend the book to her. On the other hand, from a friend's page you can recommend a book to that friend. Since there are a few ways to do it, the design is more efficient.

   Add To Reading List

   An individual book's page: Recommend

   An individual Friend's page: **Recommend a Book to Luly:** [   ] Send

Friends pages

8. **Recognition, not recall:** *Minor:* On each friend's profile page, there is a textbox allowing the user to type in a book to recommend. This textbox requires the user to use recall rather than recognition. The user needs to remember the entire title of the book, and not make any typos or mistakes when typing it in. Recall is much more difficult than recognition, so I would recommend modifying this textbox to allow for the user to use only recognition. For example, one option would be to replace this textbox with a dropdown menu or checklist which lists all the books the user has in his/her "library." Alternatively, a better suggestion may be to add an autocomplete feature to the textbox (which would be more efficient than a dropdown or checklist when the users have many books in their "libraries."

Recommend a Book to Luly: [textbox] [Send]

9. **Internal consistency:** *Major:* On each friend's page, it lists books the friend liked. However, the term "like" is not used anywhere else on the website. Is "like" the same as giving a recommendation?   If so, the terminology used should be the same across all pages of the website.
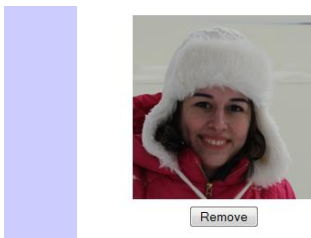
**Luly
Alcaraz**

Is reading Twilight, Artemis Fowl

Liked: Moby Dick

10. **Error reporting, diagnosis, and recovery:** *Major:* If the user accidentally deletes a friend, how does he/she recover from that error? Deleting a friend seems to be a permanent action, because there appears to be no capability to add friends, but with the click of a single button a friend can get deleted. In addition, the "Remove" button that deletes the friend is relatively close to the picture that the user can click on to view the friend's page. This allows for the user to easily click "Remove" accidentally, which is not good if the error is not recoverable.

[Remove]

Books pages

11. **Learnability, autonomy:** *Minor:* Can the user add books to the entire database? What if he/she read a book that is not in the database and wants to recommend it to a friend?

12. **Learnability:** *Minor:* It is not clear whether the rating for a book is the user's personal rating, or someone else's rating.

    Rating:
    ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

13. **Learnability, help and documentation:** *Minor:* In the "Comments" section of each book's page, it is not clear whether comments personal comments just for the user's own use, or whether the user's comments will be visible to his/her friends, or whether they will be visible to all users of the website even if they are not in the user's friends list. (It may be a nice feature to have an option to create a public comment for friends to see, or a private comment just for the user's own use.)

    Comments:

    [   ]

    [Add Comment]

Find Books page

14. **Learnability:** *Minor:* It is hard to know exactly how each of the features on the "Find Books" page works. The "Browse by letter" feature seems to not work yet, but when it does, will it show the user the books where the author's name starts with that letter, or the book's title, or both? Can the search box be used to search for author, title, and genre, and perhaps keywords, or is it only for book titles?
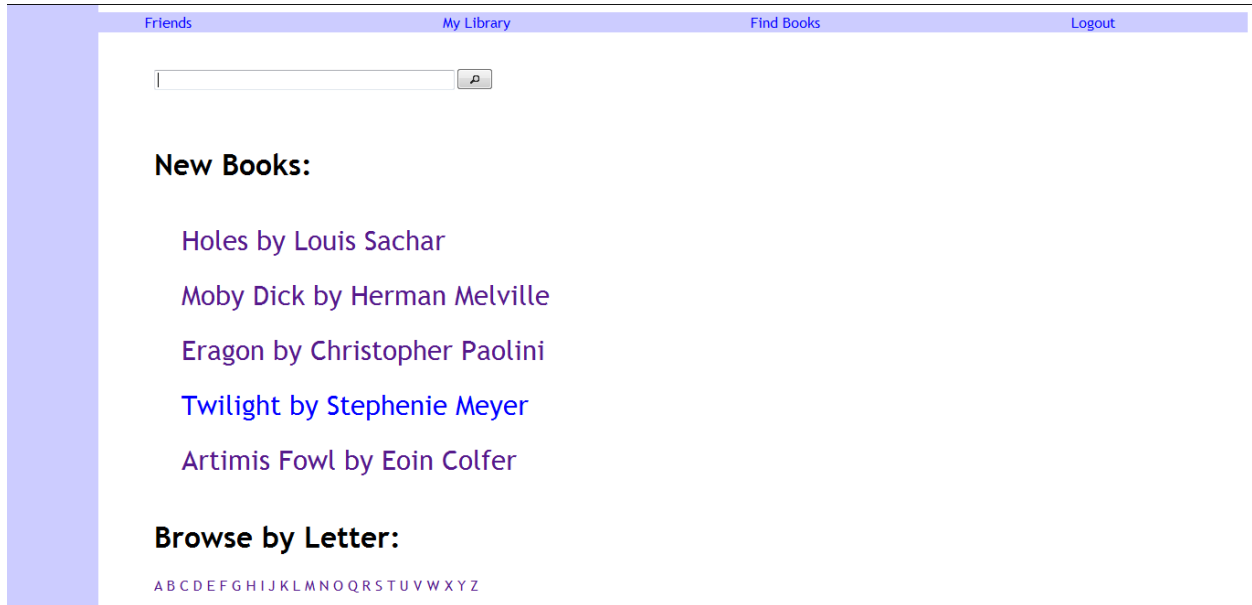
Friends	My Library	Find Books	Logout

[   ] [🔍]

New Books:

Holes by Louis Sachar

Moby Dick by Herman Melville

Eragon by Christopher Paolini

Twilight by Stephenie Meyer

Artimis Fowl by Eoin Colfer

Browse by Letter:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O Q R S T U V W X Y Z

15. **Flexibility and efficiency:** *Good*: On the "Find Books" page, there are several different methods offered to find books. The user can use the search box, or browse by letter, or just look at the entire list of books. I might suggest, however, perhaps also allowing the user to look at books by genre or other ways to organize the list of books when there are many books in the database.

Friends	My Library	Find Books	Logout

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My Library page

16. **Layout:** *Cosmetic:* On the "My Library" page, the vertical whitespace between the title "Reading" and the book the user is reading (Holes by Louis Sachar, on the current website) is larger than the vertical space between that book (Holes) and the next title, "Going to Read." One of the Gestalt principles is proximity, which means that when objects are closer together people think they belong together. Therefore, because of the amount of vertical space between the titles and the books listed, from the layout it appears that "Holes by Louis Sachar" actually should be grouped together with "Going to Read," which is inaccurate.

Reading:

Holes by Louis Sachar

Going to Read:

Moby Dick by Herman Melville

Already Read:

Eragon by Christopher Paolini