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Abstract

CollaborateArts.com is a website that will serve the entire UArts community. It is a way for the students who need help on their multidisciplinary projects and assignments to find the students with the necessary skills. Using a tailored search engine and flexible profiles, students can quickly and efficiently find the help they need from any department.

There is a growing problem in the University of the Arts. Students are becoming more and more introverted when it comes to their work. Maybe they fail to see the importance of collaboration now in preparation for the professional world. Maybe they are afraid to cross departmental boundaries due to unwarranted rivalries and stereotypes. No matter what the reason, what they need is a universally accessible resource to go to that brings students from all over the school together for the purpose of helping one another.

Audience

Students who can offer their services to this resource need to understand the importance of a diverse portfolio. They should want to show potential employers that they have been actively doing work related to their field outside of what is required from them in their classes. They should want to show they have the ability to do commissioned work for a client. Then, they see the value of sharing credit for collaborative work over the financial compensation they would expect once they have graduated.

Students looking for help on this resource should understand the value of delegating various aspects of a multidisciplinary project to those with expertise in that field. This not only saves them time but gives them assets to use that are much higher in quality than if they tried to do the work themselves. They may or may not be able to pay a commission to do the collaborator but they should be welcome to sharing the credit for a final work.

By interviewing students in and outside of my own department in my initial research, I have seen a willingness students have to exchange the services of their talents for the talents of another if they had the proper mediator.

CollaborateArts.com

CollaborateArts.com is a website that will serve the entire UArts community. It is a way for the students who need help on their multidisciplinary projects and assignments to find the students with the necessary skills.

For example:

- filmmakers who need illustration/animation work
- graphic designers who need supporting photography
- photographers who need a portfolio web site

The site's primary purpose is to facilitate an easy way for students to get in to contact with each other. Its most critical functions are in the effectiveness of the user profiles and efficiency of searching for those profiles.

Beyond this, the site can also be used to facilitate communication between members. Members can use the site to advertise a general notice, or communicate directly to particular members about commissioning work through private messages and public forums.

The site should also be an information resource for those that need general advice on their projects by referencing a wiki knowledge database. Students can use this to publish their own articles and tutorials, or to refer to other online resources of information.

By using online facilities students are already used to on social networks such as facebook, and wikipedia, the site is easy to adapt to and has the potential to grow very quickly in popularity.

Persona

The branding of the site is critical to give users a clear picture of its principles. I am currently working with a graphic designer to devise the best way to accomplish this. The title CollaborateArts.com immediately creates a natural association between collaboration and the arts.

One of the major advantages to this site over similar online networks is the ability artists have to meet in person. Because this site is focused specifically on the University of the Arts, the users know they will have a geographical commonality with anyone they connect with that they wouldn't necessarily have in another network. Students can, and are encouraged to, arrange a meeting in the lab or equipped studio to help each other in person.

The promotion for the site will take the form of physical posters and press releases through The promotion of the site is geared to raise awareness of the value of each users' individual talents, and for them to see them as gifts to be shared. It will encourage students to see this as a way to strengthen the art community at school and to break down mythical departmental boundaries.

Project Outline

The summer will be spent devising and creating the best possible functionality for the site. While keeping the core values the same, I will be considering ways to innovate the method of connection for students for usability.

My second semester of senior studio will be used to execute, observe and expand upon the site. The site will go through a period of testing with intended users. I will be meeting regularly with these users as well as other contributors to the administration of the site. These contributors include both moderators and designers I will recruit before the public launch. It is the job of the moderators to observe the social dynamics of the site, and to suggest how the site can evolve to become more usable.

As the site is successful, it may demand expansion to other art and design communities in Philadelphia. This would include, but not be limited to The Art Institute of Philadelphia, Temple University, Drexel University, Community College of Philadelphia, and Moore College of Art & Design.

Project Timeline Plan and Schedule

01/31/08	Pitched project idea for individual section
02/06/08	First presentation of the semester
02/14/08	Purchased technical and conceptual research materials
02/21/08	Meeting with Amanda Atkinson
03/01/08	Preliminary draft of site features
03/06/08	First branding meeting with Bianca
03/14/08	Interview script draft
03/16/08	One-on-one interviews
03/25/08	Alternate URL considerations
03/25/08	Meeting with DeAngela
03/30/08	Branding meeting with Bianca
04/16/08	Meeting with Gerianne
04/16/08	Second presentation of the semester
04/22/08	Meeting with Jeremy
05/12/08	Final presentation of the semester
05/14/08	Binder Complete
05/18 – 05/31	Redesign Implementation
06/01 – 06/30	Major Development Phase 1
07/01 – 07/31	Major Development Phase 2
08/01 – 08/24	Major Development Phase 3
08/24 – 09/04	Production Preparation
09/04/08	Recruitment/Teaser poster is posted
09/04 – 09/19	Active recruiting
09/19/08	Kick-start meeting with user testers/moderators/designers
09/26/08	Meeting with test site team
10/03/08	Meeting with test site team
10/10/08	Meeting with test site team
10/17/08	Meeting with test site team; Launch anticipation poster posted
10/24/08	Final meeting with test site team; Site Launch
10/31/08	Meeting with production site team
11/07/08	Meeting with production site team
11/14/08	Meeting with production site team
11/21/08	Meeting with production site team
11/28/08	Meeting with production site team
12/05/08	Meeting with production site team
12/12/08	Meeting with production site team
12/19/08	Meeting with production site team; Semester End?

Conceptual Research

Barabasi, Albert-Laszlo. Linked. Plume, 2003

Preece, Jenny. Online Communities. Wiley, 2000

Renninger, K. Ann and Wesley Shumar. Building Virtual Communities. Cambridge University Press, 2002

For my topic research I am focusing on themes of anthropology in relationship to online social networks. The purpose of this to give me insight on social patterns within micro-cultures. From this I can better understand how people identify themselves and how they seek out others in online communities. I can also learn how to better create and conduct effective surveys from which I can gather more data from potential users. These books offer insight on the adaptation of anthropological theory to the communities of the online world.

Technology Research

For this project I will be using PHP and MySQL for my web development because I am already well-versed in these technologies.

Zervaas, Quentin. Practical Web 2.0 Applications with PHP. Apress, 2008

This book offers a from-the-ground-up approach to creating community-based networking sites for advanced programmers. It also utilizes preexisting libraries to expedite the process.

Riordan, Rebecca M. Designing Effective Database Systems. Addison-Wesley Professional, 2005

I find this book to be a little dry, but a definitive resource on the theory and practicality of creating databases that are as efficient as they are functional.

Anthropological

As a facilitator of online connection, this website is solely sustained by the needs of the parties involved. Analyzing those needs and the means to cater to them is essential to its commencement and its survival.

Atkinson, Amanda: Graduate of Anthropology at Brandeis University

Amanda Atkinson has graduated from Brandeis University with a degree in Anthropology. She is currently a student of the University of the Arts for Exhibition Planning and Design, and is very generous with her time. Amanda has been and will continue to be available to give me critiques about this execution of this website as well as any surveys I will conduct.

Bartocci, Gerianne: Anthropologist at Electronic Ink

Gerianne Bartocci is a practicing anthropologist in the human factors department at Electronic Ink. She specializes in ethnography and cognitive anthropology. Gerianne has been and will continue to be available to give me critiques about this execution of this website as well as any surveys I will conduct.

Surveys & Interviews

My initial surveying has shown that there is not only a need for this community but that students of this school are liberal towards the concept of ownership of a project. The students I have interviewed have said they believe credit for a project should be freely shared between all contributing members. This is very encouraging of a site that will depend on humility over pride. I have also gotten positive feedback on the perception that their abilities are resources to be shared. This gives justification and focus to the branding and name of the site.

As I apply more and more focus to the site and its features, I will continue to survey my intended audience. From these other researching goals may emerge.

User Testing

Once I have a more complete sense of all the features and functionalities students are looking for in this site, I will draw up a mock site to present to sample sets of students from different departments. The purpose of this is to measure both its usability (does it meet the needs of its users) and its ease of use (can it be used efficiently with no outside direction).

The results of the mock site will undoubtedly require several permutations.

Current Models of Comparison

I will be looking into popular community sites as well as profile searching sites, to analyze what they do right and what they do wrong.

Facebook and MySpace are very successful community based websites. From these I can analyze their profiling/searching strategies and what it takes to get people excited about a community. Where this site differs from the two, and those like it, is its purpose directed towards utility and not superficial social status building. Also because I am not trying to create a self-contained community, but rather a terminal by which people find each other.

I can also study UArtsCareers, CareerBuilder.com, Monster.com and LinkedIn.com as successful sites for facilitating efficient profiles and searching techniques. This site differs from these types of sites because it is focus on free to low cost freelance work and small projects, rather than professional endeavors. Also because it is focused on the select demographics of students and Philadelphians. I believe this selectiveness will make the site more attractive to those who have felt like a number, lost in those mass communities.

Project Technical Specifications

This project will have me working mostly with PHP and MySQL as they are open source, very flexible and have a very large following. There are a lot of resources for both of them online and in textbooks.

For this project I have also been using the Zend Framework to build the site. It uses the very popular and flexible Model-Controller-View method for the organization of site content. It also includes several libraries useful for Web 2.0 sites that use user accounts, profiles and tagging.

Project Budget

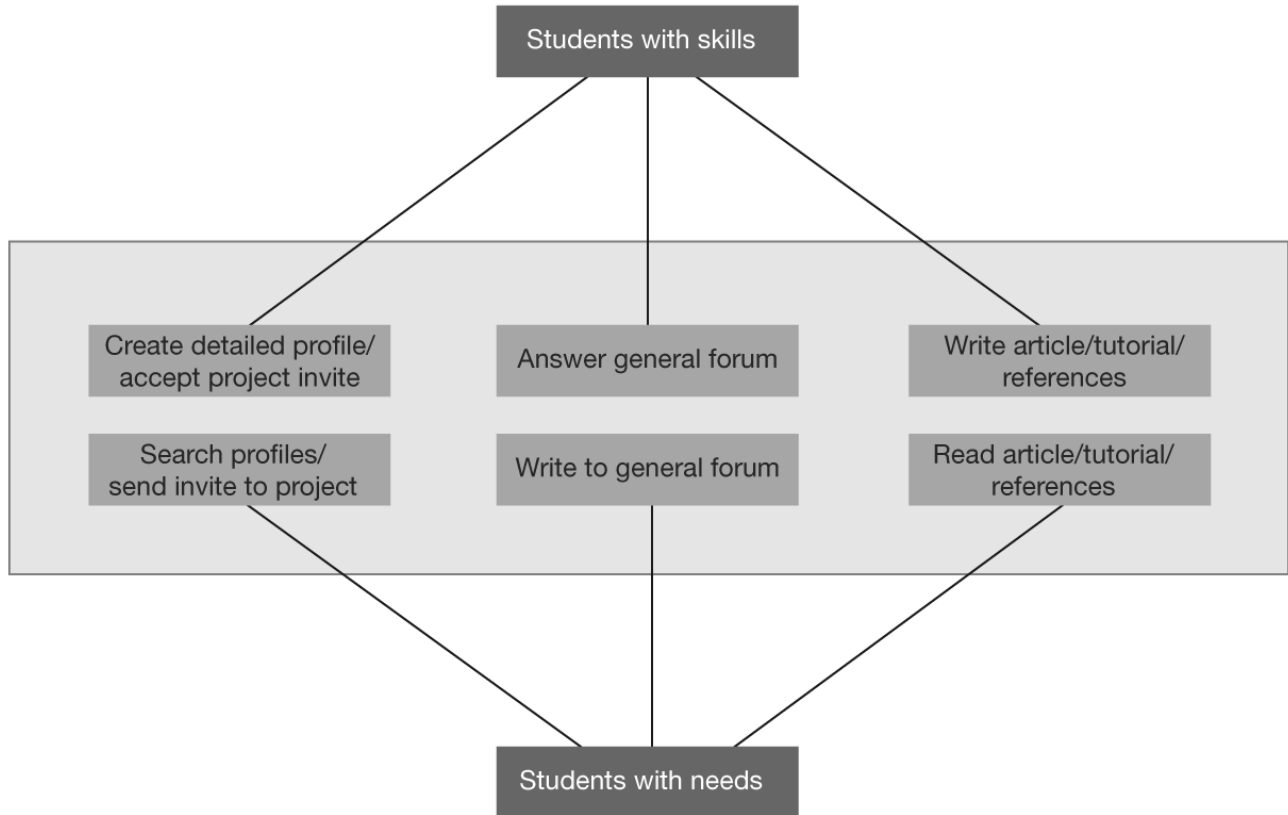
I will be hosting this website myself from a previously established hosting plan. I had to pay \$9.95 for a year of hosting the domain collaboratearts.com. As long as I decide to keep this a website project, I will be adding a unique IP and security certificate to this domain. The unique IP will cost \$47.40 per year and the security certificate will cost \$90.96 per year. This means the base cost of hosting this website will total \$148.31 per year.

My hosting plan currently allows 318.68 GB of space for all my domains and grows 2 GB per week. If this site requires me to go over that it will cost me \$0.01 per MB. The plan also allows for 6.24 TB of bandwidth for all my domains and grows 40 GB per week. If the site requires me to go over that it will cost me \$0.10 per GB.

My hope is that I can find moderators, designers and user testers who are willing to donate their time because they believe in the site. I will also list their contribution in the credits of the site, so they could use this project in upcoming portfolios. However, if I cannot get students to volunteer, I am willing to pay a small stipend per student for these services.

If the costs for the site escalate dramatically over the base hosting costs, between overage charges and the hired work, I will consider ways to use the site to fund itself. I can setup a Paypal donation link in the site, so that students who use the site can show their appreciation. If the site is popular enough to merit these extra charges, it may be worth it to include sparse advertisement. I would first petition for advertisement from the school, and its students, who want to announce events. If this is still not enough to cover costs, I will also accept advertisement from online ad services.

Project Mapping (conceptual and tangible)



Statement

My mission is to create an online community that will facilitate the initialization of a mutually beneficial relationship between students with skills in digital media and design and the directors of small to large projects that require a contribution in their skill set.

Intended Audience

Students

Underclassmen from local schools with skills in the creation or manipulation of digital media or design. These students will typically have little experience working in their intended field, so they will be eager to grow their portfolio and work experience. It's not just about what they can do, but what they are passionate about.

Local Schools will include, but are not limited to:

University of the Arts, The Art Institute of Philadelphia, Temple University, Drexel University, Community College of Philadelphia, Moore College of Art & Design

Project Directors

These can be non-profits or small businesses in the local area looking for passionate individuals without a professional-level salary expectation. They are small communities in which the potential student will be a valued member. They have more holistic needs than a larger bureaucracy including getting advice and education on methods and procedures in the students field of interest.

These can also be upperclassmen working on multidisciplinary projects for which they need contribution outside their own field of expertise. For example a flash programmer that needs an illustrator, or photographer that needs a portfolio website. These upperclassmen would be willing to share credit for valued contribution.

Research

As a facilitator of online communication, this website is solely sustained by the needs of the parties involved. Analyzing those needs and the means to cater to them is essential to its birth and survival.

Topic Research

- Referencing books and publications on job placement.
- Interviewing career counselors, social workers, department of labor employees, human resource representatives and small to large business employers

- A detailed analysis of the online and offline process of job placement (including Job Fairs, Craig's List, Krop, College Career Services, AIGA etc.)

Surveys & Interviews

- I will first need to do research that will measure the necessity of this service. Questions will relate to:
What are students/directors using now?
What are the biggest obstacles for contact between students and directors?
When are these services needed?
- Next I will analyze the searching methods of both students looking for jobs and directors looking for work. I plan to compare what they are actually looking for and the vocabulary they use to query digital search engines for it.
- From the above other researching goals may emerge.

User Testing

- When I have a sense of needs and methods I will draw up a mock site with general functionality to present to a sample set of both students and directors. The purpose of this is to measure its usability (does it meet enough of a need to be used) and its ease of use (can it be used efficiently with no direction).
- The results of the mock site will undoubtedly require several permutations.

Promotion

- Buzz for the site will begin as soon as I begin interviewing and surveying the prospective audiences. I also intend on promoting the site through facilities such as Facebook, MySpace, Fliers in common areas around the schools and networking contacts.
- I also intend on campaigning in person around schools and local businesses
- There may be a launch party for the site, if times and funding allow.

Emergent Education

- I intend for this site to be resource of education as well as utility. I want to provide literature on the site to advise users of both parties during the process. Some of this will be “required” reading integrated into the registration process, while other literature will be featured articles to be read at the user's leisure. The content for the

articles will be written by myself from my topic research, and others will be written by experts I interviewed.

- I also intend for this site to promote a sense of altruism and community in the local area.

Proposal

Website for students of the University of the Arts and Philadelphia schools to find help from each other for collaborative projects.

Site Functions

The main purpose of this site is to help students find freelance assistance on projects that involve factors or assets outside of their field. For example:

- filmmakers who need illustration/animation work
- graphic designers who need supporting photography
- photographers who need a portfolio web site

Therefore, it's primary goal is to facilitate an easy way for students to get in to contact with each other. Its most critical functions are in the effectiveness of the user profiles and efficiency of searching for those profiles.

Beyond this, the site can also be used to facilitate communication between members. Members can use the site to advertise a general notice, or communicate directly to particular members about commissioning work through private messages and public forums.

I also want to make allow the site to be an information resource for those that need general advice on their projects by referencing either a common message board or a Wiki-style knowledge database.

Intended Audience

Students offering their services to the site understand the importance of a diverse portfolio. They want to show potential employers that they have been actively doing work related to their field outside of what is required from them in their classes. They want to show they have the ability to do commissioned work for a client. Thus, they see the value of sharing credit for collaborative work over the financial compensation they would expect once they have graduated.

Students looking for help on the site understand the value of delegating various aspects of a multidisciplinary project to those with expertise in that field. This not only saves them time but gives them assets to use that are much higher in quality than if they tried to do the work themselves. They are not able to pay the salary of a professional to do the work but understand that they can get good work out of their fellow peers.

By interviewing students in and outside of my own department in my initial research, I have recognized a willingness students have to exchange the services of their talents for the talents of another.

This project will first be implemented into the community here at the University of the

Arts. As it grows in popularity, and as the bugs that come out of field testing get worked out, it will be expanded to include schools such as The Art Institute of Philadelphia, Temple University, Drexel University, Community College of Philadelphia, and Moore College of Art & Design.

Title and Branding

I am putting a lot of focus on branding the site to give users a clear picture of its principles. I am currently working with a graphic designer to devise the best way to accomplish this. The working title and domain is: OurGiftsOurCommunity.org. In this, I want to encourage the value of doing projects for credit over financial gain. I want to raise awareness of the value of each users' individual talents, and for them to see them as gifts to be shared. I want to encourage people to see this as a way to create community with others outside of their typical departments.

Second Semester

My second semester of senior studio will be used to execute, observe and expand upon the site. When the site is put into execution, it will need to be moderated for technical and conceptual adjustments. These are the unpredictable bugs that develop out of the implementation of any new system.

I will also be using this time to expand the site to the greater community, including more of Philadelphia's colleges. This expansion will probably require me to commission the help of more moderators as well as exploring other financial solutions to manage bandwidth costs.

Project Change Log with commentary

01/31/08 – First Pitch

This is when I first pitched the basic idea for my project in the individual section of Senior Studio. I proposed the following core concepts of my project:

- a website community
- connects Non-Profits with students in Philadelphia's
- encouraging the importance of credit, altruism, and building a portfolio

It gained mixed reactions. The students were convinced there were too many similar communities already in place. It was recommended that I look into some of those examples.

02/06/08 – First Presentation

This is when I did a formal presentation in the joint section of Senior Studio. I better formalized the ideas I had, and created a plan of research and execution. I stated the following abstract:

“My mission is to create an online community that will facilitate the initialization of a mutually beneficial relationship between students with skills in digital media and design and the directors of small to large projects that require a contribution in their skill set.”

I also concluded that the promotion of the site would contribute a great deal to its success, and thus I would have to make precise decisions about its brand and identity. It mostly received negative feedback largely due to the fact that there was not a lot of change between the informal presentation and this one. In retrospect, I could have expressed more of my research of similar websites in the presentation and I could have explained my concept better.

02/21/08 – Meeting with Amanda Akinson

I wanted to meet someone with anthropological education. I completely laid out my theory and plan for her. I mostly wanted to get advice on how to compose an effective survey, but the feedback she gave me on the project as a whole was the most influential. Although she didn't suggest this directly, by the end of the meeting I decided I wanted to remove the businesses from my target audiences. The businesses would be very hard to promote to and get active in the community. I was afraid this lack of focus in the demographics would water down the results. She also gave me some valuable resources to look into.

03/01/08 – Preliminary Draft

I created a preliminary draft of the second major iteration of this project. I laid out the site areas of guest access and authorized access with basic descriptions.

03/25/08 – Meeting with DeAngela

In my meeting with DeAngela we went over my recent interviewing, URL considerations and jury review. She gave me valuable advice on what to take from the interviews, what to think about with the URL, a plan of action with user testing, and some more valuable resources.

04/16/08 – Meeting with Gerianne

I met with Gerianne to review my project plan to date. She gave me valuable advice on further interviewing and promotion, as well as how to assess the community as it grows. She really got me thinking about the evolutionary nature of the Web 2.0 quality of the site.

04/16/08 – Second Presentation

I presented a site that would start very basically and very soon, that would focus strictly on students getting help from other students. In this I also expressed a definite plan to induct the surrounding Philadelphia schools in the second semester for production. From some the feedback I received, I realized I still were not making my ideas too clear, and the ideas that were clear were still too broad and available. My classmates also had negative reactions to launching such a minimal BETA site.

04/22/08 – Meeting with Jeremy

Jeremy also had a negative outlook on such a minimal BETA. He got me thinking a lot more about the usability of the site and suggested I should include more innovation in the features. The connection and communication potentials of the site were too critical to leave to traditional models.

Project Mid-point Assessment (end of first semester)

By the end of the time of writing my final presentation I had not devised any new plans for innovation that Jeremy suggested. This was made most apparent in the feedback I received. The general consensus was that I still haven't come up with anything new. I thought it might be acceptable that the core purpose was justifiably needed, I was going to create a more solid foundation than a minimal BETA, the site would have room to grow and innovate, and because although some services of the site are available elsewhere, there is yet no site that aggregates them together and focuses specifically on the UArts community.

However, it appears I still need to work on innovation. I need to invent an interface that fits specifically for this purpose rather than forcing it into preconceived conventions. While I have the time, in the next couple of weeks, this will be my primary goal. I will try to keep in contact with my multimedia teachers, and anthropological resources during this time to get feedback. I need to find a balance between starting from scratch and creating something the average student couldn't understand, and sticking to a construct that is doomed for failure.

Personal Bio and Significant Previous Project Summary

I cannot describe who I am today, without simultaneously describing the development of my religious faith. I was raised in a Christian household, and a Christian elementary school. I didn't know much about Christianity except what was told to me. Religion was more of a compulsive activity, than a defining trait of my life. For high school my parents gave me the choice of private or public education, and I chose to go to the public High School of Engineering and Science. Here, I found an attraction to diverse, multi-cultural environments for work and socializing. I had a computer programming class in each year of high school. I found I had a knack for it that many others did not, and I found that I genuinely enjoyed it. Beginning a computer science degree at Drexel seemed the logical choice, but I didn't really see much purpose in it.

In college was when I really started critically looking at my religion, and examining alternative western and eastern faiths. In the end, I found the roots of Christianity to be the most genuine to me, even if it is sometimes misrepresented. I began to live my life based on its foundations of morality and faith rather than occasional dogmatic practices. From this, I took a critical look at the direction of my professional career and how I could apply it do positive compassionate work.

At this same time I was taking on a co-op internship for a non-profit called HIASPA. Sophomore computer science students take whatever they can get, and this just happened to be in web design. I fell in love with the process and found it to be a way to make a positive impact in others' lives from behind the scenes. This web design co-op led me to another in Drexel's Printing and Mailing department. Through this experience I learned that to be an effective web designer, I needed a more focused education in design and interface, then I was getting at Drexel.

The University of the Arts has taught me so much about design both visual and experiential in physical and digital interfaces. Beyond the invaluable applicable education I received in visual communication and web design, multimedia classes have all taught me how to creatively look at interactive design as a medium with limitless potential for profound experiences.

My first collaboration project was in my Information Concepts class where a group composed of various design and communication majors composed a mock news program by coordinating our abilities. In my Collaboration and Spontaneity class a group of us creatively worked together to make a template for a school news website. In my Game Design Studio a group of us split the responsibilities of creating an active flash game. In my Interactive Sound and Video course a group of us creatively devised a musical interface and performance. In my Web Design Studio I created a plan and working template for a student-run department website portal.

With this education and the principals of community and altruism from my faith, I decided to base my senior project on what I could do with the potential of the emerging Web 2.0 and social networking culture, to satisfy a growing need for people to connect with each other for practical and positive purposes.