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From Bits to Beds: Design and Implementation of a Hotel Booking System A Coding Project

Alexa Gilman
Indiana State University

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Alexa Gilman

Honors College, Indiana State University

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Thesis Advisor: Mr. Luke May

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Abstract

This thesis presents a comprehensive hotel booking system designed and implemented to showcase the transition "From Bits to Beds". There are two main motivations behind this project: firstly, to provide users with a user-friendly and efficient platform for booking accommodations. Secondly, it serves as a great learning opportunity, providing hands-on practice with coding, collaboration with teammates, and exposure to real-world challenges. The system utilizes technologies such as JavaScript, Express.js, and HTML/CSS to offer features like browsing hotels, filtering options, user authentication, and booking management. The implementation of this project demonstrates a successful integration of backend and frontend components, ensuring reliability and scalability. This project provides awareness of the transformative potential of digital solutions in revolutionizing the hospitality industry by streamlining the booking process and enhancing customer service experiences. As we explore the design choices, technical considerations, and future directions of this project, readers can discover where creativity meets inspiration, opening up a digital world full of endless possibilities.

Keywords: hotel booking system, user-friendly platform, JavaScript, HTML/CSS, Express.js

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Introduction

In today's fast-paced digital landscape, the demand for efficient online booking systems is more prevalent than ever. As travelers increasingly rely on digital platforms to plan their accommodations, the need for sophisticated and user-friendly solutions has become vital. This project embarks on the journey "from bits to beds" by designing and implementing a hotel reservation system that captures the spirit of modern hospitality. From browsing and filtering options to user authentication and booking management, every aspect of the system is crafted to deliver convenience and efficiency.

Purpose

This thesis serves two important purposes. The first is to develop a hotel booking platform that revolutionizes the way users interact with accommodation services. This involves creating a feature-rich system that simplifies the booking process, enhances user experience, and provides a seamless journey for travelers. The second is to serve as a learning experience. This project offers valuable insights into the complexities of software development, collaboration, and problem-solving in a practical context.

Motivation

The motivation behind this project comes from the desire to apply technologies such as JavaScript, Express.js, and HTML/CSS to deliver a project that exceeds the standards of the hospitality industry. The decision to make my project one within the hospitality industry is deeply rooted in my passion for travel and an appreciation for the magic of hospitality. My inspiration was drawn from personal experiences exploring different destinations and feeling the

unparalleled service of renowned companies. In particular, the enchanting world of Disney served as motivation, showcasing the power of immersive storytelling, exceptional customer service, and smooth guest experiences. I was driven by the vision of making a digital oasis where travelers can embark on their own unforgettable journeys. This project aspires to capture the essence of adventure, discovery, and hospitality. The goal is to transport users to a world where every interaction is an immersive and delightful experience. The combination of personal passion, industry insight, and technical skill fuels the pursuit of this project.

Technical Consideration

In tackling the challenge of developing a comprehensive hotel booking system, several technical considerations came into play, ranging from the complexity of the problem to the selection of appropriate technologies for implementation. Many of these decisions were made with the assistance of my faculty advisor, Mr. Luke May.

Complexity of the Problem

The hotel booking system presents a multifaceted challenge that extends beyond mere frontend design. It involves unified integration of frontend and backend components, ensuring efficient communication between the user interface and the underlying database. Managing user authentication, processing booking requests, and maintaining data integrity pose significant challenges that require careful planning and implementation. At the frontend level, complexities arise from the need to create an intuitive and visually appealing user interface that provides logical navigation and functionality. Design considerations include layout optimization for various devices and screen sizes, ensuring a visually satisfying appearance, and implementing interactive elements such as a login form, filtering options, and booking forms.

One of the key challenges of backend development is designing a scalable and reliable architecture that can accommodate fluctuations in user traffic and data volume. This requires careful consideration of database design, API (application programming interface) integration, and server-side processing to ensure optimal performance under varying load conditions. Handling user authentication and authorization is another critical aspect of backend development. Implementing secure login mechanisms, managing user sessions, and enforcing access to controls to protect sensitive data require adherence to industry best practices and security standards. Furthermore, the integration of external services and APIs introduces additional complexity. This may involve handling asynchronous operations, error handling, and implementing fallback mechanisms to mitigate service disruptions.

Addressing these complexities requires a holistic approach to system design and implementation, encompassing both frontend and backend development. By adopting an iterative development process and using modern tools and frameworks, developers can navigate the complexities of building a hotel booking system effectively. Continuous testing, feedback gathering, and optimization are integral parts of the development lifecycle, ensuring that the final product meets the desired quality standards and user expectations.

Using JavaScript, HTML, and CSS

The choice of technologies for this project revolves around the versatility and compatibility offered by web development frameworks. JavaScript, HTML, and CSS are the primary tools for building the frontend interface, offering a combination of flexibility and accessibility. JavaScript serves as the backbone of dynamic web applications, facilitating interactive elements and client-side functionality. While its syntax is similar to Python, it introduces nuances and conventions specific to web development. HTML and CSS complement

JavaScript by providing the structure and styling necessary for creating visually appealing and responsive web pages. HTML defines the layout and content structure, while CSS adds aesthetic enhancements and ensures consistency across different devices and screen sizes.

By using these technologies, developers can create an ideal user experience that integrates frontend design with backend functionality. These web development tools enhance productivity and enable developers to tackle complex challenges. The choice of JavaScript, HTML, and CSS for this project reflects a strategic approach to web development, emphasizing the importance of user-centric design and efficient backend architecture. Through careful consideration of technical requirements with Mr. Luke May and utilizing available resources, this project aims to deliver a robust and intuitive hotel booking system that meets the needs of modern travelers.

Project Overview

The hotel booking application is a simple yet comprehensive system that allows users to browse available hotels, view hotel details, and make bookings. It consists of a backend API built with Node.js and Express, as well as a client-side application built with JavaScript.

Overview of the Solution

The primary goal of the hotel booking application is to provide users with a convenient platform for booking hotel reservations, offering a user-friendly interface for interacting with the many features of the website. The key features include:

- *User Authentication:* Users can create accounts, login, and manage their bookings.
- *Hotel Browsing:* Users can view a list of featured hotels with detailed information.
- *Filtering Options:* Users can filter hotels based on price range, rating, and room type.
- *Booking Management:* Users can make new bookings and cancel existing ones.

Technical Implementation

Backend API *(`api/api.mjs`*).

The backend API is implemented using Express.js, a Node.js web application framework. It provides a set of RESTful endpoints for handling various operations related to users, hotels, and bookings. The API uses middleware for JSON parsing, setting headers, and logging incoming requests. Data storage is managed using a memory-based data store, allowing for easy retrieval of user, hotel, and booking data. The backend also includes data store files for managing user, hotel, and booking data, those files include:

- *`userStore.mjs`:* Manages user data and provides functions for Create, Read, Update, and Delete (CRUD) operations.
- *`hotelStore.mjs`:* Manages hotel data and provides functions for CRUD operations.
- *`bookingStore.mjs`:* Manages booking data and provides functions for CRUD operations.
- *`userDefault.json`:* Default JSON file for initializing user data.
- *`hotelDefault.json`:* Defaults JSON file for initializing hotel data.

Client-Side Application *(`client/app.mjs`*).

The client-side application is responsible for rendering the user interface and handling user interactions. It is built using JavaScript features and uses the Fetch API to communicate with the backend API asynchronously. The application provides functions for handling form submissions, toggling the visibility of user interface elements, and rendering hotel information dynamically based on user actions. Additional files on the client side include:

- *`client/api.mjs`:* Contains functions for making API requests from the client-side application.

- *`index.html`:* Defines the HTML structure of the website, along with HTML within app.mjs.
- *`style.css`:* Provides CSS styling for the client-side application, ensuring a visually appealing user experience.

Design Choices and Inspirations

In developing the hotel booking system, several design choices and inspirations guided the development process. These decisions encompassed both the frontend user interface design and the backend architecture.

Design Decisions

The decision to use web technologies in the project such as JavaScript, HTML, and CSS stemmed from the fact that web technology is everywhere, and it is very versatile in modern software development. The choice was influenced by the prevalence of web technologies across various platforms, including GitHub repositories and communication platforms like Microsoft Teams. Additionally, the abundance of job opportunities in web development further emphasized the practicality of using these technologies for the project.

Inspirations from Other Programs

Inspiration was drawn from many sources, most notably from projects created by Mr. Luke May, my faculty advisor. Exploring his lecture examples provided valuable guidance and resources for the development process. His ‘Fakebook’ created in the CS 479 Web API midterm is a website consisting of fake users and their detailed information. This served as an educational tool to become comfortable in interacting with a web API. It has taught me how to utilize and become familiar with JavaScript, HTML, and CSS. I used this tutorial to build the foundation of my project.

Additionally, Mr. May's 'To-Do-It' application featured in his CS 479 final exam inspired the backend architecture of my hotel booking system. This to-do-it project showcased the implementation of a backend application similar to what we envisioned for my hotel booking application. Through this tutorial, key concepts and common practices in backend development were discovered, informing my design and implementation of the backend components. My application has been shaped by practical considerations, educational resources, and insights derived from my personal experience along with Mr. May's instructional materials.

Additional Work and Future Directions

As with any software project, there are opportunities for further development and refinement. In my hotel booking application, I have faced many challenges and have ideas for further development and improvements.

Challenges

During the development phase, several challenges developed that impeded the functionality of certain features. One notable challenge was encountered with the hotel filtering system. The system failed to return any results despite successfully saving the user-entered data in the filter form. Additionally, upon creating a booking, a 401 error was encountered in the inspection console, indicating an unauthorized access issue. To address these challenges, a thorough examination of the code was required as well as a debugging process. Collaborative efforts between myself and Mr. May have been crucial to the success of the program.

Further Development

Looking ahead, there are many opportunities for additional development and improvement of the hotel booking application. One immediate future change will be implementing a separate login and create account page/functionality, as well as including a quick

hidden method for administrator authentication. This addition will enhance the application's security and user management capabilities. Furthermore, the incorporation of client-side routing capabilities is another consideration. Client-side routing enables the mimicking of URL routing within a single-web page application, facilitating bookmarking and sharing of specific application states. By breaking down different sections of the application into distinct routes, such as Home, Login, Create User, Search, My Bookings, About, and Contact Us, users can navigate the application more intuitively and efficiently. Lastly, optimizing the code organization of both the client and server-side components is essential for maintaining codebase scalability and readability. As the application grows in complexity, modularizing the codebase by grouping related functionalities into separate files or directories can mitigate code clutter and improve maintainability.

Conclusion

The development of the hotel booking system represents a significant undertaking in both technological innovation and practical learning. By embarking on the journey "From Bits to Beds," the project has successfully demonstrated the design and implementation of a hotel reservation system. It serves as a valuable platform for understanding and employing established principles in web development. The project's motivation, deeply rooted in a passion for travel and hospitality, guided the design and implementation process, drawing inspiration from personal experiences and educational resources provided by Mr. Luke May. Through the exploration of lecture examples and instructional materials, foundational knowledge in web development was acquired, laying the groundwork for the creation of a comprehensive hotel booking platform.

Technical considerations played a crucial role in addressing the multifaceted challenges of backend and frontend development. Leveraging technologies such as JavaScript, Express.js, HTML, and CSS, the project seamlessly integrated user authentication, hotel browsing, filtering options, and booking management functionalities. By adopting a fully comprehensive approach to system design and implementation, the project has achieved reliability and scalability, ensuring a good user experience. Design choices and inspirations from other programs created by Mr. May informed the project's direction and architecture. From the utilization of JavaScript, HTML, and CSS to the backend design inspired by instructional materials, the project exemplifies a synthesis of practical learning and creative innovation. As we look to the future, the project presents growth and strengthening opportunities. Challenges encountered during development represent the importance of collaborative problem-solving and debugging processes. Future directions include implementing additional functionalities such as separate login pages, client-side routing, and improving code organization. This project embodies the intersection of passion, education, and innovation, standing as a testament to the endless potential of thoughtful design and technical expertise. With the possibilities of digital solutions, we can enhance the booking experience and shape the future of the hospitality industry.