WCIW/D

World Creativity & Innovation Week / Day - Leading the Technology Team for an International Creativity Organization Through a Global Pandemic, Exponential Growth, and Beyond

Meta Reflection

This is a project that began my freshman year, not too long before the pandemic. It began as an honors experience that did not go nearly in the way that I had expected it to go, in many ways. However, at the suggestion of my former honors advisor, LeRon Collier, I turned it into an honors with distinction project, and it ultimately turned out to be one of the most meaningful experiences of my college career.

I was actually drawn to WCIW/D long before I knew it existed, in the sense that I became aware of Miami's creativity and innovation climate before I became a student, when I saw posts on Instagram about Creativity City and some organization called "Igoodea". In reading more about it, and having recently taken a stronger, more formal interest in creativity, I knew that it was something I wanted to be involved in. Little did I know that the founder of World Creativity & Innovation Week / Day was planning to sell WCIW/D to the very university from which I had just accepted an admission offer. What a lovely coincidence.

I can't continue this story without first taking a moment to thank all of the wonderful faculty I spoke to at Make It Miami, including David Eyman, of the entrepreneurship department, who told me wonderful things about the entrepreneurship program at Miami, and the creativity and innovation track certificate that I could choose to pursue in my time here. It was because of that day on April 5th, 2019 that I ultimately decided to attend Miami, and despite the unbelievable events that have unfolded over the past few years, I'm glad I did.

I stumbled upon World Creativity & Innovation Week / Day by intentional accident. It came after a series of choices I made, including the decision to come to Make It Miami in the first place, just a few days after a family emergency. I had a gut feeling about it, and despite my hesitation, I listened. I don't think I would have chosen Miami if I hadn't come to Make It Miami, and that thought still haunts me to this day.

My first semester, I chose to apply to the entrepreneurship program, despite being a computer science major with no experience in business whatsoever, beyond a business class I took my freshman year of high school. It was in my interview with Dr. Jim Friedman and Kasey Woomer that I was introduced to the name "Hunter Saturn" and an organization called "Igoodea", which I knew essentially nothing about beforehand, except that they were meeting the following Wednesday night in room 0032, in the basement of Farmer. I showed up. I joined the organization, and it was in those meetings that I heard whispers about something called "World Creativity & Innovation Week" and the opportunity we might have to work with it. Just like with Igoodea, I had no idea what it was, except what it was called, but it sounded interesting, and when given the opportunity, I showed up.

World Creativity & Innovation Week is an international creativity organization which encourages people around the world to celebrate their creativity to make their lives and communities better. It is paired with World Creativity & Innovation Day, which is a UN-recognized day of observance, which encourages the use of creativity and innovation to address the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Together, they form World Creativity & Innovation Week / Day, or WCIW/D.

My goals within WCIW/D have, of course, been heavily influenced by the mission of the organization, but also by a semi-shared vision of what the organization could be in the future and the impact it could have in the world. Given my technical background, my main role in this team has been to support the organization in terms of its technological needs, seen and unseen.

I've drawn a lot of inspiration from our international board of advisors and ambassadors over the years, but also from my own observations about the direction the organization is heading,

in terms of growth and what the various internal teams need in order to do their jobs more effectively. Friedman has frequently said that we are a team of firefighters, and my task, as a member of the tech team, is to handle the website, but my job, as a member of the headquarters team, is to put out the fire. I've taken this to mean that where possible, it's important to help out the HQ team as a whole, to address their needs, because after all, we're all working towards the same goals.

This firefighter metaphor fits well, except for the fact that, metaphorically speaking, we're more interested in sparking fires than we are in putting them out. Creative sparks and trail blazing are commonplace among us, and we take pride in that.

In the beginning of my experience with the tech team, I had been trying to use plugins to solve our problems, in the interest of keeping things as simple as possible, while ensuring that anyone who worked on the team would be able to understand and manipulate the system. This proved to be more difficult than I thought it would be. Plugins are often designed for very specific purposes and they often aren't designed to make it easy to look behind the scenes and make them do things they weren't specifically designed to do. Getting past that bias and choosing to develop custom software really opened the doors to us, giving us the freedom to innovate in the ways that benefited our specific needs and use cases.

One of the largest challenges that I faced in working on this project was probably the bureaucracy, albeit relatively minimal compared to many organizations. Beyond the typical issues presented by a few bad actors, the organization frequently had to play politics and wasn't always as open to risks as I would have liked, but in understanding the organization's goals and priorities, I cannot say that I'm truly surprised. Some change needs to be made more delicately, especially when it has the potential to upset people if rushed.

A larger challenge than bureaucracy has undoubtedly been managing the responsibilities I have within the organization with my responsibilities as a student. To say the least, pursuing two bachelor's degrees, a couple of certificates, and a master's degree, while working with WCIW/D, has not been easy. However, the amount of real world experience I have obtained in working with this organization has been unparalleled. It has prepared me to deal with all kinds of situations and uncertainties, which I am sure will continue to benefit me in the future.

I've worked with many people over the years of working on this project, many of whom have come and gone. It tends to go that way when working within an organization in a university setting, as people join and leave the organization, and as people graduate and move on to the next chapters of their lives. I'm fortunate to have been with the organization since the beginning, back in late 2019 and early 2020, when Miami university first took over WCIW/D. I still remember the rather impressive team we had in starting the organization during the pandemic my first year, and every wonderful person who has joined us since then.

Over the years, I have been reminded by a simple fact: The work that I do, I do for the world. The more people who return to their lives having been inspired and empowered by the creativity that humanity has to offer, both in solving the world's largest challenges and in everyday life, the better. I have made it my mission to support these people in using their creativity to make the world a better place. I've made it my mission to use my understanding

and skills within computer science, software engineering, and design thinking to provide support, resources, and information that helps them to keep doing what they do. I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to engage with some of these amazing people and witness the incredible work that they're doing.

I've wanted something like this in my life for a long time. For what feels like forever. I know that I want the work that I do in the future to have a large, positive impact on the world. I love the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the challenge that comes with them. I believe creativity is the secret sauce that will enable us to achieve them, maybe not once and for all, but to make measurable, meaningful progress, improving over time.

In doing this project, I have learned so much. I've learned about software engineering, global and international relations, design, entrepreneurship, and of course, creativity & innovation. I've learned a lot about myself, too. It gives me great hope for the future, to see how people have come together around creativity during one of the most challenging times of the last century. It shows how resilient humans can be in tackling some difficult circumstances.

Even with my gratitude, I must acknowledge this experience was not without sacrifice, in ways I dare not try to express in words. But the things most worth doing are very rarely easy. In acknowledgment of my own sacrifices, I cannot help but recognize and acknowledge the sacrifices, known and unknown, that others have made to make this experience possible, and I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Jim Friedman, Marci Segal, Ambassador I. Rhonda King, the United Nations, our HQ team, international board, and everyone who has made this organization what it is today, and what it will be in the future.

Year 1

(2019 - 2020)

Backstory

I was excited. I was going to be joining the team of students who worked on Creativity City, the annual celebration of creativity that Miami University put on in the Spring of each year. I had more recently taken a special interest in creativity and innovation within the educational landscape, and I had been watching the activities in Creativity City on their Instagram account previously.

After pestering Friedman several times about World Creativity & Innovation Week, which sounded interesting to me (despite knowing absolutely nothing about it except for the name), he included my name on an email list that went out to students to invite us to an introductory meeting to be held at 7:30 am on Wednesday, December 4th, 2019. I cringed at the 7:30 am meeting time, but I showed up. At the meeting, I learned a little more about the organization. Despite having wanted to join and having expressed interest in the technology team, which was tasked with building the website, I was placed on the events team for Creativity City.

We went home for Winter break, and in the first couple of weeks after returning to campus, I met with the events team, which was tasked with brainstorming a long list of ideas for what our Creativity City celebration would look like, on campus, in the month of April. I worked with other students in Igoodea Creatives to dream big about the celebrations we could put on, coming up with crazy ideas, including President Crawford parachuting from a helicopter with thousands of post-it notes pouring down over the city of Oxford. Our organization persuaded the city of Oxford to proclaim itself as "Creativity City" for the week (April 15th - 21st). We thought we would be there to receive the proclamation.

As time went on, it became more unclear as to what we would do as a university regarding COVID-19. Other universities had already canceled in-person classes, and it seemed we would be next. On March 10th, we all received an email that changed the course of our semester. In person classes were canceled, and the team of people working with WCIW and Igoodea were left with a million questions about what would become of World Creativity & Innovation Week. I had found out right before I was scheduled to meet with the technology team, which I had been selected to join just a week and a half prior to the email going out.

How I Ended Up on the Technology and Website Team:

I had been sitting in the conference room (FSB 2079) for our weekly WCIW meeting at 7:15 am on Wednesday, February 19th, as I had done almost every Wednesday since the new semester started, and the question and opportunity of who would run the <u>website</u> when Jordyn graduated came up. I had been interested in helping with that for a while, so I whispered across the table to her that I was interested, immediately after it was brought up. I couldn't meet with her immediately, because I was leaving the next day for a four day creative

consulting experience in Schaumburg, but we made plans to meet upon my return. Jordan Zahoransky was one of the seniors who had rebuilt the entire website that year, in collaboration with Ashley Black. Jordyn taught me the ropes of the WCIW website and introduced me to WordPress and Elementor, which were different from the raw code that I was used to. We discussed ideas for how things could be done differently, including the prospect of having a world celebrations map on the site. Tuesday, March 10th, the day that classes were canceled, she and I had planned to meet with Cameron, a senior with a lot of experience in UX design, so we could discuss where we wanted to go with the website. We postponed our meeting to get in touch with our families and to discuss our options and what we planned to do now that classes were to go virtual.

The Adjustment

Not long after classes went virtual, we received the news that Miami was closing its campuses. The week before Spring break, I packed up to go home, like I had planned to before, but instead of taking just a suitcase, I took everything with me, not knowing when or if I'd be back.

After we had settled into our new locations, we continued to work on the website. As of March 27th, I was officially named the new lead of the technology and website team for WCIW, so that I could learn to handle things on my own while I still had the support of Jordyn. I received information from Hunter Saturn, another senior and president of Igoodea, about the events going on around the world, as events previously planned to be in person shifted to being virtual instead. I put new events on the site, and updated others as new information came in. Our first year, we had at least ten more countries join us, bringing our total up to 56 different countries.

Seeing the way countries and communities have adapted, dealing with the ambiguity and combating it with creativity has been inspiring, and it gives me great hope for the future. By running the website, I was able to see the world come together around creativity and innovation, with some international collaboration, adapting to the ambiguity of the new world that we'd been introduced to over the course of the previous six months. Handling this responsibility amidst this pandemic has been incredibly rewarding and quite the learning experience regarding the concepts that I've been practicing in my entrepreneurship classes. Dealing with the ambiguity, adapting to the circumstances, and using creative tools and techniques to solve the problems that have come up from the circumstances has been a real test of the skills I've been developing in class, and through Igoodea Creatives.

Also upon arriving home, I was tasked with leading a Mastermind Group of four other people, in order to help create the new, virtual properties of Creativity City. Leading a team of people spread out across the country was a challenge, considering that one team member was running the Linked In Page for WCIW, one member lived and worked on a farm and didn't have internet access all of the time, and another was in the process of moving halfway across the country. Keeping my team motivated and engaged from a distance, amidst the adaptation to distanced learning was not easy, but I am grateful for having had the opportunity to handle such a challenge.

Needless to say, I chose an interesting semester to take 20 credit hours while working with World Creativity & Innovation Week and Igoodea, but I am glad I took it on, and I remember looking forward to seeing what we as an organization could do in the future.

Enter Exponential Growth

In the process of manually posting all of the events to the site that first year, I couldn't help but wonder how many events we had in comparison to the previous year. The previous year, there had been 20 celebrations, and at the moment I looked, we were already well over 60, and counting. In examining the trend line for the number of celebrations over the past few years, it looked a lot more like a curve than a straight line. If my predictions were accurate, we could be dealing with exponential growth, and our current process for uploading celebrations to our website could be outdated within the year.

This was where I realized that automation might become an integral part of our operations moving forward. Even if we continued to grow at a linear pace, we'd likely have about 150 celebrations the next year, and exponential growth would lead to about 300-500, depending on the rate of growth. Adding one celebration took minutes, and our team was fairly small. Updating each of the country's pages took a while too, and that time was multiplied by 60, accounting for all 60 countries we had to update. Even if we only added 150 celebrations the following year, the time involved to change every celebration by hand would have been astronomical. There was just no way we could do everything the same way we had been.

The work involved, even just to add another country, was excessive, involving a lot of manual dragging and dropping of elements in our website's page builder. There had to be a better way to do this...

Year 2

(2020 - 2021) - Completely remote / virtual

International Database of Creative Events

What about a database? Couldn't a database provide us with the structured, centralized format that would allow us to display all of the data in a consistent format automatically? All sorts of questions filled my head. What sort of data would we store? How would it be connected to other data? What objects, attributes, and relationships did our unstructured data already have?

Having read a few books about exponential growth and the disruption it can create, I had noticed the beginning of this intense growth while I was still on campus in early March. As a result of my growing concerns and limited database skills, I asked a professor in the CSE department if he would be willing to assist me in designing a database to address the organization's needs. He agreed, having done this for many other students and clients.

I set out to create an Entity Relationship Diagram, and I sought a way to include such a database within our existing website environment. Since we were using WordPress, I initially tried to find a plugin that would enable us to create custom data structures and display those items in a customized fashion. I tried a couple of different plugins, but time was of the essence, and none of the plugins seemed capable of doing what we needed them to do, not in time at least. Eventually, I just created the database tables within our existing WordPress database, and I figured out that I could develop some custom Elementor widgets and APIs to access the data via queries.
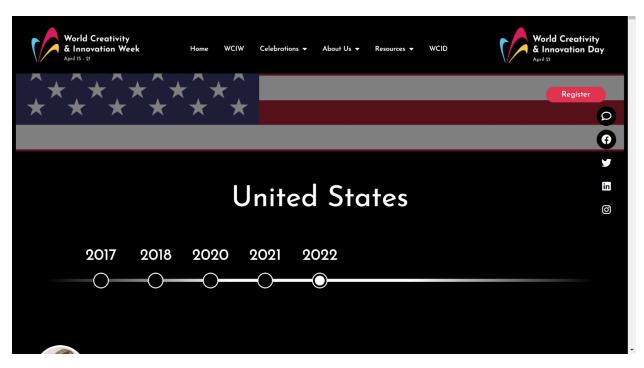
Finding a solution to these problems felt a lot like wandering around in the dark, looking for a light switch, and not knowing whether there was one to be found. This was a theme that continued throughout the pandemic, at least for me, and remains something that I work with even now.

After that, the task became pulling all of the data off the website and putting it into a structured format so that I could write the insert statements to enter all of our data into the newly created database tables. In collaboration with a computer science professor, we managed to get the data entered into our database, and from there, we had a couple more problems to solve.

Assembling the Pipeline

We had a database that had data in it, but we needed to find a way to get that data out. We also needed to make sure that the new celebration data that we received from people found its way into the database, so that we weren't stuck adding everything manually, which was what we sought to avoid in the first place.

To address the issue of getting the data to display from the database, I created a new custom plugin and widget to work with our existing page builder, Elementor. The new widget included a timeline to select different years and displayed the events as cards which would expand and display more details when clicked on. These cards lived on our site's "country pages", which was a page dedicated to a specific country and that country's creative celebrations.

Register

United States

2017   2018   2020   2021   2022

United States

Register

2017   2018   2020   2021   2022

United States WCIW/D Ambassador
Holly Haggerty

2022 Celebrations

Collecting New Data

To address the issue of collecting and capturing new data, I made several changes to our existing form, to collect the required information for the database, and then I routed that data to an email list and a Google Sheets spreadsheet, for backup purposes. Still, our current form could not send the data directly to the database, so we had to find a way to get the data we received from our current form into the database.

To address this problem, I built an internal form that would allow members of our HQ team to take the celebration data entered by the users and input it directly into the database, which drastically reduced the amount of time we spent on getting celebrations onto the site. This was a critical improvement that allowed us to take on a growth factor of 4.5 that year, going from 80 celebrations the previous year, to roughly 360. Exponential growth. I don't know how we would have managed that growth without this new system.

Evaluating Our Progress

The system was far from perfect, but for the time being, the pipeline was at least complete, and much, much faster than our previous process of manually adding all of the celebrations to the site. Furthermore, the automated event display and country page widget enabled us to change all of the country pages at once, and since we were quickly approaching 100 countries, compared to our previous 40, this was no minor improvement in efficiency.

Even still, there were improvements to be made. The process was not fully automated, but doing so would enable us to democratize the process and hand it off to another team, while also giving us more time to fix other problems that were coming up.

Year 3

(2021 - 2022)

A New Form

We had discovered that our current form, built in Elementor, no longer met our needs. We couldn't add extra text to provide instructions to the users, and there was no way to include more advanced fields like repeating locations, social media, links, and organizations. These repeating fields were essential to routing the form data directly to the database.
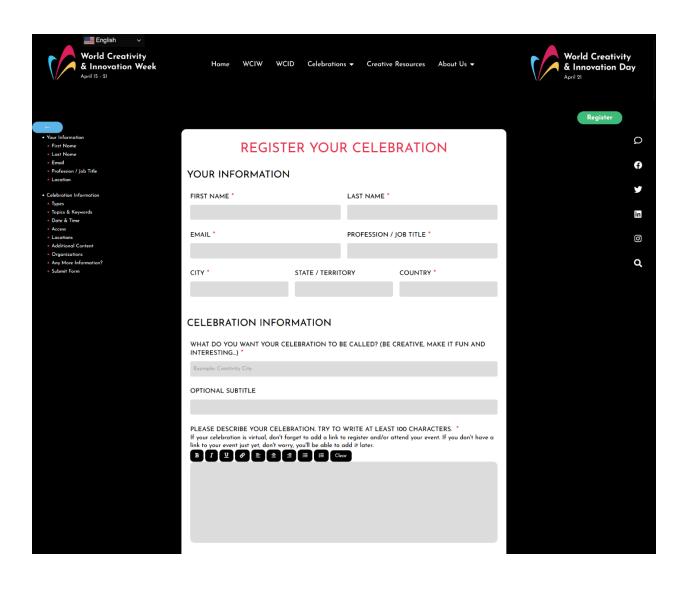
Since our current form just couldn't keep up with our needs, we built a new one.

At this time, we also took the opportunity to improve clarity for our international users, by choosing our words more carefully, to make translation easier, and also using a date selector that was more inclusive for international standards, since many people in other countries use the date first, followed by the month (e.g. April 15th, 2022 = 15/4/2022).

We added a number of additional features that our users had expressed they would appreciate, including multiple locations and rich text formatting for the description box. We added some fields that our HQ team had requested to make their jobs easier, including information about the person registering the celebration and an estimate of the number of people who would be involved in the celebration.

In addition to some of the more overt changes to the user experience, we also added additional data validation and evaluation metrics, including checking to make sure that the celebration's starting date and time was actually *before* the celebration's ending date and time, which was something we'd had issues with previously. People had entered celebrations that ended before they began, which I'm sure was confusing to those who were trying to figure out how to attend. We also added an updated time zone selector, so users could tell us what time zone the times they entered corresponded to, so we could better accommodate people from different time zones.

This new form really opened the doors to our creative freedom, in terms of creating a better experience for our international audience, while also enabling us to improve process efficiency and manage the growth created by our international outreach team, who were tasked with reaching out to people around the world and encouraging them to celebrate with us.

World Creativity
& Innovation Week
April 15 - 21

Home   WCIW   WCID   Celebrations ⌄   Creative Resources   About Us ⌄

World Creativity
& Innovation Day
April 21

Register

REGISTER YOUR CELEBRATION

YOUR INFORMATION

FIRST NAME *

LAST NAME *

EMAIL *

PROFESSION / JOB TITLE *

CITY *

STATE / TERRITORY

COUNTRY *

CELEBRATION INFORMATION

WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR CELEBRATION TO BE CALLED? (BE CREATIVE, MAKE IT FUN AND INTERESTING...) *

Example: Creativity City

OPTIONAL SUBTITLE

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR CELEBRATION. TRY TO WRITE AT LEAST 100 CHARACTERS. *
If your celebration is virtual, don't forget to add a link to register and/or attend your event. If you don't have a link to your event just yet, don't worry, you'll be able to add it later.
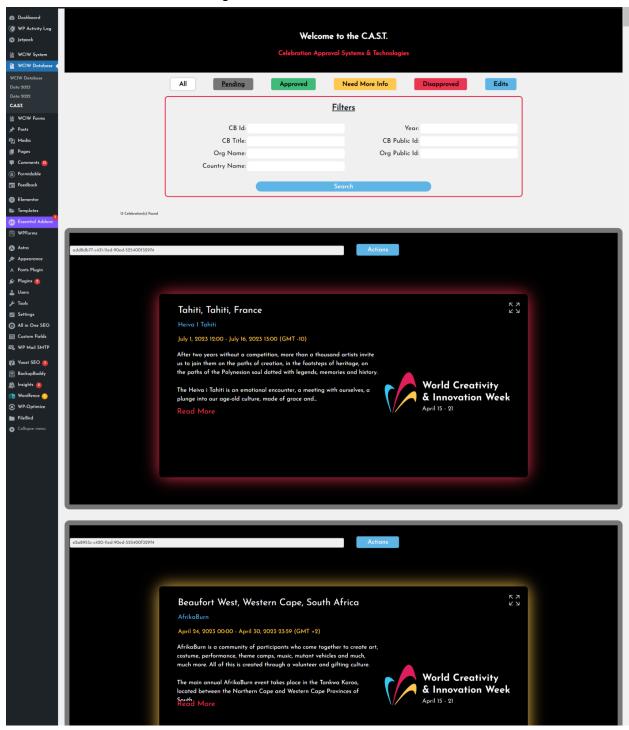
B *I* U̲ 🔗 ≣ ≣ ≣ ☰ ☰   Clear

The form continues on, beyond what is pictured above.

A New Approval System: The CAST

Since our new form automated the data collection and the custom widget automated the data display, the next natural step was to build an approval system. I wanted to make it easier for anyone on our HQ team, regardless of technical skills, to approve celebrations. As a result, I built the CAST, which stands for Celebration Approval Systems & Technologies. This was a page within the dashboard of Wordpress that allowed anyone with an account to login and change the status of any celebration with a couple of clicks.

This democratization of the automated pipeline gave our international outreach team full autonomy with celebration approval and allowed our tech team to focus on future development during the busier times of year, while also significantly decreasing the workload and time taken to get a celebration posted on the site. Where it previously took 5+ minutes to post a celebration on the site, it now took less than 10 seconds. A single person could now post 30+ celebrations in the same time it used to take to post just one celebration. Given our growth as an organization, this was instrumental.

You can see the CAST in the image below.

We still use this system to approve our celebrations, and the celebration registration and approval process is almost completely democratized and handed over to our international outreach team. There is still progress to be made regarding editing the celebrations, but given enough time and focus, I'm sure this will become a priority for the organization moving forward.

All things considered, it took a while to complete, being that it was uncharted territory in a lot of ways, but by the time the pipeline was done, new events could be approved with the click of a button, our team could be notified via email, and a backup copy could be sent to the spreadsheet.

New Notification Emails

Since the custom form ensured that we had total control over the entire pipeline, it now became easier than ever to insert extra scripts to customize the emails that the team received whenever someone filled out the form. So, I did. I had received complaints that the default emails that were sent were not as helpful as they could have been, so I asked the team what would be most beneficial, and I made it happen. Where previously, our emails were in black and white, with all text being the same size, our emails now look much more colorful, and they highlight important information for the outreach team to use in the work they do.

Here's what the emails used to look like (with redaction):

First Name: Buga
Last Name: ████████
Email Address: ████████████
Profession / Job Title: Med student
Post Email On Site?: on
Organization Name: Peanut Art of writing Short Phrases
Organization Location: Santiago de Cuba
City: Santiago
Country: 🇨🇺
State / Territory (if applicable):
Title: Peanut Art
Starting Date: 2021-10-02
Starting Time: 16:54
Ending Date: 2021-10-22
Ending Time: 16:54
Time Zone: UTC +14
Description: We celebrated the birthday of our roommate.
Social Media/links (not required): ████████████
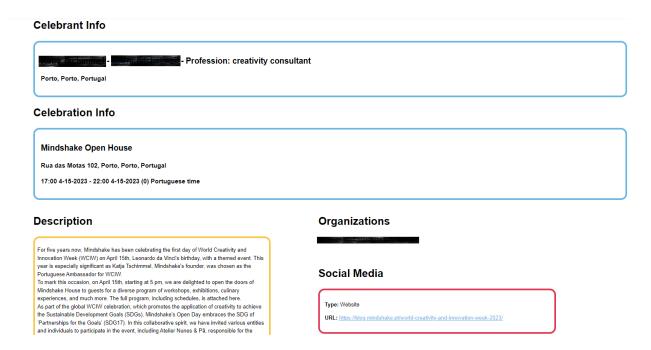Post Social Media Info on the Website: on

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Date: October 22, 2021
Time: 7:03 pm
Page URL: https://wciw.org/
User Agent: Mozilla/5.0 (iPhone; CPU iPhone OS 12_5_1 like Mac OS X) AppleWebKit/605.1.15 (KHTML, like Gecko) Version/12.1.2 Mobile/15E148 Safari/604.1
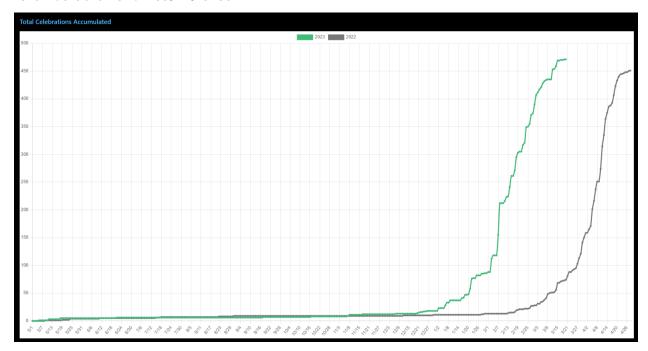Remote IP: ████████
Powered by: Elementor

Here's an example of what they look like now:

Celebrant Info

▒▒▒▒▒▒▒▒▒ - ▒▒▒▒▒▒ - Profession: creativity consultant

Porto, Porto, Portugal

Celebration Info

Mindshake Open House

Rua das Motas 102, Porto, Porto, Portugal

17:00 4-15-2023 - 22:00 4-15-2023 (0) Portuguese time

Description

For five years now, Mindshake has been celebrating the first day of World Creativity and Innovation Week (WCIW) on April 15th, Leonardo da Vinci's birthday, with a themed event. This year is especially significant as Katja Tschimmel, Mindshake's founder, was chosen as the Portuguese Ambassador for WCIW.
To mark this occasion, on April 15th, starting at 5 pm, we are delighted to open the doors of Mindshake House to guests for a diverse program of workshops, exhibitions, culinary experiences, and much more. The full program, including schedules, is attached here.
As part of the global WCIW celebration, which promotes the application of creativity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Mindshake's Open Day embraces the SDG of 'Partnerships for the Goals' (SDG17). In this collaborative spirit, we have invited various entities and individuals to participate in the event, including Atelier Nunes & Pã, responsible for the

Organizations

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Social Media

Type: Website

URL: https://blog.mindshake.pt/world-creativity-and-innovation-week-2023/
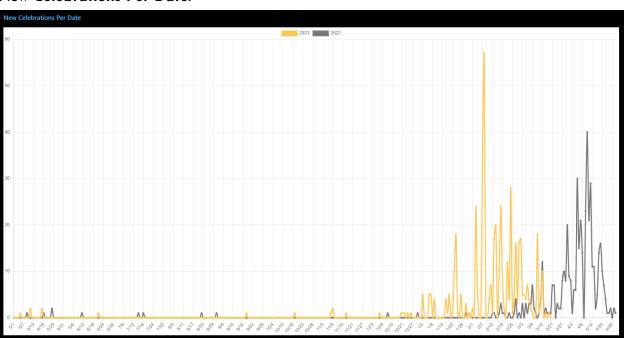
Data Page

In the interest of providing helpful information to the rest of the HQ team, I decided to build a data page that features critical statistics about the data we have in our database. The data page includes several interactive charts that provide information about how many celebrations we have, comparisons to the previous year's data, and how many countries are celebrating.
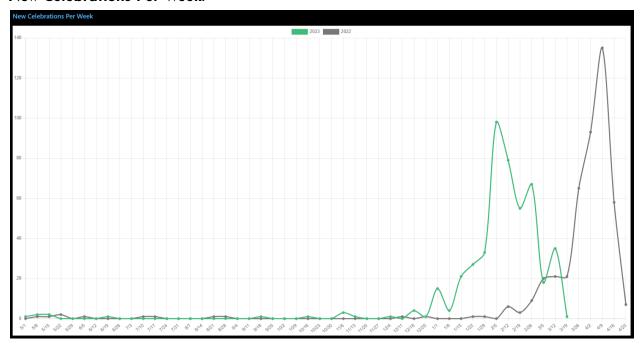
Total Celebrations Accumulated:
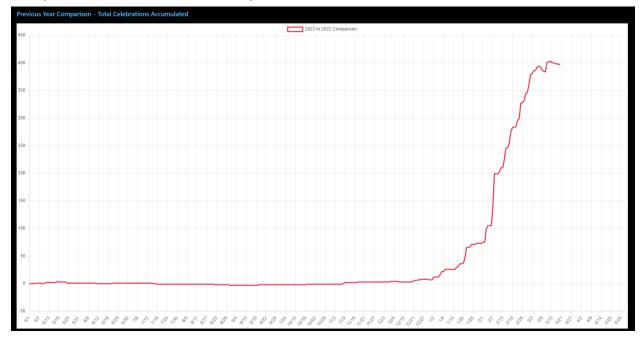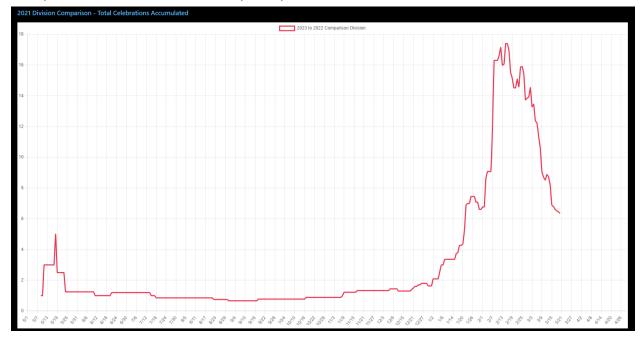

New Celebrations Per Date:

New Celebrations Per Week:

New Celebrations Per Week

Previous Year Comparison: Total Celebrations Accumulated
(this year's count to date minus last year's count to date)

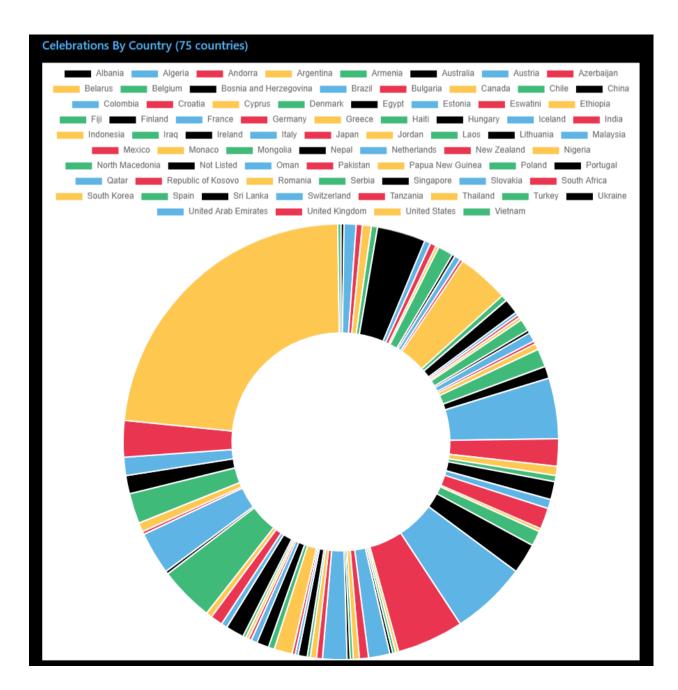Previous Year Comparison - Total Celebrations Accumulated

Division Year Comparison: Total Celebrations Accumulated
(this year's count to date divided by last year's count to date)

This graph differs from the one before it in that 1) it was added more recently, in my 4th year, and 2) it shows our exponential growth factor between the previous year and the current year. At the time this image was taken, we had roughly 6x the number of celebrations than we had at that time last year. At one point, we had 17x the number of celebrations compared to that time last year. I created this graph to highlight the immense growth that we are experiencing, since at a certain point, a line with a large slope (quick growth) just looks the same. In looking at the current numbers, I think 800+ celebrations is a realistic expectation for this year's total celebration count (2023).

Celebrations By Country (75 countries)

Albania · Algeria · Andorra · Argentina · Armenia · Australia · Austria · Azerbaijan · Belarus · Belgium · Bosnia and Herzegovina · Brazil · Bulgaria · Canada · Chile · China · Colombia · Croatia · Cyprus · Denmark · Egypt · Estonia · Eswatini · Ethiopia · Fiji · Finland · France · Germany · Greece · Haiti · Hungary · Iceland · India · Indonesia · Iraq · Ireland · Italy · Japan · Jordan · Laos · Lithuania · Malaysia · Mexico · Monaco · Mongolia · Nepal · Netherlands · New Zealand · Nigeria · North Macedonia · Not Listed · Oman · Pakistan · Papua New Guinea · Poland · Portugal · Qatar · Republic of Kosovo · Romania · Serbia · Singapore · Slovakia · South Africa · South Korea · Spain · Sri Lanka · Switzerland · Tanzania · Thailand · Turkey · Ukraine · United Arab Emirates · United Kingdom · United States · Vietnam

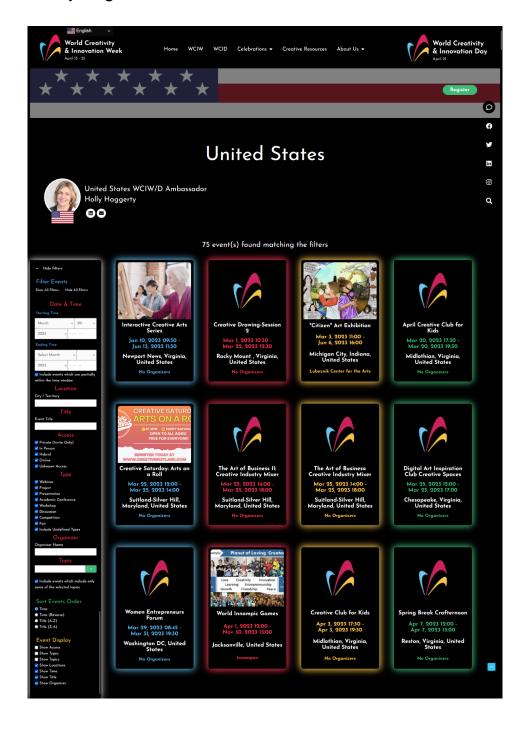## How Data Access Has Affected the Organization as a Whole

It seems the organization has been able to benefit from access to real time stats about our operations, and has included that information in our annual report, which goes out to our international board of advisors. In effect, the organization has started to look at the database as the official record of our data and how many celebrations we have each year. I know the international outreach team also uses the data page to keep track of which countries are currently celebrating, and which ones they might need to target.

Year 4

(2022 - 2023)

"Good isn't good enough if better is possible" - Jim Friedman

Newer Country Pages

In this organization, we don't stop improving. We are always thinking about what could be done better and the ways in which we are lacking. This is what prompted us to reinvent the country pages again, complete with a new template for all celebrations and a sidebar with options for filtering, sorting, and displaying different information. This new layout was proposed by the Chief Steward (Dr. Jim Friedman) and Associate Steward (Bethany Schwan), with online shopping sites in mind.
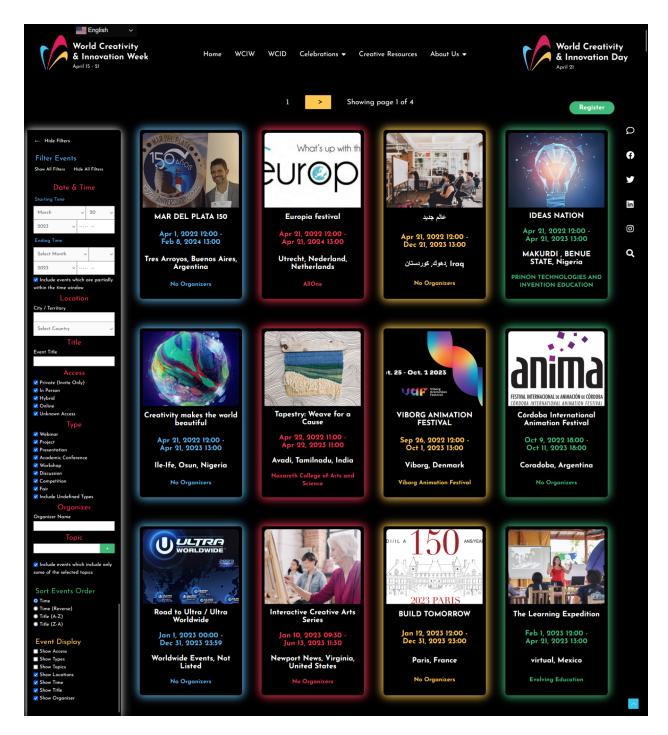

This is a closeup of the new filtering options, which are made possible by the database. This is something that our international audience was asking about, and it was great to be able to provide that for them.

New Event Categories and Labels

In the interest of enabling people to discover events in a more organic fashion, we have also included event types, topics, and access levels, to allow users to indicate that they're interested in, for example, an art fair that they can attend in person.

New Events Page

Since we updated our country pages, the HQ team asked me about adding a page which would have all the events on them, regardless of country. Here it is.

Other Changes

Over the course of the past few years, many other wonderful changes have also been made, including a fantastic creative resources page, built by Henry Nenni, a teammate of mine, and the translation of the site into six languages, which was done by an IMS capstone class.

Additionally, we've updated the Get to Know Us Page, the How To Celebrate page, the navigation bar at the top of the site, added a search bar and improved the look for the country flags on the home page, built a custom, animated #IAmCreative header, and many other changes which have helped to polish the site even more.

Changes Not Made

In addition to many new changes, there were also several propositions which did not gain traction, including a creative newsletter, a worldwide events map, and creative organization profiles. Other projects are still in development or placed on the backburner, including an edit system which would enable users to login and edit their own content. Another feature we would like to create is uploading files directly from our celebration form.

Conclusion

Concerns Moving Forward

In looking at all of the development that I have done, there are of course concerns about maintenance in the long term. It is hard to come by students who are capable and interested in volunteering their time to work on this sort of project out of the kindness of their hearts. It is common for people who have these sorts of skills to contract their skills out, to make some nice money on the side, while still in school. It is less common to find someone who has these

skills who also has the passion for creativity and the interest in volunteering for a cause such as this, especially when the organizational expectations are set so high, on top of an already very demanding degree program. It's a fantastic opportunity to build up a resume, but I've noticed that people who are doing it for that reason don't last very long at all.

I am very concerned that there may not be someone who can and will take this project on when I graduate. It may be possible to resolve these issues by finding plugins, but these plugins unfortunately frequently come at the expense of losing features that we have grown attached to, and may actually depend on. Ensuring that these systems don't become unusable is something that I will undoubtedly need to focus on over the next year, to ensure that the organization can continue to function well without my involvement.

Even if things do not go as well as I hope, I know that I will at the very least leave the organization better than it was before I started. When I started, the pages had all of the information in a drag and drop format, meaning that all of the data was trapped within the static page, and if someone wanted to get the data, they'd have to comb through each country page by hand and copy and paste the information. Now, the data is all contained within a database, which has built in options for exporting the data into a variety of standard formats, enabling it to be used elsewhere if needed.

Future Work

As I mentioned before, I really have my work cut out for me in the next year, as I wrap up my master's degree in computer science and perhaps my college career as a whole, to begin the next season of my life.

At the time of writing this, World Creativity & Innovation Week 2023 is just beginning, and soon will come the time when WCIW 2023 comes to an end and Friedman tells us to reintroduce ourselves to our families and to rest up. Over the years, that has become my signal to take note of everything that didn't go as well that year, and to begin planning for next year. These couple of weeks are truly some of the most intense, enjoyable, and meaningful weeks of my year.

I think this organization has a tremendous amount of potential in shaping the future of the world, especially pertaining to the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. I know that I would love to continue my work in advocating for the goals, and for worldwide creativity, and I may just find a way to integrate my master's thesis with these goals in mind, in order to continue the work that I started over three years ago.

It's possible that I may find a lifetime of work advocating for the 17 Goals and for international creativity, collaboration, and inspiration. Maybe more than a lifetime.

- Karissa Waterworth