

Lessons Learned

Client Communication

One of the most important lessons learned from this project is how to communicate with client and contacts who are faraway and might not have a strong technical background. In order to keep both sides (the client and the team) informed, the team provided frequent updates to the client via email and conference calls and asked the client for plans of action and feedback on the work the team has done. In communicating technical ideas, the team used examples and step-by-step instructions and confirmation to ensure that the client and team are on the same page. During the phone conference with the client and her contacts, the team found it useful to contact each member individually in order to ask them to provide information to expand the database with.

Information Politics

Information is a major hurdle in the long-term success of project, as it is difficult to find people who hold the information and give them enough incentive to provide and update the information. Although information politics made it more difficult to get the information we needed to further complete the project before the end of this phase and handing it over to a future team, this is one the most valuable lessons we have learned and realized how valuable information is, and how useful it would be for the users if the project can be completed for a variety of locations.

Improving on an Existing Site

Because the original MIWatch.org website and a separate basic map was already in place the team began the project, the team had to take efforts to gain access and work with the existing site. Because the website was developed using Movable Type and the map used PHP, the team went through a phase of code translation, and explaining to the creator of the original MIWatch.org what the team needs in order to improve the site and add our own work on top of the site. This is important lesson because most of the time it is necessary to develop new functionality based on existing ones. In addition, communicating with the creator of the site allowed the team to focus on what needs to be done and what issues might be encountered.

Deploy Early and Often

In order to allow the client to view the team's progress and comment on it, the team used a deploy early often strategy, which allowed the team to develop incrementally, and lets the client see any updates almost immediately, since each time an update was made, the team can test the newer versions and which are not incredibly different from the old versions that mistakes will be difficult to fix. This also allows the team to address and solve problems early. Overall, this has proved a very useful strategy, especially for this project because of the short amount of time the team was given to complete as much as possible, and the client can give feedback and follow along even without much instructions.