My Experience with i101

When I entered this course, I wasn’t sure what to expect. I had dabbled in computer science and informatics in the past but hadn’t really gotten into it in detail and didn’t consider it for a career. I became interested primarily because of strong career prospects after having taken a job as a website developer previously. I have since learned about the incredible diversity of fields and opportunities in informatics over the last few weeks in i101. There are few fields if any which are or will be affected by advances in informatics; in my opinion the most significant of these in the next few years are robotics and big data. The advances to come will have worldwide effects socially and economically. Learning about informatics, improving my skills and being exposed to new ideas have been an exciting personal experience for me.

I have always thought that technology was how the future would be measured, that technology was desirable to most if not all people, and that companies that dealt in technology would therefore be excellent places to start a career. Before I had entered this class, I had already been introduced to informatics through a y100 course my first semester and working as a website developer for a small social media marketing company. It was a rather brief introduction over a few months but I learned about website building, servers, and coding in html; though I never thought of it as Informatics at the time, only as web development.
When I registered for this class in informatics I was asked many times by different family members what informatics was, but was only able to answer that it was like computer science, but more practical. Now after having taken this course for several weeks I can tell them that the brightest minds in informatics are currently asking themselves the same question and that it is a discipline that focuses mainly on the interface between the chair and the keyboard. I wouldn’t say my perception of informatics has not changed so much as that is has expanded; I only knew of informatics through my experiences in web development.

I didn’t know, for instance, about the personal robotics revolution looming on the horizon or the challenges and opportunities posed by big data; I knew of informatics as improving the usability and customer experiences of websites. Now I am better informed about the scope of informatics but I would say the attitude is very much the same, whether the application is manufacturing or cybersecurity, home care or personal entertainment, social assistance or therapy. For instance the MiRAE, teaching assistance and Paro robots from the robotics lecture are at the forefront of robotics advancement and are just one of the many fields that informatics intersects with; Social robotics is constantly being improved to work alongside humans more effectively, productively and conveniently (Robotics Lecture).

Researchers are gaining new insight to interaction between robots and humans to better inform the design changes they will make as the field continues to advance; researchers evaluating paro’s use by patients discovered that men and women had different likelihoods of using the robot and groups of people had more interaction than just one person (Robotics). Experiments with smaller robots meant to remind people to take breaks have also proven fruitful and may have a real effect on workplace productivity (Robotics). Some companies are beginning to use assistant robots to work with their employees on factory floors instead of replacing them; using slower, smaller, less precise robots to do
the more onerous tasks while humans work with them or nearby with little if any safety risk (Economist).

Companies are beginning to use very large scale data processing to better determine what their customers may want and provide better service more efficiently than they could otherwise; Some call this an inversion of the business model as customer choice and experiences begin to drive business decisions (Data). Our analytical capabilities and the benefits gained from them will increase as computers advance in power and complexity; there are even specialists who try to draw meaningful conclusions from data called data scientists, and this field continues to expand (Data).

What has been helping me the most has been the practical experience from the lab sections of i101. The labs in this class are excellent, the my instructors are very competent, helpful, and respectful; I’ve learned a great deal about programming in the past few weeks and got me thinking about majoring in informatics. The assignments we’re given may be hard but they are rarely dull, as an introduction to programming they work marvelously and I have a flashy new website to show for it too; It really helps me to have this tangible accomplishment, it’s great that the buttons and links work when I click on them and I can say I did it myself.

The week 3 labs were the ones I enjoyed the most, the week 3 lab 2 assignment was probably my best work and was the most fun to do. Css files were great to work with and changing the styles without even editing the html itself is incredibly convenient and gives the developer many options to use when making the site (05_W3L2.pptx). Users of a website could even chose what theme they liked best without changing the functionality of the website significantly, as shown by the Css Zen Garden website which has an array of styles which vary widely in spacing color pictures, decoration and many other ways all using the same basic text (.Css Zen Garden).
I101 has been an eye opening experience for me, and I plan to continue with informatics during my student career. I’ve learned so much about coding, my grades are great so far, I’m meeting new people and learning about critical developments in the sciences that will inform my career decisions. Programming has been great, I’d like to think that if I better understood the tools at my disposal I could more easily find new opportunities in the future just by knowing what I could be capable of. It might not be easy but the rewards for proficiency with technology will only increase as time goes on, and this is just the first opportunity to learn more and hopefully make a living for myself someday; informatics is where the action is, this is where the future challenges will be met and the rewards for success will be great. This is why I declared as an informatics major.
Works Cited


