The Italian Garden Project

Executive Summary

Community Partner
Mary Menniti
Student Consulting Team
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Background

The Italian Garden Project (IGP) is a nonprofit organization founded by Mary Menniti. The project was founded to celebrate the practices and history of Italian vegetable gardening and maintains the ultimate goal of reconnecting Italian Americans with their rich family heritage, preserving multiple generations' worth of stories regarding hardships, survival, mentality, and identity. With no central location, they operate nationwide, leading various efforts to compile and display stories that pertain to the culture of Italian gardening. Taken from the Italian Garden Project website, their mission statement is below:

> *The mission of The Italian Garden Project™ is to celebrate the joy and wisdom inherent in the traditional Italian American vegetable garden, preserving this heritage and demonstrating its relevance for reconnecting to our food, our families and the earth.*

Project Description

Project Opportunity

The IGP seeks to inspire current and future generations of Italian Americans to learn about and appreciate fig trees' life-sustaining influence on preceding generations. There is an opportunity to create an online community for fig tree enthusiasts to share their stories. An automated solution will reduce the amount of time Mary manually spends entering all details on her website.

Project Vision

Users can navigate from Mary's IGP website to the Legacy Fig Tree Archive on Wix to search a database of fig trees and read their stories as well as use an interactive map to explore where the fig trees are located. Users can join the archive by filling out an online form. All form submissions get automatically stored through Wix's database. After Mary approves a submission, it can be viewed and shared publicly.

Project Outcomes

Our collective outcomes enable the IGP to further grow the connection and community between Italian Americans through the documentation and sharing of the stories behind the many generational fig trees throughout the country. This is possible through the Fig Tree Archive website hosted on Wix that we created throughout the semester. Through the Fig Tree Archive,

users can upload the technical details and the stories behind their fig trees and view the trees uploaded by others through an interactive Google map displaying their location and a visible, searchable database. Aside from the user-facing features of the Fig Tree Archive, the online database provides a clean and efficient way for Mary to store the information she collects from her many house visits across the country rather than recording them in scattered notes. This optimizes the time taken for Mary to locate and reference data while also providing a reliable way for Mary to gauge the size of her audience. Through the email portion of the Archive Form, Mary is also able to record emails for use in her newsletters and various updates about the IGP as a whole.

Project Deliverables

The final deliverables include the following:

- [Legacy Fig Tree Archive](#) website hosted by Wix.
- [Documentation](#) detailing how to manage and edit the Legacy Fig Tree Archive.
- [Video tutorials](#) to supplement the extensively written documentation.
- [Google Drive Repo](#) containing all artifacts that were created along the way with the client.

Recommendations

The team recommends revisiting the Legacy Fig Tree Archive with new personnel in the future to reimagine and increase the scope of the project. Given that our community partner is the IGP's primary organizer and administrator, introducing a new service that requires any degree of human interaction imposes a new commitment to her schedule. One critical component of future work on the Archive will require additional personnel to take part in its maintenance, either as a developer or simply to approve submissions in Mary's stead. Hiring a freelancer to continue support for the website invites room for all matter of improvements; a more intuitive, aesthetically pleasing website would ideally generate more traffic, measured by quantifiable metrics such as time spent on the website, clicks per session, or number of submissions per day. They could also consider building off of existing functionalities such as photo uploads to allow for more images per submission, to be displayed in a more streamlined format, which would be suitable work for a freelancer or even future student teams.

Student Consulting Team

Cami Wu served as the Client Relationship Manager. She is a 3rd-year student majoring in Information Systems with minors in English Literature & Culture and Game Design. This coming summer, she will be working at First National Bank in Pittsburgh as an Application Development Intern.

Anna Rippert served as Project Manager. She is a 4th-year student majoring in Information Systems with an additional major in Human-Computer Interaction and a minor in Game Design. She looks forward to joining Amazon as a full-time UX Designer after graduation.

Daniel Arriola served as the Quality Assurance Manager. He is a 3rd-year Information Systems major with minors in Human-Computer Interaction and Computer Science. This coming summer he will be interning at Google and is looking forward to a career in software engineering.