When I was trying to think of something to report for the Minitex/MnLINK Interlibrary Loan Committee I realized that maybe it was time to learn something new. I came across an online coding site called Codecademy in a news article some time ago. I believe it was the Code Year concept which caught my eye. Codecademy is fairly new, being only a couple years old. They have a variety of programs and are regularly adding content. I bookmarked it in my browser thinking that it was something I wanted to try out eventually. When I decided to try it I started searching for similar programs. This revealed several review/comparisons which was ultimately what I was hoping to find. When it comes to free educational programs, Codecademy rated pretty highly even though it is fairly new. Some others which you might recognize are Coursera or Lynda. Codecademy seemed to best fit my plans in that it was free, interactive, and it was suggested to be good for the beginner from the reviews I had read. My hope for the course was to gain a better understanding how things work, rather than to become a programmer.

The best place for me to start seemed to be their Web Fundamentals course. The course would start with the basics of HTML and CSS to eventually build a site. Anyone who has ever done wiki editing had the option (or was forced) to edit in HTML. To get started I decided to put it on my calendar so I had a regular reminder, with a goal of spending 15-30 minutes a day. This course had 6 parts with 13 to 26 exercises in each part. A project accompanied the closing of each part. I hoped that would be enough time to complete the course in the month of June, but this was all just guesswork. When I started I found that the layout of the course could be broken down into small bits making my time allotment seem pretty reasonable. I found out soon enough that since you login to gain access, you can leave in the middle of an exercise and easily pick up where you left off. With the calendar reminders I had a pretty easy time staying on track.

After a couple weeks I had the opportunity to put some of my new skills to use. In the past when examining HTML for a web page I’d scan hoping to find something that I recognized. The new knowledge helped me understand where to look, because the structure of the page made sense. While I didn’t find anything that helped to resolve my issue, I did figure out the HTML wasn’t where the problem was.

While it took me into the first week of July before I finished the course, I stayed pretty true to my original timeline. Some of the exercises took a little more time as the course became more involved. While going back over my daily notes I noticed that I often commented how I enjoyed the session. Overall I thought this was a very good course. I gained the knowledge and experience to evaluate information and this was my goal. I’m looking forward to taking another course. I’d encourage others to check this out because it was a good experience and gave me some useful knowledge.

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