Legal Aid Drupal Users Collective

Collaboratively building open source expertise and innovations in legal services

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LSC Legal Aid Hackathon: May 2018 - Projects Report

The 2018 LSC Legal Aid Summer Virtual Hackathon was held on May 19-20, 2018.

> "I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed participating in the Hackathon. As a tech-newbie, I was a little intimidated by the whole thing at first, but by the actual weekend, I was having a great time and learned so much. What I liked best was seeing how creatively technology could be used to respond to unmet legal needs and working with advocates and programmers around the country. I am now a Hackathon fan!"
>
> - Jessica Rae, Florida Law Help, Florida Justice Technology Center

Hackathon Projects

1. Browser Extension for Court Operators to Share Their Projects

Design and build a prototype for a browser extension for court operators (court staff/employees) to use for reporting and sharing their projects.

One of the main challenges I foresee is having a secure repository to collect the information and a platform for hosting the information. As the goal for the hackathon is a prototype, likely using InVision App, I can tackle that question later. For now, I think generating an excel/google sheet to collect and pull information from will be sufficient to demonstrate functionality. There are some hard limits to deploying a tool like this, some of which would require serious strategic thinking on topics like: court-rules and standards related to data security and how to navigate judicial branch permissions on private court-networks. I'm thinking this prototype can begin that conversation, so I'm leaving those considerations on the horizon.

Intended Users: court staff/employee, access to justice project managers/funders/collaborators/operators

Key features:

- **Primary Functions** (achievable for the hackathon)
  - Post - users can post a project or program they are working on
    - Name of Project
    - Name of Project Developer
    - Status of Project (drop down)
    - Category of Project (drop down, with other option)
    - Milestones/Stages with dates
    - Links (to website or public page)
  - *Invite* - users can invite another user via a private link (privileged access--edit & comment, comment only, view)
  - *Track Notifications* - users can opt into receiving a notification that something has changed (information, status, milestones, new links)
- **Secondary Functions** (aspirational for future development)
  - *Share* - users can link to social media for publicizing their project
  - *Collaborate* - users can join community board to discuss challenges
  - *Contribute* - users can receive suggestions, resources, or files to aid in their project from other users
  - *Publish* - users can link via an API (Drupal or other site) to easily publish their work or specific information on their project
  - *Public & Private settings* - user control of access, tracking engagement from other users

Test Prototype

2. Reminders and guided steps for required check-ins with case worker

(Slides not available)

The Florida Legislature just created a requirement that parents in open dependency cases have to check in with their case worker every 2 weeks to make sure the case worker has current contact info. They also have to advise the caseworker if there are any barriers to getting the services they need to complete the tasks on their case plan. Parents need an app that would remind them to submit the info, and pre-populate contact info as well as give them menu ideas of what items might be barriers to disclose.

3. Docassemble Template Builder in MSWord

Docassemble is a popular free, open source tool for building guided interviews to automate legal pleadings (among other capabilities). Guided interviews have two components: a template (the

pleading) and an interview (a script to prompt the user for information). Currently there is an online editor which helps new users develop interviews, but no assistive editor for the template.

This project would create a Word Add-in that uses Microsoft's new JavaScript API to add some helpful tools for editing Docassemble templates. It could start with adding control structures, if/else, etc. Syntax highlighting and checking for common errors (curly quotes maybe) would be great also.Microsoft's new Add-in model uses HTML + JavaScript only, similar to Google Apps. However, you need to host the HTML and can use any backend you like (node.js is popular, but vanilla Apache would work)l. I think this could start as a simple static HTML page with all of the logic in client side JavaScript.

4. Multi-Jurisdiction Legal Elements for Eviction

Breaking a legal action like an eviction up into its individual parts, its elements, is fundamental to law - from the bar exam to element charts used for trial preparation to court rules requiring numbered paragraphs to appeals courts reviewing specified elements. Thinking in elements is thinking like a lawyer. Breaking complicated processes into individual parts is also the foundation of coding and creating chatbots through docassemble, qna markup or other tools. When we focus on the elements of an eviction action, we find that the individual elements are often similar across state jurisdictions, although they are based on different statutes or case law, and some elements/defenses may be available in one jurisdiction but not another.

If we had a standard way to write about the elements of eviction, while creating customized versions for each state, we could make multi-jurisdiction eviction defense apps, study the effects of different rules, and much more. But standardization is better accomplished through doing than thinking, so I propose that we develop a rough draft of a multi-jurisdiction eviction elements library before the hackathon, and use the tool for another project, like replicating the Eviction Fighter app for another state jurisdiction, or finding what eviction elements can be determined with access to a live court docket.

5. Ethics & Privacy Best Practices

Hackathon Objectives:

1. Review impact of GDPR on USA
2. Refine principles if needed
3. Brainstorm next steps

6. Eviction Fighter Chatbot

Even when the law protects you, those protections usually do you little good if you are unaware of their existence. Even after reading the lease, you may be unaware of when your rights supersede or even contradict the terms in that document. And when the vast majority of tenants facing eviction lack legal representation, it is absolutely essential to at least have an accessible way to learn your rights. That knowledge could save you from being homeless tonight. The prototype version of the Eviction Fighter for Kentucky is now complete.

The Eviction Fighter is intended to help tenants and attorneys who serve them fight unlawful evictions. The Fighter helps users drill down on and understand the legal issues facing them. At this time the bot is intended to be more of an interactive legal information source than an artificially-intelligent "robot lawyer". I would like to build in the ability for Eviction Fighter to refer users to legal aid organizations and other pro-bono/reduced fee attorneys, as well as the ability to create documents or complete forms for users. Since the ethical implications of chatbots in law can be notable, I have obtained an ethics opinion from the Kentucky Bar Association and have consulted that opinion while building and refining this prototype.

- Github repository
- Test website

7. Chatbot for Youth Aging out of Foster Care

Every year, approximately 20,000 youth age-out of the foster care system throughout the U.S. The statistics on how youth fair after they leave foster care are grim. Compared to their peers, youth who age-out of foster care without being connected to caring and committed adults are less likely to complete their education and obtain employment that pays a living wage. They are at greater risk of homelessness, incarceration, becoming parents early and having their own children involved in the foster care system. Many are left to deal with the trauma they experienced at home or in the foster care system without adequate access to medical and mental health care.

To combat these dire outcomes, both federal and state laws have created rights and protections for this vulnerable population. However, many youth and those who advocate on their behalf are unaware of those rights or do not understand how to access them. Florida, in accordance with federal law, has enacted several programs which provide access to health care, housing, education, social and financial support. However, the eligibility requirements for each program are specific and can depend on the youth's legal status at certain ages, the length of time the youth spent in certain placements, the youth's educational achievements and current age.

To help navigate this complicated system, we would like to create a chatbot that walks a youth and/or their advocate through questions to help determine eligibility for the various programs.

Most of the questions could be answered with yes, no, or I don't know. In an ideal world, this chatbot could be expanded to cover the entire U.S. and be available to all youth and young adults who have aged out of care.

8. Drupal Chatbot Integration Module

Wouldn't it be nice to have your AI-powered DialogueFlow chatbot running right on your own Drupal site (and in other places like FB messenger, too)? We think so! We would like to build a Drupal module to enable:

- A site user to interact with a DialogueFlow based chatbot
- A site admin to manage when/where/how the chatbot appears on the site, chatbots appearing on the site, and chatbot generated data (as available).

9. Drupal 8 Distribution for Legal Aid Organizations

The Legal Aid community (as a whole) has wide range of users who depend on technology to serve various functions. While many projects are focused on innovation for the public / client / citizen, my team and I would like to build a resource to "aid those who administer the legal aid." During this hackathon we hope to build a Drupal 8 Distribution (theme, modules, configurations) to be used as a resource for legal aid organizations. The distro will include an ADA compliant theme, preconfigured webforms for communications and client onboarding, a chatbot, OAuth authentication, and other functionality. We'll also include documentation and installation instructions.

For more information about this hackathon please see https://www.legalaidhackathon.org/

The Legal Aid Hackathon is funded by the generosity of the Legal Services Corporation by a TIG Grant to Bay Area Legal Services. The hackathon is organized by Abhijeet Chavan and Joseph Schieffer.

Reports from previous LSC Legal Aid Hackathons

- LSC Legal Aid Hackathon: Jan 2017, San Antonio, TX
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  LSC Legal Aid Hackathon: Jan 2018, New Orleans, LA