

Abstract

The goal of this project was to create an educational website for children, about paleontology and dinosaurs. During the summer of 2023, I collaborated with the Solon Public Library to utilize a collection of wooden dinosaurs made by an Iowan, Jack Neuzil, to make this website. My hope was that, by finding information based on research and facts, I could make a reliable source of education. I wanted this website to use children's fascination with dinosaurs to start to introduce them to scientific ideas. For example, science is very speculative and there is a lot we don't know. I wanted to begin communicating these ideas. Another big part of this website was Jack Neuzil's collection of wooden dinosaurs. He originally made these dinosaurs to bring to schools, so that kids could learn about dinosaurs. I included these on the website because we wanted to honor his legacy of using dinosaurs for further education. My hope is that my website ([Our World of Dinosaurs](#)) can continue his legacy in a way that can be accessible to people around the world.

How my interest in education and paleontology developed

My fascination with dinosaurs has spanned my entire life. In school I would often learn to read by looking through dinosaur encyclopedias, I would watch movies like Jurassic Park and The Land Before Time. My house was by a lake so I would often go hunting for fossils by the shore. As I progressed through elementary school my interest in dinosaurs and science only grew. Before long I was theming all my projects around dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures. My interest in paleontology solidified with my introduction to areas such as biology, evolution, and chemistry. Soon enough, my interest in paleontology was bleeding into other portions of my life.

One such area was Boy Scouts. When I started to think about my eagle scout project, I realized that I wanted to do something that would be related to my lifelong interest in dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs at Dusk

One day I was at an event, where I saw these giant wooden dinosaurs on display (the same ones on this website). Through a friend, I was able to find out more about these wooden dinosaurs, which were housed at the Solon Public Library. After meeting the library director, Liz King, and the inventor who made these dinosaurs, Dr. Jack Neuzil, I helped with the annual Dinosaurs at Dusk event in 2022. The goal of this event was to showcase Jack Neuzil's collection of wooden dinosaurs to educate children about paleontology. For this event, the library asked me to do research to collect basic information on about 15 dinosaurs. I made small note cards for each dinosaur, sharing scientific research that has been done on the species in a way that children could understand. This event was very successful and showed me the extent to which you can share accurate science with children, while still capturing their imagination. After this event, I realized that I wanted to feature these dinosaurs in my eagle scout project. To honor the original intent of Jack Neuzil's dinosaurs, which was to promote education surrounding dinosaurs to children, we brought this project online as an educational resource.

Methods

I had three main components that I needed to make this website. I needed 3D models of Jack Neuzil's dinosaurs to insert into the website. I needed reliable information and facts about each dinosaur to include on the website, which would be easy to understand but still be backed by research. Lastly, I would need to do a small write-up about Jack Neuzil, to honor his legacy and what he accomplished with these dinosaurs.

To 3D model the dinosaur models, I used reality capture on my phone. This consisted of taking many pictures of the model from different angles. After having pictures of each dinosaur from hundreds of angles, the software is able to compile and render a coherent full 3D model of the dinosaur. For the information from the internet, I tried to stay close to reliable sources such as National Geographic and made sure the other sources were up to current research and were reliable. I was also fortunate enough to interview Jack Neuzil in person about his childhood, career, and accomplishments. He had a very successful and diverse life, with a unique perspective on how Iowa has changed over the last century. I included a couple clips from the interview on the website.

To compile everything into the website, we (David Donald, Marcus Brintle, and I) used website builder, Squarespace. Thankfully there were lots of pre-made templates, which made it easy to format everything. We inserted all the information, 3D models, and references into the Squarespace template. Before we published the website we took some time to make sure everything looked good and was easy to use. I would like to thank everyone who helped me on this project, specifically my friends, Boy Scout troop, and the Solon Public Library.

Reflection

After completing this project, I have a new appreciation of what it takes to make an educational resource. This project alone was small in scope, but on its own took more than 100 hours of work to professionally produce and publish.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to collaborate with the Solon Public Library. I was very fortunate to interview Jack Neuzil and include his wooden dinosaurs into my website. I

hope that this can be a platform by which his story can be told for generations to come. My ultimate goal, which can hopefully be achieved through this website, is to promote the accurate representation of science to children, in a way that could still capture their imagination. I hope this website lives up to those ideals and can be enjoyed by children around the world.

I encourage anyone who is interested to check out my website: [Our World of Dinosaurs](#)

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