

RateMyTextbooks.com

A theoretical tool for determining if you should pay \$300, \$30, or zilch for that “required” schoolbook.

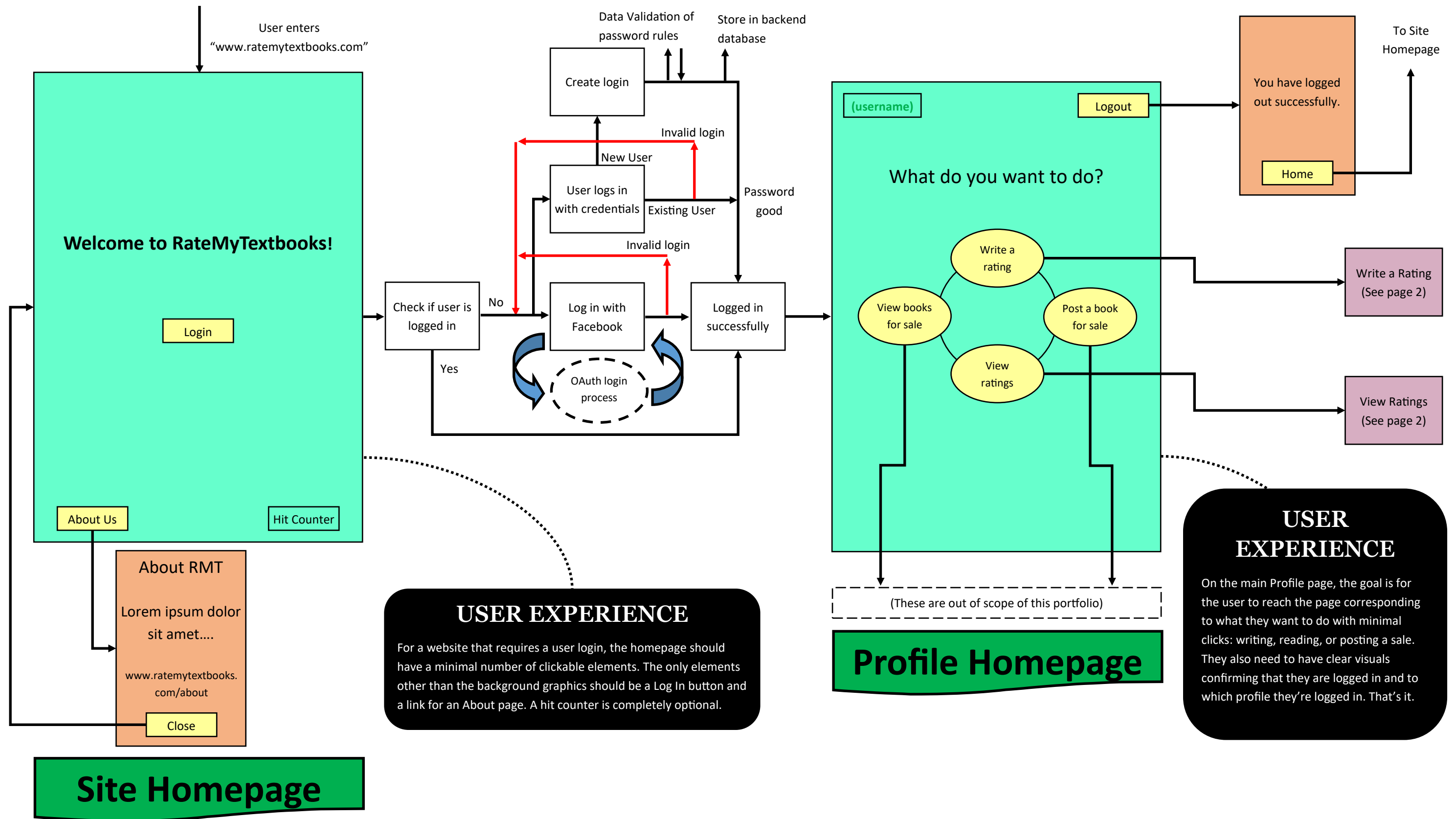
This all started with Shark Tank, unlimited access to Khan Academy, and some unemployment-fueled boredom.

No, really, that's pretty much how it started.

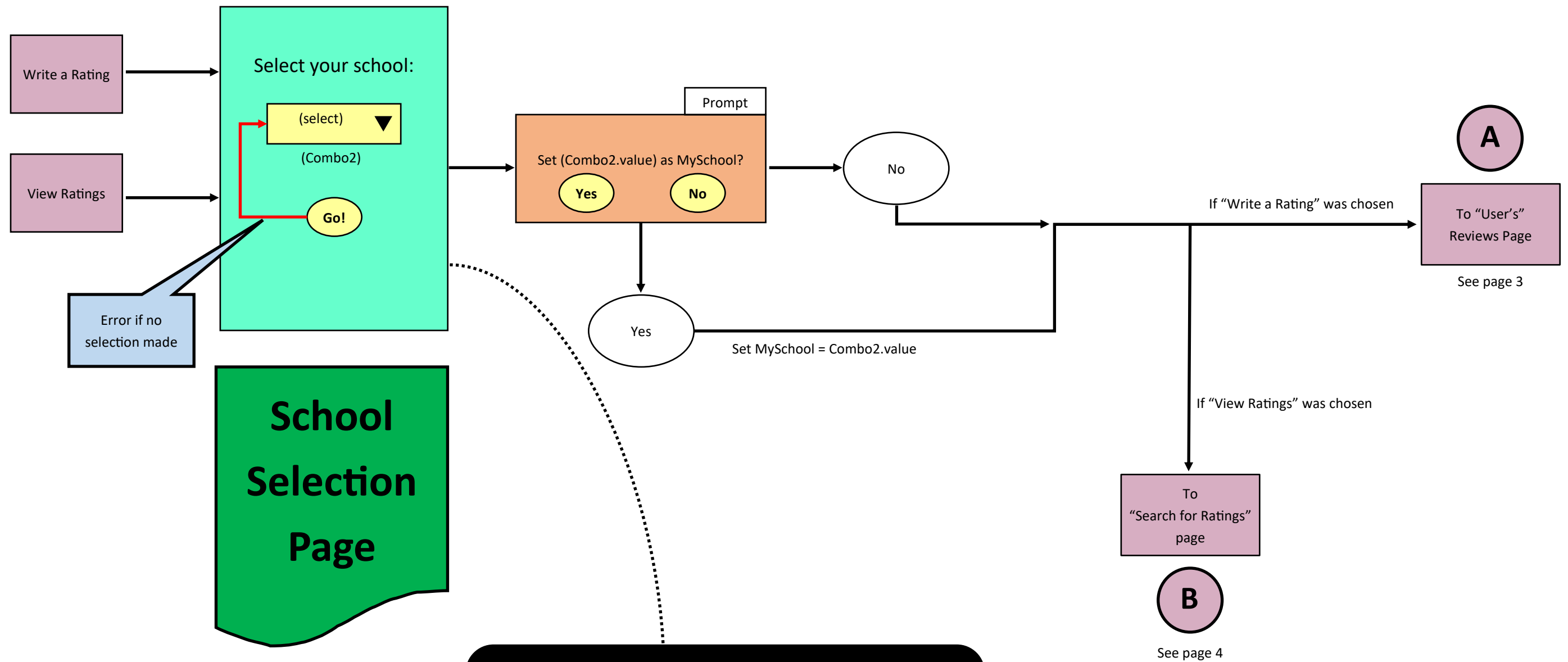
In mid-2013, I found myself living at home after having been unable to secure a job immediately after graduating with my Bachelor's degree in engineering. I can't say that I've ever longed to be the next famous multimillionaire CEO businessman, but something about watching Shark Tank really triggered an entrepreneurial itch. I've always loved being a student and soaking up new knowledge. Though I had no background in programming or graphic design (save for one Computer Science 1 class), I wanted to try my hand at web development and see how far I could get.

I had an idea. An idea for an invention that I thought, if fully realized, would help students save thousands of dollars by avoiding buying books they don't really need. I imagined that I would probably need a marketing degree and at least four more programming courses to be able to create it. In a world where few ideas are completely unique, I also expected that someone had already done it. As it turned out, I eventually did find one person out there that had already attempted something similar, but in my humble opinion, he'd left out some critically important components of the idea. So, while I was busy begging companies to hire me (excuse me, I mean politely submitting endless numbers of resumes to the computerized brain of Taleo and touting my infinite wisdom from zero previous internships), I decided to spend a significant portion of my free time over several months pouring over Khan Academy, YouTube, CodeCademy, and The New Boston, watching tutorial videos on how to make websites. I took their classes on HTML, CSS, Javascript, and PHP and started reading about JQuery, all in a glorious effort to build a website that ultimately... ended up as a pile of unfinished code files and pages of handwritten notes showing what this thing would theoretically look like.

This, my friends, is a tour through my non-programmer's unrealized plan for "RateMyTextbooks.com".



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|---|---|--|--------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light green boxes: individual webpages • Orange boxes: pop-out windows/transitional web pages • Dark green boxes: unique page identifiers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light yellow boxes (on webpages): buttons/clickable elements • Purple boxes: alternate user flow paths • Light blue boxes: comments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark blue boxes: individual review elements • Black arrows: process flow • Red arrows: error loops | <h2>Color Key</h2> |
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USER EXPERIENCE

The School Selection page is a transitional page only. This should be a simple 3-click progression for the user: select the dropdown, click the desired school name, and press the Go (submit) button. The prompt confirms that the user wants to set this school as the default school.

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A

See page 2

If "Write a Rating" was chosen

(Username)'s Reviews

Filters

Book Title	School name
Author	Course code/Course name

Book Title	School name
Author	Course code/Course name

Book Title	School name
Author	Course code/Course name

Book Title	School name
Author	Course code/Course name

Populate **Reviews** from **Username** from backend DB

Populate **Username** from backend DB

Backend database

My Reviews Page

To Profile Home

Data Validation:

User cannot enter multiple reviews for same ISBN, check for blank fields, etc. Return to form if there are errors.

ISBN Help Window

Input Form Page 1

New Review Input Form

School:

Course Dept:

Course Number:

Professor:

Textbook Title:

Edition:

ISBN / ISBN-13:

Semester you took took the class: (Fall / Spring) (Year)

Image Of Textbook Cover

Defaults to MySchool

Manually search for cover image

Google search for cover image

Wrong cover?

What is this?

USER EXPERIENCE

If the user has opted for writing ratings, these pages allow them to quickly see which books, if any, they've already rated, with key data displayed to quickly identify individual reviews. The button for the new review is conveniently placed at the top of the page to avoid scrolling to it. The input form serves as a simple questionnaire guiding the user to provide only the critical information and error if any required fields are left blank. The image of the book cover confirms to the user that the website "understands" what they want to review.

Web

To User's Reviews page

Input Form Page 2

Describe Textbook Usage

- Does the professor assign homework sets from the textbook?
- Does the professor require you to use the textbook in class / do you need it for class?
- Does the professor assign readings from the book?
- Will reading the book help prepare you for this professor's tests?
- Is the book easy to read, or is it really dense?
- Do you think a student taking this class with this professor would have any disadvantages if they opted to use the previous edition of the textbook? (These are often cheaper.)
- Does the textbook, when purchased new, come with any CDs or codes needed for this class/professor?

Note: If you answer "Yes" to #1, #2, or #7, we'll indicate to others that they should probably be getting this book for this particular class/professor.

Data Validation:

Check for blank fields and return to form if any are found.

Thank you for your review!

College is expensive. Your contribution here will likely help other students avoid unnecessary spending.

B

If "View Ratings" was chosen

See page 2

Search For Ratings

Return to Profile Home

To Profile Home

School: [dropdown]

Course Dept: [dropdown]

Course Number: [dropdown]

Professor: [dropdown]

(Search returned 0 reviews.)

Search

Reviews | Summary

(Results subform)

Backend database

Query

Defaults to MySchool

Return results if any reviews were found

Hide subform and display "Search returned 0 reviews." if no results were found.

Subform has two separate clickable tabs

USER EXPERIENCE

If the user has opted to search for ratings, then the Search For Ratings page should be laid out to only let the user (1) enter search criteria, (2) press Search, and (3) view results. The only other element needed on the page is a way to go back to the Profile Homepage for making another "what do I want to do" selection. Any additional elements here would be extraneous.

Search Page

Reviews

(Reviewer username)
(Yes, you need this book)
(No, you don't need this book)

(Reviewer username)
(Yes, you need this book)
(No, you don't need this book)

etc.

Each review is populated into a box that shows the reviewer's username. If they answered #1, #2, or #7 with a "Yes", then the phrase "Yes, you need this book" will be displayed. Otherwise, the phrase "No, you don't need this book" will be displayed. Each box is hyperlinked to open the full review.

Summary

You probably (don't) need this book.

- ___ of ___ people said that homework is assigned straight from the book
- ___ of ___ people said the book is used in class
- ___ of ___ people said the book, when purchased new, includes a CD or access key that you'll need for this class/professor

Check how often reviewers answered #1, #2, or #7 with a "Yes". If the majority of reviews had a "Yes" response to at least one of these questions, don't display the red text.

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Color Key