WEB QUERY: ORGANIZING ONLINE CLASSIFIEDS

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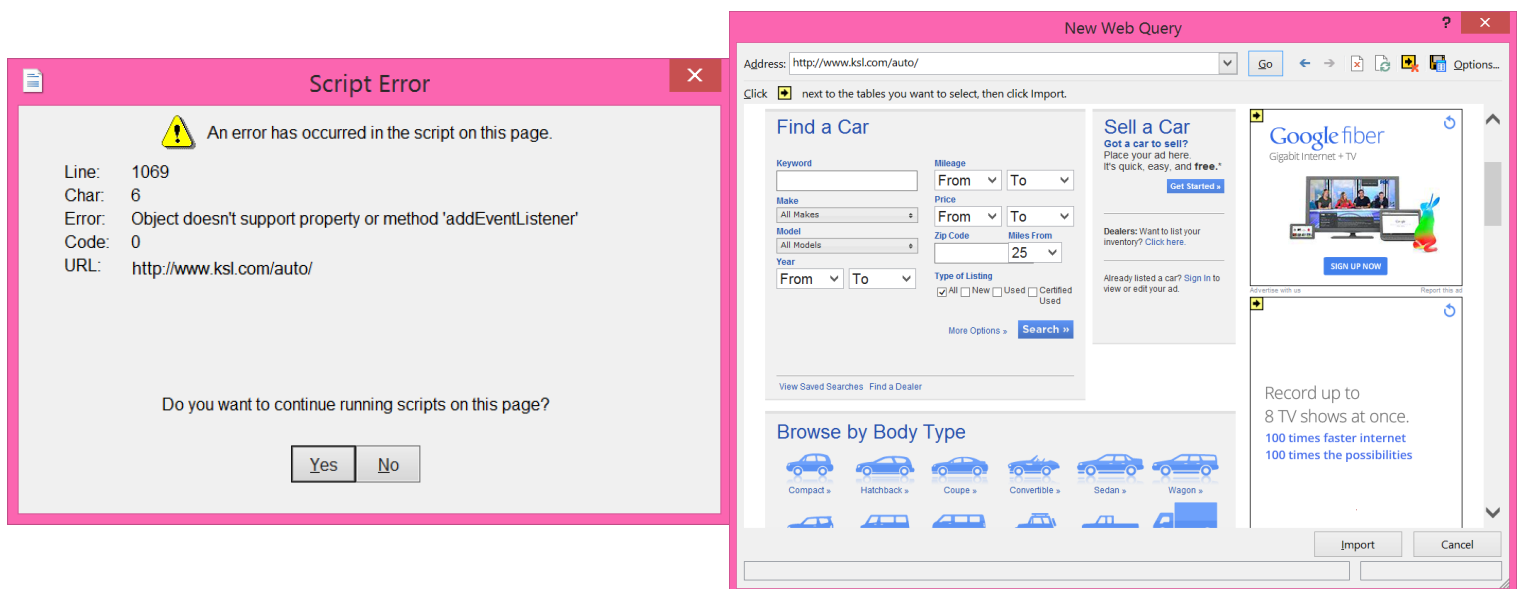MBA 614: Spreadsheet Automation

Executive Summary

I love spending time in the outdoors and finding a good deal. Since I grew up in Utah, I have used KSL classifieds to buy and sell several items. It is a unique website that connects buyers and sellers. It also has more users and greater reliability than Craigslist. For this project, I created a webquery that could help me search for items using the search tools of KSL. I plan to use this to collect information on postings I am interested in such as, backpacking equipment, ski tickets, and classic Nintendo games. Because I have a background knowledge in this equipment and typical prices, I could visually sort out the good buys and make purchases for my own use or to flip.

This project would allow a user to search the KSL classifieds for any specific item. The user could edit their search results and have displayed for them all the postings meeting their search requirements. If a user had a specific interest in a certain item, they could click on a link to the right of the post to access the internet and find more information. I feel this is a great solution for people that want to quickly review and compare postings on the KSL classifieds.

Implementation documentation

Learning and conceptual difficulties

Much of this was an opportunity to learn for me. Initially, I thought I would do a KSL.com cars search because of my love for cars. I planned to collect this data to give me more knowledge and potentially flip cars that I bought on a good buy. I knew there would be a steep learning curve because I was not as familiar as I would like with accessing the internet with VBA code. As I started looking into the website, I also realized that it would be difficult to work with the dependent pulldown options when creating a userform. When I first started recording a macro, I also found that the KSL.com/autos site was difficult to work with and wouldn't allow me to access the search piece of the website that was key for my project.

I thought about how I could overcome these setbacks, but I also figured that as a student it would be impractical for me to flip such a high priced item. I figured I could take another approach and search the

KSL.com classifieds. This would give me a better opportunity to search for broader products and for lower priced items that I was also familiar with; specifically, camping/outdoor items and classic Nintendo systems. I decide to change my project, and worked through other learning difficulties shown below.

The main learning difficulties included organizing information gathered from a web query and creating the ribbon and buttons. Because we haven't had a project that allowed me to practice these skills, I had to re-research how to pull in this information. I also had to figure out how I would make the search more user friendly. After talking with a few students, I determined it would look more clean and professional if I hid tabs from the users view, but still referred to them in the code.

Most of my learning difficulties were resolved from searching online and discussing my project with others. If I were to do the project again, I would make the information in column D a hyperlink or a standard text hyperlink (ex. "Click here for more information").

Assistance

I received assistance from Mark Walker. Mark Walker was an All Star to help me with this project. He completed his early and was interested in my idea to search KSL classifieds. He was willing to help re-teach me how to do webqueries, which was key to my project. He was great to collaborate with and gave me the idea to make an "Edit Search" userform to make it more user friendly.

Conclusion

This project was a great learning experience for me to become well-acquainted with accessing data from the web. This project was a great practical application of VBA automation and will help me as I seek to purchase items for me or to fix up and sell. My collected information is useful for a user seeking to quickly search KSL, find deals, and quickly purchase items.