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Rituals and Chrome Extensions Part 2 : Return of the Icon, Cubs Edition

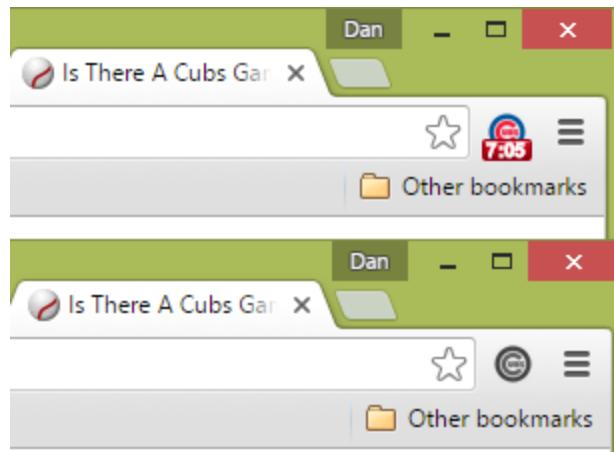
My [CTA Bustracker](#) extension took care of the commute to work in the morning—but I had another problem. My apartment is close enough to Wrigley Field that I’m affected by Cubs traffic—the drive from the lake to my apartment varies from 3 to 30 minutes, depending on the game schedule. There’s a fantastic site called [isthereacubsgametoday.com](#) that I found myself visiting as part of my daily rituals to see if I needed to change my plans accordingly. As you might expect, that led to...

Light bulb number 2—a Chrome extension to tell me if there’s a Cubs game today

Fixing the Annoyance

The wonderful website I mentioned earlier hosts an API to give basic information about if there is a Cubs game today. It was a trivial matter to use that same API myself to have the information of whether or not there was a game, and if so, at what time.

Building on what I learned with the CTA Extension, I had a timer run once per hour to set the extension's icon to be either a full-color or a greyscale Cubs logo, depending on if there was a home game today. If there was a home game, I also set the Badge overlay text to be the time of the game (as day games have a very different impact from night games). It was a simple, effective indicator that did precisely what I was looking for.



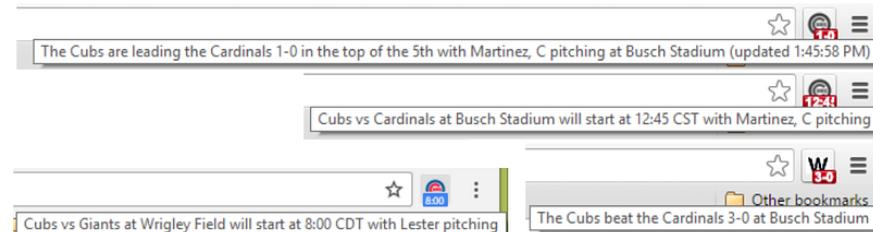
New Opportunities!

And so I released the extension to the masses—and got an interesting (but in hindsight, shouldn't have been unexpected) bit of feedback—what about fans of the Cubs? What about people who also care if there's an away game, and want to know things like who they're playing, what the score is, and who's pitching? I already had an extension that showed some basic information about the Cubs—why not make it useful to a wider audience of people?

So I began looking for somewhere I could source additional data about Cubs games—and quickly found a number of APIs designed for providing large-scale professional sports data, all of which were ludicrously expensive (as they were designed for very different applications). Not to be defeated, I eventually stumbled across a [blog post](#) from 2012 about someone doing a much more involved application, but who found another source of data—the MLB scoreboard web page. MLB has a 'scoreboard' page available on their [website](#), which polls an API every minute for updated game data, then displays that data for the user. The data that it pulls is just a big JSON blob about all the games going on for the requested day—that

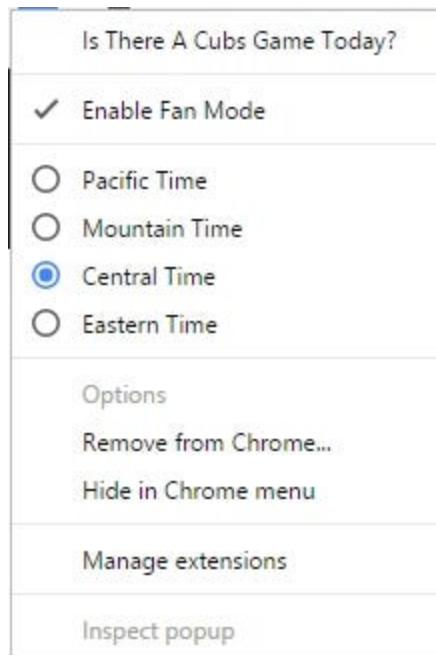
was something I could work with! I was concerned about the [Terms of Service](#), but I decided that I was OK, as the requests would be coming from individuals' browsers, the extension I was writing was free and non-commercial, and I was doing nothing in bulk (in fact, polling much less frequently than their application did, all only for 'today'). At last, I had a source of all the data that a Cubs fan could want!

Once I had that, the rest was pretty straightforward. Request data from 'today', pull out the game that I cared about from the json blob, pull out the data I was interested in from the game (inning, opponent, location, pitcher, score, etc), and pop that into hover text for the icon I'd already made. If there was an 'away game, I left the icon greyscale, but added the overlay text of the game time. While a game was in progress, I showed the score in the overlay Badge text, and updated data every couple minutes rather than just every hour to make things real-time. Once a game finished, I would switch the icon to a "W" or "L" flag to indicate if the Cubs won or lost the game. Everything reset each day, so the icon was a representation of 'today'. In relatively short order, I had a whole new way that the application could be used!



This new functionality went a bit against the initial purpose of the extension, so I needed a way to make it opt-in. An entirely custom Settings page like I did with the CTA tracker popup would be overkill for something simple like this, so I poked around in the context menu settings, and found that I could add a checkbox-style option to the context menu on only the icon (no other web pages) to toggle Fan Mode on and off, and my code would be notified accordingly so it could update. To persist it, I added an item to the Chrome synchronized storage store, so that whenever the browser was restarted or the user went to a different computer, the toggle would follow them.

Finally, I got a request from an ex-Chicagoan asking if the game times could be adjustable to different time zones. Following my context menu settings streak, I added 4 radio-style options to the icon's context menu (for the 4 US time zones) so that a user could select the time zone for the extension, and used the [Moment](#) javascript library to handle time zone switching.



I'm sure I'll continue making tweaks and updates to those extensions, but it's been fun diving deeper into the world of Chrome extensions, and for now, I'm pretty happy with how they turned out.

The Chrome extension is available for free in the [Chrome store](#)

True to their original purpose, they've my daily rituals just a tad more efficient. Now—what's next?

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