

Littering on Whitman Campus

Project Description and Aims:

This research question has two related parts: Is there a correlation between the location of litter and the placement of trash cans on campus? And, what are the campus attitudes of both students and maintenance on the issue of littering on campus? We attempted to answer the first question using pictures and Fulcrum to map out the data. The pictures help demonstrate the issue of overflowing trash cans and contaminated recycling, as well as depict a visual narrative of the problem. Surveys sent to Bon Appetit and maintenance staff, and around 35 students provided feedback to help answer questions about the attitudes and perceptions of littering on campus. Our overall aim was to explore the problem of littering around Whitman from both staff and student perspectives, as well as more objective observations of littering.

Digital Concepts and Tools from the Class that were Used:

The course tools we used were mostly for data collection. We used Fulcrum for taking pictures of trash cans and Google Forms to create our survey. But we also utilized the knowledge we gained on data visualization to format our data we had collected. The project also became reminiscent of digital storytelling.

Current Project's relation to your Earlier Aims:

Our questions about attitudes towards littering we answered to a degree through surveys. But solutions to these problems are more complicated and outside the scope of a three week project.

The Unfolding of the Creative Process:

This was an idea about littering on campus which developed into an exploration of where overflowing trash cans were located and what kinds of litter were most often found. We wanted to use pictures and surveys to collect data and gradually the project came together.

Moments of Failure:

After collecting dozens of pictures on Fulcrum, and spending time tagging the correct photos with the time and location, we realized most of this metadata was lost in the process of transfer to a spreadsheet. Instead, we used only the picture files and information we can recorded independently to recreate the data that was not accessible through Fulcrum.

Places where this Project might Expand:

With more time and funding, we thought we could create a study that might lead to Whitman potentially installing more trash cans around Ankeny field since many students identified a lack of access to trash receptacles around that area. We also realized that a 24-hour dish drop-off area would be beneficial and help solve the problem of dining hall dishes being littered throughout the campus. More recycling bins would also be useful. The overall design of the recycling bins could also be improved, since they are often too small to accommodate the quantity found around campus.