

Archive of Found Sound

Project Description and Aims:

Our project was to archive a collection of brief recordings of anonymous practice sessions in the Whitman College Music Building. The collection aims to explore the ephemeral nature of sound, facilitating the creation of artistic pieces which can engage the artist and their audience with the concepts of ephemeral sounds and the spaces those sounds populate.

Digital Concepts and Tools from the Class that were Used:

Our project made use of digital studies mediums in the documenting and archiving of the music samples originating from the Whitman College Music Building. In collecting recordings of an ephemeral source, members of the project attempted to quantify the artifacts through the tagging of metadata (i.e. timestamps, locations, etc.). Through the process of archiving the recordings, another key concept of digital media arose: the active participation of the user through an archive that allows composition of the recordings and participant decision on the time they would spend perusing the archive and hearing the recordings to their fullest.

Current Project's relation to your Earlier Aims:

The creation of the project itself was fairly straight forward and paralleled the general progression we had expected. However, we struggled to figure out the importance and meaning of the project. The overall creation lacked a concrete goal for the user; as a result, we spent most of our class periods discussing what the project would entail for the audience. The physical outcome matched closely with our initial goal, but our conception of the project evolved significantly into numerous directions. We had originally wanted to capture and archive ephemeral sounds; however, after having collected our audio we began to question why would we archive this? What purpose did it serve? And how do we engage the user with this archive? As a result, we decided to construct this archive as a domain that grants the user a freedom to experience, and explore the nature of sound as an ephemeral medium.

The Unfolding of the Creative Process:

The process of creating our project and turning it into what it has become has been a practice of self-evaluation and emphasizing the experience that can be found in the recordings. In wanting to archive an ephemeral source primarily, we originally lacked a question to lead our project. However, upon deciding on a music experience being our archival goal, we realized the interactive role that is created with an active user audience. This "found sound" experience has

thus transformed into an accessible database of recordings to be utilized in creating compositions that frame the environment of the Whitman Music Building.

Moments of Failure:

Most of our issues involved questions of what exactly we were trying to achieve with the creation of the archive, what is the central question was that we were trying to address. As such we had to take the time to hammer out these quandaries but did not experience an moments of major failure overall.

Places where this Project might Expand:

If given more time and resources we would have attempted to increase the size of our archive. In so doing, an increased archive would entail more complex compositions to create and a larger amount of capta to work with. By extension, this could mean more ways through which the user can experience and interact with the audio in addition to expanding the ways they construct their own compositions.