

Reflection #5: Wrapping Up (Due November 14)

This semester has been a unique journey, and reflecting on our on-site work has shown me how much we learned as a cohort, especially as we shaped our implementation plan for the garden. Early in the semester, we were introduced to the challenge of designing a project that could be integrated into the Missouri Botanical Garden. Our first site visit set the stage by introducing us to Jennifer, who shared examples of past implementation projects. We analyzed these, discussing their strengths and limitations, which really helped us understand what makes an implementation plan successful and what common issues to avoid. This first visit was crucial, it gave us ideas to draw from and adapt as we moved forward with our project.

Our second visit to the garden stands out as my favorite. Beforehand, each team in our cohort had developed a rough draft of their plan to present at the garden. My research team decided to introduce our proposal in a creative format: a letter titled “Dear Sean.” Ironically, Sean couldn’t attend that day, so we presented to Jennifer instead! The presentation was a memorable experience, not only because we got to share our work but also because we could hear and provide feedback on other teams’ ideas. This interaction, both receiving and giving feedback, gave us a clearer direction and helped refine our approach to the project.

The third and fourth visits were focused on gathering data, with my team, “Colonialism/Extractive Practices,” working closely with the “Indigenous Knowledge” group. The Indigenous Knowledge team had developed a QR code-based tour concept that highlights the original indigenous names of plants rather than the European names often used in traditional garden signage. Their project emphasizes a more accurate representation of plant histories, making indigenous perspectives central and challenging the white-centered naming narrative. Their focus aligns closely with our own work on extractive practices, as both of our groups seek to uncover and honor the true origins and histories tied to the garden’s plants. Together, we aim to highlight how colonialism/displacement have not only altered plant ecosystems but also erased indigenous knowledge and cultural significance. Working alongside their team gave us additional insights into how to approach our topic from a lens of respect and restoration and allowing us to acknowledge the people and practices that colonial histories have overlooked.

Our final site visit marked the culmination of our work. My team met with Ashley and one of Dr. Jack’s groups, whose plan involved creating a multi-day, interactive curriculum for

garden visitors. In our conversation with Ashley, we focused on extractive practices and gained insight into specific plants and people we could connect with to continue our oral histories next semester. This conversation helped us solidify our research approach and provided leads on experts who could inform our data collection.

Overall, I'd rate this semester a solid 7/10. I learned a lot from the challenges we faced, especially the importance of being prepared and staying communicative with my team. Moving forward, I'm committed to improving these skills next semester to strengthen our final product and team dynamic.