**Gwen Poillucci**

**Collaborative Unit Artist Reflection**

The collaborative unit project was by far the most challenging, but also the most fun, assignment of this entire semester. Even after not fully mastering html + css markup, expanding that knowledge further was beneficial, and met my aspiration for creating interactive data visualizations. As I had alluded to in my individual project pitch, the portrayal of data has always been extremely fascinating to me. I get great joy, although that may be strange to say, out of witnessing the convergence of raw information and styling. Enrolling in a class my final semester of college that would enable to learn the behind the scenes knowledge of this was incredibly rewarding for me.

I could not have been successful in this endeavor without the similar interests of my group members Casey, Gabi, and Lucas. Each of their successes and failures furthered my own knowledge, and, let’s face it, I wouldn’t have been able to even work on this project had they not believed in my scary project pitch. To reiterate from our team contract and project proposal, our goal was to create an interactive data visualization housed on a WordPress site. We wanted to dive into JavaScript, since all of us with the exception of Gabi, had never even dipped our toes into this before. The decision was made to use a JavaScript library (jsfiddle or .js) to manipulate our information. This was more feasible than learning how to write it all on our own in our short time frame, but also taught us how to maneuver and personalize a set of predetermined code. We also decided to use WordPress as our portal of delivery because we felt our experience in creating our own webpages from scratch was sufficient during the html + css markup unit. WordPress offered us customizable templates that again allowed us to learn to maneuver and personalize a set of predetermined styling choices.

Due to the difficult nature of this project, our baseline criteria were limited to having a functioning WordPress site that utilized JavaScript based interactive charts and graphs. We wanted to be able to see and interact with just a few charts and graphs on our page, and also incorporate our own styling into the preexisting WordPress template Astrid. We were successful and met all of this baseline criteria. We decided that our site would function as an educational resource chronicling our journey to meet our criteria as well as provide information for future students to learn as we did. Our site contains five pages: a homepage, three pages containing different interactive data visualization about our Black Friday sales data which we found on [**https://www.statisticbrain.com/black-friday-yearly-spending/**](https://www.statisticbrain.com/black-friday-yearly-spending/)**,** and a resources page that contains the behind the scenes look at our site.

Our first major decision was a data set to work with. The link included above provided static charts with an array of Black Friday information which we thought would be interesting to work with due to the time of year and our joint interests in consumer spending. The array of data and variable provided us with many options for showing the data. Next, we needed to decide on a JavaScript library. After considering react d3, Google Charts, and .js, we decided to let each individual group member use the library they felt best addressed their data set. Gabi, Lucas, and I used the jsfiddle extension in Google charts for our savings vs. sales and e-commerce performance data while Casey used a .js format to show a timeline of spending. We also had to decide a theme for our WordPress site, and settled upon Astrid for its minimalistic style, ability to support plug-ins, and static single page formatting that would work for us well because we did not plan to extend this site beyond the duration of the class.

The biggest challenge we faced was incorporating the JavaScript into our site and styling the page to our liking, but we were able to overcome both of these. The background image we used for the site, Diacratico de Venezuela, offered a sense of the craziness of Black Friday and fit into our black, white, gold, gray, and green color scheme. We chose a simple black on white text, with white backgrounds and gray border because it looks sleek and the contrast demands attention. The home page offers a snippet into our goals, and tagline “How much was bought?...” grabs interest. The timeline of sales, sales vs. savings, and e-commerce action sites offer one or a few visualizations. On each page, the menu bar across the top of the screen remains visible so that users can move between pages seamlessly. The charts or graphs on each page remain white, but include bright colors so it is easy to see the data we were working with. Our baseline criteria were to get just one or two working visualizations, but the fact that we were able to get six, each of a different type ranging from a table to line charts to bubble charts to bar graphs met our aspirational criteria. The resources page is also a nice addition to our aspirational criteria because not only did we learn these skills, but we created a template for others to do so as well. This could attract a following for future classes that Ben holds. They can see our coding on the GitHub repository, fiddle around with our data on jsfiddle, and learn how to embed their own code on WordPress with Gabi’s handy guide and links.

All of the sources of our data can be found in interactivedataviz/credits on the GitHub repository so I will not repeat them here. The JavaScript for each of the individual charts can also be found in the GitHub repository. Wordpress.org was incredibly helpful in finding directions on how to embed code and style our own css.

Attribution for the background image: Diacratico de Venezuela CC-BY 2.0, (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/diariocriticove/8211477590/in/photostream/)>, no changes were made to the original form of the photo