ENGL 1650: EC Project Reflection

The goal of the Critical Making Assignment was to collaboratively design a visualization of *The Umpire* dataset using a specific technology from the Education Commons. My group, the Textiles/Textures group, was tasked with using the sewing machine to create a tangible representation of any piece of the data. We chose to visualize the very first entry of *The Umpire Newspaper* dataset, which contained the scores of a baseball game on March 19th, 1913, between the two teams at Eastern State Penitentiary: the Yanigans and the Regulars. As a group, we decided to create a scoreboard of these results, using the sewing machine. This reflection will explore our goals, process, successes, failures, and the dynamics of our team as we tackled the project.

Our primary goal was to create a unique way to present a piece of the dataset, while ensuring that the design was achievable within our skillset and the capabilities of the sewing machine. As a group, we had limited experience using a sewing machine. However, Ella and Buky took on the responsibility of operating the machine in the roles of Fabricator and Design Facilitator. Chase took on the role of Documentarian, Stephen as Digital Asset Manager, Taryn as the Outreach Specialist, and I served as Project Manager. Once we divided up our roles, we participated in a lesson led by our mentor, Christine. She guided us through an overview of the sewing machine's function, features, and shared ideas from past projects of her own. It became clear that given the time we have, the best approach would be to create a patch. Christine even showed us an example from our own data – a patch of the dog inmate from Eastern State Penitentiary. This initial session was very helpful, as it provided insights into the technology, as well as how we could approach our own ideas. As a group, we knew we wanted to create something with the baseball data in the dataset; a scoreboard was the best way to clearly present multiple elements, such as the team names, the game date, the inning scores, and the overall game outcome. We were also able to find straightforward examples online, which gave us more inspiration and guidance.

With a clear vision of our visualization, we moved forward into the actual making process. We couldn't just start sewing right away; we had to prepare a design. The first step was creating an Illustrator file of the scoreboard between the Regulars and the Yanigans. This file would serve as the foundation for our patch, allowing us to intersect the baseball game data with the metadata from Eastern State Penitentiary and the textile technology. We created a patch design on the EmBrilliance Software in the Education Commons. Ella, as the fabricator, had to familiarize herself with the software and proceeded to attempt the scoreboard design. Unfortunately, when designing the patch we struggled to incorporate some of the elements that we had conceptualized in our original design. While this presented some challenges, it was definitely a natural part of the process as we transitioned from an idea to the actual hands on creation. One of the main obstacles was that the EmBrilliance software was very hard to navigate. Typically Embrilliance imports from Adobe illustrator, but we couldn't use Adobe, and therefore had to work directly with the more complex Embrilliance software. We were able to work through any difficulties and adapt. For example, our original design included the full team names, "Regulars" and "Yanigans". However, the patch was too small to fit all of the characters, so we had to simplify the names to acronyms "REGS" and "YANS" to fit on the patch. As we continued through the process, we faced numerous technological difficulties with the sewing machine. However, Ella and Buky worked closely with Christine to troubleshoot and navigate the problems.

Despite the challenges we faced, our team came together and successfully completed the patch. One of our key successes was our ability to adapt and stay persistent, especially in overcoming difficulties with a machine we had no previous experience with. Each team member played a crucial role in keeping the process moving forward, despite having to make changes throughout. Everyone contributed to the problem solving process, whether it was adjusting the design, working through the software issues, finding creative solutions, or just maintaining organization. As the project manager, my job was to keep the team organized and on track. I made sure our team GoogleDoc specifically had our goals and next steps for the project. I also had to communicate with the team constantly to make sure things were running smoothly and we were taking the correct steps to finishing the project. Our group as a whole worked very well together; everyone brought different strengths and creative ideas. I wouldn't change anything about our design or how our group worked together. We were able to overcome challenges and complete the project successfully, while maintaining a collaborative and creative environment.

Final Design

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Photos Throughout Process