

# **Formative Research Report**

## **Team: Trackboard**

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## **Introduction**

Bulletin boards are an essential component of any college, school, market or even workplace. They provide a convenient means for communicating vital and non-vital information. However, the management of bulletin boards can be quite messy. This is fairly evident if you look around campus. Often posters for an event at the start of a semester are left unattended until the end of the semester. It's the responsibility of those who put up the posters to take them down at the appropriate time. However, this duty is neglected, and the student services team has trouble enforcing this rule for several reasons. One of the main reasons is the lack of documentations surrounding the poster approval and postage process.

However, the student service team is responsible for many duties some of which are of paramount importance like students' mental and physical wellbeing. They don't have the time nor the resources to document things like who put up a poster on which board on which floor in which building. Currently, there is no specific website or app that can provide the necessary solution to the problem right now, despite a couple of attempted solutions. One solution that was tried was having work-study students manually go around the campus and check every bulletin board for posters. Another solution that was attempted was compiling things into a Google Docs. Both solutions were ineffective and difficult to manage. Thus, neither solution is in effect right now.

Our solution aims to solve this problem by providing a streamlined process making documentation of necessary information easy and provide a visual representation of what each bulletin board is supposed to look like. The end goal is to lift a burden on our already hard working student service team.

## **Background**

The first record of a bulletin board being used dates all the way back to 1801 and is credited to James Pillans, a headmaster and geography teacher of a highschool in Scotland (Room 241). Soon Patents formed for cork boards and other types of physical boards, but for a very long time only small incremental changes were made to bulletin boards, such as changing the cork material or changing the location of the physical board (Brooks, Fox). This was true up until 2006 when Dr. Pumpnickel proposed a high resolution digital bulletin board system (Carvey). Since then several digital platforms have been created such as Digital Signage and Pinterest (Grant).

When the poster management system was first created in SUNY Korea, SUNY Korea was a much smaller university with a drastically smaller student body. Manually keeping track of a few posters here and there was a fairly simple task. The only problem was that it wasn't scalable. As time went by SUNY Korea's population got larger and larger while on the other hand the poster management system was never updated. Soon, manually keeping track of every poster got more and more tedious while more and more students started becoming unaware of the rules. The problems only kept escalating as the student body kept growing, yet no changes were brought about.

A couple years ago there was an attempt to move management onto Google Docs, however it only brought new problems whilst not solving any of the existing ones. It didn't make recording posters data easier. It didn't speed up the process. It caused people to scramble and try to find the correct google doc file whenever a student came in wanting authorization. Not long after it started, the solution was ditched and the management system reverted back to the old manual style. The manual documentation system is the system that is currently used today.

## **Target Users**

Our target users are the people who organize the posters and those who want to get their posters authorized for posting. To be more specific for our project, the people that organize posters will be SUNY Student Services and Career Team as well as IGC Housing Office; and the people who want their posters authorized will be the Undergraduate Student Council, SUNY Club Executives and the Residential Assistants. These are the two groups of people that we are targeting our software to.

## **Formative User Research - Surveys**

We found the participants for our online surveys by sharing a google forms survey on the SUNY Korea Undergraduate and the CSE Students Kakaotalk group chat. We selected these group chats since it will give us a decent estimate of what percentage of students have gone through the process of posting posters around campus as well as being able to get submissions from USC, Club Executives, and the Resident Assistants. There are many students who are in both group chats and our survey doesn't collate emails so we would never know if someone filled out our survey multiple times, but we believe that the students tech savvy enough to notice if they're filling out the same survey twice. Especially since the announcements that we made in the group were identical every time and those that are filling out the survey were willing enough to participate without any compensation.

By conducting the survey through google forms, the collected data was presented in an easily readable method that we analyzed. One thing we noticed is that the posting on boards lacks visibility compared to posting on Kakao groups or Facebook. Another, was that some students didn't post on the bulletin boards because they didn't want to go through the tedious process of getting permission. Most students thought that the boards were too cluttered and they had trouble finding a spot when posting posters. A key thing that we noticed is that there was nothing inherently wrong about the current system. It just lacked the resources to manage the posters and could use a lot of major quality of life changes.

## **Formative User Research - Interviews**

For our interviews we hand selected several people that we wanted to interview: a SUNY Korea Student Service Team Representative, IGC Housing Office Representative, and a SUNY Club executive. We selected these three people since they play a significant role in the poster management process and are the people we want to target our project towards.

To reach these people we started by contacting these people by email to get permission for the interview and at the start of each interview we briefly explained the reason for the interview before proceeding to the questions. The nature of our questions was asking them to describe the process of posting posters, how they feel about the process, if they feel like there are any problems with the process, and something they wish to see implemented, changed, or updated in the process. During each of the three interviews there was someone taking notes and someone asking questions and after each interview we had a group discussion to identify the key points and common themes that occurred. The three interviews went as follows.

The first interview was with the IGC Housing Office's representative. A common theme that was brought up throughout was that students don't follow "simple instructions." At the core of every frustration was that the students were given clear, simple, and easy to understand instructions as well

as examples to follow, yet somehow the instructions weren't followed properly and the management has to follow up to clean up the messes that were created was a frustrating cycle to repeat over and over. The fact that this mess happened all over the IGC campus only added to the frustration. They understand that controlling the students' behaviors is not in their control, so they wished for a system that allows them to more easily convey instructions as well as aiding in cleaning up the messes.

The second interview was with the SUNY Korea Student Service Team's representative. The representative gave a thorough description of the process. The direction of the interview gravitated towards having a visual representation of the bulletin boards available online. A method to see the bulletin boards with a method other than physically taking a look at the board. Additionally, the representative mentioned how they always turn away the students' first posters because of the failure to both satisfy the university's poster format guideline and the lack of informing the students of the guideline; thus, this resulted in wasting countless papers. The representative strongly believed that the current system can be definitely improved. The representative wished for a system that will prevent wasted posters trying to get authorization and will also synthesize and provide feedback of the current state of the bulletin boards.

The third interview was with a SUNY Korea Club President. One of the thoughts that was repeated was that the locations of the bulletin boards, to which the students were limited to, were not in good locations for posters in general. She mentioned that the students will "see it, but not *see* it," meaning that the locations of the posters were in places where students would glance at before continuing walking towards their destinations. After mentioning this problem, she suggested that lecture rooms and elevators were much better locations for posters, but they didn't have permissions to post in these locations. She wished to have more freedom on where she was allowed to post posters.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the general consensus is that there is nothing inherently wrong with the core of the current poster management system, but it could definitely use an update since it's unenjoyable to use and difficult to manage. Therefore, without altering the core steps in the current management system our poster management project will enhance the experience by; streamlining the whole process to keep it less frustrating to use; allow authorization of posters before printing anything out; providing visual feedback to stay up to date on the state of the bulletin boards; and allow students to make individual requests for special posting permissions. We can achieve this by switching to an all-parties-inclusive online platform that handles everything from explaining specific rules to specific campuses, requesting authorization of posters through pdf and image files, and providing up to date feedback on the state of the bulletin boards. This is the service our poster management project will be able to provide.

## References

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- Grant, August E.; Meadows, Jennifer H. (June 25, 2010). *Communication Technology Update and Fundamentals*. Focal Press; 12 edition. p. 165. ISBN 978-0240814759.
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*ResilientEducator.com*, 8 Nov. 2017,  
[resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/the-history-of-the-classroom-blackboard/](http://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/the-history-of-the-classroom-blackboard/).

## Appendix

### Initial In-Class Critique

- I. Instead of referring to things as "this service" or "this project" be specific about which portion of the project or what the service is providing for the staff or the users.
- II. Make a mention to what the current system is like at the moment.
- III. Ask for the background of poster management.
- IV. Ask what have they been frustrated with so far.
- V. Ask what are some "wish" features they would like to add to the system?

### In person Interview with IGC Housing Office Manager

- I. Semi-structured interview
- II. Prepared interview questions
  - A. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZnKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t\\_S4-Sfg/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZnKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t_S4-Sfg/edit)
- III. Written notes during the session
  - A. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZVHRlqMHJV0I66j75bb6qv1tPL8QXSgX/view?usp=sharing>
- IV. Audio recording of the session
  - A. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O8\\_9mHAbv5HgkNezVXTvkGXxqrfOn\\_jY/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O8_9mHAbv5HgkNezVXTvkGXxqrfOn_jY/view?usp=sharing)
- V. Time, date, and location of the session: March 25th, 2020 - 19:00 KST at IGC Housing Office Lounge
- VI. Interviewer participants
  - A. Muhammad Bilal
    1. Main interviewer asking prepared questions with follow-up questions
  - B. Daekyung Kim
    1. Note taking and supporting follow-up questions

### **In person interview with SUNY Korea Student Service Team Member**

- I. Semi-structured interview
  - A. Prepared interview questions
    - 1. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZnKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t\\_S4-Sfg/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZnKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t_S4-Sfg/edit)
- II. Written notes during the session
  - A. <https://drive.google.com/open?id=17hKUob9pIYOKuv2haUWilhNTqVLzUwxn>
- III. Audio recording of the session
  - A. Not available
- IV. Time, date, and location of the session: March 26th, 2020 - 15:30 KST at SUNY Korea Student Affairs Office
- V. Interviewer participants
  - A. Muhammad Bilal - Main interviewer asking prepared questions with follow-up questions
  - B. Daekyung Kim - Note taking and supporting follow-up questions

### **Phone call interview with the President of SUNY Korea International Christian Christian Club in Spring 2020**

- I. Semi-structured interview
  - A. Prepared interview questions
    - 1. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZnKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t\\_S4-Sfg/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZnKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t_S4-Sfg/edit)
  - B. Written notes during the session
    - 1. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LI0EB0yuqOpQTOvn3OWpraU9L2z\\_C7ksmdgkJeFlyUU/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LI0EB0yuqOpQTOvn3OWpraU9L2z_C7ksmdgkJeFlyUU/edit?usp=sharing)
  - C. Audio recording of the session
    - 1. <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Clp1jJ8uRTY0eDoKkAoOGxMUP4JzxtHJ>
  - C. Time, date, and location of the session: March 27th, 2020 - 23:10 KST over phone call
  - D. Interviewer participants
    - 1. Haseung Lee
      - a) Interviewer asking prepared questions with follow-up questions and took notes

### **Online Survey with SUNY Korea students**

- I. Structured interview
- II. Prepared interview questions
  - A. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZnKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t\\_S4-Sfg/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZnKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t_S4-Sfg/edit)
- III. Results
  - A. [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ZY48t\\_95QZAQVDazWeLFyrLAdMIWChqVs1NDDO45d9O/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ZY48t_95QZAQVDazWeLFyrLAdMIWChqVs1NDDO45d9O/edit?usp=sharing)
- IV. Duration of the survey: March 24th, 2020 - March 28th, 2020
- V. Total Participants: 16 SUNY Korea Students

**Online Survey with staff (Requested to other universities)**

- I. Structured interview
- II. Prepared interview questions
  - A. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZNKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t\\_S4-Sfg/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/19vaWw-kOlrrdZNKbCjcOP5wDrUZGNe0QhC7t_S4-Sfg/edit)
- III. Results: Requested online survey through email, but failed to receive any responses