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Grinnell EcoHouse:



Exploring Sustainable Living at Grinnell College

Goals, purpose, and philosophy

Begun in the Fall of 2008, EcoHouse is a Grinnell College project house devoted to experiential examination and practice of sustainability, providing an example of sustainable living for the Grinnell campus and community. The house serves as a:

- Testing ground for green technology
- Demonstration house
- Locus for skill sharing/learning
- Home of sustainability studies, and
- Hub of environmental discourse

To ensure that the house's environmental ideals are lived out in practice, residents agree to abide by a set of lifestyle guidelines.

Students work to hold events, make improvements to the house, and keep up with day to day tasks around the house through the guidance of a flexible governing structure that includes weekly group meetings, subcommittee responsibilities for Gardening, Renovations, and Events, and a chore rotation.

Independent Study Projects

In the 2008-2009 school year, EcoHouse residents collaborated with various faculty to undertake independent study projects relating to environmental issues. Project topics included:

- *Governance, Commitment, and Cohesion in Ecovillages and EcoHouse*
- *Exploring the Feasibility of the 100-Mile Diet in Grinnell, Iowa*
- *The Environmental Movement and Socioeconomic Class*
- *Migration, Ethnicity, and Environmental Attitudes in the U.S.*
- *Prairie Ecology: Perceptions and Misconceptions*
- *The Disposability Culture*

The results of these projects were presented to the college through formal academic presentations.

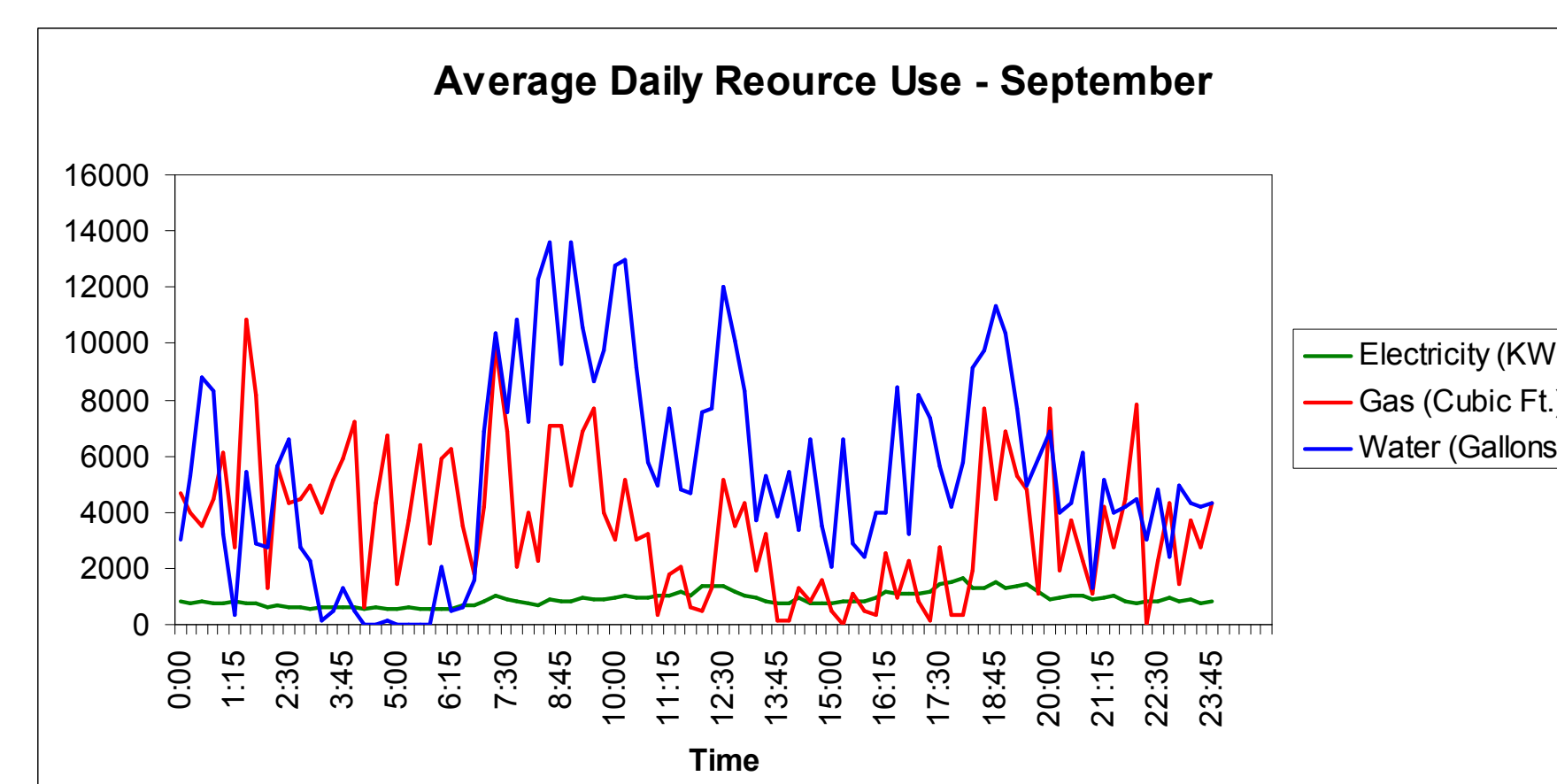
Home Sweet Home



Efficiency Projects

In conjunction with Facilities Management (FM), EcoHouse works to improve the efficiency of resource use in the house through renovations and data monitoring. Projects have included:

- Real-Time Monitoring of Resource Use
- Aerated Faucets
- Dual Flush Toilets
- Insulation of Attic, Foundation, and Pipes
- CFL lighting
- Gardening and Composting
- Data Tracking and Calculations:



Renovations and behavioral changes allowed EcoHouse to reduce electricity use by about 25%, saving the college nearly \$500 in 4 months.

This year, we will continue with renovations and monitoring, and will extend the efficiency projects to other college-owned houses.

Participatory Design @ EcoHouse

Participatory Design is a family of theories and methods for technology design that include technology users and other stakeholders throughout the design process.

(For an introduction to Participatory Design, see Bødker, Gronbæk, & Kyng 1995.)

The goal of this project is to develop and/or deploy information technology to help EcoHouse achieve its goals for promoting sustainable living.

Project timeline:

Summer 2009: Facilitator preparation

September: Brief interview of each participant

September-October: Cultural probes, facilitator joins in weekly meetings

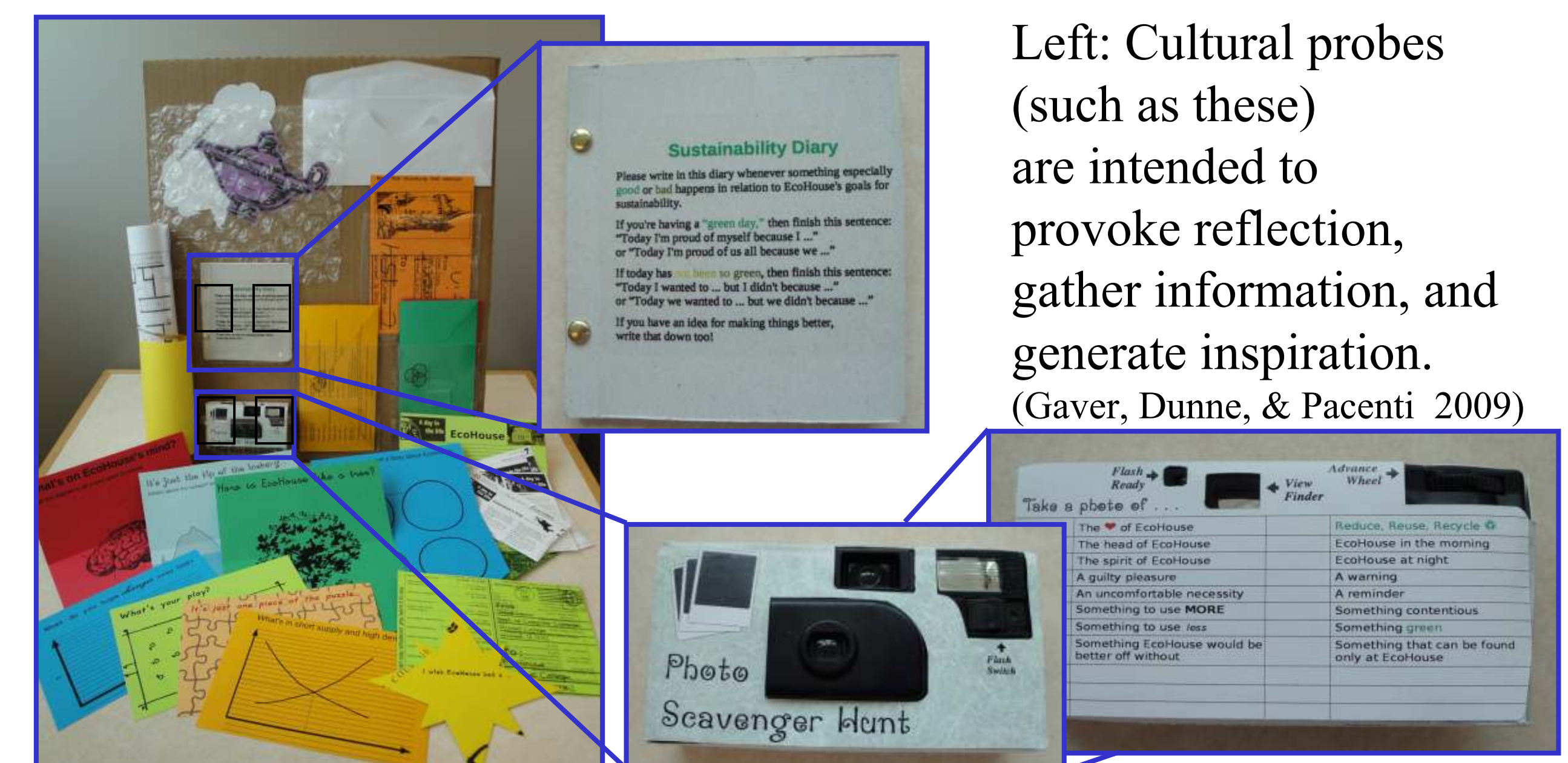
November: Workshops to develop design concepts and non-working prototypes

December: Refining prototypes

Spring: Deploy new technology!

What will we build? We don't know yet!

That depends on the needs and ideas that emerge through the design process.



Left: Cultural probes (such as these) are intended to provoke reflection, gather information, and generate inspiration. (Gaver, Dunne, & Pacenti 2009)

Acknowledgments

Thanks to all current and past EcoHouse residents who have contributed so much to the house. EcoHouse owes its success to our many collaborators, including Professor Jon Andelson, Mr. Chris Bair and Mr. Rick Whitney from Facilities Management, Ms. Jen Krohn from Student Affairs, and all the advisors of the independent projects.