The *Whole Earth?* Exhibition: A catalyst for course and module innovation

Stephen Scoffham and Adriana Consorte-McCrea
1. Introducing the Whole Earth exhibition

http://www.hardrainproject.com/
Changed human minds

Change, if it comes, will originate not through changing our technologies first, changing our minds; changing from judging success by ownership, switching wanting more of everything to wanting the right amount, developing a sense of those suffering the brunt of climate change. It is tough enough to dematerialize our own developments; it is tougher to dematerialize our own minds.

Perhaps the best beginning would be to imagine how pleasant sustainable development could be – without pollution, weather extremes, sprawl. Stewart Brand of Whole Earth Catalog fame has argued that West Coast American take the environment more seriously not because they are more serious than most, but because they are hedonists. Cycling is more fun than riding in a car. Being out in nature is pleasant so it is worth protecting that nature. Etc.

It is hard to change, but people who have done it – even those who have tried – have found it liberating, exhilarating and a lot of fun.
Our fragmented world

"The Earth is one but the world is not," began the 1987 Brundtland Report, which invented and defined the concept of sustainable development. It meant that the Earth is one whole planetary ecosystem, but the world we have constructed on it is fragmented, with parts in opposition to other parts. Worse, the divisions we had constructed to manage our world were breaking apart.

"Until recently, the planet was a large world in which human activities and their effects were neatly compartmentalized within nations, within sectors (energy, agriculture, trade) and within broad areas of concern (environmental, economic, social). These compartments have begun to dissolve."

That dissolution has gained momentum over the three decades since the report was published, creating the unmanaged, mismanaged, conflicted world we live in today. Conflicts exist even within "areas of concern". Environmental groups preach constantly that it is "one minute to midnight"; we are running out of time to "save the planet!"

Yet these groups spend a disproportionate amount of time and energy fundraising and increasing their own "market share" of members and funds. They do not unite to save our planet.

A promise of WHOLE EARTH? is that university students may be a bit more 'reasonable' and less mired in mumbo jumbo than the general public, or at least than their elders.

By joining together to articulate the kind of world they want to live in and campaigning for it, students can be a hugely powerful group, reaching across the fractures of their world and creating a political force for sustainable forms of human progress.
2. Whole Earth? at CCCU
“The children of today have got to learn to grow up with a love of this planet. If you don't start with a love of it ... knowing that it is their place... it's not just on telly.... then it will never happen.”
3 Whole Earth? Overseas
Dr Lal C.A., Kerala University, Department of Botany, writes to Mark Edwards and Stephen Scoffham.

"Dear Mark and Stephen

I am back home after a very fruitful week in Bangalore. Things worked in a fantastically more effective way than I anticipated. The banners were on display in three campuses. Beyond that I had the opportunity to directly address about 1250 students in nine spells of two hours each. I combined your stories with mine and Mark's video was viewed in state of the art auditoriums by all. (…). The feedback has been overwhelming."
CLIMATE CHANGE

It's settled... We agree to sign a pledge to hold another meeting to consider changing course in a date yet to be determined.

SOS

It is a critical time for our future. URGENT! The urgency is clear: we need to act now to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come. Climate change is real, and it's happening now. We must act together to mitigate its impact and protect our planet for future generations. 

WORLD LEADERS
4 Using *Whole Earth*? as a catalyst
Media students FI project: Engaging with *Whole Earth?* – reflections & responses to WE

School of Teacher Education and Development students visit the exhibition

School of Law, Criminal Justice and Computing, FI project “*Criminology picks up the gauntlet*”: Responses to the *Whole Earth?* Exhibition

School of Public Health, Midwifery and Social Work discussed exhibition in class, using photographs to provoke discussion.
The *Whole Earth?* exhibition provided a novel way of engaging staff, students and practitioners working within the field of Early Childhood with sustainability.
The exhibition generated sparks of curiosity, conversation, and discussions between strangers. And for me it raised fundamental questions about the way in which I live my life and how I enact my role.”
Sadie Barton, Student, CCCU (Whole Earth? Newsletter, April 2016)

"...Then I got it: the impact my plastic, my meat, my waste paper is making on the planet which is keeping me alive."

"What’s good is that the exhibition doesn’t just show problems, it shows what my generation – and universities – can do to bring about real change."
5 Using *Whole Earth*? Further events
21st October
2015
EcoReligion: An Interfaith Council response to Whole Earth?
Sustainability in Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities
England Centre for Practice Development, & Art Therapists: ‘I would have been/could be amazing’: A social justice oriented visual art rejoinder to Whole Earth.
6 Unexpected outcomes
8th March 2016
Poetic response to *Whole Earth?* on International Women’s Day
A Wonder-Web of Life
(refrain taken from Denise Levertov’s poem Web)

What are we eating, what are we really eating?
I’m really eating grain, seeds, nourishment.
Where from?
A kitchen, farms, labour ... women.
Food at the family’s table, plenty, blessed by gratitude
Food in the rich west, waste, bitter, poisoned by guilt
Women are food.
all praise,
all praise to the
great web.

Extract from poem collated by Vicky Field
Whole Earth? Many Hands Make a Lighter Future
7 Evaluating Whole Earth’s impact
Together
Small steps
Big changes

Can little me make a difference?

Yes! Together we can.
‘WHOLE EARTH?’ provides a catalyst for debate and action in response to the most pressing sustainability issues of our time.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.

Please write down any thoughts, feedback you have after viewing the exhibition.

- Thought provoking; sad; concerning - scary.
  But the world needs to stop it's wars as well!
  - we have much work to do - and potentially little time to do it!
Responses from the on-line survey about the value of *Whole Earth*?

- Helpful and well-presented…..
- I wished it had been more creative.
- Somewhat oversold – a load of posters on some scaffolding……
- Really thought provoking….. Gave me a wider perspective.
- I hardly knew the exhibition was there. ..... 
- A good range of information about active engagement in sustainability issues...
- A waste of time and money...... 
- The photos were wonderful..... 
- Should have been a more central location........
- It sparked a lot of debate amongst the students....... 
- Both thought-provoking and empowering....... 
- Engaging..... 
- Not focused on local issues enough..... 
- Dull and simplistic.
Conclusions

Many of us in the modern world have felt a sense of loss, of missing something in spite of our great technological gains, which should have made us feel that life has been enriched rather than impoverished. Can we live better with less?
8 Questions and answers