



On April 24, UW Recycling, in collaboration with Earth Club and UW Garbology Project, hosted its annual Trash-In, a mini sorting event where we explore how much recyclable and compostable material is still being thrown away on campus. The objective of Trash-In is to increase campus-wide awareness of the materials that make up our waste stream. Results from the event are used to guide the development of future waste reduction programs and strategies.

Sorting Categories

- Compostables (including food scraps and compostable serveware items)
- Mixed Paper (including cardboard)
- Mixed Containers (including cans, bottles, plastic dairy tubs, aseptic packaging, and non-compostable cups)
- Other (including Styrofoam, electronic media, plastic film, and Surplus items)
- Garbage

Data & Observations

- The breakdown of materials sorted in 2013 was fairly similar to previous years. This shows that existing recycling programs are working quite well because recyclable containers and paper made up less than 20% of the overall garbage during the sort. However, there are still opportunities to get more recyclables out of the garbage.
- The UW has a comprehensive composting program, but because more than half of the garbage sorted was compostables, opportunities remain for capturing additional compostable items. To do this, UW Recycling is increasing the number of [Solar Kiosks](#) in outdoor public spaces on campus and expanding the number of buildings participating in [MiniMax](#). MiniMax not only raises awareness about personal waste, but also increases the recycling and composting infrastructure within buildings.
- Coffee cups make up a large portion of the compostable and recyclable material being thrown away as garbage on campus. These are items that would not exist in the waste stream if people used their own coffee mugs. To be true to the “reduce, reuse, recycle” waste hierarchy, the campus community should be encouraged to reduce usage of disposable items by using durable/reusable ones instead.

