



Connections

A Note from the Editors: Eportfolios and Career Planning

This issue focuses on eportfolios and career development. You will hear from colleagues who are using eportfolios to facilitate student reflection about career goals, to promote skills development and to make connections between theory and practice. While all three contexts are different, there are many similarities between the process that is being used to engage students in reflective practice about their career goals. It is significant that Candace Ford, Sarah Lucas Hartley and Jill Lumsden of Florida State University note in their article the importance for students to have time and space to think about their career attributes and to reflect on their own development. The work in the Accounting and Financial Management Program at the University of Waterloo echoes this, as does the work of Julie Hughes and her colleagues at the University of Wolverhampton. All of the authors also recognize that eportfolios, while most valuable for

learners, can also be valuable for employers. We are beginning to know much more about how learners benefit from their eportfolio work, thanks to the work of the Coalition, but we need to do much more work on the employer side—figuring out what will most benefit them as they seek to recruit future employees. What do they most want to see in eportfolios? Do eportfolios replace Facebook and other ways to get to know employees, as Florida State points out? Or, do we need to look for ways that new Web 2.0 technologies can facilitate a “coming together” of the “lived, delivered, and experienced curricula” that Kathleen Yancey calls for? While there is much work yet to be done, an exciting road lies ahead.

Tracy Penny Light, University of Waterloo & Cara Lane, University of Washington

Using Eportfolios for Job Searching

Candace Ford, Sarah Lucas Hartley & Jill Lumsden, Florida State University (Cohort III)

Eportfolios can serve many purposes for their creators, one of which is to showcase students' skills, experience, and accomplishments to potential employers. With Internet-based services and social networking sites being increasingly utilized and heavily relied upon, the idea of only submitting a paper resume and cover letter to an employer is becoming a notion of the past. Employers want to know more; not only do they want to know if potential employees have the skill set to perform their job, they want to know *who* these candidates are, *what* they are interested in, and *how* they will represent the company. Eportfolios can serve to remedy an employer's compulsion to Google search their candidates, and may satiate their desire to know potential new hires on a more personal level. A completed eportfolio is valuable to employers; the process of creating, expanding, and sharing the eportfolio is valuable to students.

In creating an eportfolio, students have the opportunity to develop, chronicle, and communicate their career attributes to others. The process of reflecting on their skills when creating their portfolios can assist students in preparing for interviews with potential employers. Relationships, they are gaining experience in answering potential questions they may be posed by an employer in an interview.

When students practice relating their skills and experiences and providing examples of those relationships, they are gaining experience in answering potential questions they may be posed by an employer in an interview. Even if an employer does not view a student's portfolio, the process of creating an eportfolio has provided the student with an invaluable experience in preparing for the job search process.

Through the use of eportfolios, students can reflect on their experiences both in and outside of the classroom, painting a more complete picture of what their skills are and how they identify the experiences in which they have developed life-long skills. For example, students may demonstrate how they developed communication skills by reflecting on the completion of a

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Developing Professional Reflective Practice in Vocational Subjects using an Eportfolio System

Julie Hughes, Linsey Duncan-Pitt & Emma Purnell, University of Wolverhampton (Cohort III)

Education and Health related subjects are well placed to engage with this goal as both vocational areas place heavy emphasis upon reflective practice. Our eportfolio system, PebblePAD, at the University of Wolverhampton includes a blogging tool which is used as an ongoing reflective journal. In both disciplines the blog has functioned as an important transition support into placements and into the workplace. Students are encouraged to reflect upon the theory/practice nexus, theorize and share with others their learning in professional contexts.

Education, nursing and midwifery students use the eportfolio to reflect upon their placements within 3 months of joining the University. They use the blogs for weekly journaling, selecting their own stories or critical incidents, many of which are shared with a small group of peers as well as tutors. All groups create webfolios consisting of reflective practice writing related to professional competencies and other evidences of engagement in practice such as work place mentor reports, birth logs or certificates of mandatory health and safety training. The eportfolio forms part of a triadic assessment process involving student, mentor and personal tutor for midwifery students. As yet we have not achieved this for the nursing students because of scalability but this is planned for the next intake. In education we have used the eportfolio to support the CPD (Continuous Professional Development) of the placement mentors. We are also upscaling to partner colleges in the next academic year and anticipate supporting approximately 300 students and 15 staff in 6 regional partners.

We are [all] eportfolio learners

The modeling and use of a dialogic approach has led to the creation of vibrant and engaged online communities. We have learnt that:

- Modeling is key – we are eportfolio learners too;
- Staff (and students) need support and mentoring to develop their online presences;
- Online socialization is key – students need to feel “safe”;
- There needs to be dynamic shared control of the talk-space, students need to feel “ownership”;
- Strategic “use” of the blog as talk space is okay—lurkers are listening and learning and will often make connections and comments at a later stage to evidence their learning.

Students tell us that they have learnt:

- More about themselves as learners;
- How to (begin to) manage the transitions;
- How to reflect through doing and through sharing with others (tutors and peers);
- That it is okay (and actively encouraged) to bring informal learning/experiences into our eportfolio world;
- That they can represent themselves and their experiences in non-text-based media—digital photo/video/audio.

Our continuing I/NCEPR work is exploring how this work can be scaled up both within our respective disciplines and within the wider University community.

Eportfolios for Developing Professional Competencies

Bob Sproule, Tracy Penny Light and Katherine Lithgow, University of Waterloo (Cohort III)

In the last few years, there has been increasing emphasis placed on developing “soft skills” in future accountants. For instance, skills like written and oral communication, teamwork and leadership and overall interpersonal skills need to be developed in programs that train professionals. To address this need, we have been using eportfolios to allow students to document their abilities in these areas in our Accounting and Financial Management program. A key component of this work is providing opportunities for students to reflect on their skills and to plan for future development. We are tracking student progress between contexts (academic and workplace) as this is a fully co-operative education program. What we have found is that reflection is the key to the development of these abilities and that students need time to learn how to reflect on their experiences effectively. In essence, the eportfolio is a tool of integration where students bring together the learning that occurs in different learning contexts. We have noted that early on in their careers, students are less effective at reflecting on what they know and are able to do, largely because they have not yet made meaning out of their experiences. In other words, we are asking them to think in a holistic way about their career development, rather than thinking strategically (simply checking off courses in their program as they complete them). Instead, we are asking them to think backwards and forwards about their skills and abilities—skills that the Accounting profession values. As one student noted, “I never knew just how important the team reflections from AFM 131 would be, until I began preparing for interviews for summer internships.” This statement emphasizes the importance of scaffolding the learning of reflection for students as they complete their courses and co-op placements. They need time and space to reflect on their areas of strength, areas for improvement, and future goals.

Using Eportfolios for Job Searching (continued from page 1)

class project in which they were challenged to interact with group members throughout the semester and present the final project to the class. In addition, students can include examples of their work such as writing samples, PowerPoint presentations, links to personal Web sites they have created, articles in which they have been featured, pictures, and videos. This allows them to reflect on the skills they have developed, as well as demonstrate their applied learning through work samples.

In addition to the growth experienced while creating an eportfolio, students benefit from being able to show employers their completed eportfolios. If a student plans to use an eportfolio for the job search, here are some hints, based on feedback from employers:

- Make the first page welcoming and relevant – it should attract the employer's attention and give them a reason to keep looking.
- Target the opening page toward a specific industry, field, or employer.
- Make sure that the remaining parts of the eportfolio support the student's goals and objectives.
- Keep things fairly concise.
- Explain why artifacts are important, what role the student played in creating artifacts, and what the student gained from them.
- Ensure that there are no errors in any parts of the eportfolio, including spelling, grammar and proper sentence structure.

"The portfolio has been so useful in helping me realize what skills I've learned..."

- Keep it professional – students should separate more personal eportfolio items so that the "job search" portfolio is a professional reflection of who they are and what they have to offer.

A student who created an eportfolio at Florida State University had this to say about creating a portfolio for the job search:

"The portfolio has been so useful in helping me realize what skills I've learned through the experiences I've had and classes I've taken. Having my classes and jobs organized according to the skills I've gained from them allows me to see what I've actually accomplished through my education. I've been able to use my portfolio to write more effective personal statements for internships and create a descriptive, impressive resume. I've gotten great responses in the form of obtaining two excellent internships! The portfolio really has proven to be a powerful tool that forced me for the first time to consider what I've done with my college career. It brings a whole new way of thinking about classes; instead of just evaluating success through test scores and completed requirements I'm seeing what valuable skills I've gained that will help me in the future."

References:

- Brown, A. (February, 2006). Personal Communication. Tallahassee, FL.
- Garis, J.W. (2007). E-Portfolios: Concepts, designs, and integration within student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services*, (119), 3-16.

Member News: Publications

Electronic Portfolios 2.0: Emergent Research on Implementation and Impact

Edited by Darren Cambridge, Barbara Cambridge and Kathleen Blake Yancey



We are pleased to announce the first publication of the Coalition's research in monograph form. Contributions from members of Cohorts I, II and III are included in this new volume edited by our leaders, Darren, Barbara and Kathi! Here is a bit of information about the book, available this Fall from Stylus:

"Higher education institutions of all kinds—across the United States and around the world—have rapidly expanded the use of electronic portfolios in a broad range of applications including general education, the major, personal planning, freshman learning communities, advising, assessing, and career planning.

Widespread use creates an urgent need to evaluate the implementation and impact of e-portfolios. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, the contributors to this book—all of whom have been engaged with the Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research—have undertaken research on how e-portfolios influence learning and the learning environment for students, faculty members, and institutions.

This book features emergent results of studies from 20 institutions that have examined effects on student reflection, integrative learning, establishing identity, organizational learning, and designs for learning supported by technology. It also describes how institutions have responded to multiple challenges in e-portfolio development, from engaging faculty to going to scale.

These studies exemplify how e-portfolios can spark disciplinary identity, increase retention, address accountability, improve writing, and contribute to accreditation. The chapters demonstrate the applications of e-portfolios at community colleges, small private colleges, comprehensive universities, research universities, and a state system."

Tracy Penny Light, "Making Connections: Developing Students' Historical Thinking with Electronic Portfolios," *Academic Intersections*, 2 (Spring 2008).

Member News: Updates and Announcements

Report from the Northern California Eportfolio Day of Dialogue

Kevin Kelly, San Francisco State University (Cohort III)

San Francisco State University, the Digital Teaching and Learning Consortium, and the New Media Consortium co-hosted an eportfolio Day of Dialogue on March 7, 2008. Around 60 faculty, students, staff, and administrators from K-12 schools and districts, community colleges, universities, and non-profit organizations attended the event.

The opening keynote speaker, Dr. Stephen Acker from the Ohio State University (I/NCEPR Cohort II), set the tone by discussing how Ohio implements its eportfolio initiative within the context of student success plans. Together Ohio institutions help students create a collaborative identity.

Three panelists (two from I/NCEPR Cohort III) followed Dr. Acker: John Ittelson from the K-20 California Educational Technology Collaborative, Jean Mach from College of San Mateo, and Ruth Cox from SF State. These three eportfolio veterans gave a well-rounded look at how eportfolios are being used in California through brief presentations and an extended question and answer period.

During a delicious lunch provided by the New Media Consortium, attendees joined "birds of a feather" discussion tables. After the lunch break, attendees broke into three groups for more focused discussions: 1) an overview discussion of eportfolios for those just getting started, 2) a discussion about using eportfolios for assessment, and 3) a discussion of leading eportfolio tools and their functionalities for campuses matching tools to their needs.

For the last hour, everyone came back together to report the three to five main lessons learned during the afternoon discussion and the three to five questions that still needed answers. The keynote speaker and panel presentations, as well as portions of the afternoon dialogue discussions, were recorded for distribution online. SF State will revamp its eportfolio website (eportfolio.sfsu.edu) this summer to include these video clips and a number of artifacts from the event.

Eportfolio Research at Seton Hall University (SHU)

Martin Sandler, Seton Hall (Cohort III)

The eportfolio Research project team at SHU developed a holistic assessment protocol to evaluate eportfolio artifacts with the assistance of Freshman Mentor scorings. Assessment rubrics provided a means to study freshman year student life, in particular, to examine student reflection as a developmental process. Secondarily, with strong findings from a reliability analysis and preliminary regression analyses, the team has acquired a capacity to explain student persistence through the lens of eportfolios. The team presented their findings at the "Making Connections Conference" at LaGuardia Community College in New York City, April 2008.

ePirate: <http://tlc.shu.edu/blogs/projects/epirate/>

LaGuardia Making Connections Conference presentation: <http://www.slideshare.net/mzedeck/review-of-freshman-eportfolios-using-persistence-factor-rubrics/>

External Expert Review Study of Eportfolios

Ruth Cox, San Francisco State University (Cohort III)

In 2004, the Master in Public Health Program (MPH) Program at San Francisco State University began requiring students to prepare an electronic portfolio. With three years of completed MPH eportfolios (2005-07 Cohorts representing 72 students), the department sought honest, critical reaction to a sample portfolio from experts in the field of public health, both academic and practitioner. Sixty experts were contacted, with 50% responding to a Web survey linked to the viewing of a completed student eportfolio. Key questions included:

Are public health professionals aware of the use of electronic portfolios in higher education or other contexts?

50% of respondents indicated that they had heard of eportfolios through their academic institutions or attended professional presentations where eportfolios were being discussed. Some academic respondents shared interest in incorporating eportfolios into their programs or institutions.

Would experts feel that the electronic portfolio effectively reflects the work of a culturally and professionally competent emerging leader in public health?

85% responded that the evidence within the student's mission statement, competency-based projects, and leadership sections presented a view of the individual that was "more three dimensional and dynamic than a traditional CV or resume."

What do public health professionals think about the potential usefulness of this innovation as a tool for bridging MPH graduates with perspective employers or further academic endeavors?

While most (82%) felt that eportfolios provided a better understanding of the student's abilities, cautionary comments related to professional development included avoiding having the portfolios "formulaic" or complicated for employers to navigate, and advising students to avoid "long-winded rhetoric and jargon".

Value of implementing eportfolios

75% of the sample strongly agreed or agreed Student eportfolio sites provide an added value to curriculum. Respondents also shared some possible benefits of implementing eportfolios in the preparation of Public Health professionals—indicating that the creation of an eportfolio gives students insight in to the art of communication using the web and provides a useful tool to help students reflect on their overall experience in the program document the competencies they've gained in one place.

A number of comments addressed the "metacognition" of being asked to synthesize their myriad experiences into an overarching theme. This was felt to encourage students to think more deeply about their program and interests and related to questions about the role of reflective writing (on competencies, leadership, community work) in presenting the student's learning.

Overall, the preliminary results indicated a growing awareness and interest in eportfolios within the field of public health. The researchers plan to publish the results in the coming year.

Member News: Updates and Announcements (continued from page 4)

2008 eFolio Summit on August 6, 2008

Lori Schroeder, Minnesota State Colleges & Universities

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities are hosting this event, which will take place at Minneapolis Community and Technical College in St. Paul, Minnesota. It brings together individuals and institutions that use the eFolio Minnesota and eFolioWorld software system to showcase best practices at this second eFolio Summit. Since our first summit in 2005, we are pleased to announce eFolioWorld, an initiative that broadens the use of eFolio software to individuals and institutions outside of Minnesota. The 2008 eFolio Summit is pleased to showcase innovative K-12, Higher Education, and Workforce applications underway in Minnesota and beyond. Discover the many exciting ways that electronic portfolios can be used by students, educators, institutions, and job-seekers to further their education and careers. We will share successes, concerns, tips, and strategies using the latest in Minnesota electronic portfolio technology. For more information about the 2008 eFolio Summit, visit <http://efoliosummit.project.mnscu.edu>.

Update on Cohort 2 Activity

Mary Zamon, George Mason University

At George Mason University I am working with a partner, Jennifer Korjus, from the Instructional Technology Unit on analyzing the data from a joint survey undertaken with Washington State to determine faculty interest in using eportfolios and what kinds of support might be needed. The survey also connects teaching styles to use of eportfolios in support of student learning. Yoon Cho at Washington State worked with me and shared her survey so that we will have some comparable data. I was able to travel out to see her and meet with fellow Cohort 2 members. This was a wonderful synergy that came out of our participation in Cohort 2. At this point, preliminary information we see at GMU is that there is a group of faculty who value use of and are interested in support for e portfolios, as well as concern for time to learn how to do so. More unusual perhaps, are recognition and apparent awareness of potential eportfolio contribution to integrating university coursework, to providing information for program assessment, to enhancing understanding of students, and to sharing information across semesters. Other strong statements included making teaching more time consuming, and providing feedback to students. During the summer we plan to prepare careful results and see what the implications are for our university which at this time does not have a university wide eportfolio system.

Conference Presentations:

Thomas Edwards, Vice President for Academic Affairs, presented on the work of Thomas College at the conference "Eportfolios: Breakthroughs and Quandaries" held March 28, 2008 at Eastern Connecticut State University. The title of his session was "The Promise of e-Portfolios for Institutional Research." The conference was sponsored by the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium and NERCOMP, the Northeast Regional Computing Program. The keynote of the conference was provided by Kathleen Yancey, co-director of the I/NCEPR.

Michael Day presented on Northern Illinois University's First-Year Composition Electronic Portfolio Initiative at the 2008 Conference on College Composition and Communication in New Orleans, as well as at the 2008 Computers and Writing Conference in Athens, Georgia. Day also submitted a proposal for longitudinal general education electronic portfolios as part of Northern Illinois University's Strategic Planning Initiative. For more information, see <http://www.engl.niu.edu/mday/cccc08.html> or email mday@niu.edu.

Carl Young presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Conference in November 2007.

Upcoming I/NCEPR Cohort Meetings:

Cohort V—August 4-5, 2008 at George Mason University

Cohort IV—October 29-30, 2008 at Northumbria

Cohort III —February 26-27, 2009 at San Francisco State University

Cohort V —February 27-28, 2009 at San Francisco State University

For more information go to <http://incepr.ning.com/?xgi=f5zyEr1>

Send us news!

We are now accepting articles and news items for the next issue on eportfolios and Integrative Learning!

Send your 100-300 word contributions to Tracy Penny Light (tplight@uwaterloo.ca) or Cara Lane (cgiacomi@u.washington.edu). The deadline for submissions is September 30, 2008.

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