UCBA

ePortfolio Handbook:

for students

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MY EPORTFOLIO

My learning, my process, my skills, my mastery

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Preface

This handbook is intended to support students who are considering creating an eportfolio. This handbook should help beginners get started. There is another version of the handbook with advice specifically for instructors.

More advanced users might benefit from forming communities of practice to support each other. We welcome suggestions for additions and changes. If you would like to contribute a topic to this handbook, please contact any of the members of the ePortfolio Learning Community.

This handbook is the result of the work done by the 2015-2016 ePortfolio Learning Community for our colleagues and students at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College. At our college, we do not use a single enterprise-wide eportfolio software package. We use free Web 2.0 platforms, and it is up to each instructor whether or not to use eportfolios.

ePortfolio Learning Community
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Laurie Bailar
Ruth Benander
Adam Chekour
Sharon Disher
Daniel Sansing
Peggy Strohmaier
Eric Van Hoose

As a student, how do I get started making an eportfolio?

1. If you are making it for a class, ask your instructor what platform he or she prefers. It is possible that he or she will give you a choice. If you are just making one on your own, use the platform that you are most comfortable with, such as WordPress, Weebly, or Google Sites. See "What platform should I use" below.
2. Decide the purpose of your eportfolio. Do you want it to show the progress of your learning or do you want to only show finished products that show your mastery of skills and knowledge?
3. Based on the purpose of your eportfolio, decide what you want to put into your eportfolio. See "What can you put in it" below.
4. Create a shell for yourself, which means make the pages that you think you will need for the things you put in your eportfolio. Use dropdown menus to group items so your reader knows how they are related. You can always add more pages or delete pages later on. This is just to get started.
   a. You might want to map out your site before you make it. You can draw the pages and subpages on paper, or you can use any of these mapping programs (or others that you may find).
      i. https://bubbl.us/
      ii. https://www.mindmeister.com
      iii. http://mind42.com
5. Add things to your pages. When you put something on a page, add a little paragraph at the top to help your reader understand how you would like him or her to understand what you added.
6. Add a Welcome Page where you explain the purpose of the eportfolio to your readers. This might be the opening page of the eportfolio.
7. Add an About Page where you introduce yourself to your readers.
8. When you are finished with your eportfolio, you might add a Final Reflection page that explains what you learned from the process of making the eportfolio or what overall picture you would like your readers to have from the collection of things in your eportfolio.

What platform should I use to build an eportfolio?

An eportfolio is a pedagogical approach as much as an application of technology. When implementing eportfolios, the technology is among first decisions. ePortfolio technology provides a collaborative work space and online repository for learning artifacts. This technology allows students to create websites showcasing and reflecting on artifacts when the student has a particular purpose for the website. In addition, eportfolio technology provides rich aggregate data for institutional research. The technology can support many functions, but not all available platforms do every function equally well, or in the way that a campus may need that function to work. The technology choice should be well informed because that choice influences the outcome of the project. Here are the three that seem to fit our needs at UCBA best.

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Google Sites

Recommended for: simple learning portfolios with graphics and text. Recommended for beginners.

Recommended templates: "Blank Template" then any of the "Solitude" templates are good.

Google Sites is a web page creation platform offered by Google as a collaboration tool (e.g. Wikis), where people can share files, engage in discussion blogs, or simply create their individual website. Google Sites is recommended as a basic eportfolio platform for beginners. It has a clean, basic look. The "Blank Template" has basic color choices and simple layout. The more complicated templates sometimes have complicated pre-filled sections that can be very cluttered. Be cautious about the template you choose! For example, "Classroom Site" might sound attractive, but it is cluttered and hard to work with. Google Sites is easy to view and use on multiple devices.

- This is a step-by-step tutorial on how to create a Google Sites eportfolio. In addition, some important recommendations are provided on the content, structure and design of eportfolio.
- This video also shows how to create a Google Sites eportfolio, accompanied with best practices.

Weebly

Recommended for: students who are not yet ready for Wordpress but who are ready for something slightly more complicated than Google Sites.

Recommended templates: choose "Site" then choose theme --> "Clean Lines" or "Brisk"

Weebly is a website building application which is fairly easy to negotiate. The templates are attractive, and it allows multi-media to be embedded fairly easily. The interface is a "drag and drop" style editing function, and it does allow drop down menus. One challenge of this site is that the functionality is a little more different than is comfortable when you move from a computer to a mobile device. However, it is easily viewable from all devices.

- Here is the Weebly getting started page: https://hc.weebly.com/hc/en-us/sections/200354313-The-Essentials
- Here is a nice video tutorial on how to get started: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7PjTgpgqn8

WordPress

Recommended for: multi-media, sophisticated menus, robust privacy, tagging, blogging, social media embedding

Recommended "starting" templates: Big Brother, 2012, Lyretail

WordPress is one of the more popular website building applications available, and it has been around for a long time. It offers many templates, lots of design options, and allows embedding of multimedia. It also has robust privacy controls. The dashboard requires careful explanation and initial significant support. However, after the introductions, students seem to need minimal support. If you are an instructor, and you plan to use WordPress with your class, it would be best if you contacted someone who already has experience with the program to show you around the first time.

- Here is the WordPress support page: https://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress_Lessons
- Here is a simplified tutorial for Getting started with WordPress

What are the different kinds of eportfolios?

The Learning eportfolio
The "learning eportfolio" described by Zubizarreta (2008) is an eportfolio that combines reflection, documentation, and collaboration to create a document that demonstrates learning over time. This type of eportfolio can also be called the "developmental eportfolio" since it shows how a student has developed over the term or degree program. The minimum functional expectations for a Learning eportfolio application include:

- accommodating multimedia,
- mapping accessible navigation among artifacts (Pima Community College), and
- sharing between primary users (students and teachers).

The lifetime expectancy of the platform should be fairly stable so that a student might continue to build this eportfolio during his or her career at the institution; but, for the purposes of a single course learning eportfolio, students might use a different platform for each class. For a learning eportfolio in a course, the instructor can assess the eportfolio and the artifacts with rubrics, no formal analytics are required. Institutional assessment that involves courses across an institution probably requires a commercial platform with strong analytics.

The Professional eportfolio/Showcase eportfolio
Unlike the learning eportfolios, the professional eportfolio usually does not show before/after work that includes demonstrating growth over time. Instead, the professional eportfolio includes finished pieces that demonstrate mastery. A professional eportfolio allows the developer to present her intellectual and professional value while building social capital (Stevens and Dunlop, 2012). Beyond the functionality needed for a learning eportfolio, a professional eportfolio requires the ability to:

- customize the look, feel, and navigation of the published eportfolio;
- provide access to a variety of different audience members; as well as
- export and import the eportfolio materials into different digital environments.

Developers need to be able to distinguish themselves from one another in the same program and/or graduating class so that when they use the eportfolio on the job market, it helps them stand apart. If the professional eportfolio is to be useful beyond the graduation, the ability to share with multiple audiences is also critical for long term usage.

The Assessment eportfolio

A program can use a Learning eportfolio or a Professional eportfolio for course of program assessment. In some cases, a program might decide to dedicate the eportfolio assessment. In *Assessing Student Learning* (2009), Suskie offers a good list for understanding assessment eportfolios with an emphasis on having a clear set of learning objectives and/or evaluation criteria that the student meets through content/artifact selection and reflection. The eportfolio offers an opportunity to observe each student's attainment of curricular and other desired outcomes from courses and programs, offering a chance to grow and improve those outcomes. This assessment cycle may occur in a single course or in multi-year programs. Beyond the functional elements needed for a learning eportfolio, an assessment eportfolio's technology needs to facilitate:

- creating and communicating learning objectives and/or evaluation criteria, as well as feedback;
- storing, selecting, evaluating, and reflecting upon appropriate artifacts by the student;
- storing, retrieving and reporting on artifacts, reflections, and evaluations, over the individual, programmatic, and/or institutional assessment period(s)
- accessing, evaluating, and reporting by multiple users (e.g., student/author, faculty, assessment and/or outside evaluators).

Why not just use paper?

Paper portfolios can still be useful. Some people still like to work on paper. Students may still use paper to design their eportfolios, make drawings, or draft their writing. Even if you are creating an eportfolio, you might still work in paper to create the products that you later upload. Sometimes, paper portfolios as a final product can be useful when the technology is not easily available. Some students may not be able to work with the technology, and in these cases, they can still create a paper portfolio that can meet course requirements.

On the other hand, eportfolios help students develop technological literacies. They must make decisions not only about the content they create, but also about how to organize and present that content. In doing so, students must consider their audiences, their site's usability, navigability, and their central goals.

Another good reason to use eportfolios instead of paper is that, unlike paper, eportfolios accommodate all manner of digital multimedia (embedded videos, colors, audio, hyperlinks, and so on) which allow students more freedom for creative expression. Often, this leads to greater student investment in the work. Other advantages include portability (sites are accessible from everywhere), durability, and the opportunity for students to easily showcase their work to wider audiences (such as peers and employers). ePortfolios last longer than paper and can be modified and updated over time to better reflect students' current thinking.

For faculty, eportfolios streamline holistic assessment; eportfolios provide a snapshot of a student's work over time along with the student's reflection on the work they've done, what they've learned, and how they've learned it. They are also easier to share than paper-based eportfolios.

What can you put in it?

A major difference between a paper portfolio and an eportfolio is the variety of evidence of learning and achievement that can be included. Because an eportfolio is a digital environment, it can include essays, videos, recordings, graphics, and anything else that can linked or referenced. The flexibility offered by this variety allows students to demonstrate their achievements according to their strengths, create a nuanced digital identity, and explore the technological skills that are becoming increasingly expected in today's professional world.

text
As an eportfolio is frequently a place to present and/or document writing and reflection, text is usually part of an eportfolio in some way. Frequently, students can make choices about how they present their writing, but instructors also have preferences for how they want particular kinds of writing displayed. How text is utilized might also be impacted by whether or not the eportfolio is a *learning* eportfolio or a *professional/showcase* eportfolio.

images
There are many possibilities for the use of images in an eportfolio. Students might incorporate family photos, photos of a vacation, or even hand-drawn or computer generated art. Anime or scenes from a graphic novel might shed light on an important concept featured on a page or in a text discussion.

sound
Students have quite a number of choices for sound in terms of what they might build into their eportfolio. A student might utilize an audio file of a song or an interview with a researcher or professional as part of their eportfolio. Musicians might want to share their own lyrics or music through sound files. A song could be shared from YouTube if it relates to the content of a page, or to a reflection. A student might also include audio reflections for either individual pieces or for the overall portfolio along with written reflections. There are many possibilities for using sound in an eportfolio.

video
Perhaps one of the most exciting possibilities for eportfolio is the opportunity to weave video clips into an academic discussion. For example, if a student were working on an ethnography project, they might include some clips from a videotaped interview with a family member sharing stories about the family history. A student might include a few answers from an interview with someone working in the career they hope to work in someday. In addition, clips from internet news stories or movies shared on the web could help lend context and dialogue to a complex argument.   A student might also include video reflections for either individual pieces or for the overall portfolio along with written reflections.Video is one of the reasons eportfolio opens many new doors for students to express themselves and their academic work.

PowerPoint and other documents
PowerPoint files, pdf files, and other common document files can be uploaded into an eportfolio. If a student has great confidence in building a PowerPoint, that document might become integrated onto a page on their website, or a blog post, in order to better support a position or to provide more context for those who view their site. Generally, documents should be uploaded in pdf format. Documents should appear on the page and not require downloading.

links
Links are easily built into an eportfolio, and could provide a convenient portal to YouTube, an academic article, a website, or other web-based additions to their discussion or presentation.

widgets
Most eportfolio platforms allow the use of web widgets, or small software applications that connect to other content, for example a weather website or a social media website. A platform option such as WordPress contains many built-in choices for popular widgets, but more advanced users can integrate just about any web widget available into a website.

How is Reflection an essential part of an eportfolio?

Reflection is an essential component of eportfolios as it shows the students' ability to think about their learning. The artifacts in the eportfolio serve as a physical representation of students' thinking and progress. This can help instructors with assessment and evaluation, and it also allows students to thoughtfully consider content, past and current skillsets, and future goals.

Showcase eportfolio reflections
Showcase eportfolios highlight the best work that students have done throughout the semester or project. The reflection acts a rationale for why the eportfolio proves mastery of the content. Students may discuss how and why the artifacts show that they have accomplished their goals or outcomes.

Learning eportfolio reflections
Rather than highlighting the "best" or final product, the learning eportfolio documents the process that students have gone through in creating their work. It demonstrates learning with assignments as well as self-analysis of the students' progression and development. This can be shown with reflective journals about their process, drafts of assignments, and revisions of these drafts.

Students: How do I write a reflection for my eportfolio?

First, you should check with your instructor to see if he or she has specific requirements. Reflection can be used to highlight important aspects of growth and discovery in learning. While there are many ways to approach this kind of writing, consider using the following process to draft your reflection: description, feeling, assessment, and action.

1) Describe what you did (the artifact).
2) Then talk about how you felt while doing this project--what may have been frustrating or difficult for you? What were you thinking as you went through the process of your project?
3) Assess how you think you did on this project. What effect did this project have on your process and understanding about the assignment or content?
4) Talk about what was good and bad for you in this experience. What did you enjoy or dislike, and why? Also, you might discuss how this project has changed your process and your future goals. How will you adapt your future work based on this experience?
5) Discuss how putting the portfolio together helped you to demonstrate your mastery of the student learning outcomes for the course.

What do you do with an eportfolio?

Get a final grade. An eportfolio is essential to your final grade. It is a compilation of all your work for the semester and demonstrates what you have learned and achieved. It is your personal learning record.

Make an argument for your progression through the class. Your eportfolio shows how you have improved and the progress you have made in a particular course. It allows both you and your instructor to view the steps you have taken to accomplish your goals. It reflects your personal growth and development.

Show it to an employer. An eportfolio lets future employers know that you have the skills and knowledge to be successful in their company or organization. It allows you to showcase projects that you're proud of, and at the same time, gives them insight into your personality. eportfolios are a concrete way to show your strengths.

Show it to someone who is writing a recommendation for you. Because your eportfolio is personalized and reflects your creativity, it would be beneficial to show it to someone who is writing a recommendation for you. It will give him/her an understanding how you think and provide him/her with tangible evidence of the skills you have acquired.

Keep it as a record of your academic career. An eportfolio is a handy way to keep track of your academic career. Through it you can assess your development and progress through your course of study. It will help you build confidence as you reflect on your achievements.

It is a snapshot of your evolving digital identity. Because an eportfolio is a living document, it is evidence of your continuous personal development. It grows as you grow.

Where can I find support?

Training includes not only group workshops, but documents and tutorials that can be viewed online, as well as an individual point person who is available on a regular basis until all have become thoroughly familiarized with the system. All three of the website building applications cited at the start of this Guidebook are free, and there are people on the UCBA campus who are experienced in their use.

- Students can get help with Weebly, WordPress, and Google Sites in the Writing and Study Skills Center.

Why are eportfolios useful to students?

The use of eportfolios helps students understand the utility, power, and beauty of their voices. ePortfolios accomplish this in several ways:

- Students engage with a wider audience because their work is accessible on the web and so may be seen by peers, strangers, employers, and anyone interested in the content.
- Students can tap into an increased range of opportunities for self-expression because of the ability to use multimedia.
- Students can update and edit the eportfolios and can also see how their thinking has changed over time
- The eportfolio may travel with students across courses.
- It's visual and multimodal, so students can play to their areas of strength.
- eportfolios allow students a huge variety of ways to organize their work.

Why are they useful to employers?

As a recent article in *Forbes* noted, employers are increasingly interested in seeing a digital *eportfolio* as opposed to a résumé. (Craig 2015). It has become commonplace for employers to search Internet sources for information on a prospective employee. Sources like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn constitute an "accidental eportfolio". In the face of these digital footprints, which are often not a good measure or expression of one's potential, it is therefore essential that students and faculty alike become skilled in presenting themselves professionally by reflecting on, constructing, and curating a digital identity. The eportfolio is the ideal space to facilitate this activity.

The knowledge, experience and literacy development afforded by eportfolio creation aids in identity formation and developing a sense of self as learner and future professional constructs a narrative of learning in the eportfolio (Belshaw 2012). Issues that are important to consider are how the process of building the eportfolio helps students reflect on their experiences, link their experiences, and construct an

intentional scholarly and professional identity. Students can reflect on the ways their experiences contribute to their identity as students and professionals. Increasingly, that identity is a digital one.

ePortfolios demonstrate digital literacy and mastery of skills

Paul Gilster (1997) conceived of digital literacy as being about "mastering ideas, not keystrokes." Digital literacy includes the ability to locate and access information, critically evaluate information and its sources, and build knowledge in the realm of networked computing. Being "digitally literate" or "transliterate" has become the ability to navigate this complex, dynamic and evolving universe of representation in the digital world. e-**eportfolio** literacy might be thought of as the negotiation, curation and personalization of digital information and interactivity in order to create and communicate meaning and identity.

ePortfolios demonstrate mastery of skills

When students create eportfolios, taking advantage of the multi-media presentations that eportfolios facilitate, an employer gets to see what a student can do. Students can clearly link their academic accomplishments to their professional aspirations. Additionally, the electronic environment has presented unique challenges to assumptions we may have had in the past such as the primacy of one medium of communication (text) over others (image, video, audio, tactility, etc.), or the limited range and scope of "audience" in the exercise of reflection in a non-networked environment. Digital literacies have expanded our notions of communication and multimodal knowledge building. Now, eportfolios are serving as pedagogical vehicles for helping our students self-author their digital identities and exercise control and ownership of their multimodal digital footprints as well as hone their transliteracy skills. Employs can see a more nuanced professional person in an eportfolio in a way that a plain résumé cannot.

Where can I see samples of UCBA eportfolios?

Here: http://www.ucblueash.edu/resources/faculty-staff/learning/eportfoliosucba.html

If you have an eportfolio that you would like to share, please email ruth.benander@uc.edu, or speak with someone in the Writing and Study Skills Center to arrange to put your site up as a sample on this page.