

Workshop: Teaching with Eportfolios

Led by Cynthia Patterson, Associate Professor of English, cpatterson@usf.edu

This workshop will provide an overview of the use of portfolios in higher education, and will discuss the applicability of eportfolio use, especially in senior “capstone” courses. Widely used in the field of Education, eportfolios can also be used in other academic settings, and creating an eportfolio is particularly useful for students as preparation for entering the job market. The *Canvas* eportfolio tool will be demonstrated, and additional proprietary eportfolio tools discussed.

The History of Eportfolio Use in Higher Education

Ehley, Linda, “Chapter Two: Literature Review,” *Digital Portfolios: A Study of Undergraduate and Faculty Use and Perception of Alverno College’s Digital Diagnostic Eportfolio* (Diss.: Alverno College, 2006).

Ehley points out that portfolios, defined as “selections of representative work,” have been used in higher education for years, but primarily by those in the art disciplines, as a way of showcasing visual artifacts. The discipline of education, in particular, spread the use of portfolios in higher education, and with the advent of electronic files, eportfolios gained in appeal beginning in the 1990s (31).

Uses of student eportfolios

As Ehley points out, portfolios and eportfolios have been required of students for three primary purposes: 1) to showcase student work; 2) to demonstrate student learning; 3) to assess student learning (34).

Categories of Student Digital Portfolios

In her literature review, Ehley describes the various ways eportfolios can be categorized, based on how/when they are deployed: 1) *developmental* – used to trace student learning in a specific subject area or within a course; 2) *showcase* – to document student’s best work (could be used in conjunction with student awards). To this I would add: 3) *graduation* – designed to document student learning over the entire collegiate career; 4) *skills-based* (or employment) – designed to be shared with prospective employers either before or after completion of a degree program (Ehley 39).

Available Eportfolio Tools

<http://epac.pbworks.com/w/page/12559686/Evolving%20List%20of%20ePortfolio-related%20Tools>

Provides an extensive list of over 70 free and fee-based eportfolio systems known to be in use, including some of the acknowledged leaders and emerging leaders in the field: *Blackboard*; *Canvas*; *Chalk and Wire*; *iWebfolio*; *TaskStream*.

<http://eportfolioreview.wordpress.com/eportfolio-list/>

A more current and selective list of 17 eportfolio tools, that includes *Angel*, *Digication*, *Epsilen*, *FolioSpaces*, *Mahara*, *PebblePad* (UK), and *RCampus*.

Additional Background on Eportfolios

<http://www.alverno.edu/academics/ouruniquecurriculum/>

Alverno College has long been the leader in the use of eportfolios (which they call “diagnostic digital portfolios”) and on competency-based education.

My Experience with Free and Fee-based Eportfolio Tools

I have tried a variety of free and fee-based eportfolio tools, in conjunction with teaching ENC 4260, Advanced Technical Writing, an exit Gordon-Rule writing course required of students enrolled in the fully online Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) degree program. This course also meet requirements for English majors enrolled in the Professional and Technical Writing track, and several dozen English majors have also constructed eportfolios in this class since I began teaching the course in spring 2007. A few student and faculty observations/evaluations about the various tools we have used:

Blackboard – Clunky, not user-friendly, supports limited file types, unattractive

Canvas – More on this tool shortly

Chalk and Wire –

Cons:

Must be purchased through USF bookstore
Wait-time between purchase and access 24-48 hrs.
User interface is not intuitive

iWebfolio (Nuventive)

Cons:

Log-in not encrypted
Templates a bit restricting
Tutorials text based rather than video
A bit pricey

Taskstream (my preferred tool)

Cons:

Interface overwhelming at first
Creating “from scratch” is challenging

Pros:

Secure site, with log-in protection and time-out
Fairly reasonably priced
Fairly professional in appearance

Pros:

Can upload a pre-constructed web site
Works on all browsers tested
Attractive in appearance

Pros:

Reasonably priced
Wide variety of templates
Entire portfolio can be downloaded
Links to national assessment rubrics
Supports a wide range of file types
Higher file storage capacity
“Help” features, including live support

A Tour of Two ENC 4260 Eportfolios

I teach the creation and presentation of an eportfolio for ENC 4260 as a combination of a graduation and work skills-based eportfolio. I use the following pedagogical practices: 1) competency-based education (the subject of a soon-to-be published article in the ATLE *Faculty Voices* newsletter); 2) experiential (hands-on) learning; 3) collaborative learning.

Sample eportfolios:

Linda Bell <https://w.taskstream.com/ts/bell229/WelcometoMyPortfolioforENC4260>

Cecil Thornhill <https://w.taskstream.com/ts/thornhill4/CecilThornhillEportfolio>

The Canvas Eportfolio Tool

The Canvas eportfolio tool can be accessed through the “Settings” tab in the upper RT hand corner of the top navigation bar in *Canvas*. Then click on the “Eportfolio” tab in the LT navigation bar. I find the *Canvas* eportfolio tool as clunky as the *Blackboard* tool, and students who already have a *WordPress* site might prefer to create an eportfolio in *WordPress*. So I offer my students three choices: 1) *Canvas* (free); 2) *WordPress* (fee-based but some students already have *WordPress* accounts; 3) *Taskstream* (\$25/semester).