



Digital Portfolio Workshop

DSSN Workshop 9/10/2020

Nikolaus Wasmoen (nlwasmoe@buffalo.edu)

About this workshop

This workshop will explore ways to use digital portfolios as a learning and teaching tool. We will discuss how portfolios can serve as more than just a showcase of already-completed work by focusing on a formative approach to digital portfolio building that teaches multimedia composition, reflective decision-making and self-presentation skills, while encouraging students to approach learning and skill development as personalized and contextualized processes. We will examine some case studies and discuss how to make strategic choices between various formats, platforms, and tools. Student and instructor perspectives on digital portfolios will be put in dialogue, anyone interested in making or assigning digital portfolios is encouraged to join.

Origins of digital portfolios

Portfolios are common in professional and artistic fields such as visual arts, architecture, photography, performing arts, fashion, and design.

Objective is primarily to showcase talents and demonstrate range of skills and prior experience, usually to provide a basis for evaluation from clients and employers or for awards and competitions.

Academic portfolios

- Professionalization
- Assessment and Feedback
- Pedagogy

Portfolios as assessment and feedback

- Summative: used for evaluation, provide basis for grading
- Formative: used to assess learning during a course or other interval, provide basis for lesson planning
- Evaluative: used to assess longitudinal change in individual or group; provide basis for institutional or group assessment and planning

Digital portfolio benefits

- Personalized: gives students agency
- Contextualized: promotes student work to be considered in their individual contexts, including knowledge, ideas and skills they bring with them from outside their classes
- Feedback: student output becomes instructor input, and vice-versa; creates space for revision and editing.
- Self-presentation: trains students to effectively present their complicated education and preparations for careers or other opportunities in accessible ways
- Multimedia composition: trains digital multimedia tools and skills while also adding an expressive element that may make these feel more personal and valuable
- Reflection: promotes reflection and, I would argue, reflective decision making

Portfolios as pedagogical tool

- Empower and motivate students by giving them purchase and ownership over their education
- Enable self-regulated learning
 - Puts onus on students to make choices about how they will pursue course objectives and grades or other goals
 - Instructors can make these choices meaningful by allowing for revision and editing before final grading and through adaptive lesson planning
- Promotes reflection

Types of reflection

- “Showcase”: skills possessed and achievements (summative)
- “Growth”: learning and development (formative)
- “Assessment”: demonstrate proficiency
- *Students and faculty may not appreciate the formative function of portfolios when these are presented merely as showcases or assessments.*

Case study: reflection as interaction

In the ENG 380 New Media classes I offered 2016-2017 students explored new media from a historical perspective while doing hands-on projects in media such as hypertext and social media analysis.

After they had completed a “Cyberpunk Remediation” hypertext, in which they adapted a cyberpunk novel or film as an interactive hypertext fiction, I asked them to turn their work for the entire course into an interactive hypertext narrative using Twine.

- Twine: <https://twinery.org/>
- Cyberpunk Remediation Twine
- Course Portfolio wine

Portfolios at UB, the Capstone

Although it is called a “capstone” implying a showcase style of portfolio, the UB Curriculum portfolio requirement encourages early integration of the portfolio into students’ and instructors’ planning.

Capstone intended to be both “reflective” and “integrative.”

- UB Curriculum Capstone page <https://www.buffalo.edu/ubcurriculum/capstone.html>
- UBC Capstone Introduction Video <https://youtu.be/uljvfYPFBzE>
- Uses UBLearns (BlackBoard), user guide available at <http://www.buffalo.edu/ubit/service-guides/teaching-technology/learning-resources-for-students/ublearns/portfolios.html>

Coda: Looking back at *The Education*

The Education of Henry Adams (1907/1918)

- **By Henry Adams** (1838 –1918), awarded Pulitzer Prize posthumously in 1919.
- 3rd Person “autobiography” focused on education
- Focuses on lessons learned from failures, not triumphs
- Emphasis on social contexts and relationships
- Education in many forms and situations
- Presents a narrative
- Presents an argument based on this narrative in the form of Adams’ “dynamic theory of history”, a vision of history as a field of forces interacting.

On Chicago World's Fair, 1893

Education ran riot at Chicago. [...] Men who knew nothing whatever — who had never run a steam-engine, the simplest of forces — who had never put their hands on a lever — had never touched an electric battery — never talked through a telephone, and had not the shadow of a notion what amount of force was meant by a *watt* or an *ampère* or an *erg*, or any other term of measurement introduced within a hundred years — had no choice but to sit down on the steps and brood as they had never brooded on the benches of Harvard College, either as student or professor, aghast at what they had said and done in all these years, and still more ashamed of the childlike ignorance and babbling futility of the society that let them say and do it. The historical mind can think only in historical processes, and probably this was the first time since historians existed, that any of them had sat down helpless before a mechanical sequence. Before a metaphysical or a theological or a political sequence, most historians had felt helpless, but the single clue to which they had hitherto trusted was the unity of natural force.

Did he himself quite know what he meant? Certainly not! If he had known enough to state his problem, his education would have been complete at once. Chicago asked in 1893 for the first time the question whether the American people knew where they were driving. Adams answered, for one, that he did not know, but would try to find out. On reflecting sufficiently deeply, under the shadow of Richard Hunt's architecture, he decided that the American people probably knew no more than he did; but that they might still be driving or drifting unconsciously to some point in thought, as their solar system was said to be drifting towards some point in space; and that, possibly, if relations enough could be observed, this point might be fixed. Chicago was the first expression of American thought as a unity; one must start there.

So, a digital portfolio should

- Emphasize its formative function (reflection + integration)
 - Present the selection, application and reasoning for technological media as choices reflecting the choices made in the classwork being included
 - Ask students to articulate these choices and support them
 - Integrate this student output as instructor input, tailoring lesson plans based on portfolios development from week to week (or semester to semester)



So, a digital portfolio should

- Include a strategic mix of narrative and argument
 - Allow for learning to be not only a showcase, but also a personal story of growth and development
 - Allow for learning to be contextual and social, including out-of-class experiences and interests
 - Include dialogic interactions such as peer review and instructor feedback
 - Integrate this student output as instructor input, tailoring lesson plans based on portfolios development from week to week (or semester to semester)



Case study: portfolio as storymap

In AAP 507 Cultural Data (2017) students collaborated on a series of public art productions, while completing hands-on exercises that were integrated into these performances. Students were asked to design and create a course portfolio in a format and style that they felt best suited their individual experience.

- Course portfolio in Powerpoint formatted like a storymap

So, a digital portfolio should

- Provide students purchase and ownership over their education and how they will present and use it.
- Format Choices should thus be guided by:
 - Relevance to the type of work being done
 - Accessibility and Ease-of-use
 - Privacy Controls
 - Multiplicity and flexibility
 - Longevity and Portability

