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Implementing ePortfolios through Engagement with a Faculty Learning Community

Nancy Pawlyshyn, Chief Assessment Officer, Mercy College

In the past two years, Mercy College, New York, has implemented MePort, an electronic portfolio project, housed in the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. Four faculty and two staff participated in an Academic Impressions Workshop held in Park City, Utah in summer 2008 featuring Dr. Helen Chen and Dr. Trent Batson. Returning to campus, they embarked on a study of ePortfolio tools, assessed the College's needs and evaluated the best tool for our purposes.

The following spring, the group, which had grown to ten, launched a pilot of the electronic portfolio tool using the model of the faculty learning community described by Cox (2004) as "a cross disciplinary faculty and staff group of 6 to 15 members who engage in an active, collaborative, yearlong program with a curriculum about enhancing teaching and learning with frequent activities that provide learning, development, the scholarship of teaching, and community building" (p. 4).

This model was chosen as it embodies the principles within which this group worked in focusing on a process that was intentional, inspired, self-directed and collaborative, and based on inquiry and scholarship. The learning community model also recognizes what is needed for faculty to learn and develop and how change occurs in the academic culture. As Angelo (2002) points out, many academic innovations have failed because they are implemented without this understanding.

Within the learning community, which met every other week, the faculty and staff built electronic portfolio templates for courses in English literature, music technology, education and health sciences practicum. Faculty were encouraged to define a small, manageable project, build an interface to support it and roll it out to students. Learning community meetings were a time to show and tell, troubleshoot problems, and discuss possibilities.



At the end of the pilot, the learning community proposed the next phase of the project and expanded to 14 members. By the following spring, there were four learning communities involving 55 faculty members and 561 students in dozens of courses and programs.

A 9-member ePortfolio strategy team has now emerged to plan and facilitate the learning communities. Four curriculum modules were developed to give some focus to the learning community meetings: Focus on Faculty, Students, Feedback and Reflection. Team members and faculty MePort participants built a "Cybrary" of templates and tools to share, created a shared space for reflection and discussion, hosted an "Open Mike"



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event for the whole campus where other faculty could come to hear about what MePort participants were doing, and held a spring symposium at Mercy College featuring Dr. Helen Barrett who came to speak on how electronic portfolios can be used for personal and professional development.



A \$2.9 million Title V grant awarded to the College in 2009 features ePortfolio as a professional development tool for graduate students in health sciences and teacher education. The next phase of MePort will begin to pull the tool usage through student-initiated folios so that multiple drivers—faculty and students—will converge in a variety of effective uses for the ePortfolio tool in teaching and learning.

At the July AAEEBL conference, Mercy College team members shared what Trent Batson described as a grassroots organizing approach. Nancy Pawlyshyn, Chief Assessment Officer and Dean Braddlee, Dean of Library, Academic Technologies and Online Learning were joined by faculty from Mercy's School of Education, Eileen Brennan and Carol Gladstone. Both faculty described how they had implemented ePortfolio in their courses with an emphasis on student reflection and digital storytelling. In addition, the faculty shared how they had leveraged other college resources, including faculty development grants, to create their own unique artifacts within the MePort project.

Fall 2010 brings an expansion of the MePort project as we scale up to over 1000 student accounts, and 72 members of the MePort faculty learning community. Early data collection shows that 71% of students who responded to our surveys find they have more interaction with their professors and see more evidence of their learning. Faculty personal narratives have conveyed the power of the MePort faculty

learning community and demonstrate faculty's own personal transformations around reflection. Faculty have, in essence, experienced the reflective "folio thinking" which is at the heart of the ePortfolio process for students.

The communities have created dynamic environments for faculty to create conditions that lead to innovation through the "the culmination of fostering multiple perspectives, argumentation and reflection to form new syntheses and invention that pull together the best ideas and practice" (Bielaczyc & Collins, 2006, p. 44). They have created bridges for the reflective world of faculty as learners and leaders to the shared world of the college community. They have also created an emerging infrastructure to support innovation and faculty leadership. With the success of the MePort learning community, other communities have formed at the College around faculty initiatives including iClickers and WIMBA and other themes for curricular infusion such as social justice and interdisciplinary studies. The faculty learning community has therefore become the model for faculty development at Mercy College.

References

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From Concept to Reality: A collaborative framework for ePortfolio implementation

Rebecca Petersen, EdM, Director, eLearning Resources, Lesley University
Linda Pursley, PhD, Director, Assessment & Institutional Research, Lesley University

This presentation chronicled the journey we took to bring ePortfolio to fruition at Lesley University. In response to demand from early adopting faculty members, we convened a cross-university task force to inventory the programs that were using portfolios, the purposes for which they were being used, contents and format for presentation, and whether and how they were used in assessment. Once we clearly established the need, and understood how we wanted to use ePortfolios, we were able to cohesively articulate our system requirements related to functionality and reporting features, technology and support, and cost considerations. Using our criteria, we evaluated available software platforms, including a wide range of university stakeholders in the selection process. Among the critical lessons learned from this process were:

- Technology can offer an optimum, accessible, user-friendly experience, but appropriate technology cannot be selected without a clear understanding of needs.
- Project management documentation throughout the process helps maintain continuity through leadership changes and organizational shifts.
- Successful implementation requires meaningful engagement at all levels—leadership is key, but faculty who must develop the content and rubrics, and do the actual assessment must understand the work and be convinced of the value of their efforts.
- Recognize and mitigate anxiety, whether related to technology or the increased transparency of assessment.

See "*From Concept to Reality*," Page 5

Crafting an Electronic Portfolio from Your Unique Requirements

Arthur E. Williams, Ph.D.
Director of Electronic Portfolios, Olivet College

Olivet College is a private institution in mid-Michigan whose motto is "Education for Individual and Social Responsibility." Student portfolios, a graduation requirement since 1995, are customarily large binders of academic papers, printouts of presentations, photographs, letters of recommendation, and the occasional videotape or disk. Although the current program has produced excellent examples of student work, there have been challenges: putting off the portfolio until senior year, faulty understanding of the requirements or the format, loss of the original papers, and finally, increasing demands on storage space.

Olivet's solution was the decision to adopt an electronic portfolio system. There are several unique aspects of the current Olivet College portfolio program which complicated the eventual solution. First of all, completion of the portfolio is a requirement for graduation. Students attend major-based seminars through their academic career, which help them to shape their portfolios. There is also a series of outcomes, some of which are college-wide, some based particularly in each major, which each portfolio must satisfy. These outcomes are periodically reviewed and adjusted to fit the professional and academic standards of the faculty and major.

After researching other colleges' use of ePortfolios, we decided to create a database that would satisfy the college needs and make it available in an online format. The system needed to be easy to use, requiring a minimum of training. Creating the software in-house enabled the college to invest in personnel (including training sessions and conferences), software, and hardware, such as powerful workstations

See "*Unique Requirements*," Page 5



Strategies for Adoption: Faculty Development and ePortfolios

Wayne Hall, Vice Provost for Faculty Development & Professor of English & Comparative Literature, University of Cincinnati

Copies of documents at: http://homepages.uc.edu/~hallwe/cincinnati_ePortfolios.pdf

The goal of the presentation: To map a multi-step process by which faculty might begin to implement print-based learning portfolios in their courses and then gradually move towards implementing electronic portfolios.

Overarching strategic principles:

1. Establish ePortfolios within the curriculum
2. Emphasize pedagogy, not technology
3. Map out the steps in a gradual process
4. Provide a vision of the future
5. Continue to provide follow-up support

Specific resources:

- John Zubizaretta's concept of the learning portfolio. (See, for instance, Zubizaretta, *The Learning Portfolio: Reflective Practice for Improving Student Learning*. Jossey-Bass, 2009, p. 20.)
- Kathleen Yancey's discussions of the role of reflection. (See, for instance, Yancey, *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*. Utah State UP, 1998; p. 6).
- Helen L. Chen & Tracy Penny Light. *Electronic Portfolios and Student Success: Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Learning*. AAC&U, 2010.

Key progressions:

- From paper-based learning portfolios to e-portfolios
- From a single assignment to a course portfolio to a program portfolio
- From limited student choices about content to

significant choices about content

- From content developed within the classroom to content developed outside the classroom (such as from extra- and co-curricular activities)
- From linear paths through the portfolio to multiple paths (hyperlinks, more dynamic and interactive connections between the parts of the portfolio)
- From individual portfolios to collaborative portfolios
- From portfolios showing limited revision possibilities to ones showing a dynamic and shared revision process over time
- From an emphasis on product to an emphasis on process ("learning made visible")

From "From Concept to Reality," Page 4

- Create a culture of collaboration and learning. Use a "pilot" to gain experience and feedback from key stakeholders.
- Separate development and pilot costs from implementation and cost recovery.

While there is a tendency to over focus on the technology/tool, the real work is determining the content (student work, standards, rubrics) and the organization of the contents in the portfolio. We have yet to learn the lessons that will be inherent in implementation beyond the pilot, and in data aggregation, analysis and reporting, and look forward to new insights and continuous improvement.

For more information: <http://www.lesley.edu>

From "Unique Requirements," Page 4

and scanning and video equipment. The director of the Electronic Portfolio program worked with program and department chairs to ensure Electronic Portfolio alignment with existing goals and objectives. Extensive work with the Academic Dean ensured alignment with college assessment requirements. Finally, students tested the system for workability and ease of use.



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ePortfolios for Employability

Geetha Nehemia, LRC Technology Careers Liaison, Broome Community College

ePortfolios are becoming increasingly necessary to enter the workforce. Due to increased competition and the need for excellent oral and written communication skills employers are looking for more than technical skills for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (S.T.E.M.) students.

During the past 3 years SUNY Broome Community College's Learning Resource Center has been using ePortfolios as a career planning/awareness tool, funded by Perkins IV Career and Technical Educational Act grant. Over thirty local employer surveys conducted from 2007 – 2010 responded that STEM students have excellent technical skills but they need to strengthen their written and oral communication skills. Mock interviews and employer sponsored workshops were presented in addition to ePortfolio instruction to students during the grant period. In a recent mock interview survey conducted in the spring of 2010 where 16 employer representatives were represented, approximately 56% responded that the students had good communication skills and 38% noted that the inclusion of the ePortfolios enhanced the student's resume. Eleven students participated in mock interviews and four included their ePortfolios on their resume.

Approximately four hundred students have created ePortfolios at BCC to date. The majority of the STEM students have created their portfolios incrementally during their two year program of study. Currently a hybrid one credit ePortfolio course is offered through the Business Information Technology department as a requirement for BIT students. The course incorporates Service Learning as a way for students to obtain employment experience and engage in community service. Students engage in selecting and reflecting on artifacts from academic and life experiences and interactions with employers to determine the career path that best utilizes their strengths, skills, and interests.

If you are interested in learning more about the BCC Technology Careers program visit <http://sunybroome.edu/custom/techcareers> or contact Geetha Nehemia at nehemiag@sunybroome.edu.

Upcoming and current publications and presentations

AAEEBL webcast for Educause Learning Initiative. September 2010.

Batson, T. (2010). A Profoundly Disruptive Technology. Retrieved July 2010, from

http://campustechnology.com/articles/2010/07/28/a-profoundly-disruptive-technology.aspx?sc_lang=en.

Batson, T. (2010). The Testing Straitjacket. Retrieved July 2010, from http://campustechnology.com/articles/2010/07/07/the-testing-straitjacket.aspx?sc_lang=en.

Batson, T. (2010). On the Cusp of the Resume Renaissance. Retrieved June, 2010, from

http://campustechnology.com/articles/2010/06/16/on-the-cusp-of-the-resume-renaissance.aspx?sc_lang=en.

Miller, Allison. Captured alive: Using technology to manage lifelong learning. This presentation is being given at multiple conferences and can be viewed by accessing this url: <http://networkevents.flexiblelearning.net.au/webx?13@307.5a9pazjdcEe.1@.1aef8af8>.

Pinker, Steven. Mind over mass media. The New York Times. Retrieved June 10, 2010 from

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/11/opinion/11Pinker.html?_r=1&hp.



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Epsilen (www.epsilen.com) made its presentation at the 2010 AAEEBL ePortfolio conference and demonstrated its unique hosted system that contributes to student engagement, retention, and networking. As online academic programs continue to grow in popularity, institutions are continually challenged to find ways to engage and retain students in the virtual learning environment. By connecting the online classroom with Epsilen's powerful social networking platform and advanced ePortfolio system, institutions are more likely to encourage students to create, develop, and maintain an evolving lifelong cyber identity. Epsilen presents a transformative "next generation" teaching and learning environment by incorporating the use of its refined ePortfolio system and Web 2.0 networking tools within its learning management system. With the integration of Epsilen's comprehensive electronic portfolio within its system, users are provided extensive support methods that encourage global collaboration and maximize learning opportunities far beyond those available inside campus walls. Epsilen is constantly responding to the demands of today's learning needs, and its most recent release is the Institutional Assessment Tool which provides a progressive solution for institutions to capture individual learning achievements within custom-defined rubrics and with personal reflection, as well as a reliable evaluation of the pedagogical strength of the entire institution.



Quick Conference Fact: 19 institutions sent 2 or more individuals to the AAEEBL 2010 conference; 13 of these sent more than 3 people, and 8 sent more than 5. Keep bringing your friends and colleagues!

TaskStream was excited to participate in the first AAEEBL Annual Conference in Boston this year. We had a great group join us for our workshop on Monday afternoon, co-presented with Laurie Poklop from Northeastern University, in which we explored a process model for designing and integrating ePortfolios to meet diverse needs. Laurie shared examples from various programs at Northeastern that are using ePortfolios in very different ways and we had an interesting dialogue about assessment and reflection.

We greatly appreciated the rich contributions to the conference made by several TaskStream clients, including Laurie and her colleagues at Northeastern and the team from Mercy College. Mercy's story about their success with establishing a faculty learning community and integrating eportfolios across the institution is inspiring for any group looking to get their eportfolio initiatives off the ground.

During the conference, TaskStream also launched the latest version of our web-based tools, which included several new features and usability enhancements to the ePortfolio system. Stay tuned for an announcement later this summer when we will be releasing powerful new ways for integrating TaskStream with other systems on campus, such as Course Management and Student Information Systems, including real-time web services.





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The Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research is pleased to announce the twelve members of its newest cohort. Cohort VI will focus for three years on the common question “What is the value of assessing a complete ePortfolio?” We are interested in learning about the value of the dynamism that exists in an ePortfolio as artifacts relate to one another, reflection both illuminates and changes the significance of individual artifacts, and interaction with multiple readers creates learning within and through the ePortfolio. Institutional teams from the following campuses will investigate this central question:

- Bowling Green University
- Curtin University of Technology (Australia)
- Goshen College
- Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis
- Lamar University
- Northeastern University
- Portland State University
- University of Georgia
- University of Michigan
- University of Mississippi
- Virginia Military Institute
- Westminster College

For additional information about the Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research and reports from past cohort members about their research findings on a wide variety of questions, visit the Coalition website at <http://necpr.org>. To ask questions about the Coalition, contact any of its leaders: Barbara Cambridge (bcambridge@ncte.org); Darren Cambridge (dcambrid@gnu.edu), and Kathleen Yancey (kyancey@fsu.edu).

Get Connected with AAEEBL

Sites and events of interest:

- AAEEBL Slideshare site: <http://www.slideshare.net/AAEEBL>
- e-Skills ePortfolio. This is an ePortfolio sandpit for you to develop your own e-portfolio for free: <http://mahara.e-skills.com.au/>
- The Action Lab site for ePortfolios (<http://actionlab.ning.com/>) is moving to a new site: <http://grou.ps/actionlab>.
- Grant proposal. LaGuardia Community College submitted a FIPSE proposal in partnership with AAEEBL in July. We will be notified at the end of September if our 3-year project, “Connect to Learning,” will be funded. If so, work starts in January, 2011. And, if we are funded, we will issue a Call for Proposals from campuses that would like to be involved in the project in October.
- The first AAEEBL survey has been initiated, created with the assistance of Steve Ehrmann, Drexel University Faculty and Director of the Flashlight Program for the Study and Improvement of Educational Uses of Technology and also Gary Brown, AAEEBL Co-Director, at Washington State University. Steve is also a member of the AAEEBL Executive Team. It is therefore a professionally-designed survey and



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the results will be tabulated and analyzed accordingly. The membership of AAEEBL is being surveyed to produce reports in the fall before October 15. To complete the survey, visit this link: <http://bit.ly/AAEEBL-snapshot>.

- The Leap Ahead LLN ePortfolio and eSystems pilot report carried out by the Centre for ePortfolio Development is now complete. The project ran trials of over 1000 ePortfolio licences in schools, FE, HE and employees from 2007 to 2009 as well as working on XCRI to join courses data in regional institutions: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/eportfolio/leapahead/ePFLLN.shtml>

Upcoming conferences for AAEEBL and other related organizations:

- Submit proposal to the 2011 Educause Learning Initiative Annual Meeting. Educating in the Open: Philosophies, Innovations, and Stories. February 14–16, 2011. Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C. The deadline for submissions is September 17. http://net.educause.edu/content.asp?SECTION_ID=523&bhcp=1
- Submit proposal to the 2011 Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy. February 3-4, 2011. The Inn at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA. The deadline for submissions is October 7. <http://www.cider.vt.edu/conference/>
- Learn more about the ePortfolios Australia Conference. November 3-4, 2010, Melbourne, Australia. <http://epaccop.blogspot.com/> (AAEEBL presence)
- E-Learn 2010 Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, & Higher Education, October 18-22, 2010, Orlando, Florida. <http://aace.org/conf/elearn/>

AAEEBL membership information:

- AAEEBL institutional membership renewal due on or before June 30: <http://metalearning.americommerce.com/store/c/18-AAEEBL-Memberships.aspx>
- Join AAEEBL as an institution: <http://metalearning.americommerce.com/store/c/18-AAEEBL-Memberships.aspx>

AAEEBL Affiliates:

- AAEEBL's first affiliation was with EPAC, Electronic Portfolio Action and Communication, <http://epaccop.blogspot.com/>, out of which many ePortfolio initiatives began. EPAC will hold a meeting at the Boston conference on Wednesday July 21 at 9:30 am in one of the concurrent session rooms. You can meet Helen Chen, Tracy Penny-Light, and John Ittelson, who have sustained EPAC for almost a decade, a volunteer effort of incomparable value to our community.
- AAEEBL is tied in many ways to the Making Connections National Resource Center at LaGuardia Community College, which will be well represented at the Boston Conference. Making Connections, through its annual cohort of campuses, has expanded the intelligent use of portfolios each year and continues as one of the most important and influential portfolio initiatives in the country.
- AAC&U and AAEEBL share a common interest in advancing portfolio practice for useful and valid assessment in higher education. Terrel Rhodes, Vice President for Quality, Curriculum and Assessment at the Association of American Colleges and Universities is on the Board of Directors of AAEEBL and has helped enormously in putting together the Boston conference. We look forward to much more collaboration between AAC&U and AAEEBL.



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- AAEEBL has also connected with The Centre for Recording Achievement in Nottingham, U.K., formally exchanging memberships with the CRA, has also connected with EIFEL, the European Institute for E-Learning, and with ePortfolio Australia (the AAEEBL Board of Directors has two members from Australia and three from the U.K.).
- In the Northeast U. S., AAEEBL collaborates with EDUCAUSE's regional organization, The Northeast Regional Computing Program (NERCOMP), helping to extend NERCOMP's interest in ePortfolios. NERCOMP is an official co-host of the Boston Conference as is AAC&U and the Making Connections National Resource Center. AAEEBL is also partnering this year with the New England Faculty Development Consortium, providing the pre-conference workshop on ePortfolios at the annual NEFDC conference in Worcester, MA in November.

Corporate Affiliates:

- AAEEBL is now conducting an intelligence-gathering survey of our corporate members to discover their perspectives on the present state of ePortfolios and where they see the market heading. They have a perspective on the market that we academics may not have. Learning from them can help us be better informed as we make decisions on campus about ePortfolios. Trent Batson is currently writing an article for publication about the results of this survey.

We would like to share members' upcoming and current publications, as well as any publications that might be relevant to the community. We plan to only include bibliographic information or links to multimedia sites that include presentations. Please send any publication or presentation information to Marc Zaldivar: marcz@vt.edu.

Please submit articles, notifications, and publication/presentation information for The AAEEBL Learner (rolling acceptance) to marcz@vt.edu.