Electronic Portfolios: Decisions, and Dilemmas
AAHE 2003 Assessment Conference
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What are your Decisions & Dilemmas about Electronic Portfolios?

My Questions:

Is the addition of technology changing the definition of what a portfolio is or can be?

How can we create an electronic portfolio that our students want to maintain as a lifelong learning tool?

Turn to a partner

Talk about your questions about e-portfolios
Share a few with the large group.

Definitions

What is a Portfolio?

A purposeful collection of students' work that illustrates efforts, progress, and achievement [over time]
(NW Eval Assoc.)
What is an Electronic Portfolio?
- uses electronic technologies as the container
- portfolio artifacts in many media (audio, video, graphics, text)
- hypertext links to organize the material
- and connect evidence to standards (in an assessment portfolio)

Decisions

Electronic Portfolio Decision Considerations

Questions to ask:
Stage 1
1. What is the portfolio’s purpose?
2. Who is the audience?
3. What technology do you have? (and what skills?)

Purpose & Goals for the portfolio
(Determine Content)

Many purposes:
- Learning
- Assessment
- Marketing/Showcase

Audience
(Determine publishing format)

Who are the primary audiences for the portfolio?
- Student
- Parent
- Teacher/School community
- Employer
- College

What technologies do they have?

Assessment - What are the goals for students?
How is the work assessed?
- Standards
- Rubrics
- Is there a need to aggregate portfolio/assessment data for program assessment purposes?
Assessment for Learning Continuum

- Learning
- Reflection
- Accountability
- Self Assessment
- Informal Feedback
- Rubrics
- Portfolios
- Performance Based
- Standardized Tests


Culture

What else has to change for the portfolio to be valued AND valuable?

Collaboration
Partnerships
Leverage

Curriculum Issues

Where is the concept of the e-portfolio introduced to students?
Does the curriculum require “appropriate digital artifacts for electronic portfolio?”
Is there a course in the curriculum where the students develop their electronic portfolios?
How are the portfolios assessed?

Type of Technology

What MEDIA best convey the messages of the learning journey?
- Text
- Images
- Audio
- Video

"Portfolios tell a story...put in anything that helps to tell the story"
- Pearl & Leon Paulson, 1991

Stage 3
Constructing the Reflective Portfolio
Stage 4
Connections

Reflections
- The Heart and Soul of the Portfolio

Making Connections
- Linking artifacts to standards, outcomes or goals.

What Tools to Use?

What is the best electronic portfolio program???

IT DEPENDS . . .
on the assessment context + variety of other factors, human and technological
Directions in Electronic Portfolio Development

**GT**

Generic/Common Tools Approach
- MS Office: Word/Excel/PowerPoint
- Higher level tool software
- Portable Document Format
- HTML
- Multimedia authoring
+ Low startup costs
+ Replicate process in classrooms
  — Ability to aggregate data for assessment

**CS**

IT Customized Systems Approach
- Online database
- Assessment Management Systems
- Examples of commercial companies: LiveText, TaskStream, Edmin.com’s V-ED,
  Northwestern University’s Collaboratory
  — Server programming/purchase (or student fee subscription), maintenance & Internet access requirements
+ Ability to aggregate data for assessment

Show Examples

Which approach should you take?

Are you looking for an **electronic portfolio**…
Or an **assessment management system**?
What’s the difference?

Purpose

**Electronic Portfolio**
- Multiple:
  - Learning
  - Assessment
  - Employment

**Assessment Management System**
- Single:
  - Assessment

Data Structure

**Electronic Portfolio**
- Varies with the tools used to create the portfolio; most often common data formats (documents often converted to HTML, PDF)

**Assessment Management System**
- Most often uses a relational database to record, report data
### Data Storage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electronic Portfolio</th>
<th>Assessment Management System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>multiple options: CD-ROM, videotape, DVD, WWW server, LAN</td>
<td>LAN or secure WWW server</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Digital Divide Issues

### Primary Type of Data

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Electronic Portfolio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Quantitative and Qualitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Control of Design & Links

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Electronic Portfolio</th>
<th>Assessment Management System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under control of portfolio developer</td>
<td>controlled by database structure</td>
</tr>
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</table>

• Hyperlinking reinforces metacognition *
• Design = Individuality

*Portland State University

### Technology Skills Required

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<td>Medium -&gt; High</td>
<td>Low -&gt; Medium</td>
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More advanced skills: information design through hyperlinking, digital publishing strategies, file management

Minimal skills, equivalent to using a web browser and adding attachments to an e-mail message

### Technology Skills Demonstrated

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depending on tools used to create portfolio

depending on the sophistication of the artifacts added to the portfolio

### Locus of Control

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<tr>
<td>Student-Centered</td>
<td>Institution-Centered</td>
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Electronic Portfolio or Assessment Management System?

Lee Shulman’s 5 dangers of portfolios

1. "lamination" - a portfolio becomes a mere exhibition, a self-advertisement, to show off
2. "heavy lifting" - a portfolio done well is hard work. Is it worth the extra effort?
3. "trivialization" - documenting stuff that isn't worth reflecting upon
4. "perversion" - when used as a form of high stakes assessment “why will portfolios be more resistant to perversion than all other forms of assessment have been?”
5. "misrepresentation" - does “best work” misrepresent “typical work” -- not a true picture of competency

Lee Shulman’s 5 benefits of portfolios

1. tracking and documentation of longer episodes of teaching and learning
2. encourage the reconnection between process and product
   - very best teaching portfolios consist predominantly of student portfolios & highlight the results of teaching that lead to student learning.
3. institutionalize norms of collaboration, reflection, and discussion
4. a portable residency... introduces structure to the field experience
5. (most important) shifts the agency from an observer back to the teacher interns...

Lee Shulman’s 5 benefits of portfolios

“Portfolios are owned and operated by teachers; they organize the portfolios; they decide what goes in them.” (p.36)
Pedagogical Requirements

An online portfolio system needs to support a CULTURE of EVIDENCE:
Evidence = Artifacts + Learner Reflections + Validation or Feedback

Questions to the audience:

What do you think about my distinctions between e-portfolios and assessment management systems?
Is there any evidence of how the decisions we make about electronic portfolio systems impact the learners and the institutions?

Dilemmas

Above all else...

Electronic portfolios should provide a dynamic environment for learners to document and celebrate their learning across the lifespan

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