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**Articles at a Glance**

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The AAEEBL ePortfolio Review (AePR) invites you to submit articles and reports covering the broad area of ePortfolio use. We publish articles about pedagogy, research, technical, and organizational issues bi-annually. Our readership includes ePortfolio practitioners, administrators, and students. AePR is an online journal serving the needs of the global ePortfolio community and seeks to promote portfolio learning as a major way to transform higher education.

The AePR is a theme-based journal; therefore, acceptance is competitive. After a paper proposal has been accepted for a specific issue, the authors are paired with one of our peer reviewers. Paper proposals submitted for a current issue may be considered for a subsequent issue if it fits the upcoming theme.

Article Types
We’re particularly interested in the following types of articles:

- Longer articles (3,000 to 5,000 words) about practical research, administrative reports, or case studies with generalizable results – again, not as peer-reviewed research but as reports.
- Short articles (1,000 to 1,500 words) discussing a case study at an institution/course, offering advice and opinions to other ePortfolio practitioners.
- How-to articles, tutorials on specific tools or approaches (500 to 1,500 words).
- Interviews (500 to 1000 words) with key individuals directly involved with the use of ePortfolios.
- Announcements (up to 300 words) of items regarding the use of ePortfolios in the field.

For further details about making paper proposals, see page 53.

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Welcome Readers,

It’s my pleasure to introduce this issue of the AAEEBL ePortfolio Review. The previous issue’s theme of “Building Bridges” is so substantial that we devoted another issue to it! Through its publications and events, AAEEBL strives to build and maintain bridges among community members, higher ed institutions, effective practices, and innovative ideas. This AePR issue showcases how ePortfolios have become rich communication channels. Rather than more static library collections, ePortfolios are meant to spark dynamic interactions among a variety of stakeholders who share common interests, goals, or needs.

Individual and institutional ePortfolio authors start new conversations as they collect, select, reflect, build, and publish work that other people or organizations can use. We collect our work, select artifacts that have meaning to others, reflect on how each artifact fits within a specific context, build pathways for others to find and consume, and publish to increase availability or visibility. In response, we encourage ePortfolio reviewers to connect, project, comment, share, and republish. That is, we want others to connect our work to their goals and needs, project how an artifact might serve other contexts, comment with encouragement and feedback, share with like-minded network connections, and republish new works that build on our own.

In that spirit, we hope that this AePR issue about building bridges of all kinds—personal, practical, professional, and more—inspires you to engage with the AAEEBL community. Please connect with us online via an AAEEBL/EPAC Twitter chat and in person at the AAEEBL Annual Meeting at Bronx Community College in New York City, July 15-18, 2019.

Happy reading!

Kevin Kelly
San Francisco State University and the AAEEBL Board of Directors
Dear Readers,

Spring is in the air and it seems everywhere we look, the sun is shining, the birds are chirping, and new spring flowers are starting to bud. We don’t know about you, but we are filled with a sense of newness and restoration not unlike the joys of seeing the spark catch in a student’s eye after long thought and reflection on their learning process. The sense of accomplishment and understanding brings so much joy and excitement. We are thrilled to be able to capture just some of that in this issue.

There was so much interest after our last issue, AePR V2N3: Building Bridges, that we decided to bridge the theme into another issue. Discussing how students demonstrate their development and growth, Nicholls and Wright discuss the value of eportfolios in nursing education. We are especially thrilled as Zuba Prokopetz describes her experience as an adult educator developing and using her ePortfolio as a learning tool. Reynolds, Ring, Wilson, Davidson, Confrey, and Stuart describe their involvement in AAEEBL’s 2017/18 Out of Practice group. They explain how bridges are built with other practitioners, faculty, students, and future employers. Wear and Baltazar review the University of North Texas’s Career Connect’s program and how their students can connect their post-secondary education to the workforce. Their article also provides recommendations for other practitioners tasked with a similar goal.

In knowing we can never have enough data, Stuart, Haskins, and Adelino explain Auburn University’s recent research into life-long and life-wide learning and student perceptions and how that can direct the future ePortfolio research. Similarly, Hartwick, Davidson, and McCarroll summarize more than 5 years of collaborative ePortfolio design, research, and practice at the course level in a post-secondary context. They share evidence that affirms ePortfolio pedagogy leads to high-impact behaviors if—and only if—it is “done well.”

Taken all together, we hope this issue stimulates some new ideas for you to expand your thinking and improve your programs.

Happy reading,

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Many students seeking higher education do so in hopes that having a degree will increase their probability of having a better paying job, or at least one that justifies the expense of college. Similarly, institutions seek to provide their students with an educational experience that prepares them for a career (Sutton, 2016). Earning a college degree used to be enough to guarantee employment, but now employers search for college graduates with proven attributes extending beyond the degree.

A degree only tells employers that students attended classes and completed a curriculum, but it falls short of demonstrating the skills the college graduate will contribute to their business. Employers want to know that the candidates they hire have the skills to do their job adequately, so institutions have begun incorporating activities that focus on developing workplace skills. Institutions are also providing their graduates with methods to demonstrate and articulate their skills in a meaningful way. At the University of North Texas, one of the ways we do this is through student ePortfolios.

Surveys from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) highlight the importance of developing skills that will transfer into the workplace. In a survey of organizations hiring fresh college graduates, NACE identified eight key competencies associated with career readiness: critical thinking, oral communication, written communication, teamwork, digital technology, leadership, professionalism, and career management. Since these competencies represent the most sought-after skills by new graduates, it is reasonable that they are also referred to as marketable skills.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) recognized the importance of developing marketable skills when implementing the 60x30TX Higher Education Plan, which requires that “[a]ll graduates from Texas public institutions of higher education will have completed programs with identified marketable skills” (60x30TX). With this initiative in place, degree programs across institutions are required to list the skills that their students develop while completing their program. The goal behind this plan is for students to both recognize and articulate their skills to employers, an ability that employers often find lacking.

Results from the Job Outlook 2018 (NACE) delineated the gap in perception between graduates and employers regarding the level of proficiency in these skills. The percentage of employers that considered graduates proficient in skills such as oral/written communication and critical thinking was 37% and 24% respectively, less than the amount perceived by students who considered themselves proficient in the skills. Although students may be listing these skills in their applications, additional preparation is needed to demonstrate their proficiency to employers.
In response to the disconnect, Career Connect at the University of North Texas (UNT) was chosen as the QEP initiative to support faculty, staff, and students by creating opportunities that emphasize and highlight the development of four marketable skills: critical thinking, oral communication, teamwork, and written communication. Career Connect developed rubrics (modeled after the AAC&U LEAP rubrics), providing students the opportunity to be rated on each of these skills and the ability to demonstrate their proficiency by receiving a credential.

Project templates are created by faculty or staff members which focus on an assignment or activity to enable students to demonstrate one of the marketable skills. The student not only describes what they did for the assignment, but also articulates how they believe they developed critical thinking/communication/teamwork in the process of completing the task. The twofold purpose of these projects for the students is to learn how to articulate the marketable skills they are developing and to connect activities and assignments to their future employment. The project will also have a universal rubric which is used by project supervisors to rate the students’ proficiency at one of four levels: beginning, developing, proficient, or distinguished. Students who average a proficient or distinguished rating across therubric receive credit towards a credential in that skill.

Over the course of their college experience, students are introduced to many opportunities to develop these skills. Although it is not possible to rate every experience, Career Connect requires that a student participate in at least three experiences where they are rated by a supervisor or faculty member on an identical, validated rubric to receive a credential in that skill. Subsequently, students can send a link to the skills credential of either their project or portfolio which contains the skills credential and evidence of the developed skill.

We are not naïve enough to assume this is a silver bullet (Watson, 2012) for student engagement in the curriculum or that every student will automatically be able to connect their experiences to the marketable skills they are developing. However, with more than 16000 participants so far, we are confident that this initiative will reach many students, enabling them to articulate the evidence of skills they develop throughout their college experience.
About the Authors

Adam Wear currently serves as the ePortfolio coordinator for the University of North Texas in the Career Connect office. He has also served as an instructional consultant and taught courses in English. He is a PhD candidate in the Department of Higher Education at UNT.

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Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (n.d.). 60x30TX higher education plan.

Bridging Research to Practice and Practice to Research: ePortfolio Practitioners’ Perspectives

Authors: Allie Davidson, Peggy Hartwick, Julie McCarroll
Review Editor: Sandra Stewart

Introduction
According to Eynon, Gambino and Török (2014), sophisticated ePortfolio development involves instructors, staff, and students engaging in Inquiry, Reflection, and Integration (I-R-I) in their ePortfolios. We recently reflected on our own ePortfolio practice and share our reflections and insights with other ePortfolio practitioners. Together, we have collaborated for over five years on ePortfolio design, research, and practice at course level in a post-secondary context. This article is our attempt at collectively inquiring into our practice to reflect on the intersection of our teaching and research. Herein, we share our story so that others may learn and integrate our experiences in their practices.

Here, we provide a description of ePortfolio pedagogy “done well” (Eynon & Gambino, 2017) and critically reflect on implications for students and teachers when ePortfolio practice is compromised. We begin by summarizing results from our earlier published case study (Hartwick, McCarroll, & Davidson, 2018) that demonstrates the effectiveness of ePortfolio pedagogy, a practice “done well”, because it succeeded in generating multiple high impact behaviors (Kuh & O’Donnell, 2013). Next, we describe the second stage of research where we compared the performance between EAP students using ePortfolios (experimental) and students using traditional paper-based portfolios (control). While findings from this second study were limited and unexpected, the results affirmed that ePortfolio pedagogy leads to high-impact behaviors if, and only if, it is “done well.” The unexpected results prompted us to reflect on how and why our ePortfolio practice in the second study was compromised and how ePortfolio pedagogy has progressed our teaching practice as a whole. By uniting our ongoing practice to research and research to practice, we share these reflections below.

Background
Peggy and Julie, instructors of English as a Second Language for Academic Purposes (EAP), adopted ePortfolios into their classrooms when Carleton's electronic portfolio system, cuPortfolio (powered by Mahara), was first introduced at the university in 2014. With the help of Allie, our research partner and Educational Technology Development Coordinator, we mapped a traditional paper-based research project onto the ePortfolio platform by aligning the steps of the existing project to the available features of the ePortfolio platform, such as tabs. We believe that ePortfolio practice is process-oriented wherein learning is documented over time and feedback, whether formal or informal, is provided often. As a result, this process-based project spanned the entire semester and included 12 smaller tasks, worth a total of 40 percent of students’ final grades. Assignments were designed with a mind
towards Inquiry, Reflection, and Integration (Eynon, Gambino & Török, 2014). For instance, in one activity, students explored their chosen academic discipline, both within and outside the university website, synthesized and cited sources, and made connections across courses. They then informally presented findings to peer groups, an authentic audience. We observed student groups inquiring about their classmates’ discipline, courses, use of technology in their portfolios, as well as other areas. This prompted opportunity for peer feedback and self-reflection on strengths and areas in need of improvement, which was integrated into subsequent activities.

**this “done well” practice is characterized by the thorough integration of the ePortfolio into the course**

We suggest that our assignment design led students to take ownership of, and become engaged in, their own and their peers’ learning. Anecdotally, we consider our practice to be “done well” and, therefore, believe it led to active and engaged learners (Eynon & Gambino, 2017). In this case, we attributed the success of ePortfolio to the pedagogical approach and the support from the institution. Intrigued by these anecdotal results and observations of our ePortfolio practice, we undertook a case study in the winter 2017 term with our EAP classes. We collected online survey responses from over 40 student volunteer participants using ePortfolio and teaching materials. The results of this case study were published in Eynon and Gambino’s (2018) edited book entitled *Catalyst in action: Case studies of high-impact ePortfolio practice.*

**Study 1**

This case study investigated ePortfolio practice “done well” by using the lens of the Integrative Social Pedagogy sector of the Catalyst Framework and design principles of Inquiry, Reflection and Integration (Eynon & Gambino, 2017) to explore which ePortfolio practices helped to generate high-impact behaviors (Kuh & O’Donnell, 2013). Student survey responses indicate that they (1) invest a significant amount of time and effort into their ePortfolios throughout the term, (2) engage with their instructors and peers about substantive matters through developing their ePortfolios, and (3) engage in reflective and integrative learning in their ePortfolio work. In this chapter, we suggest that these student responses indicate a successful implementation of ePortfolio into a course or, in other words, an ePortfolio practice “done well.” We explain that this “done well” practice is characterized by the thorough integration of the ePortfolio into the course which includes the connection of class activities to student ePortfolio prompts, significant weighting of the ePortfolio in the final course grade, the provision of regular feedback on students’ ePortfolio work, and regularly scheduled time for students to work on their ePortfolio in class.

**Study 2**

Convinced that ePortfolios, when “done well,” lead to high-impact behaviors, and motivated by gaps identified in the literature (Bryant & Chittum, 2013; Eynon & Gambino, 2017), the researchers set out to understand the effectiveness of ePortfolio practice compared to a paper-based portfolio practice in relation to student performance and retention over time. Study 2 was designed to follow students from the fall 2017 Intermediate EAP course through the winter 2018 Advanced EAP course. The study used EAP placement scores, pre- and post-tests, and student final grades. In each semester, the experimental group completed their research project using ePortfolio, while the control group completed a traditional, paper-based portfolio. Peggy and Julie worked together, thereby ensuring the teacher variable remained relatively constant in relation to the tasks and outcome. Peggy was solely responsible for instruction pertaining to the research project - both portfolio and paper-based. She designed and facilitated the portfolio section of
the course, paper-based and electronic, which was a research project that spanned the full academic term and equated 45% of the final grade. Julie, on the other hand, was solely responsible for design and instruction related to course content and skill development.

**Surprises**

This study was limited by low participant numbers (n=20) as student participants in each of the control and experimental groups did not necessarily continue with the same instructor in the second term. That is, some students from the control group ended up in the experimental group section in the second term or with another teacher entirely. As a result, it was difficult to generalize any meaningful findings related to student performance and retention. Indeed, preliminary findings showed that students registered in the paper-based group outperformed their peers in the ePortfolio group. While these results were unexpected based on the findings from our Study 1, the explanation as to why this may have happened is perhaps most meaningful and what we wish to share with you in this article.

**You cannot take the practitioner out of the pedagogy or practice**

First, Peggy and Julie noticed that their stronger students did better regardless of the practice (ePortfolio/paper-based) and report that these students, who are generally more self-directed, autonomous learners, will do well regardless of method. This was compounded by the fact that due to the nature of our study design, such as trying to control for the teacher variable, we were unable to clearly isolate the role of ePortfolio as we had done in our first study. Upon reflection, the reason this was not possible is perhaps the most interesting finding and supports our claim made in Study 1 that ePortfolio is a successful pedagogy only if it is “done well” in terms of generating high-impact behaviors. In this case, we argue that the practice in Study 2 was not “done well” because we tried to control for the teacher variable by holding Peggy responsible for the control and experimental groups. As a seasoned ePortfolio practitioner, she reports that she could no longer use a paper-based practice in good conscience because she no longer believes the paper-based practice is as effective as the ePortfolio practice. As a result, her paper-based practice took on characteristics from her ePortfolio practice, those that made it a practice “done well,” while her ePortfolio practice became watered down so as not to unfairly advantage students in this group. Our unexpected findings show that you cannot take the practitioner out of the pedagogy or practice. So, what changed, and why was the ePortfolio practice compromised? Peggy suggests that the design of the study impacted her ability to do the practice well and states “maybe we shouldn’t have tried so hard to control for teacher variable.” By controlling for the teacher variable, Peggy was solely responsible for both groups and thereby felt compelled to keep the lessons and class time spent on ePortfolio and paper-based as equal as possible so that she established fair and level playing fields for both groups. Consequently, Peggy feels that her ePortfolio practice was compromised to the point that she was unable to deliver an ePortfolio practice that generated the high-impact behaviors identified by Kuh and O’Donnell (2013) and confirmed in Study 1, such as time, feedback, assessment, and reflection (Figure 1).

As noted above, results from Study 1 support that a significant investment of time contributes to a practice “done well.” For example, time spent in the lab or classroom led to opportunities for informal peer and teacher feedback.
In these instances, learning was observed as being social, engaged, and iterative. However, during Study 2, in the interest of fairness, Peggy reports having to cut back on class time for the ePortfolio group while developing more activities for the paper-based groups, activities that were more in line with her ePortfolio practices that prompted reflection, collaboration, and creativity. Peggy found that, due to changes in her pedagogical beliefs and practices, she was unable to use the types of activities that she had designed and used in the past for a paper-based practice; therefore, she significantly modified her paper-based (control group) activities to generate more high impact behaviors, like time and feedback.

In terms of feedback, Peggy found that she had to minimize opportunities for group work and lab time for the ePortfolio group as a matter of fairness to the paper-based group. As demonstrated in Study 1, these in-class opportunities lead to feedback and opportunities to interact with faculty and peers on substantive matters. Again, she felt by providing more class time to the ePortfolio group to work on their ePortfolios, she would be disadvantaging the paper-based group and so diluted the earlier successes of her ePortfolio practice.

Regarding assessment, another high-impact behavior, Peggy was overwhelmed with the number of students to grade for each of the four portfolio submissions. Traditionally Peggy and Julie had shared and collaborated on assessment, but in the fall, she was responsible for grading 60 students and 90 students in the winter term. In addition to high numbers, she was no longer benchmarking with Julie to establish inter-rater reliability and this was the first time she used an online marking guide. Upon reflection, she felt this online marking guide led to a mechanical tick and flick style of assessment as opposed to the richness of feedback that emerges from team marking and benchmarking.

Finally, with respect to the reported benefits of reflection in Study 1, Peggy states that “this practice (of assigning reflective prompts) fell completely off my radar.” She says that reflective prompts, for either group, were not assigned due to the sheer volume of grading it would have generated. Upon reflection, we feel that had we not tried so hard to control for the teacher in this study, this predicament would not have emerged. In other words, the marking would have been more equally distributed throughout the term thereby ensuring the reflective prompts remained as a rich high-impact behavior.

**Conclusion**

Despite the weaknesses in our design for Study 2, we feel strongly that the unexpected findings are important as they confirm for us that ePortfolio, as a practice, must be “done well” to generate high-impact behaviors. Further, when a practice is “done well,” it shapes our teaching beliefs and philosophies. Moving forward, our study design needs to look forward and not backwards. We are in the process of preparing a more extensive literature review that focuses on the gaps in the literature and the methods for research. Our redesigned Study 2 will not compare a paper-based practice to an ePortfolio practice, but will rather investigate how and why an ePortfolio practice impacts on learning outcomes, grades, and student retention.

**About the Authors**

**Allie Davidson** is an Educational Technology Development Coordinator at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. Allie consults with instructors on their use of educational technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences in the classroom and is involved in the design, development, facilitation, and implementation of ePortfolio projects and initiatives at Carleton.
Peggy Hartwick is an instructor of English as a Second Language Academic at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. As a reflective researcher and practitioner, she is fascinated by the potential learning benefits afforded by digital technologies, such as ePortfolios and 3D virtual learning environments. Peggy has a PhD in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies and is the past recipient of the 2015 Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) / Brightspace Innovation Award.

Julie McCarroll is an instructor of English as a Second Language Academic at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. In preparing international students for success in their discipline courses, she is interested in the ways that technology can motivate and engage learners to meet learning outcomes. Julie received an Innovation Grant from Carleton University in 2018 for her research on ePortfolios.

References


Uniqueness of ePortfolios: Reflections of a Creator, Curator, and User

Author: Rita Zuba Prokopetz
Review Editor: Adam Wear

Abstract
This reflective essay describes the experiences of an adult educator as the creator, curator, and user of an ePortfolio during the final course in her graduate program of studies.

Creator, Curator, and User of an ePortfolio
My journey begins in my graduate studies, when I first developed an ePortfolio, as a capstone project (see Figure 1). As I welcomed my first ePortfolio experience in 2013 during my graduate studies at Central Michigan University (CMU), I embraced an exciting way to learn with this technology-enabled learning tool. As I developed my project, I became more aware of what I was learning during the creation of my collection of pages (transformation of thought processes and deeper level of reflection); of how my learning was unfolding during the curating of the artifacts (Dillon & Brown, 2006); and why, as a user, it was important for me to learn more about this elegant learning tool. I saw my learning unfolding, and began to notice bouts of reflective thoughts that seemed to emerge in my struggles as a first-time creator, curator, and user of an ePortfolio. I paused to reflect on what I was experiencing, and realized that my learning seemed to both energize me, and also to compel me to go further and dig deeper. My new learning discoveries also brought me moments of both turbulence and serenity, and gave me a feeling of living “with a gust of wind within” (Zuba Prokopetz, 2015). During this reflective process, I also recognized that in my eagerness to complete my ePortfolio as a capstone project, I was neglecting to notice what I was experiencing during its creation. As I learned to allow time to reflect on what was occurring, I realized the twofold challenge I faced: 1) learning ePortfolio technology itself; 2) enhancing my learning process through it. Both were vital to my mastery of ePortfolio.

Figure 1. Homepage of the Weebly of my first capstone ePortfolio project in my graduate studies.
**Types and Purposes**

There are various types of ePortfolios that have been highlighted in the literature within the context of education. Butler (2006) identified the different audiences for their creation: teachers, lecturers, mentors, employers, and individuals themselves. In addition, in tertiary education, there are also different purposes for the different types of ePortfolios based on their diverse audience. These include ePortfolios for:

- learning and reflecting (the process ePortfolio of students);
- professional development (the learning ePortfolio of professionals);
- evaluation and assessment (the assessment ePortfolio assembled by students); and
- job applications (the showcase ePortfolio) used by job seekers (Butler, 2006; Chang, 2001; Wade, Abrami, & Sclater, 2005).

Figure 2 provides an overview of some of the purposes of ePortfolio based on the diverse audience among ePortfolio users in tertiary education.

![Figure 2. Purpose of ePortfolio use in tertiary education based on its diverse audience. Adapted from Butler (2006); Chang (2001); Wade, Abrami, and Slater (2005).](image)

**Process ePortfolio**

The process ePortfolio, as described by Barrett (2010), encompasses a variety of activities that facilitate the development of reflection in its creator. This type of ePortfolio is developed by students for the selection of artifacts, the creation of a collection of pages, reflection on the learning to date, the alignment of course competencies, and the presentation of culminating learning experiences. The audience for the process ePortfolio in my practice includes the students (as the creators), their peers (as the feedback givers), the course instructor, and may also include support staff, and administration. In my graduate studies, the audience for my capstone ePortfolio project consisted of the course professor and participants, and I also shared my final project with my colleagues and administration at my workplace. During the twelve weeks of the development of this terminal project, my attention turned to what I had previously learned, the process involved in each learning experience, and, most importantly, how my students would benefit from what I was learning. I also needed to remember that our professor would focus on the evaluation and assessment of my academic work to date (assessment ePortfolio). As graduate students completing a terminal project, we aimed to highlight our professional and personal development (learning ePortfolio), as well as our development process creating our ePortfolios (reflective portfolio).

It was while developing my capstone project during the eleventh course in my program of studies that I reflected with more depth on the learning experiences of my own students. This level of awareness and cognition emerged as I observed the students participating in their ePortfolio creations—their struggles, their sense of stick-to-itiveness, and their eloquent articulation of their thought processes. In consequence, I was able to step back and analyze what had worked, and what necessitated some adjustment. During those moments, I realized that I was becoming more knowledgeable about the “theoretical perspectives and the general theoretical approaches to the study of learning” (Ormrod, 2009, p.19).

**Application**

Although I was eager to share my learning with my students, I was cognizant not to allow my initial enthusiastic perceptions to translate as a “silver bullet” or a quick fix in my practice (Bryant & Chittum, 2013; J. Watson, 2012). As argued by Bryant and Chittum (2013), it is not uncommon in the field of education for
practitioners to apply what they know about a concept before more research findings on that concept are made available. As such, although I wanted to introduce innovative pedagogy in my classroom, I managed to curb some of the impulses that were lurking on the sidelines of my daily lesson planning. Consequently, I allowed myself to deepen my understanding of my experiences as an ePortfolio user, and thus prevent subsequent unfavourable outcomes in my practice. Figure 3 displays how I applied in my practice what I was learning in my courses (under application in my classroom), and what I was learning in each course (in the blue radio buttons below).

Figure 3. Selection of artifacts, and application in my practice of what I was learning in my own courses.

During this time in my journey, it became apparent to me that the ePortfolio situated itself in higher-education as more than just a technology-enabled learning tool. This emerging pedagogy was becoming positioned as an impactful practice in higher education (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2008; Kuh, 2008; Watson, Kuh, Rhodes, Light, & Chen, 2016).

**ePortfolio Pedagogy**

I consider myself a life-long learner, and during the completion of my first ePortfolio, I also became a life-wide learner. I recognized a sudden awareness of my own learning process, and an immense desire to pursue knowledge (Zuba Prokopetz, 2016). I realized that I needed to further my understanding of this technology-enabled emerging pedagogy before its application in my practice could occur (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). I understood that although the ePortfolio is still viewed by most as just one more tool in a tech-tool kit of Internet culture, it has the potential to engage students with their own learning. Batson (2018) argues that despite the long road travelled, ePortfolios are still being perceived just as a technology, and they still have a long way to go before they are viewed as a powerful emerging pedagogy in global higher education. As a substrate for autonomous learning, active learning, and reflective learning (Watson et al., 2016), the ePortfolio is viewed as an emerging pedagogy that facilitates learning and also enables ongoing, anytime anywhere interaction. Watson et al. (2016) further suggest that

*ePortfolio pedagogy provides a set of practices that are platform agnostic and utilize a range of broadly available technologies. They are constructed within a framework for organizing learning, and not as a prescription for a single end product, and they are designed to be owned and developed by the student learner with guidance from faculty and other educational professionals* (p. 25). My experience as a creator, user, and implementer of ePortfolios has placed me within an ePortfolio ecological system (Batson, 2015). EPortfolio pedagogy “enables instructors to become better educators,” because they facilitate the thinking back on what worked during the teaching and learning (Zuba Prokopetz, 2018). This emerging pedagogy, as posited
by Batson (2015), reaches beyond the curriculum to deepen learning, facilitate reflection, and promote interaction. It not only enriches student learning, but also helps connect practitioners with what they do daily—teach students, and facilitate their learning (Eynon & Gambino, 2017). This innovative pedagogy came as a surprise to initial users, as there was little literature or previous work done in the field at the time (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997). Since there was no previous research on this powerful pedagogy, early proponents had a “feeling hampered by no prescription or even direction” of what might emerge when they attempted to implement the ePortfolio in their practice (Cambridge, Cambridge, & Yancey, 2009, p. 2).

In an effort to make a broader contribution to ePortfolio as an emerging pedagogy, a group comprised of 24 leading American university and college campuses set out to seek answers to a number of questions. Together, as reported by Eynon, Gambino, and Török (2014), the group began working on the Connect to Learning (C2L) project, which focused on advancement of student, faculty and institutional learning through an exploration of strategies enabled by the ePortfolio pedagogy. In their search to address their research questions, scholars and educators participating in this project conducted a thorough analysis of the vast documentation on various dimensions of ePortfolios. The documentation reviewed placed ePortfolios in alignment with the following dimensions: pedagogy, technology, professional development, assessment tool, and as a form of institutional support. Although I have not experienced the ePortfolio at an institutional level to date, I continue to seek ways to include it in all facets of my practice.

Further research is required to enable educators to, as Eynon, Gambino, and Török (2014) have suggested, learn how to apply the ePortfolio not only to help students learn better, but also support reflection. The literature presents ePortfolios as an educational innovation that fosters new uses (e.g., as a capstone project of culminating experiences), and leads to new research findings (e.g., evidence-based ePortfolio as a high-impact practice) (AAC&U, 2008; Kuh, 2008). Since 2015, I have observed several iterations of a capstone ePortfolio project as a course in a graduate program. In my interactions with the students, both as a participant and an observer, I have seen the application of ePortfolio as a technology (the product), pedagogy (the reflective learning), and high-impact practice (the meta-analytical process) which are now key components of a digital ecosystem.

**ePortfolio as a High-Impact Practice**

Initially, there were ten high-impact practices under consideration by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). These instructional practices, which also include collaborative assignments and projects, and learning communities, have undergone testing with results showing the overarching benefits for students beyond the duration of their educational journey (Kuh, 2008). In 2016, the AAC&U relied on research findings to expand the list of ten high-impact practices in order to include ePortfolios (Watson et al., 2016). As one of the eleven high-impact practices, the ePortfolio may be considered an instructional method, a tool, an application, or an event that requires both students and instructors to devote time and effort during its development. The addition of the ePortfolio to the original list of ten impactful educational practices in 2016 was based on research findings that showed evidence of the steady effectiveness of ePortfolios during the past decade (AAC&U, 2008; Eynon & Gambino, 2017; Kuh, 2008; Watson et al., 2016). The list of the eleven high-impact practices, which was updated in 2016 to include the ePortfolio, is presented in Table 1.
These impactful educational practices are built into the course design and are scheduled in a timeframe to allow for ongoing collaboration and frequent feedback. The essence of an ePortfolio, or its core value, is in the learners’ ability to reflect on their learning history to date, thus justifying its positioning among the impactful instructional practices. An ePortfolio as a capstone project can then be considered more than solely an educational practice that is of high impact for the students. These ePortfolio projects can integrate other high-impact educational practices, which, as Kuh (2008) has suggested, require not only time and effort on the part of the students, but also decision-making and personal investment in each of the tasks. He adds that these practices strengthen intellectual and practical skills, deepen personal and social responsibility, and provide practice for integrative and applied learning, as exemplified in a culminating reflective capstone project experience.

**Capstone Project**

As a capstone project, ePortfolios have been tested, and research results show their positive impact for students beyond the duration of their educational journey (Kuh, 2008). Their educational value lies in the process that students experience during their completion. Some critics argue that there must be accountability for quality of design and layout, not just academic standards of composition. They are concerned that students may submit a substandard product. Literature shows that these projects, when properly implemented, make it possible for students to show evidence of their learning; instructors to connect with the students, and their learning artifacts; and for students to collaborate, interact, and offer feedback to their peers (Kuh, 2008).
Conclusion
Although the Weebly technology played a significant role in my first ePortfolio as a terminal project, the development of an ePortfolio, as suggested by Barrett (2010), involves more than simply choosing a certain platform, as emphasis ought to be placed on the learning process. These processes of learning, as described by Bates and Poole (2003), must be the primary focus when attending to matters related to technological expansion in higher education. As a technology-mediated learning tool, eportfolios are now considered a high-impact instructional practice, and a powerful pedagogy that fosters active learning, learner engagement, and the process of reflection. As a technology, the ePortfolio is becoming an exemplar for connectivity and interaction in global education (Batson, 2018).

About the Author
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References


Do Students Use Their ePortfolios After Graduation?  
A Pilot Study of Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Authors: Heather Stuart, Megan Haskins, and Lucas Adelino
Review Editor: Connie Rothwell

Introduction
The use of ePortfolios to support student learning and professional development during their academic experience has been well documented (Miller & Morgaine, 2009; Penny Light, Chen, & Ittelson, 2012; Watson, Kuh, Rhodes, Penny Light, & Chen, 2016). In addition to providing students with the opportunity to synthesize their experiences, students can use ePortfolios to communicate their skills and abilities during job and graduate school search processes. Studies analyzing employer perceptions of ePortfolios generally show positive (Hart Research Associates, 2013) or moderately positive (Leahy & Filiatraut, 2017) responses, sometimes tempered by employers’ lack of familiarity with the concept or the technology (Yu, 2012).

Portfolios are especially relevant in light of a rapidly changing professional environment. Jobs are no longer lifelong commitments; students entering the job market today are expected to work at several organizations as they progress in their careers. Chen (2009) argues that this high volume of transitions places greater responsibility on individuals to develop and maintain a curated record of their experiences. In this manner, ePortfolios are documents of lifelong and life-wide learning, and their benefits extend beyond the scope of undergraduate or graduate education.

Cambridge (2010) presents an overview of three large-scale projects that worked with ePortfolios beyond the scope of academic institutions. Though these projects show how ePortfolios can help individuals manage transitions throughout their lives, none of the three focuses on the use of ePortfolios by higher education students after their graduation. This pilot study aims to fill this gap by analyzing how Auburn University students perceive ePortfolios and how some of those students use ePortfolios after graduation.

Institutional Context
In order to understand how and why we conducted this pilot study, some background information about our institutional context is important. The ePortfolio Project at Auburn University is a campus-wide initiative that supports students as they create outward-facing, professional, integrative ePortfolios. Across
departments and programs, our office helps students create ePortfolios that meet four learning outcomes: critical thinking through reflection, technical competency, visual literacy, and effective communication. While the office offers several ways to directly support students through workshops and online materials, the majority of our work is collaborating with faculty to help them think about how to integrate ePortfolios into courses and curricula. Faculty and staff who decide to teach ePortfolios can opt to participate in the cohort, a type of learning community, where they can access resources and support from our office.

As we continue to implement the initiative, we prioritize flexibility and student ownership in our practice and programs. For example, the curriculum map and type of ePortfolio may vary from one department to the next, and students can choose which platform they use to create the ePortfolio. For more information about the initiative and case studies from specific departments, see Bartlett, Stuart, Owensby, and Davis (2016).

**Methods**

The research design for this study followed a mixed-methods approach, which allowed us to analyze both a Likert scale and open-ended sections of a student survey, as well as triangulate the results of the analysis.

**Student Survey**

We collected the data through a survey link sent via Qualtrics to students who we thought might have encountered ePortfolios, either in their courses or directly through our office. These students met at least one of the following criteria: graduated from a cohort program between August 2012-May 2018, attended ePortfolio workshops, nominated for an ePortfolio award, held a position as an ePortfolio Ambassador, or worked as a writing center consultant. A total of 6,357 students were contacted and 682 students completed the survey, a response rate of 10.7%. Of those students, 248 included a working link to their ePortfolio.

The survey asked students to include a link to their ePortfolio, provide general contact information, indicate if they were willing to be contacted in the future, and provide researchers permission to access academic and demographic data, all of which were optional. Students also answered a series of Likert scale and open-ended questions focused on how they used or planned to use their ePortfolio following graduation.

**Data Collection**

The Likert scale section of the survey was comprised of five items, all optional. Each item included five response options, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Between
496-497 students responded to each item. The five Likert items students were asked include:
1. The process of creating an ePortfolio helped me think about what I wanted to do after graduation.
2. I used or plan to use my ePortfolio while looking for a job or applying to graduate school.
3. Creating an ePortfolio helped me see connections among my experiences.
4. Creating an ePortfolio helped me explain my interests and skills.
5. I have evidence my ePortfolio helped me secure a position or admission to a graduate program.

Items 1 and 2 focused on the ePortfolio as a process. Items 3 and 4 focused on the ePortfolio as a product. Lastly, item 5 focused on ePortfolio use after graduation. If students selected “agree” or “strongly agree” on this final item, they were prompted to respond to an optional open-ended follow-up question. Sixty-nine students responded to the open-ended question:

**What is the evidence your ePortfolio helped you secure a position or admission to a graduate program?**

**Data Analysis**

Simple descriptive statistics, aided by Microsoft Excel, were used for analyzing the distribution of responses to the Likert scale items. For the open-ended question, our analysis was informed by Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). All three researchers coded the data, which was done in three steps. First, each researcher independently used open coding to become familiarized with the data set and draw a set of preliminary themes. Axial coding was then used to look for connections, similarities, recurrence, and relationships of causality between the individually derived themes. This culminated in the first version of our codebook. Lastly, over three in-person meetings, the researchers refined the codebook, using constant comparison (Glaser, 1965) to ensure that it accurately represented the data set. At the end of the process, there were eight codes and 100% agreement among the three researchers.

**Results**

The responses to the Likert scale items are indicated in the graphs below:

![Figure 1. Results for the question “The process of creating an ePortfolio helped me think about what I wanted to do after graduation.”](image1.png)

![Figure 2. Results for the question “I used or plan to use my ePortfolio while looking for a job or applying to graduate school.”](image2.png)

![Figure 3. Results for the question “Creating an ePortfolio helped me see connections among my experiences.”](image3.png)
Analysis of the open-ended question yielded eight codes, which describe how students reported using their ePortfolios after graduation and what they consider evidence of successful ePortfolio use. The codes and their distribution are represented in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hired</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Value</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring Process Implicit</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring Process Explicit</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Process</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracked Views</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Distribution of Qualitative Codes

It is worth noting that multiple codes could be assigned to a single response. As a result, the sum of “Usage” in the table above goes over 100%. Below is a brief description of the codes, followed by examples of responses they describe.

- **Hired** describes responses where students state that getting a job or being accepted to a graduate program is the evidence of successful ePortfolio use.
  - Example: “I sent mails to professors with a link to my ePortfolio and I finally got a fully funded offer from Penn State.”

- **General Value** includes comments about the general benefits of ePortfolios, such as helping students organize their work, showcase their experiences, or articulate their professional identities.
  - Example: “It’s helped me showcase my work.”

- **Hiring Process Implicit** describes comments that report positive responses from hiring committee members, without mentioning the ePortfolio as a deciding factor for their selection.
  - Example: “Positive reviews from all who I interviewed with. Easy to view and share around the office.”

- **Hiring Process Explicit** describes responses in which students’ ePortfolios were singled out by their hiring committees as the reason for their selection.
  - Example: “[My employers] stated that my ePortfolio was the strongest that they had seen, and that is the main reason that they felt comfortable with giving me the higher offer.”

- **Search Process** includes comments about ePortfolios being used in a job search, without mentioning their reception by prospective employers or admissions officers.
  - Example: “I submitted my ePortfolio as the main way to share my work for job applications.”

- **Tracked Views** describes responses in which students report tracking the page views of their ePortfolios.
  - Example: “In Google Analytics, I saw numerous visits to my online portfolio from the institution that ended up hiring me.”

- **URL** includes comments in which students posted the links to their ePortfolios.

- **N/A** describes any other comments that could not be grouped under the other codes. Often, these comments were too short or worded imprecisely. Categorizing comments such as “interview” or “it helps me to get a summer internship” would require making judgment calls about what students might have wanted to say or assumptions on grammatical mistakes, which we sought to avoid.

### Discussion

Student responses indicate that they find value in both the process of creating an ePortfolio and the use of ePortfolios in their career or...
graduate school pursuits. The process of creating an ePortfolio requires students to reflect on their curricular and co-curricular experiences, synthesize those experiences into visual and written reflections, and package that content on a website. This process is complex and requires significant critical thinking from students. The student responses indicate that this process helped them see connectedness between their experiences (73%). Students also indicated agreement that creating an ePortfolio helped them explain their interests and skills (82%). The understanding that students see value in the process of creating an ePortfolio emphasizes that educators should pay attention to how ePortfolios are being created, and not just on the finished product. One student clearly articulates this by focusing on the value of the process in providing a clear representation of their learning process for a professional context, stating:

“[My ePortfolio] allowed me to explain my role and thought process behind each piece, which I would not have been able to do if I merely sent [employers] a couple sample files. It also allowed me to communicate my identity as a professional in a way a resume and cover letter cannot.”

In addition to seeing the value of the process of creating an ePortfolio, students also identified value post-graduation. Sixty-four percent of students agreed that ePortfolios helped them think about what they wanted to do after graduation. Students are able to more clearly articulate their goals and market themselves for a specific audience because of the thinking that goes into an ePortfolio. One student cites the ePortfolio’s value in capturing their abilities, stating: “The hiring manager...felt confident offering me a position...because the portfolio so comprehensively explained my skill set, qualifications, and goals.” Since students see the value of the ePortfolio, many (69%) agreed that they will use or have used the ePortfolio to seek a job or apply for graduate school. One student articulated the evidence of their ePortfolio use, stating: “I was offered significantly more than I had originally been told [because] my ePortfolio was the strongest that they had seen.”

The distribution of the qualitative codes gives us additional clues about what students consider evidence of successful ePortfolio use. “Hired” was the most frequent code (39%), suggesting that, for most students, getting a job or being accepted to a graduate program is the strongest indication that their ePortfolios were valuable. Receiving positive responses from admissions officers or prospective employers is also considered evidence, as demonstrated by “Hiring Process Implicit” being among the most used codes (23%). Furthermore, the rate of use of the “General Value” code (23%) lends further proof that students deem the process of creating an ePortfolio valuable.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The results of this study indicate that students see that they are better equipped to identify and articulate their own skills, experiences and knowledge when they complete ePortfolios. Students also see positive results when they use their ePortfolios in the job or graduate school markets. When introducing ePortfolios to students, we often hear questions about the value or return on time and energy investment. Prior to this study, our responses focused largely on anecdotal evidence that lacked the impact needed to convince students to commit to the process of creating an ePortfolio. However, this research project helped produce numerical and testimonial data that support our assertion that ePortfolios are worth the effort on the part of students.

While this study provides compelling information, we are interested in gathering more data to better clarify how students are using their ePortfolios after graduation. While many students cited employment or positive conversations with committees focused on their ePortfolios, we seek to better understand what students view as evidence of ePortfolio use after graduation. For instance, how did students share their ePortfolio with committee members? We are also interested in if and how students continue
to use their ePortfolio after obtaining their first job after graduation. Do they continue to update and share their ePortfolio as a networking or promotion tool? If so, in what ways does the ePortfolio change as their careers progress? These questions will allow us to better understand how students use their ePortfolios in the future. This understanding can inform the ways in which we discuss and teach ePortfolios to students, and findings may also better inform how students market their ePortfolios to career and graduate school contacts.

About the Authors

Heather Stuart is the Senior Program Administrator for the Office of University Writing at Auburn University. In her current role she provides support for students by facilitating workshops, teaching classes, creating resources, advising student leaders, and supervising graduate students. She received her M.Ed. in Administration of Higher Education.

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Lucas Adelino is a Program Assistant for the ePortfolio Project at Auburn University. In this position, he works with students through a variety of workshops, in-class presentations, and programs such as the eportfolio Open Studio. His research interests include educational technology, self-directed learning, and second language acquisition. He will graduate in the Spring of 2020 with his M.S. in Adult Education and plans to further his graduate studies in the field of Linguistics.

References


As ePortfolio practitioners, it is easy to tout the virtues of ePortfolios. We all know that ePortfolios provide opportunities to reflect on and demonstrate our learning and our expertise. As ePortfolio practitioners, we have no problem instructing and guiding students in the development of their portfolios. But many of us do not practice what we preach. The authors of this paper were members of AAEEBL’s 2017/18 “Out of Practice” cohort, a group designed to encourage and support practitioners in the development of their portfolios. The group also sought to learn from our own experiences of creating a portfolio for particular audiences. This paper will describe how developing and reflecting on our own portfolios with others allowed us to build bridges with other practitioners, faculty, students, and our professional identities. In this article, the authors describe the audiences they sought to connect with, share the design of their ePortfolios, describe their experiences creating their ePortfolios, and share the lessons learned in this process.

As ePortfolio practitioners, we believe that using ePortfolios is one of the best pedagogical and extra-curricular practices for our students. ePortfolios provide opportunities for students to reflect on and demonstrate their learning. Students can use ePortfolios to facilitate their learning and provide information about themselves and what they know to a variety of audiences. Faculty and academic professionals can also use ePortfolios to reflect on their own learning and demonstrate their competencies. We believe ePortfolios are good for students, ourselves, and our colleagues!

However, many of us do not lead by example. During our presentation on this topic at the 2018 AAEEBL Conference, a show of hands revealed that less than a 1/2 had an ePortfolio and of that, only 1/3 updated and maintained their ePortfolios regularly. Modelling and demonstrating the behaviors we want to see is not only common sense but is also well researched (Yaffe & Kark, 2011). How do we expect our students and colleagues to test the riches that an ePortfolio practice can offer if we do not do it ourselves?

In 2011, a group of ePortfolio professionals decided to support each other in either creating or updating our ePortfolios. We agreed to meet by phone once a month and send each other links to our ePortfolios for critique and discussion. We called ourselves “Out of Practice” as we were certainly out of practice in maintaining ePortfolios. In that first year, we met with some success. All but one of our members created a portfolio. We presented what we had learned in making our ePortfolios at the AAEEBL conference in 2012. Many of us in the original group kept up with our ePortfolios, but many of us fell back onto old habits—spreading the word about the wonders of ePortfolios, but neglecting to maintain our own.

At the AACU ePortfolio Forum in 2018, “Out of Practice” was revived. Two of the original
members, Gail Ring and Candyce Reynolds, participated again and were joined by ten other colleagues from across the country who were also eager to explore their own use of ePortfolios and get support from one another.

**Out of Practice (OOP) Group Process**
Part of the purpose of OOP was to help hold one another accountable. As professionals, we are all busy, and like our students, we had difficulty making time to work on our ePortfolios. We agreed to “meet” every two weeks via conference call or video conferencing. Each time we met, we agreed to complete certain tasks. In essence, we created assignments for ourselves much like we do for our students.

We focused on the following topics throughout the time we met:

- Technology choices
- Defining the audience and purpose for our individual portfolios, including but not limited to
  - Life-wide or comprehensive
  - Promotion and tenure
- Identifying categories to showcase in our portfolios, including but not limited to
  - Teaching/Research/Service
  - Expertise/ Consulting/ Clients
- Identifying specific accomplishments with categories, including but not limited to
  - Conference presentations
  - Publications
- Creating content for our ePortfolios, including but not limited to
  - Reflective essays
  - Photos

After we had completed these tasks, we divided into teams of two or three and began to critique one another’s work. We decided to make this an iterative process and receive feedback, make improvements and meet again.

**The Results**
Ultimately, seven members completed the whole process. Five of us are authors of this article. We represent a diverse group of professionals. Some of us are faculty members who use ePortfolios in our teaching. Some are academic professionals who work with faculty and/or students to help create ePortfolios. One of our members is a current student and another is leader in an ePortfolio software company. We weren’t all able to meet every time, but we kept in touch, did our assignments and were all actively engaged in the feedback process at the end. We each made decisions about the platform we would use to create our ePortfolios, determined our audience, and developed content relevant to that audience.

We were proud and happy to present the results of our OOP experience at the annual AAEEBL conference in July 2018. We focused on providing an overview of decisions and experiences and shared the lessons learned from participating in OOP and from creating and maintaining our ePortfolios. Below, you will find a summary of each members’ results.

**Theresa Conefrey, faculty member, Santa Clara University**
Hi Everyone, I’m Theresa Conefrey and I’m a serial ePortfolio starter!
At my institution, we’ve gone through three platforms and I’ve started multiple ePortfolios in all of them but not completed any of them, until now. ePortfolios have been slow to take off at Santa Clara, marked by changing champions and platforms. Some faculty in some courses have tried them for a while in select courses, but very few have stuck with them over time. The introductory writing courses in LEAD, the learning community for first-generation students, is one exception. For more than five years, despite changes in platforms and people, this program has required all students to create an ePortfolio to demonstrate their progress in their first college writing course.

As for me, I was smitten as soon as I learned of the potential of ePortfolios to enable students to integrate their learning and to become intentional life-long learners. Over the years, I’ve been gradually implementing them in all my courses and I’ve been working diligently and persistently to encourage colleagues to give them a try in their classes also. Recently, with internal funding, I managed to persuade some colleagues to join an ePortfolio faculty learning community (FLC), where we met regularly and
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Building Bridges: Creating Connections by Building Our Portfolios
Authors: Candyce Reynolds, Gail Ring, Theresa Confrey, Allie Davidson, and Heather Stuart

built our campus resources. We are also in the process of implementing ePortfolios in our new neuroscience major, and so they are poised to finally take off in a specific program, where the plan is to employ ePortfolio pedagogy throughout a student’s academic career in both lower and upper division courses.

But none of us had completed an ePortfolio. No one in any of the ePortfolio initiatives that I organized or participated in was using them for their own personal learning. ePortfolios were a tool we thought would be beneficial for our students. That is until I heard about OOPs and decided that it was time to put into practice what I’d been preaching. After joining this group, I was finally motivated to complete one of my many incomplete ePortfolio efforts. This community was fabulous. We kept each other accountable throughout the months of creating our sites and by the time of our panel presentation, we all had completed our ePortfolios.

We met virtually every 2-3 weeks using Zoom and Google hangouts, and our virtual meetings worked well. Occasionally, we had difficulties with time zone confusion and unanticipated commitments, but we stayed in touch, kept one another accountable, and made it work.

In the early weeks, we talked about the purpose of our ePortfolios, our platform choices, what to include, and whom we saw as our main audience. Our final products varied, with different platforms, different purposes and different artifacts depending on whom we had identified as our audience. I wanted my ePortfolio to serve as both an example to show students and a professional development tool that I could share with colleagues and use for myself to keep track of my learning.

What was most helpful to me was our sharing our ePortfolios with one another and receiving feedback from the group. The feedback was encouraging and motivating, and we all made changes and improvements to our ePortfolios as a result.

Lessons learned:

First, building an ePortfolio is hard. It involves a significant amount of metacognitive work. Self-regulation is involved too as creating the ePortfolio requires consistent and persistent effort over time. There are fiddly technical frustrations, no matter what the platform, when you can’t get a picture in exactly the right size or location, you forget to save your work or don’t save it correctly, or you can’t get the ePortfolio to look the way you envision it.

Second, writing for multiple audiences is difficult. What I might initially want to create to show to my students is not necessarily what I’d be comfortable sharing with colleagues. In creating the ePortfolio, one creates a digital persona, and the persona I showcase to my first-year students is not necessarily the same one that I would want to portray to my seasoned colleagues. In addition, what might be interesting to my colleagues might not be accessible to my students.

Third, collecting photos is useful. I would advise collecting significantly more graphics than you could possibly need so that you have sufficient choice. The most engaging ePortfolios are visually interesting and photos work well to engage the viewer. Of course, all graphics have to be purposeful. I realized that some of my initial choices were merely decorative or were possibly misleading and so I had to delete them and search for alternatives. For the final version, I used only photos that I had taken and suggest that this is a good practice to avoid problems with usage rights.

Finally, creating community is invaluable. In our group, we encouraged one another to keep up our efforts and gained from one another’s invaluable feedback.

Allie Davidson, campus ePortfolio professional, Carleton University

I am one of the newbies to the Out of Practice group. I have been working in the ePortfolio field for the past few years, and since I first
started, I have attempted to create an ePortfolio a few different times. Prior to getting involved with Out of Practice, something always seemed to get in the way of putting the final touches on my portfolio. I found it difficult to prioritize my portfolio because it was a personal project, and so it was easy to put on the back burner while I dealt with the usual busyness at work. And if I am being completely honest with myself, I was also anxious about the idea of sharing my portfolio publically. My role at Carleton University is to support instructors using ePortfolio in their teaching. I have been dubbed the ePortfolio “guru” and “expert” by colleagues and, therefore, as a newer professional who is all too familiar with imposter syndrome, the prospect of creating and sharing a portfolio was an intimidating prospect. The doubting voice in my head was saying, “a portfolio ‘expert’ with a bad portfolio, what could be more indicative that you don’t belong in this job?” My worst nightmares would surely be realized as soon as I hit the “share” button: my fraud status would finally be unveiled to the world!

Well, maybe I wasn’t thinking as dramatically as that, but the reality was that the anxiety I felt around publishing a portfolio was enough of a barrier for me to not get it done. Despite my anxieties, I knew that creating a portfolio would be a useful professional development exercise and would add an extra layer of authenticity to the ePortfolio work that I do. Cue: the Out of Practice group. When I first heard about the group, I jumped at the opportunity to get involved. I knew I needed the extra motivation to complete my portfolio, and I figured I would be in good company with other ePortfolio practitioners who had struggled, for one reason or another, to build their own portfolios.

At the start of the Out of Practice process, we each identified the audience and purpose of our portfolio. I decided to create a professional portfolio—something I could share on my departmental contact page or email signature in case instructors wanted to learn a bit about what I do before meeting me. I can say now though, in retrospect, the far more important audience of my portfolio was myself—I built a stronger professional identity through creating my portfolio and participating in the Out of Practice group.

Lessons learned

First, creating and sharing a portfolio can be a useful professional development exercise. Going through the process of creating my portfolio helped me feel proud of who I am professionally and of the accomplishments I’d had so far in my career. Creating my portfolio made my professional accomplishments more visible to me (SHOCKER, I know) and in turn, I could not help but accept that I’ve done some pretty good work and that I actually do belong in my profession and role. Additionally, receiving friendly and supportive feedback from other ePortfolio “experts” and “gurus” on my portfolio was validating. Turns out, sharing my portfolio with others did not “out” me as a complete failure after all. Second, your portfolio can include both professional and personal information. In my case, I was unsure if I should dedicate a space in my portfolio to my horsemanship. Even though it is a huge part of my life, I wondered if it belonged in a professional portfolio. I shared this question with my Out of Practice members and the answer was YES! We talked over a few options of how I might include it in my portfolio, and eventually, I decided to place it front and center on the first page of my portfolio. I also decided, in an effort to integrate the personal and professional aspects of my life in my portfolio, to connect my horsemanship approach to my teaching philosophy. This ended up being a fun and revealing exercise for me, which emphasized the influence that the non-professional aspects of my life have on every aspect of my life, including my work. Third, feedback on your portfolio is important and can be transformative. One of the pieces of feedback I received from an Out of Practice peer was that I used the word “work” a lot when I described what I do. She did not bring this up as a criticism; instead she mentioned it because
she noticed a disconnect between the way that I acted in person (actually in our case, it was over Google hangouts) and the way that I represented myself as an “employee doing work for a job” in my portfolio. This observation was tremendously insightful for me. I know that the language is indicative of our attitudes and behaviors and so since this observation, I have been cognizant of the way I frame what I do and how I introduce myself to others (in person and in text).

Finally, community is important. Without the support, accountability, and feedback I received from being involved with Out of Practice, I would not have finished my portfolio and I would still feel pangs of anxiety at the thought of hitting the “share” button on my portfolio.

**Link to my ePortfolio** (Click to view the webpage)

Heather Stuart, campus ePortfolio professional, Auburn University

I was excited to join this group because creating an ePortfolio would give me an opportunity to refine my online presence and professional identity. The timing was ideal because I plan to participate in a professional job search over the next few years. I imagined that my goals and process would mirror what students at our institution experience, which would inform my practices as an educator. Participating in OOP was informative and enjoyable. During the process I learned more about myself as a professional, and I experienced a few surprises along the way.

**Lessons Learned**

Before joining the group, I already had a draft of an ePortfolio from 2015. However, even though the reflective writing was compelling, the structure, design, and content were dated. It was clear that I would need to create a new one. Creating two versions would be useful because I could use both in future workshops or programs. By the end of the semester, my goal was to create a new draft of my ePortfolio with at least two pages of reflective writing and artifacts.

I began the process by researching my audience on job search websites. I specifically looked at the language used to describe the responsibilities and requirements of these positions. This helped me determine which experiences to include and how to organize my artifacts. After determining that I should include my administrative and teaching experiences, especially my work with the ePortfolio Project, I set to work finding artifacts. In my first portfolio iteration I was only able to identify a few artifacts, and I needed to enlist the help of my friends and coworkers to take photos and create additional artifacts. This time, I had the opposite problem. Over the last few years, I’ve created dozens of workshops, programs, materials, and resources. It took me a few weeks to sort through my work, and I finally identified a few photos, worksheets, and lesson plans that exemplified my range of skills and knowledge.

After identifying artifacts, I started to write my reflections. This part of the process took the longest. Because I wanted this experience to inform the way I teach ePortfolios to others, whenever possible I attempted to use the worksheets and handouts from the ePortfolio Project. The most helpful one for me was the reflective writing handout because the prompts allowed me think about the range of ways I could talk about my experiences. I spent a lot of time drafting and redrafting my text. The most challenging part was trying to condense my writing into small, manageable sections. Because I’ve been with the Office of University Writing for six years, I had quite a few experiences to discuss! However, I suspected my audience wouldn’t spend a lot of time exploring my pages, so I intentionally condensed pages and pages of text down to paragraphs of text.

Once I was confident that I had a solid foundation of artifacts and reflective writing, I created a new website in Wix. The ePortfolio Project supports three platforms—Wix, Weebly, and WordPress—and in order to refine my technical expertise I knew I wanted to use one of these three. Wix is the most popular platform at our institution, which is why I decided to select that one over the others.

I took a few weeks to carefully consider my design. I wanted to select a template that was
clean, professional, and inviting. One of the most noticeable changes between my old and new ePortfolio was the design. My old ePortfolio had a gray background with black text, which wasn’t very easy to read. In this version, I kept the gray background, but I added white text boxes so the reflective writing was easier to read. I also added teal accents to each of my pages to create a sense of visual cohesion between pages and sections. I also added more images showcasing my work with students as seen in Figures 1 and 2. In addition to providing compelling visuals, these images further reinforced my passion for working with students. I was also especially aware of basic design principles and ethical literacy. Because we encourage students to use design principles such as contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity, I wanted to demonstrate those in my ePortfolio. I also received permission from all students who were featured in my ePortfolio as a way to model ethical practices.

As the semester came to a close, I continued to revise and refine my work. Reflecting on the experience, I most remember the iterative nature of the process. The description above may seem linear, but I was constantly moving between different parts of my ePortfolio. For example, I would revisit position descriptions as I was writing my reflections, or I would eliminate an artifact after I discovered that it didn’t connect to my overall message.

The other participants in the group provided helpful feedback as well. Specifically, they encouraged me to add more visual elements and organize the reflective writing into sections with headers. These changes made my ePortfolio visually compelling and easier to read.

Creating an ePortfolio for multiple audiences was a constant challenge. My primary audience was higher education professionals, and I created the ePortfolio with them in mind. However, I also knew that I would be working with students and faculty who may want to see my ePortfolio. As a result, I tried to make my experiences accessible to them as well. This was an unexpected challenge because I thought my audience expectations would align better. For example, I wanted to write deep, meaningful reflections to model best practices for students, but writing about my experiences in a way that appealed to students would often require me to represent my experiences in a way that didn’t always align with my professional identity. This is something that I will continue to consider moving forward.

For some reason, I also anticipated that the process would be easier because of my experience with ePortfolios. I thought that I would be able to move through these steps more quickly. This project took a lot more time than I had anticipated, and while I think I understood the process, executing the ePortfolio was still difficult. This has informed the way I work with students. Even though a student may seem bright and enthusiastic, the process can still be challenging and frustrating.

Moving forward, I’m going to add pages about my assessment and research experiences. I think these additional pages will reinforce my message while
maintaining a simple and clear page structure. I’m also going to send my link to potential employers and professionals in the field for additional feedback so their comments will continue to help me shape and refine my ePortfolio.

Candyce Reynolds, faculty member, Portland State University

Like Theresa, I too am a serial ePortfolio starter. I have over 50 ePortfolios—some more completed than others. I like to try new platforms and see how they work. I use ePortfolios a lot in the courses I teach, and I convinced my colleagues to use ePortfolios as the culminating experience for students in our program and to use the results for our program assessment. As a self-proclaimed ePortfolio evangelist, I often feel guilty that I don’t have my own completed, coherent ePortfolio to show students and my colleagues.

I have learned over time as I have worked on these various ePortfolios that defining my audience is very important. I have struggled in the past with trying to create an ePortfolio that will meet the needs or expectations of a variety of stakeholders. I found that this didn’t work very well. Instead, the ePortfolio ended up being this static representation of many parts of my academic and personal life that was disjointed. These portfolios did not tell a story, but instead represented disconnected pieces across the tabs of the website.

For the ePortfolio that I chose to create for OOP, I focused on creating an ePortfolio for my students. I wanted my students be able to understand a bit about me, especially about my beliefs and attitudes about education and how I approached teaching. As a faculty member in a program that required an in-depth, integrative ePortfolio, I also wanted to model the creation of a coherent ePortfolio. I work in an adult education graduate program, and we spend a great deal of time having students think and write about their guiding principles as adult educators. We tell them that this serves as the anchor for their ePortfolios. I wanted to show them that my ePortfolio uses my guiding principles as the anchor for my story also.

I found the accountability of OOP to be tantamount to my success in building and maintaining (still!) my ePortfolio. In my weekly to-do-list, I have had “work on ePortfolio” in my overall weekly goals for years now. During my time in OOP, I was able to check off “work on ePortfolio” on my to-do-list each week. I actually scheduled time to make sure I was ready for the discussion and showcasing of my work for the OOP meeting. I also found the feedback from my small group of critical friends to be invaluable. They had questions for me that allowed me to get out of myself and see how my ePortfolio might be viewed by others, especially students. Their questions pointed to the questions that my students might also have.

Lessons learned

Creating a coherent ePortfolio is actually more difficult and complex than I imagined. It is easy enough to gather some artifacts and put them together in an ePortfolio but to carefully think about my audience and consider what they would like to know and what I wanted to share was challenging. As I began to consider what I might want to share, my “education” page became my “schooling” page as I wanted to explore what I had learned from my education beyond where I had gone to college and graduate school. It is now my favorite page of my ePortfolio.

Portland State University adopted PebblePad as its ePortfolio platform and I had been asking students to use it in my classes for several years. I knew the basics but not much beyond that. Creating my own portfolio pushed me to learn how to make my ePortfolio look better and have better navigability.

I set the goal of my ePortfolio to communicate with students. I wanted them to know me better and understand my background and perspective. This has been successful. I have had more students come during office hours and we have had deeper and more meaningful conversations. They refer to things they have read on
my ePortfolio. They ask questions about what they have read. They share similar experiences. I have felt vulnerable in sharing parts of myself with my students, but ultimately I have been rewarded with more engaged learning experiences for me and my students.

Part of the vulnerability came in completing an assignment that is part of the program’s ePortfolio expectations. We ask them to engage in highly personal reflective practice to identify their guiding principles as a professional. I did the same assignment and wrote my own guiding principles. We ask students to make their statements illustrative and personal. In writing my own in this way, students get to know me but also have a model (albeit imperfect) of what we, as a program, want to see. Students have told me that they appreciate that I have done a difficult assignment also. We have also seen the quality of assignments go up. Figure 3 is my current Guiding Principles page.

Given my poor history of maintaining an ePortfolio, it is clear that having an authentic audience is good. At the beginning of each term, I review my ePortfolio and update it. I know my students will look at it. I am grateful to have the motivation to reflect on my ongoing work. It is good for them and good for me!

Gail Ring, Director of Operations, PebblePad

As one of the original members of the OOP group, I benefited greatly from participating in this group over the years. ePortfolio evangelists like those of us in OOP talk at great length about the benefits of portfolios for reflection, authentic assessment and evidencing student work, but as has already mentioned, we sometimes don’t practice what we preach.

My ePortfolio journey began years ago (1995) when my undergraduate students created portfolios as a way to reflect on and track their growth and understanding over time. The “ah-ha” moment that I had with this group of students and what turned me into a life-long portfolio evangelist and portfolio creator was when students thanked me for the portfolio assignment. Never before had I been thanked for an assignment! But these students thanked me for the opportunity to look back at their work, essentially making their learning visible to them. From those early days trying to motivate my students, I realized that I needed to model this practice if I was to one, have empathy for the challenge of reflecting on work and putting into words what I learned, struggled with or accomplished and two, provide a model of what a portfolio is for my students.

Like Theresa and Candyce, I created a lot of portfolios over the years and with each portfolio came a new level of learning and understanding. But in addition to creating my own portfolio(s), my career essentially has been to implement portfolio programs. This began with the class I taught as a graduate student, which led to a College of Education-wide requirement for students to demonstrate teaching competencies, to my work at Clemson University where ePortfolios and students’ evidence and reflections in them were used to assess both the student’s understanding of the general education competencies and the
program as a whole. Skip ahead a few years, my ePortfolio evangelism has not wavered. In fact, in my current position as Director of Learning Partnerships for PebblePad North America, my work includes facilitating strong implementations of PebblePad at partner institutions. Much of this work includes applying ePortfolio pedagogies that support reflection, integrative learning and assessment for learning.

Lessons Learned

My own portfolio journey over the years has been informed by the work that I do as well as the collaborations with my OOP colleagues. Here are a few of the lessons I learned.

First, and it has been mentioned a few times already but bears repeating, accountability is a motivator and a teacher. In the first OOP group, I was partnered with Wende Morgaine, our then fearless and peerless leader. Those of you that have had the great fortune to work with Wende know that she is highly organized and will keep you organized. Knowing that I had regular sessions where we discussed our portfolios motivated me to regularly update and add to my portfolio. These conversations also led to my strong conviction that a portfolio needs conversation and feedback leading to the second lesson learned.

Feedback improves. I know this sounds like a no-brainer, but in many cases a portfolio is simply a showcase where one puts stuff and says: “Ta-Da!!! Here is me!” I contend for a portfolio to become what AAC&U has identified as the 11th High Impact Practice (with the important caveat “when done well”), it needs feedback and iteration. My ePortfolio changed in very positive and profound ways after my conversations with Wende in that first OOP group. I carefully revised my navigation, streamlined content and added narration where needed. I saw that with my students’ portfolios as well. What began as an academic list of accomplishments became richer and fuller after our conversations and/or their conversations with peers. They began to see for example that extracurricular experiences demonstrated skills and learning after what we called our “ePortology” sessions. Their portfolios, like mine, began to present a complete person with vast experiences. This leads to my third lesson learned.

In this recent OOP group, when we reviewed one another’s portfolios, one of the parts that many of us struggled with was how personal our portfolios should be. We wondered if there is room for a personal space in a portfolio. One of the group mentioned my portfolio from the last OOP group and said it had a nice balance of the personal and professional and felt that side provided insight to me a “whole-person.” And quite frankly she was disappointed that the personal page had been eliminated from my current portfolio. That comment reminded me of my job interview at Clemson where one of my interviewers mentioned my personal page and my love of travel and dogs and felt he knew me after reading my “whole” portfolio. So the answer to the question posed above is yes, I think there is!!

Finally, participating in the OOP group has had such a profound impact on me both personally—I have made great friends as a result of this group—and enriched me professionally over the years. I think any campus with a portfolio program or considering implementing one can benefit from a local Out of Practice group. I believe when implemented well, the portfolio initiative can be the connective tissue that supports and binds learner-centered practices throughout campuses. I have seen this first-hand at Clemson where our portfolio assessment each summer was a cross-disciplinary space that led to collaborations in research and teaching across campus. The opportunity to escape the silo that so often exists on campuses today to share our work and our ideas on learning and teaching as represented in our portfolios could have a transformative effect not only on the individual but the system at large.

Back to that accountability thing, now that my portfolio is going live...again...I better get busy!!

Link to my portfolio (Click to view the webpage)
Conclusion

Creating and maintaining ePortfolios are more complex than it looks on the surface. In the process of working in OOP, we all discovered the importance of an authentic audience as well as the importance of creating a cohesive message. We all valued the opportunity to reflect on our work. Most importantly, we all valued the critical and supportive eyes of our colleagues. We found that the reflection on our work became deeper and more nuanced with the feedback we received. Reynolds and Patton (2014) contend that reflection can be seen as a social activity and that we have not truly reflected until we have gotten feedback from others.

We hope that in reading this, we have inspired you to consider starting your own Out of Practice group on your campus or perhaps with colleagues at a distance. As Gail said, the opportunity to escape our silos and share and learn from one another not only changes us as individuals but could have a transformative impact on our campuses’ communities.

About the Authors

Candyce Reynolds is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy in the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA. She has published broadly in higher education books and journals and has made presentations at a variety of venues throughout the USA and internationally. She is co-author of a book with Judy Patton entitled Leveraging the ePortfolio for Integrative Learning: A Guidebook of Classroom Practices for Transforming Student Learning published by Stylus Publishing in 2014. A forthcoming book, Web U: A Student Guide for Creating an Authentic Digital Identity will be released in 2020.

Gail Ring is a great believer in the power of portfolios for learning and has been using them in her teaching and research since her graduate work at the University of Florida where she earned her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction. Formerly the Director of the ePortfolio Program at Clemson University, Gail joined the PebblePad team in 2015 because she wanted the opportunity to share her knowledge and passion for the transformational nature of portfolios with a broader audience.

Theresa Conefrey obtained her B.A. in German and Linguistics with a minor in EFL/ESL. After teaching English in Germany, Denmark, Finland, Japan, and Spain, she returned to the UK to obtain a PGCE in high school teaching before heading overseas again. After graduating from the University of Illinois with an MATESL and a Ph.D. from the Institute of Communications Research, she taught at the University of Hawaii, Hilo, before accepting a position at Santa Clara University, where she teaches oral and written communication courses and carries out research on multifarious aspects of ePortfolio implementation and usage. Through her research, she hopes to help all learners reach their full potential.
Allie Davidson is an Educational Technology Development Coordinator at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. Allie consults with instructors on their use of educational technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences in the classroom and is involved in the design, development, facilitation, and implementation of ePortfolio projects and initiatives at Carleton.

Heather Stuart is the Senior Program Administrator for the Office of University Writing at Auburn University. In her current role she provides support for students by facilitating workshops, teaching classes, creating resources, advising student leaders, and supervising graduate students. She received her M.Ed. in Administration of Higher Education.

References
The ePortfolio Bridge to Professional Proficiency: An Evaluation

Authors: Barbara Anne Nicolls and Jane Wright
Review Editor: Heather Caldwell

Abstract
This paper evaluates the Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) proficiency ePortfolio at an English Higher Education Institute as a competency-based assessment tool that enables linking theory to practice. Student ePortfolios created since 2012 were examined for the different types of connections the SCPHN ePortfolio afforded making competency-based assessment reliable and valid. We discuss how reflections structured as a spinal column conceptual model enable students to develop self-awareness and critical thinking skills as they move from being Novice to Proficient Health Visitors and School Nurses. The reflections, which describe practice experiences, are analyzed and evaluated with reference to theory, past experience, research for application, and improvement in future practice. The ePortfolio space affords discussion between students and their Practice Teachers making reflective practice a shared activity. The findings suggest the value of the ePortfolio as a bridging environment to demonstrate student development and growth as future Specialist Community Public Health Nurses (SCPHN) and for the PTs and the course team to follow their journey as guides by the side.

Background to ePortfolios
Many educators see digital or electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) as vital to learning, teaching, and assessment (Karsten, 2012; Richardson et al., 2012; Goodyear et al., 2013); they are digital presentations of students’ experiences, achievements, and aspirations for a particular audience. Additionally, this use of ePortfolios incorporates information technology, thus aligning the educational process in professional degree programs to 21st-century teaching and learning scholarship. Furthermore, the value of promoting ePortfolios in education is their facilitation for accountability and autonomy mainly because they are believed to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning needs, as well as the direction, progress, and quality of that learning (Harris et al., 2001; Joyce, 2005; Butler et al., 2006; Garrett & Jackson, 2006; Pincombe et al., 2010; Garrett et al., 2013; Karsten, 2012).

Different sectors, disciplines, and professional bodies have their own approaches to using ePortfolios (Brandes & Boskic, 2008). For example, in academia, ePortfolios are commonly used as a tool to display achievements and evidence of mastery; use of ePortfolios has been advocated to demonstrate nursing student accomplishments as well as to document program and course outcomes (Wassef et al., 2012) while health professionals are increasingly adopting this relatively new “tool” to store their certificates, achievements, and employment records, a process welcomed by nursing regulation bodies such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) in the UK. The opportunity for students to document, analyze, and evaluate
their clinical practice experience in an ePortfolio appears to provide a more utilitarian framework to bridge theory and practice, and highlight learning in practice as a key role in nursing professional development (Jensen & Saylor, 1994; Landers, 2000). Thus, ePortfolios are a natural candidate to hold supporting evidence relevant to learning and achievement which demonstrates competencies (Barrett, 2007).

**Competency-based Assessment in Nursing and ePortfolios**

Competence in nursing can be described as the acquisition of knowledge, the development of psychomotor skills, and the ability to apply the knowledge and skills appropriately in a given situation (Benner, 1984; McCready, 2007; Decker et al., 2008). It is perceived as a common language to demonstrate the complex integration of knowledge including professional judgment, skills, values, and attitude (Fukada, 2018); it is also an intelligent practical skillset that integrates different factors and issues in complex ways, specific to each circumstance. Learning this skillset, therefore, helps the clinician become one who not only “knows that” but “knows how”—“the ability to do a particular activity to a prescribed standard” rather than simply demonstrate what they know (Hargraves, 2000, p. 286).

Moreover, Benner’s (1984) “Stages of Clinical Competence” clarify that in the acquisition and development of a skill, a nurse passes through five levels of proficiency: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. This framework appears to be ideally suited to nurses’ ePortfolio development because proficiency at each of Benner’s five levels of competence can be established by evaluating students’ outcomes at each stage of their learning journey. When ePortfolios demonstrate the progress and development of students over a specific period, they are referred to as developmental ePortfolios (Wassef et al., 2012). The ePortfolio, therefore, illustrates a changing landscape on the students’ learning journey due to the changes in attitudes, knowledge acquisition, and skills developed while connecting them to their future professions as they transition from reliance on abstract principles as a novice, to the use of past concrete experience as an expert. Therefore, as Harris et al. (2001) claim, the ePortfolio is an excellent choice for demonstrating nursing competence as the content demonstrates growth and personal development in care situations.

**Reflection in ePortfolios**

ePortfolios provide a platform for students to demonstrate evidence of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and content understanding through reflective learning and critical analysis of both theory and practice while also promoting personal and professional development planning (Murray & Currant, 2006; Joyce, 2005; Challis, 1999). In other words, ePortfolios act as an online learning space that encourages integrative learning fostering student reflection on academic learning, personal and professional goals, and career planning to increase student performance, retention, and engagement with their own learning behavior and development processes. Moores and Parks (2010) explain that this is due to an ePortfolio’s strong capacity to enable a user to rethink and analyze situations through reflective practice and learning from experience. Therefore, reflection and self-assessment of performance are fundamental elements of modern competency-based assessment and essential elements in the remediation of unsatisfactory performance (Diller & Phelps, 2008; Kimatian & Lloyd, 2008).

**Aim of This Paper**

Although the use of paper as well as ePortfolios to assess the clinical competence of nurses, midwives, health visitors, and other health care professionals is now common practice across the UK (Rane-Szostack & Robertson, 1996; Sorrell et al., 1997), it is unclear to what extent they provide educators and employers with real insight into practitioners’ clinical competence (Finlay, Maughan, & Webster, 1998). Therefore, this paper evaluates the efficacy of the Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN)
competency-based ePortfolio as a platform for students to demonstrate achievement of the SCPHN Standards of Proficiency as they transform from Novices to Proficient professionals.

The Bucks Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) Course

The Bucks SCPHN Program is approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the independent professional regulator for nurses and midwives in the UK. The one-year program prepares competent NMC Registered Nurses (RNs) and Midwives for the SCPHN Qualification evidenced by the achievement of the Standards of Proficiency (SoP) for Specialist Community Public Health Nurses. SCPHN Nurses work in the community and may be required to make decisions on their community’s behalf (NMC, 2004). This means that working in the community requires specialist knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are distinct from working in the hospital setting. The SCPHN Program also incorporates learning and development tasks that enable students to apply the three elements of the triangle of success: knowledge, skills, and attitude (Figure 1).

During the program, student Health Visitors (HVs) and School Nurses (SNs) collaborate with their Practice Teachers (PTs) responsible for promoting and developing the students’ professional role, knowledge, and assessment of their proficiency to practice through a three-stage program of learning: observation, supported practice, and supervision. The goal is for student HVs and SNs to demonstrate competence in three domains: Search for Health Needs, Stimulation of Awareness of Health Needs, and Facilitation of Health-Enhancing Activities. The ePortfolio is the vehicle for students to:

1. record their development from Novice to Proficient HVs and SNs based on Benner’s five-stage competency model measured against the SCPHN SoP,
2. demonstrate self-awareness of their strengths and limitations at each stage and develop an action plan to fill the gaps as formative assessment,
3. demonstrate their reflective practice, and
4. demonstrate attainment of Proficient competency at the end of the course through summative assessment.

Embedding the ePortfolio in the SCPHN curriculum also demonstrates the course team’s recognition that incorporating technology into the learning environment improves the student’s transition into clinical practice (Giddens, Lauzon-Clabo, Jeffries, McQuade-Jones, & Ryan, 2014).

Table 1. Structure of the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure – Semester One (September - December)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday &amp; Tuesday in University</td>
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<td>Wednesday &amp; Thursday in practice</td>
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<td>Friday independent study day</td>
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<th>Structure – Semester Two (January - August)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday &amp; Tuesday in practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday &amp; Thursday in University</td>
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<td>Friday independent study day</td>
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Figure 1. Adaptation of the Triangle of Success.
The Specialist Community Public Health Nursing Competency ePortfolio

Competency-based assessment is a well-established feature of ePortfolio use in the health professions (Tetzlaff, 2009). Therefore, the SCPHN ePortfolio is a competency-based ePortfolio used in conjunction with the SCPHN curriculum to provide for appropriate assessment of clinical performance. Since 2012, there have been six cohorts using Google Sites to develop competency ePortfolios. A web-based application such as Google Sites, when used as an ePortfolio, has been described in the literature as an innovative evaluation tool for competency assessment (Carraccio & Englander, 2010).

The SCPHN ePortfolio can be described as a “spinal column” (Figure 2) approach to developing placement portfolios as conceptualized by Webb et al. (2002, p. 897); they are structured around practice competencies or learning outcomes with evidence demonstrating how each competence has been met. Unlike the other models, i.e., the “shopping trolley” and the “toast rack” ePortfolios, the “spinal column” ePortfolio promotes the demonstration of explicit evidence of learning and competence through students’ reflections on the evidence of competence.

Therefore, the SCPHN ePortfolio is a dynamic record of learning comprising a purposeful collection of evidence demonstrating students’ learning journeys and their changing abilities over time (Butler et al., 2006) (Figure 3). It can be typified as:

- “developmental,” “learning,” or “process” ePortfolio (Oermann, 2002) as it is a collection of work showing a learning journey;
- “showcase portfolio” as it shows achievements, both at study and in practice; and
- “assessment portfolio” prepared specifically for assessment or evaluative purposes (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Zeichner & Wray, 2001).

Growth and Development Towards Professionalism on the SCPHN ePortfolio

Bridge: Findings and Discussion

The findings are presented according to the content of the SCPHN ePortfolio to evaluate its efficacy in promoting learning through analysis and evaluation of diverse experiences as the students are transformed from Novice to Proficient HVs or SNs.

Content of SCPHN ePortfolio

All SCPHN participants from 2013 - 2018 successfully created ePortfolios and documented evidence of growth and development on their journey from Novice to Proficient Specialist Community Public Health Nurses; this demonstrated their achievement of the program learning outcomes mapped to the NMC...
SoPs. SCPHN students present examples of their work, as well as their reflective statements, which demonstrate the value of their work examples and demonstrate their professional growth and development from Novice to Proficient HVs and SNs. Their self-reflections are based on the analysis and synthesis of thought and action, encouraging active involvement and a sense of ownership in the development of the ePortfolio and of their own learning.

The Checklist (Figure 4) included in each ePortfolio shows that students assume ownership of their ePortfolios, are accountable for their claims contained within, and take responsibility for their own learning (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991; Wenzel, Briggs, & Puryear, 1998) by cross-referencing them to their own activity logs and assessments. The Checklist resembles a template for students to structure the presentation of evidence and to organize artifacts which helps to streamline the assessment process and to limit excessive evidence collection, a benefit afforded by the ePortfolio (Australian Flexible Learning Framework [ALFL], 2009). It highlights the systematic and organizational aspects of the ePortfolio which are characteristics of online portfolios (Campbell, Cignetti, Melenyzer, Nettles, & Wyman, 2006). The completeness of evidence rather than convergence is also ensured by the spinal column type ePortfolio.

Structure of the SCPHN ePortfolio
The affordance of the spinal column type structure of the SCPHN ePortfolio is that all entries on every page of the ePortfolio provide evidence to demonstrate the students’ incremental growth and development from Novice to Proficient professionals (Benner, 1984). Further, the SCPHN ePortfolio acts as a platform for learning with “opportunities for students to make connections among coursework, extracurricular involvement, and placement experiences” (Chen & Black, 2010, p. 1) promoting the crossing of contexts and making connections beyond the classroom and formal academic environment (Johnsen, 2012) while engendering deep and meaningful learning (Tiwari & Tang, 2003). Clearly, the landscape on the bridge changes as the students travel from the Novice to Proficient stages during the learning journey. The student SCPHNs’ journey along the ePortfolio bridge portrays “a dynamic record of growth and professional change” (Price, 1994, p.35) presented in their own voice.

Reflections in the SCPHN ePortfolio
As a Novice HV or SN, students first conduct the SWOT Assessment to critically self-evaluate their strengths and limitations. This leads to learning how to set goals and create a plan to achieve them. Titchen (2003) describes self-assessment as a form of reflective practice which is highly personal and is designed to help students continue their learning journey while Olina and Sullivan (2004) argue that it also helps students to better understand the learning goals and take greater responsibility for their own learning. As such, the PT uses students’ accounts to facilitate a growing insight into self- and professional practice. As Knieper (2002) explains, the PT can help students to understand not only what happened but also what they learned about their knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Table 1). Thus,
### Assessment Reports:

PT and student to discuss and score progress at the end of each semester:

**Score: AT THIS STAGE OF THE COURSE:**
- 0 = Making little progress (THIS REQUIRES AN ACTION PLAN)
- 1 = Requiring improvement
- 2 = Developing some understanding
- 3 = Making good progress
- 4 = Making excellent progress

#### Semester One

**Knowledge**

**Student’s comments and score**

“I feel I have made good progress in all of these fields (Figure 2). I am aware of the National and local policies especially for safeguarding. I have completed my community health profile which has enabled me to help assess the needs of the community and assisted in screening at a local primary school.” (Score 3)

**PT’s comments and score**

“Student is becoming aware of the policies regarding SN and is exploring her contribution to them and the impact they have on the wider school community. Student SN’s reflection on the completed community profile has given Student SN new skills in health surveillance and assessment. Student SN’s participation in the National Screening Program giving her a better understanding of the national policies driving this work.” (Score 3)

**Skills**

**Student’s comments and score**

“I have been working towards a balance between my theoretical and practice work and despite the challenges I am pleased that I am making progress. My communication skills are improving but I need to improve in some areas especially in 1:1 sessions with students.” (Score 3)

**PT’s comments and score**

“Communication with young people has been a challenge but Student SN has grown in confidence in communicating with this client group... Student has demonstrated the ability to practice independently and the importance of accurate, timely record keeping. This is helping her to be more organized.” (Score 4)

**Attitudes**

**Student’s comments and score**

“I have developed good working relationships with other professionals and with families especially vulnerable families which has required my communication skills to be improved. Attending core group meetings has made me confident in working independently and maintained my professionalism according to the NMC code of conduct.” (Score 3)

**PT’s comments and score**

“Student has demonstrated empathy and confidence when dealing with clients, sensitivity to the diverse community in a school setting. Student SN is aware that learning has no limits and is always pushing herself and creating opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills.” (Score 4)

#### Semester Two

**Knowledge**

**Student’s comments and score**

“I am now more confident in performing in a safeguarding environment as I performed well in the Safeguarding exam. It demonstrates I can apply national, local and NHS Trust polices to my practice. I can now competently complete health assessments independently.” (Score 4)

**PT’s comments and score**

“Student’s knowledge about child protection issues and related risks has developed which has boosted her confidence in working with vulnerable groups due to her insight into her awareness of the risks.” (Score 4)

**Skills**

**Student’s comments and score**

“I continue to reflect in practice which enables me to not only question my practice but to offer suggestions and improve on areas that I feel there is need. For example, prioritizing my workload or improving delivery of teaching sessions. My communication skills have improved due to the drop-in sessions with young people school and conversations with other members of the multi-disciplinary team especially through conference and core group meetings.” (Score 3)

**PT’s comments and score**

“Student is now writing child protection reports and looked after children health assessments independently but needs to ensure that she pays attention to the finer details and include all information relevant to the child.” (Score 3)

**Attitudes**

**Student’s comments and score**

“Whilst being aware of confidential and consent issues, it may be necessary that I have to act as an advocate for a child/young person in particular during child protection conferences.” (Score 3)

**PT’s comments and score**

“Student understands issues of equity and is developing and awareness of ethics issues.” (Score 4)

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**Table 2: Assessment of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes.**

The AAEEBL ePortfolio Review
ePortfolio use facilitates students assuming more responsibility for their learning (Hillyer & Ley, 1996). Students record their felt experiences in the Regular Reflections (Figure 4) at the time they occur, and they are then analyzed and evaluated at a later time, thus promoting learning (Boud & Walker, 1998). The narratives usually document the students’ stage on the Novice to Expert model and emphasize the acquisition of professional competencies through reflection on selected experiences. Students revisit their practice experiences where they have contributed ideas or actions that may have influenced the outcome of care given (Cotton, 2001) and analyze the situation and their involvement in it and identify improvements or changes that can impact future performance as a solo activity as shown in the quote below.

*Reflecting on the situation I considered various explanations for the mother’s lack of emotional warmth on the day of the review...My initial feeling was that Lisa’s mother’s parenting style lent towards authoritarian. This theory categorizes parenting styles according to their levels of demandingness and responsiveness into four groups: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive or neglectful (Baumrind, 1967)... What happened could have been influenced by my experience with the previous client who was very animated in communicating. Another potential problem is the projection of one’s own feelings, about the situation or client. While reflecting on Lisa and her mother I wondered if she had unrealistic expectations of Lisa and was now feeling disappointed. This led me to consider if my interpretation could be influenced by how I might feel in her circumstances” (student HV).

These narratives generally form the basis of the reflections for the “Achievement of SoP Principles and Domains” (Table 3).

| Domain A | Search for Health Needs |
| Domain B | Stimulation of Awareness of Health Needs Standards of Proficiency |
| Domain C | Influence on Policies Affecting Health Enabling Effective Community Development |
| Domain D | Facilitation of Health Enhancing Activities |
| Reflections | Reflection on Public Health Placements |
| Reflections | Reflection on Alternative Experience |
| Reflections | Reflection on Nurse Prescribing |

Table 3. Achievement of Standards of Proficiency Principles and Domains.

The SoP reflections show the process of individual transformations on the ePortfolio bridge as each student attempts to make meaning from their experiences. This experiential learning is therefore individualistic and underpinned by constructivist theory which is learner-centered (Stefani, Mason, & Pegler, 2007). There is evidence of students’ attempts to triangulate each practice experience with theory, past experience, and research. These reflections also demonstrate students’ critical and analytical abilities as well as the connection to relevant policies, guidelines, models, and frameworks. Each SoP domain (A, B, C, & D) is hyperlinked to assessed reflections on various areas of practice as shown in the ePortfolio menu (Figure 4). One of the basic functions of hyperlinks, a functionality afforded by the Web 2.0 technology, is to enable readers to move from one page to another. Moreover, the competence to create hyperlinks within the ePortfolio in itself is a technological achievement for students. Although the process of reflection originates as a solo activity, it becomes social through a feedback loop as the PTs comment on the students’ reflections. Table 1 is evidence that discussion and dialogue between student SCPHNs and PTs
are deemed crucial for learning and development. Moreover, as the narrative below shows, the dialogues occur in a wider context involving other professionals who are involved in the experience. This reveals that SCPHN students are members of a Community of Practice, a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Following the group reflection, with experienced SCPHNs, it was decided that . . . as speculation and assumptions have no place in the write up of an assessment it is important to gain an understanding of what is going on in the relationship. This is best done by . . . (student SN).

Dialogues with the PTs and the professionals mentioned above are organized reflections that enable students to not only learn from their experiences but also help to identify the need for specific learning before further experience is required (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985) to move from Novice to Expert professional. Clearly, the SCPHN ePortfolio bridge is a discursive space underpinned by social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), which proposes that knowledge is constructed through dialogue and interactions with others, i.e. the students analyze experiences and illustrate growth within the context of SCPHN SoPs. According to Britzman (2003), this discursive space connects what students can do and what is possible for them in practice, which Yancy (2009) explains as the temporal connections from past to present to future and relationship connections as the quote below shows.

This past year has been filled with both highs and lows. The academic work has been intense and at times challenging . . . . Practice placement has been a steep learning curve . . . . I feel that I have grown both personally and professionally. I have had the pleasure of both having a knowledgeable and supportive community practice teacher and of meeting a variety of interesting and welcoming colleagues, who have motivated me when I was struggling with the course requirements and commitments. (student HV at end of course)

These connections highlight the process-orientated role of the ePortfolio in personal and professional growth through connections with theory, with PTs, and with themselves. In Brown’s (1995) words, “it is a collection of evidence, which demonstrates the continuing acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes, understanding and achievements. It is both retrospective and prospective, as well as reflecting the current stage of development and activity of the individual” (p. 3). The SCPHN ePortfolio, therefore, attests to a student’s achievement and personal and professional development by providing critical analysis of the journey to professionalism.

Employed as a pedagogical approach for deep and meaningful learning that extends beyond the classroom rather than just as a technological tool, the SCPHN ePortfolio enables documenting and integrating deep learning, as well as developing lifelong, self-reflective learners (Matthews-DeNatale, 2014). It can be visualised as a “process of reflecting on the growth of one’s knowledge and capabilities over time with an emphasis on providing structured time and space for learners to consider and document the process of their learning and not just the product” (Light, Chen, & Ittleson, 2012, p. 11).

Nurse educators who are exploring the potential of ePortfolios as a valuable tool to facilitate the integration of theory and practice in the process of preparing competent nurses (Hopkins, 2006; McCready, 2007; Karsten, 2012) have the answer in the SCPHN ePortfolio. The ePortfolio is a virtual space where students can present a compilation of their work, reflect, and demonstrate clinical competence that bridges the theoretical knowledge they gain on campus with the practical knowledge they gain during placements (McCready, 2007). Students can construct meaning from this exercise, both in respect to personal and professional growth, and through linking theory and practice (Coffey, 2005; Duncan-Pitt & Sutherland, 2006).
The findings can be summarized as follows:

1. **Student self-belief**: Their behavior and approach to learning during the course will transform them from Novice to Proficient Specialist Community Nurses in the workplace.

2. **Student ownership of learning**: Personalized, individualized approaches to choice of content, process, and self-assessment of that learning.

3. **Student accountability**: Students demonstrate awareness of the impact of their decisions, actions on the thinking, behavior, or decisions of others—and vice versa.

4. **Student voice**: Reflections on the SoP in the ePortfolio are students’ engaged and authentic ways of voicing their learning.

5. **Pedagogy that is learner-centric**: Student involvement in the entire process of ePortfolio development.

In Yancy’s (2001) words, the SCPHN ePortfolio brings together “visibility, process and reflection as students chart and interpret their own learning” (p.19). Students take responsibility for explaining their actions and for self-assessment identifying their strengths and weaknesses as they transform from Novices to Advanced Beginners to Competent and finally to Proficient professionals. Moreover, they evaluate their performances and demonstrate that learning is making meaning by connecting academic, personal, and professional knowledge both on and away from campus using dialogue and discussion to plan and set goals for future learning.

Therefore, as Murray et al. (2006) confirm the SCPHN ePortfolio presents students’ own selection of evidence linked to competence and knowledge acquisition while encouraging reflective learning (Joyce, 2005) and promotes personal and professional development planning (Challis, 1999) through connections. The SCPHN ePortfolio validates the perception that it is a virtual space which shows authentic, professional growth associated with practices and outcomes over time (Abrami & Barret, 2005).

**Conclusion and Next Steps**

This paper has discussed how the SCPHN ePortfolio, used incrementally from the students’ entry point to their gaining registration with the NMC as professional Health Visitors and School Nurses, is an innovative and effective vehicle for students not only to display practice experiences and acquisition of knowledge and skills but also to demonstrate their application in practice to demonstrate clinical competence. It highlights how the ePortfolio’s spinal column type structure helps students connect not only theoretical learning with practice but also with professional networks including their PTs and course teams while focusing on the professional Standards of Proficiency to achieve registration. It is the discursive space that affords students the opportunity to analyze and illustrate growth within the discourse and standards of the community of professionals. The SCPHN ePortfolio is, therefore, “the product, created by the learner, containing a collection of digital artefacts articulating experiences, achievements and learning” (JISC, 2008, p.6) as well as reflections, feedback, etc., which presents a selected audience with evidence of an individual’s learning and/or ability (Sutherland & Powell, 2007). The scaffolded process approach appears to be an effective way for PTs and course teams to identify students’ needs in a timely manner, which could be one reason for the high success rates of the course.

Moreover, the newly qualified and NMC registered Health Visitors and School Nurses can continue to use ePortfolios to document their journey from proficient to expert professionals, thus supporting life-wide and lifelong learning. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards technology to evidence learning is value-added to their profession as it becomes an asset to their role as PTs themselves.

Looking forward, although the spinal column ePortfolio is fit for the purpose of competency-based assessment, the cake mix would be more suitable for re-validating (NMC, 2019) the professional status with the NMC. There is integration or blending of the parts—the separate ingredients—to form a whole ePortfolio cake. Users are expected to
provide evidence to demonstrate that they have achieved the objectives of revalidation through reflective commentaries addressing analytical criteria. In short, whilst there is a collection of individual ingredients, the product at the end of the process is more than the sum of the parts. The course team intends to incorporate this in future courses to prepare the SCPHN students for the future.

About Authors

Barbara Nicolls is a Senior Lecturer at the Learning Development Unit at Buckinghamshire New University. Barbara’s dissertation on the role of academic staff in ensuring effective eportfolio development and implementation was the start of her journey leading eportfolio embedding in a variety of curricula. She has showcased student outcomes at international eportfolio conferences and in publications.

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Jane has been working with Barbara Nicolls on building an ePortfolio for the Community Nurses since 2012 as she believes in the role of technology in enhancing reflection and lifelong learning. More specifically, she has a keen interest in ensuring that students are fit for specialist practice and are able to apply learning to the practice setting.

References


Call For Papers

The Association for Authentic, Experiential and Evidence-Based Learning (AAEEBL) ePortfolio Review (AePR) invites you to submit articles and reports covering the broad area of ePortfolio use. We publish articles about pedagogy, research, technical, and organizational issues bi-annually. Our readership includes ePortfolio practitioners, administrators, and students. AePR is an online journal serving the needs of the global ePortfolio community and seeks to promote portfolio learning as a major way to transform higher education.

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The AAEEBL ePortfolio Review
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Cindy is a Full Professor at Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston, MA, in the Business Management department. She received her Ph.D. in Technology Management at Indiana State University, her Masters in Technical & Professional Communication from East Carolina University and her Baccalaureate Degree in English from Hilbert College. She also just recently completed a Certicate in Facility Management. Her full biography can be found at www.cindypstevens.com. She is also the Executive Co-Editor of AePR, AAEEBL's Online Journal.

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Adam Wear currently serves as the e-Portfolio Coordinator for Career Connect at UNT and is a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at UNT. He has served in higher education since 2007, and at UNT since 2013. During that time, he has worked as an Instructional Support Technician, an Instructional Consultant, and taught both online and face to face. He holds a BS in English, Education, and Education Psychology from Mississippi State University and a Master’s in English Literature from the University of Alabama. He lives near Denton with his wife and three sons and hopes to practice and promote an attitude of servant leadership in higher education.

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Alison Carson is a Professor of Psychology at Manhattanville College. There she has also served as the ePortfolio Initiative Director from 2010-2014, and she now serves as the Atlas Assistant Director and teaches in the Manhattanville Atlas program, an ePortfolio-based program supporting reflective and integrative practices around transitions into, out of, and during college. She will be starting as the Associate Provost for Academic Innovation and Design Thinking in July 2019.

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Connie Rothwell

Connie Rothwell began her interest in portfolio work early in her career and continued to develop her practice and understanding of portfolios and eportfolios through her own writing courses, including the capstone Senior Portfolio in the Honors Program at the University of North Carolina Charlotte. She has taught a variety of writing intensive courses, served as eportfolio consultant to faculty, and held administrative positions as Assistant Director of Rhetoric and Writing, Director of Advantage, Director of the University Honors Program, and interim Director of Communication across the Curriculum. Recently retired from teaching, she continues to write, study, and promote eportfolio work.

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