

UCBA

ePortfolio Handbook: for instructors and staff members

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MY EPORTFOLIO

My learning, my process, my skills, my mastery





Preface

This handbook is intended to support faculty and staff who are considering creating an eportfolio. This handbook should help beginners get started. There is another version of the handbook with advice specifically for students.

More advanced users might benefit from forming communities of practice to support each other. We welcome suggestions for additions and changes. If you would like to contribute a topic to this handbook, please contact any of the members of the ePortfolio Learning Community.

This handbook is the result of the work done by the 2015-2016 ePortfolio Learning Community for our colleagues and students at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College. At our college, we do not use a single enterprise-wide eportfolio software package. We use free Web 2.0 platforms, and it is up to each instructor whether or not to use eportfolios.

ePortfolio Learning Community
March 2016

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As an instructor or staff member, how do I get started making an eportfolio?

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1. If you want help with the process, contact the Learning and Teaching Center to schedule a personal consultation to help you get started.
2. You might choose a single platform that you want students to use, or you can give them a choice of platform, such as WordPress, Weebly, Google Sites etc. See “What platform should I use to build an eportfolio” below.
3. Decide the purpose of the eportfolio. Do you want students to show the progress of their work over the course of the semester, or do you only want finished products that show mastery of skills and knowledge? See “What are the different kinds of eportfolios” below.
4. Based on the purpose of your eportfolio, decide what you want to put into your eportfolio. See “What can you put in it” below.
5. Create a shell for yourself, which means make the pages for the things that you think you would like students to include in their eportfolios. You might consider using dropdown menus to group items that are related, like process work grouped with the final product.
 - a. You might recommend a Welcome Page where students state the purpose of the eportfolio
 - b. You might recommend an About Page where students introduce themselves.
 - c. Decide how you want to incorporate reflection. You might consider having reflection throughout the portfolio, with reflections for each item. In addition, you might consider a Final Reflection page where students reflect on what they learned or realized from the process of making the eportfolio.
6. Make a “Class eportfolios” page where you put all the eportfolio site links for the class so that it is easier for you to find the eportfolios and it is easier for students to do Peer Reviews.
 - a. When you make the eportfolios, ask students to email the URL for their eportfolio site.
 - b. Cut and paste these URLs into your “Class eportfolios” page. If names are not clear from the URLs, you may want to include student names.
 - c. Alternatively, if you are familiar with Google Apps, you might consider creating a Google Form to which students submit their URLs, and then you have the list in a Google Sheet.
7. Put a link to your eportfolio page in the main menu of your Blackboard course for easy access to the sites from Blackboard.
8. In the first week of class, have a “Bring Your Own Device” Day or schedule a computer lab, to set up the basic shell of the eportfolio. This is not a waste of time! It really helps make the implementation of the eportfolio much easier.
9. Refer to the eportfolio frequently. Periodically, check to make sure that items are being added.
10. Schedule an eportfolio Peer Review in the middle of the semester, and a final eportfolio Peer Review at the end of the semester.
11. Assess the eportfolios with a rubric.

Best Practice Note: Students need clear explanations of the purpose and benefits in class, and the instructor needs to structure the process clearly in class. It is worthwhile to have a full class period dedicated to the first exposure to the eportfolio program so that there is plenty of help building the shell right at the beginning.

What platform should I use to build an eportfolio?

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An eportfolio is a pedagogical approach as much as an application of technology. When implementing eportfolios, the technology is among first decisions. ePortfolio technology provides a collaborative work space and online repository for learning artifacts. This technology allows students to create websites showcasing and reflecting on artifacts when the student has a particular purpose for the website. In addition, eportfolio technology provides rich aggregate data for institutional research. The technology can support many functions, but not all available platforms do every function equally well, or in the way that a campus may need that function to work. The technology choice should be well informed because that choice influences the outcome of the project. Here are the three that seem to fit our needs at UCBA best.

Google Sites

Recommended for: simple learning portfolios with graphics and text. Recommended for beginners.

Recommended templates: "Blank Template" then any of the "Solitude" templates are good.

Google Sites is a web page creation platform offered by Google as a collaboration tool (e.g. Wikis), where people can share files, engage in discussion blogs, or simply create their individual website. Google Sites is recommended as a basic eportfolio platform for beginners. It has a clean, basic look. The "Blank Template" has basic color choices and simple layout. The more complicated templates sometimes have complicated pre-filled sections that can be very cluttered. Be cautious about the template you choose! For example, "Classroom Site" might sound attractive, but it is cluttered and hard to work with. Google Sites is easy to view and use on multiple devices.

- This is a step-by-step [tutorial](#) on how to create a Google Sites eportfolio. In addition, some important recommendations are provided on the content, structure and design of eportfolio.
- This [video](#) also shows how to create a Google Sites eportfolio, accompanied with best practices.

Weebly

Recommended for: students who are not yet ready for Wordpress but who are ready for something slightly more complicated than Google Sites.

Recommended templates: choose "Site" then choose theme --> "Clean Lines" or "Brisk"

Weebly is a website building application which is fairly easy to negotiate. The templates are attractive, and it allows multi-media to be embedded fairly easily. The interface is a "drag and drop" style editing function, and it does allow drop down menus. One challenge of this site is that the functionality is a little more different than is comfortable when you move from a computer to a mobile device. However, it is easily viewable from all devices.

- Here is the Weebly getting started page: <https://hc.weebly.com/hc/en-us/sections/200354313-The-Essentials>
- Here is a nice video tutorial on how to get started: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7PjTgpgqn8>

WordPress

Recommended for: multi-media, sophisticated menus, robust privacy, tagging, blogging, social media embedding

Recommended “starting” templates: Big Brother, 2012, Lyretail

WordPress is one of the more popular website building applications available, and it has been around for a long time. It offers many templates, lots of design options, and allows embedding of multimedia. It also has robust privacy controls. The dashboard requires careful explanation and initial significant support. However, after the introductions, students seem to need minimal support. If you are an instructor, and you plan to use WordPress with your class, it would be best if you contacted someone who already has experience with the program to show you around the first time.

- Here is the WordPress support page: https://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress_Lessons
- Here is a simplified tutorial for Getting started with [WordPress](#)

What are the different kinds of eportfolios?

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The Learning eportfolio

The “learning eportfolio” described by [Zubizarreta \(2008\)](#) is an eportfolio that combines reflection, documentation, and collaboration to create a document that demonstrates learning over time. This type of eportfolio can also be called the “developmental eportfolio” since it shows how a student has developed over the term or degree program. The minimum functional expectations for a Learning eportfolio application include:

- accommodating multimedia,
- mapping accessible navigation among [artifacts](#) (Pima Community College), and
- sharing between primary users (students and teachers).

The lifetime expectancy of the platform should be fairly stable so that a student might continue to build this eportfolio during his or her career at the institution; but, for the purposes of a single course learning eportfolio, students might use a different platform for each class. For a learning eportfolio in a course, the instructor can assess the eportfolio and the artifacts with rubrics, no

formal analytics are required. Institutional assessment that involves courses across an institution probably requires a commercial platform with strong analytics.

The Professional eportfolio/Showcase eportfolio

Unlike the learning eportfolios, the professional eportfolio usually does not show before/after work that includes demonstrating growth over time. Instead, the professional eportfolio includes finished pieces that demonstrate mastery. A professional eportfolio allows the developer to present her intellectual and professional value while building social capital ([Stevens and Dunlop, 2012](#)). Beyond the functionality needed for a learning eportfolio, a professional eportfolio requires the ability to:

- customize the look, feel, and navigation of the published eportfolio;
- provide access to a variety of different audience members; as well as
- export and import the eportfolio materials into different digital environments.

Developers need to be able to distinguish themselves from one another in the same program and/or graduating class so that when they use the eportfolio on the job market, it helps them stand apart. If the professional eportfolio is to be useful beyond the graduation, the ability to share with multiple audiences is also critical for long term usage.

The Assessment eportfolio

A program can use a Learning eportfolio or a Professional eportfolio for course of program assessment. In some cases, a program might decide to dedicate the eportfolio assessment. In [Assessing Student Learning \(2009\)](#), Suskie offers a good list for understanding assessment eportfolios with an emphasis on having a clear set of learning objectives and/or evaluation criteria that the student meets through content/artifact selection and reflection. The eportfolio offers an opportunity to observe each student's attainment of curricular and other desired outcomes from courses and programs, offering a chance to grow and improve those outcomes. This assessment cycle may occur in a single course or in multi-year programs. Beyond the functional elements needed for a learning eportfolio, an assessment eportfolio's technology needs to facilitate:

- creating and communicating learning objectives and/or evaluation criteria, as well as feedback;
- storing, selecting, evaluating, and reflecting upon appropriate artifacts by the student;
- storing, retrieving and reporting on artifacts, reflections, and evaluations, over the individual, programmatic, and/or institutional assessment period(s)
- accessing, evaluating, and reporting by multiple users (e.g., student/author, faculty, assessment and/or outside evaluators).

Why not just use paper?

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Paper portfolios can still be useful. Some people still like to work on paper. Students may still use paper to design their eportfolios, make drawings, or draft their writing. Even if you are creating an eportfolio, you might still work in paper to create the products that you later upload. Sometimes, paper portfolios as a final product can be useful when the technology is not easily available. Some students may not be able to

work with the technology, and in these cases, they can still create a paper portfolio that can meet course requirements.

On the other hand, eportfolios help students develop technological literacies. They must make decisions not only about the content they create, but also about how to organize and present that content. In doing so, students must consider their audiences, their site's usability, navigability, and their central goals.

Another good reason to use eportfolios instead of paper is that, unlike paper, eportfolios accommodate all manner of digital multimedia (embedded videos, colors, audio, hyperlinks, and so on) which allow students more freedom for creative expression. Often, this leads to greater student investment in the work. Other advantages include portability (sites are accessible from everywhere), durability, and the opportunity for students to easily showcase their work to wider audiences (such as peers and employers). ePortfolios last longer than paper and can be modified and updated over time to better reflect students' current thinking.

For faculty, eportfolios streamline holistic assessment; eportfolios provide a snapshot of a student's work over time along with the student's reflection on the work they've done, what they've learned, and how they've learned it. They are also easier to share than paper-based eportfolios.

What can you put in it?

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A major difference between a paper portfolio and an eportfolio is the variety of evidence of learning and achievement that can be included. Because an eportfolio is a digital environment, it can include essays, videos, recordings, graphics, and anything else that can be linked or referenced. The flexibility offered by this variety allows students to demonstrate their achievements according to their strengths, create a nuanced digital identity, and explore the technological skills that are becoming increasingly expected in today's professional world.

text

As an eportfolio is frequently a place to present and/or document writing and reflection, text is usually part of an eportfolio in some way. Frequently, students can make choices about how they present their writing, but instructors also have preferences for how they want particular kinds of writing displayed. How text is utilized might also be impacted by whether or not the eportfolio is a *learning* eportfolio or a *professional/showcase* eportfolio.

images

There are many possibilities for the use of images in an eportfolio. Students might incorporate family photos, photos of a vacation, or even hand-drawn or computer generated art. Anime or scenes from a graphic novel might shed light on an important concept featured on a page or in a text discussion.

sound

Students have quite a number of choices for sound in terms of what they might build into their eportfolio. A student might utilize an audio file of a song or an interview with a researcher or

professional as part of their eportfolio. Musicians might want to share their own lyrics or music through sound files. A song could be shared from YouTube if it relates to the content of a page, or to a reflection. A student might also include audio reflections for either individual pieces or for the overall portfolio along with written reflections. There are many possibilities for using sound in an eportfolio.

video

Perhaps one of the most exciting possibilities for eportfolio is the opportunity to weave video clips into an academic discussion. For example, if a student were working on an ethnography project, they might include some clips from a videotaped interview with a family member sharing stories about the family history. A student might include a few answers from an interview with someone working in the career they hope to work in someday. In addition, clips from internet news stories or movies shared on the web could help lend context and dialogue to a complex argument. A student might also include video reflections for either individual pieces or for the overall portfolio along with written reflections. Video is one of the reasons eportfolio opens many new doors for students to express themselves and their academic work.

PowerPoint and other documents

PowerPoint files, pdf files, and other common document files can be uploaded into an eportfolio. If a student has great confidence in building a PowerPoint, that document might become integrated onto a page on their website, or a blog post, in order to better support a position or to provide more context for those who view their site. Generally, documents should be uploaded in pdf format. Documents should appear on the page and not require downloading.

links

Links are easily built into an eportfolio, and could provide a convenient portal to YouTube, an academic article, a website, or other web-based additions to their discussion or presentation.

widgets

Most eportfolio platforms allow the use of web widgets, or small software applications that connect to other content, for example a weather website or a social media website. A platform option such as WordPress contains many built-in choices for popular widgets, but more advanced users can integrate just about any web widget available into a website.

How is Reflection an essential part of an eportfolio?

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Reflection is an essential component of eportfolios as it shows the students' ability to think about their learning. The artifacts in the eportfolio serve as a physical representation of students' thinking and progress. This can help instructors with assessment and evaluation, and it also allows students to thoughtfully consider content, past and current skillsets, and future goals.

Showcase eportfolio reflections

Showcase eportfolios highlight the best work that students have done throughout the semester or project. The reflection acts a rationale for why the eportfolio proves mastery of the content.

Students may discuss how and why the artifacts show that they have accomplished their goals or outcomes.

Learning eportfolio reflections

Rather than highlighting the “best” or final product, the learning eportfolio documents the process that students have gone through in creating their work. It demonstrates learning with assignments as well as self-analysis of the students’ progression and development. This can be shown with reflective journals about their process, drafts of assignments, and revisions of these drafts.

Instructors: How do I make a good reflection prompt for my students?

You can consider including two kinds of reflections: short reflections before each artifact, and a longer overview reflection at the end of the course. For the short reflection, you can ask the following three scaffolding questions:

- 1) What did you do?
- 2) Why did you make those choices?
- 3) How did it turn out?

Here are some more in-depth questions you might consider:

- 1) How did this work change over time and how do those changes reflect a better understanding of course concepts?
- 2) (Make specific for your course If there aren't multiple drafts) How did previous work inform the choices you made for this work?
- 3) Outcomes: What specific learning outcomes for the course does this work demonstrate?

For the final overview in a learning eportfolio, you might consider posing these questions:

- 1) How would you like your reader to go through your eportfolio?
- 2) What would you like your reader to take away from reading your eportfolio?
- 3) How did you make choices about what to put into the eportfolio and how did you make the choices to group certain things together.
- 4) As you review your work in the course, what insights do you have about your learning?
- 5) How will you use what you learned in this course as you continue through your academic career?
- 6) How has putting the portfolio together helped you to demonstrate your mastery of the student learning outcomes for the course?

What do you do with an eportfolio?

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Give a final grade. An eportfolio can be essential to a student’s final grade. It is a compilation of all their work for the semester and demonstrates what they have learned and achieved. It is their personal learning record.

Make an argument for your progression through the class. An eportfolio shows how students have improved and the progress they have made in a particular course. It allows both the student and instructor to view the steps taken to accomplish the course goals. It reflects a student's personal growth and development.

Show it to an employer. An eportfolio lets future employers know that students have the skills and knowledge to be successful in their company or organization. It allows students to showcase projects that they're proud of, and at the same time, gives employers insight into their personality. ePortfolios are a concrete way to show strengths and achievements.

Show it to someone who is writing a recommendation for a student. Because the eportfolio is personalized and reflects a student's creativity, it would be beneficial to show it to someone who is writing a recommendation. It will give an instructor or other recommendation writer an understanding of how the student thinks and provides tangible evidence of the skills the student has acquired.

It is a snapshot of a student's evolving digital identity. Because an eportfolio is a living document, it is evidence of continuous personal development. It grows as the student grows.

Why are they useful to instructors and staff members?

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Makes assessment more accessible

An eportfolio provides an authentic formative and summative holistic assessment of students' performance and growth, making learning visible to both students and instructors. It also generates valuable data for course outcomes assessment. An eportfolio is a lens through which we can assess personal and academic development, in addition to integrative and academic knowledge, and career readiness.


Conveniently funnels everything to one location

Indeed, an eportfolio should be considered as a cohesive composition. The assembled selection of artifacts together with students' reflections on their learning are conveniently uploaded to one folder, making it easy to find, modify and post information in one place.

Fosters a different kind of engagement

ePortfolio, if used effectively, substantiates active learning through continuous reflection and self-assessment of the learning process. Students take ownership of their work by practicing essential skills such as planning, implementation, and revision, all of which enhance meaningful and long-term learning. ePortfolio also promotes creativity and synthesis skills, and invites students to interact with the course content, their peers and their instructors.

Facilitates peer review and group work



This is a noteworthy aspect of an eportfolio, because it enables students to step out of their comfort zone, and work collaboratively with their peers. These teamwork skills are required by most employers today. ePortfolio presents students with a useful opportunity to review each other's work, and provide constructive feedback and recommendations to their peers, through an already built peer review rubric. ePortfolio is also a safe space for dialogue, cooperative learning and collaborative projects and presentations.

Raises the audience stakes

ePortfolio as a social pedagogy tool can be used to produce desired outcomes required by a specific audience. For instance, for pre-service teachers, eportfolios can be implemented to create high stakes settings that replicate a position interview process.

The lonely writer is now a myth

ePortfolios enable students to situate themselves in a learning community, becoming writers who navigate the learning process, and value writing and learning more generally. Within their online learning environment, they make choices and decisions, usually influenced by their audience, on how to present their artifacts in a more cohesive and effective way.

Teaches digital literacy

The value added of an eportfolio above its paper-based equivalent is the information technology component, which, if not integrated, can be detrimental to our current student generation. Most eportfolio platforms offer a repository of technology tools and media that can be retrieved for student use. Such tools enhance student learning, spark their creativity and prepare them for a fast growing technological world.

It can show metacognitive processes

ePortfolio is a meaningful tool to promote metacognition among learners. Other than portraying artifacts and writing reflections, an overview of an eportfolio can reveal how students engage in a deeper metacognitive learning process. For example, a student can develop greater self-awareness of his or her writing process or how he or she thinks about creating the pieces in the eportfolio. This process is often involved in making choices, integration and organization of eportfolio content. Evidence of metacognition within eportfolio can be demonstrated in students' reflection on their learning activities and strategies. This is critical to students' metacognitive development and transfer of knowledge and skills.

What are the teaching and learning challenges?

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Resistance to the idea of eportfolios

Resistance to eportfolios generally occurs when it requires: 1) either changing established patterns in order to try something new or 2) because it may appear that the use of technology will

not render a positive improvement or outcome. Generally, those who don't like eportfolios feel that they don't enhance the educational experience. Sometimes it is hard to see a realistic and proven value to the apparent effort of eportfolio teaching. It might be worthwhile to talk with someone who uses eportfolios to get a fresh perspective. (See "Why are they useful to instructors" above).

For people who are resistant to the technology, it is important to have help from others who know the technology well. Instructors can find other colleagues who can walk them through the technology: if an instructor does not know someone else in their department using eportfolios, asking for help through the Learning and Teaching Center can connect you with a colleague who can help you. Students need clear explanations of the purpose and benefits in class, and the instructor needs to structure the process clearly in class. It is worthwhile to have a full class period dedicated to the first exposure to the eportfolio program so that there is plenty of help building the shell right at the beginning.

Technology Anxiety

The information age, with its vast array of hardware, software and interrelated networks, is well entrenched in our society. As prevalent as it is, there are still individuals feel anxious using it. Technology anxiety could be the result of not knowing how to use an application well enough to meet an expected goal or this anxiety could be associated with having a bad experience at some point in time that has created distrust and disillusionment. Moreover, people who are removed from a professional environment or academic setting for a period of time may find that they have fallen behind in current technology, and as a result, they may feel woefully inadequate.

Confidence, for both students and instructors, is vital to successful eportfolio implementation. Building confidence through the help of colleagues for instructors, and through the expertise of more technologically advanced students in the classroom, can help build the element of confidence needed for successfully adapting to eportfolio teaching and learning. A healthy digital discourse community should be fostered on campus to achieve eportfolio success.

Being anxious about anything is usually countered through carefully crafted support that provides individuals with the necessary tools they will need to be successful. The antidote to anxiety is to acquire the right training from the right people, who are reasonably accessible when needed, in order to strengthen confidence and performance. Please read on to find out who these people who can help are.

Where can I find support?

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Training includes not only group workshops, but documents and tutorials that can be viewed online, as well as an individual point person who is available on a regular basis until all have become thoroughly familiarized with the system. All three of the website building applications cited at the start of this Guidebook are free, and there are people on the UCBA campus who are experienced in their use.

- Students can get help with Weebly, WordPress, and Google Sites in the Writing and Study Skills Center.
- Instructors can contact the Learning and Teaching Center to get connected with experienced users who can help, or request the Learning and Teaching Center to offer a workshop in the application you are interested in.

Instructors: Your course might need to be redesigned for folio thinking

Certainly there is the chance that courses will have to undergo some revisions to fit into the eportfolio landscape. If there is reluctance to do so, it might be beneficial to find a colleague, (someone who is comfortable using eportfolios and wants to share their experiences) to showcase the advantages the system offers. Students could also be called upon to give input as to the benefits of using eportfolios. Furthermore, instructors may be reassured that using eportfolios is only an option. Each instructor can decide whether or not to adopt this system. The use of eportfolios is not required for instructors at UC Blue Ash College. If you are a student, and your instructor has required an eportfolio for the course you are in, give it a try; if it still creates problems for you, talk to your instructor to see if a paper portfolio might be better for you at this time.

Why are eportfolios useful to students? [back to TOC](#)

The use of eportfolios helps students understand the utility, power, and beauty of their voices. ePortfolios accomplish this in several ways:

- Students engage with a wider audience because their work is accessible on the web and so may be seen by peers, strangers, employers, and anyone interested in the content.
- Students can tap into an increased range of opportunities for self-expression because of the ability to use multimedia.
- Students can update and edit the eportfolios and can also see how their thinking has changed over time
- The eportfolio may travel with students across courses.
- It's visual and multimodal, so students can play to their areas of strength.
- eportfolios allow students a huge variety of ways to organize their work.

Why are they useful to employers? [back to TOC](#)

As a recent article in *Forbes* noted, employers are increasingly interested in seeing a digital *eportfolio* as opposed to a *résumé*. ([Craig 2015](#)). It has become commonplace for employers to search Internet sources for information on a prospective employee. Sources like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn constitute an “accidental eportfolio”. In the face of these digital footprints, which are often not a good measure or expression of one’s potential, it is therefore essential that students and faculty alike become skilled in presenting themselves professionally by reflecting on, constructing, and curating a digital identity. The eportfolio is the ideal space to facilitate this activity.

The knowledge, experience and literacy development afforded by eportfolio creation aids in identity formation and developing a sense of self as learner and future professional constructs a narrative of learning in the eportfolio (Belshaw 2012). Issues that are important to consider are how the process of building the eportfolio helps students reflect on their experiences, link their experiences, and construct an intentional scholarly and professional identity. Students can reflect on the ways their experiences contribute to their identity as students and professionals. Increasingly, that identity is a digital one.

ePortfolios demonstrate digital literacy and mastery of skills

Paul Gilster (1997) conceived of digital literacy as being about “mastering ideas, not keystrokes.” Digital literacy includes the ability to locate and access information, critically evaluate information and its sources, and build knowledge in the realm of networked computing. Being “digitally literate” or “transliterate” has become the ability to navigate this complex, dynamic and evolving universe of representation in the digital world. **e-eportfolio** literacy might be thought of as the negotiation, curation and personalization of digital information and interactivity in order to create and communicate meaning and identity.

ePortfolios demonstrate mastery of skills

When students create eportfolios, taking advantage of the multi-media presentations that eportfolios facilitate, an employer gets to see what a student can do. Students can clearly link their academic accomplishments to their professional aspirations. Additionally, the electronic environment has presented unique challenges to assumptions we may have had in the past such as the primacy of one medium of communication (text) over others (image, video, audio, tactility, etc.), or the limited range and scope of “audience” in the exercise of reflection in a non-networked environment. Digital literacies have expanded our notions of communication and multimodal knowledge building. Now, eportfolios are serving as pedagogical vehicles for helping our students self-author their digital identities and exercise control and ownership of their multimodal digital footprints as well as hone their transliteracy skills. Employers can see a more nuanced professional person in an eportfolio in a way that a plain résumé cannot.

Where can I see samples of UCBA eportfolios?

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Here: <http://www.ucblueash.edu/resources/faculty-staff/learning/eportfoliosucba.html>

If you have an eportfolio that you would like to share, please email ruth.benander@uc.edu, or speak with someone in the Writing and Study Skills Center to arrange to put your site up as a sample on this page.