Chapter XVI

Toward an Increase in Student Web Portfolios in New York Colleges and Universities

John DiMarco
St. John's University, USA

ABSTRACT

This research project investigated the existence of web portfolios on academic websites in New York State. It cites disappointing results when surveying the websites of New York State Colleges and University for web portfolios. Recognizing the problem of a lack of web portfolios, this chapter also provides a syllabus sample that can be used in technology based classroom environments across disciplines to integrate web portfolios into curriculums. The goal of this project was to promote web portfolios, provide interpretation of the current level of student web portfolio usage and activity within all New York colleges and universities, and suggest a sample syllabus to build web portfolios into curriculums. Major findings were that there is a low quantity of web portfolios in relationship to overall student enrollment, thus providing impetus to study a new phenomenon, lack of web portfolios. The study yielded data providing a breakdown of where and how many web portfolios were found. This study provides a basis for further research by scholars into web portfolios within academic settings.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding what a web portfolio is and is not is sometimes not easy. Is a web portfolio a course website? No it is not. Is a web portfolio a non-professional personal website used for posting personal data related to social outcomes? No it is not. A web portfolio is a personal website that provides evidence of your skills and expertise in the form of artifacts (photos, professional documents, artwork, and multimedia content including audio, video, and animation) from any discipline

or field. The ideas behind the web portfolio as a tool for assessment, lifelong learning, and skill building have not yet been proven nor have they been embraced by society or academia at large. Those who exude confidence and passion for the notion of universal access to web portfolios and web portfolio skills cannot yet say that the web portfolio has become an accepted, professional cyber identity. This paper yields conclusions that uncover some intriguing dialog surrounding web portfolios. There are not very many student web portfolios found through college and university websites. The new phenomenon that has emerged from this research is lack of web portfolios.

Goldsby and Fazal note that student created portfolios are (2001, 607-608):

[Commonly] used in teacher preparation programs to demonstrate teaching skills and expertise. This practice was introduced as test scores alone lack the comprehensive scope needed for effective assessment and evaluation, portfolios can be implemented to interpret/make decisions regarding learning of teaching competencies.

The case for the student portfolio in any discipline can be made on the same basis; electronic portfolios provide a new level of assessment that cannot be measured by traditional methods such as standardized tests, applications, and resumes. Electronic portfolios and web portfolios provide assessment of competency within a discipline as well as a marketable tool for graduates. The web portfolio has promise as a tool, platform, and impetus for worldwide learning and growth in technological skills. The objective of this research project is to provide an accurate interpretation of the level of web portfolio usage within the colleges and universities of New York.

As we move towards more fluent, ubiquitous platforms for web media such as internet ready phones, web based television, and wireless personal digital devices, the web portfolio, and its

place as an assessment tool, a learning tool, and a vehicle for lifelong learning has been recently scrutinized by scholars. Scholarly definitions of the electronic portfolio vary from discipline to discipline. To define the web portfolio, we must first define the e-portfolio, also known as the electronic portfolio. DiMarco put forth this definition (2005, 13):

The electronic portfolio is a collection of artifacts, project samples, cases, and focused content presenting the messages and professional and public appearance of an individual or a company through electronic media (web, DVD, CD-Rom). The e-portfolio provides evidence of skills, experience, and learning. I define the web portfolio as: an electronic portfolio that is an internet delivered, interactive, mass communication used to persuade users.

Greenberg (2004, 28-29) writes:

Ideally, all work in an electronic portfolio not only is digital but also is available on the Internet. Yet even though materials may be visible on the Web, the ePortfolio is not simply a personal home page with links to examples of work. In addition, unlike a typical application program, such as word processing, an ePortfolio is a network application that provides the author with administrative functions for managing and organizing work (files) created with different applications and for controlling who can see the work and who can discuss the work (access).

This definition presents several items for closer analysis. First, Greenberg makes a distinction that the electronic portfolio is not only digital but also available on the Internet. Development of the electronic portfolio and delivery are typically centered on using the Web. By using the Internet for delivery, electronic portfolios become less effective and more prone to failure. Also, an electronic portfolio is not just a home page. Any

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