Chapter 9

The Career Concept Map:
ePortfolio Content and Critical Thinking Skills

Paul A. Fritz
University of Toledo, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many undergraduates do little active reading about their intended professions. This becomes a problem when they interview with potential employers and cannot demonstrate their depth of knowledge about the job they seek. To help prevent this problem, the authors designed a semester-long project requiring the students to gather at least fifty news clippings from The Wall Street Journal about current issues in their careers. At semester's end, students presented short speeches summarizing their career research on a concept map with two axes: North-South and East-West. They organized their presentations with evidence from their clippings in the map's four quadrants: stories about jobs in this profession migrating to other countries, stories indicating jobs were being developed domestically, stories about a decreased need for jobs in the future, and stories about this profession's increase of jobs. These clippings became documents for students' ePortfolios.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

This exercise was introduced in a traditional classroom setting before converting it to a distance-learning course. We will demonstrate the changes we made as we incorporated it into our distance learning class COMM 2400, "Analysis and Synthesis

of Information." In COMM 2400, students use critical thinking skills as they analyze Websites using the five rubrics of journalistic reporting: objectivity, authority, accuracy, currency, and coverage. We have taught distance learning courses at our university since 1995. We have learned that most distance learning exercises should be launched in a face-to-face class to gain students' assessments of the activities.

Our academic home is a state-funded Carnegie Foundation Doctoral Research Extensive University. Enrollment is approximately 23,000 distributed among nine colleges. As an open enrollment university, many of our freshmen are first-generation college students. These students may come to college with unrealistic expectations about obtaining the baccalaureate. Many may think the diploma will guarantee them employment. Some students in this group may think there might be little need to begin a program of active reading about their careers in the first semester of their freshman year.

To help students become proactive in selecting careers, many professors at our university have expanded their traditional course content to include student engagement techniques and career selection exercises. These exercises might include sending students to interview working professionals, observing executives on the job, researching how their professions are depicted in the media, or critical analyses of profession-specific newsletters and magazines. Many of our colleagues require students to create personal Webpages where they may mount these documents as senior ePortfolios.

SETTING THE STAGE

Some academic disciplines and professors may think that an undergraduate ePortfolio is a type of scrapbook of term papers and laboratory reports students have accumulated over their undergraduate careers. By scanning an ePortfolio's contents an experienced instructor can make a reasonable estimate of the student's intellectual depth. Academics may assume that potential employers reading the same ePortfolio would gain as much meaning from the content as they did.

Ward and Moser (2008) at the University of Findlay surveyed 700 employers to learn what portfolio content employers would find meaningful. The responses included: reports on campus or class projects, analyses of current employment problems, students' proposed solutions to current workplace problems, interviews with industry leaders or diaries of how students managed a budget for a club project. With just as an academic reading, an ePortfolio can perceive how well a student *fits* into the academic community, employers apparently want documents in the portfolio that might indicate how candidates might *fit* into the corporate world. Charlotte Braumer (2007), a professor at Samford University, found that employers saw many

Related Content

#TextMeetsTech: Navigating Meaning and Identity Through Transliteracy Practice
Katie Schrodt, Erin R. FitzPatrick, Kim Reddig, Emily Paine Smithand Jennifer Grow (2020). *Participatory Literacy Practices for P-12 Classrooms in the Digital Age (pp. 233-251).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/textmeetstech/237424

Multi-Group Data Classification via MILP
Fadime Üney Yüksektepe (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 1365-1371).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/multi-group-data-classification-via/10999

Data Warehousing for Association Mining
Yuefeng Li (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 592-597).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/data-warehousing-association-mining/10881

Financial Time Series Data Mining
Indranil Bose (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 883-889).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/financial-time-series-data-mining/10924

Conceptual Modeling for Data Warehouse and OLAP Applications
Elzbieta Malinowskiand Esteban Zimányi (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition (pp. 293-300).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/conceptual-modeling-data-warehouse-olap/10835