ePortfolio Initiatives and Challenges

Proposals for the Winter 2022 Edition of AePR are due July 18, 2022
Table of Contents

Articles at a Glance ................................................................. 3
About the AePR ................................................................. 4
From the AAEELBL Board .................................................. 5
From the Editors' Desk ......................................................... 6
AAEELBL Board Members .................................................. 7
AePR Editorial Team ........................................................... 8

Articles
Introducing an ePortfolio into a Nurse Education Program:
A Case Study ................................................................. 9
Maria Cassar, Ph.D., Barbara Nicolls, Corinne Scicluna, & Sharon Martinelli

Innovative Pedagogy in a Time for Change:
Student & Instructor Perspectives of an ePortfolio .................. 20
Rita Zuba Prokopetz, Nitesh Patel, & Chan Tran

The Journey of Shadow, Shade, & Light: Implementing ePortfolio
Assessment for Visual & Performing Arts ............................. 29
Nancy Linden & Nicholas Silberg

Editorial Team Biographies ............................................... 37
Past Issues ........................................................................ 39
Call For Papers .................................................................. 41

Navigation Key*

• Previous Page  ➤ Next Page  ➕ Back to Articles at a Glance Page  ➔ Link to Website or Full Image

Navigation is available only when opened in PDF reader.
Articles at a Glance

**Introducing an ePortfolio into a Nurse Education Program: A Case Study**
Authors: Maria Cassar, Ph.D., Barbara Nicolls, Corinne Scicluna, & Sharon Martinelli
Review Editor: Russel Stolins

**Innovative Pedagogy in a Time for Change: Student & Instructor Perspectives of an ePortfolio**
Authors: Rita Zuba Prokopetz, Nitesh Patel, & Chan Tran
Review Editor: Barbara Ramirez

**The Journey of Shadow, Shade, & Light: Implementing ePortfolio Assessment for Visual & Performing Arts**
Authors: Nancy Linden & Nicholas Silberg
Review Editor: Diane Holtzman

**Call for Fall/Winter 2022 Proposals**
Guidelines and the deadline for proposals can be found on p. 43.
About the AePR

The AAEEBL ePortfolio Review (AePR) is the magazine of the Association for Authentic, Experiential and Evidence-Based Learning with a mission to serve the needs of the global ePortfolio community and promote portfolio learning as a way to transform higher education.

AePR explores the ways in which ePortfolios shape the digital educational landscape across many fields and disciplines, broaden technological literacy amongst those working and learning within this digital space, and open the door to new methods of innovation that develop professional and personal growth in the ever-changing realm of academia. Through examination of the continued advancements in ePortfolios/ePortfolio-based learning, we continue to witness, redefine, and expand the ways in which students learn—an exciting, encouraging picture of how academia’s future experiences growth in an increasingly technology-reliant future.

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.

For further details about making paper proposals, see page 41.
From the AAEEBL Board

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the next issue of AePR entitled ePortfolio Initiatives and Challenges. It’s a true pleasure to reach you as an AAEEBL board member from the southern hemisphere as we exit lockdowns in Australia and start to make our way abroad again to join our colleagues in 3D. Thankfully and with certainty, AAEEBL has transcended the new COVID-19 world and kept us digitally connected as a community and to the latest ePortfolio thinking and practice via the AePR.

While the pandemic definitely had its challenges, it’s clear that opportunities for initiatives and infusing change was a recurring theme across many workplaces and sectors. The higher education sector delved into many initiatives fueled by the intensive emergence of the digital age era – ePortfolio was brought into view again. The medical research sector had a big spotlight cast on it with lightning speed development and deployment of vaccines against SARS-CoV-2 – community was a driving force in bringing the world’s leading labs together. As a medical scientist and university educator, I often reflect on how COVID-19 presented us with incredible moments in global history with various missions to overcome the pandemic underpinned by strong communities and new ways of doing.

In this issue, Maria Cassar and colleagues explore the application of ePortfolio pedagogy and digital literacy in the health sphere to collaboratively develop and capture experiential learning and reflective thinking for students in nursing education programs. The authors present a model of GSPep-based Learning to develop a learner-centered approach to skills building. When exploring the idea of innovation during COVID-19 times, Rita Zuba Prokopetz and colleagues highlight perspectives from students and instructors on ePortfolio with insight into student agency as well as personal/professional journeys as part of their skills development. Nancy Linden and Nicholas Silberg provide the story of being flexible in platform use and application. They discuss the integration of ePortfolio with assessment process. A model for new ePortfolio artifacts and mapping of Course Student Learning Outcomes (CSLOs) onto Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs) was presented. This is a timely example, as the re-imagining of assessment and the use of ePortfolios as a way forward has been an interesting idea at higher education institutions during COVID-19 times.

With so many challenges and initiatives either behind us, in progress or ahead, it’s time once again to bring our ePortfolio thinking and doing back into focus and consider the ideas and themes presented in this issue for our local and global context. Happy reading everyone!

Take care and stay well,

Professor Patsie Polly
UNSW Sydney, Australia/ePortfolios Australia/AAEEBL Board Member
From the Editors' Desk

Dear Readers,

Though there continue to be ups and downs, the emerging consensus of our social behaviors is that the pandemic is no more. Its place has been taken by acceptance of an endemic disease. There are risks, but with our vaccines and medical science, these are much-reduced. In the present moment, the Fall 2022 term promises to resemble pre-pandemic conditions; a welcome return to "normal" for students, faculty, and staff.

In its wake, the pandemic has wrought durable changes on many campuses. In particular, the technology bar in education has virtually fallen away. Of necessity, students and faculty are now well-versed in all sorts of state-of-the-art technologies. Virtual collaboration skills are stronger across the board. But even as some of the technical challenges to ePortfolio adoption diminish, we are reminded that technology is just one piece of a well-crafted ePortfolio initiative. This issue’s theme is ePortfolio Initiatives and Challenges. The call for proposals read:

"Portfolio growth continues on campus as institutions recognize the potential for ePortfolios to aid in student learning and assessment. Portfolios are being used in a variety of different ways and for a variety of purposes. As part of this growth, institutional leaders and faculty members have, of course, met with challenges in initiating and maintaining ePortfolio practices."

The three articles in this issue explore this theme from three approaches:

- **Technology Selection and Training** – Authors Nancy Linden and Nicholas Silberg had to resort to three different ePortfolio platforms to launch their initiative for a Visual and Performing Arts program. The authors creatively found software and workflow work-arounds that enabled the conventions to be maintained. They also successfully integrated the students’ ePortfolio into the assessment process of a capstone course in their program.

- **From Paper to Digital** – Author Maria Cassar and her co-authors built upon an existing paper-based portfolio in their program. Using free tools from Google (Drive and Sites), they defined a learning ePortfolio system that utilizes the growing level of digital literacy in their student nurse cohorts. This emphasis on a living, accessible ePortfolio had a cascade of program benefits, including the promotion of active and collaborative learning.

- **Student Agency and Growth Perception** – Author Rita Zuba Prokopetz brings student voices into her article through her two co-authors. These former students relate their personal experience of ePortfolio in her ESL course and its benefits. In particular, they write how the process of curation took them through a review of their newly-developed capabilities learning ESL.

We hope you enjoy these pandemic-era articles and the insights they convey,

Russel Stolins
Cindy Adams
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Introducing an ePortfolio into a Nurse Education Program: A Case Study

Authors: Maria Cassar, Ph.D., Barbara Nicolls, Corinne Scicluna, & Sharon Martinelli
Review Editor: Russel Stolins

Introduction
The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC, 2019) describes the ePortfolio as a 21st-century tool for supporting learning, teaching, and assessment. ePortfolios enable and capture guided reflection, which is recognized as a hallmark of good education and training in health care capacity building. ePortfolios allow for independent learning while providing self-development opportunities (Barrett, 2007; Bass, 2014; Cavaller, 2011; Chesney & Marcangelo 2010; Eynon et al., 2014).

The Department of Nursing in the University of Malta (UM) sought to transform the students’ portfolios from a collection of achievements to a method of learning. In essence, the introduction of the ePortfolio amongst pre-registration nursing students comprised the introduction of a “learning” portfolio, which documents a student’s learning over time (Butler, 2006). This initiative echoed the implementation of ePortfolios across universities in different countries spanning various professions (Anderson et al., 2009; Lopez et al., 2011; Pincombe et al., 2010; Ruiz et al., 2009; Vernazza et al., 2011). Specifically, this case study describes the integration of the Google Sites Practice ePortfolio (GSPep) into the pre-registration nursing curriculum as a pedagogical environment for enhancing learning outcomes through the design of the placement-based teaching and learning activities. This is supported by Joyes, Grey, and Hartnell-Young (2010) who contend that the ePortfolio can effectively be used as a pedagogic tool through its inclusion in teaching and learning activities.

The Process of Introducing an ePortfolio into a Nurse Education Program
A project team was established at the Department of Nursing, UM, in 2019 to design and implement an ePortfolio for the 2019 cohort of pre-registration SNs (Student Nurses). Against a backdrop of increased digital literacy across the SN population (Farrell, 2018), not doing so appeared to be wasting an opportunity for an enhanced learning experience. In addition, in view of the continually evolving nature of the role of the nurse and the function of nursing care delivery, the need for continual professional development and growth of nursing students and its formal documentation (evidence) was determined as a priority (Collins & Crawley, 2016). The purpose of the portfolio was to correct the former
Introducing an ePortfolio into a Nurse Education Program: A Case Study

and to address the latter (Haggerty & Thompson, 2017). It was a high-level decision to move forward with an ePortfolio implementation with clear senior management buy-in. After a literature search, the department’s management identified B Nicolls, a UK-based academic, as the project lead; her credentials involved extensive evidence of successful ePortfolio facilitation employing open source Web 2.0 ePortfolios in HE focusing on the pedagogy rather than the technology. B Nicolls agreed to collaborate on the initiative initially, virtually sharing her experiences. The team adopted Barrett’s (2011) suggested format, and, therefore, a readiness checklist was conducted amongst the stakeholders. This readiness exercise explored stakeholders’ expectations of the GSPep and what might be barriers to their effective use.

The Readiness Survey
The “ePortfolio readiness survey” conducted in January 2020 revealed critical support to the Department of Nursing’s vision that embedding and implementing the GSPep in the pre-registration curriculum will empower the nursing graduates to become active participants in their own personalized nurse education. Through reflection, technology, and collaboration, SNs and their educators will develop the 21st-century skills that will lead them to achieve their lifelong goals.

Building on the Paper Portfolio
The introduction of the ePortfolio entailed the enhancement of and adding value to the existing paper-based Pre-registration Practice Portfolio for Nursing Students (PPP) (University of Malta, 2019). The digital learning space the ePortfolio introduced served as a supported virtual environment which drew upon the dialogic potential of the Google system. In a novel and unique manner, the ePortfolio enabled students to consolidate the experiences and learning across all facets of the program. The learning taking place in clinical practice, the learning in simulation teaching laboratories, and the theoretical components of the program meet across the ePortfolio. However, the GSPEp maintained the format and the contents of PPP. Such format, in comprising a competency framework, ensures compliance with the requirements of the national regulatory body of the profession and fulfills the requirements of the European Union Directive pertaining to nurse education.

As a result of the ePortfolio, upon the successful completion of the pre-registration nursing program, SNs now exit a program at the UM as owners of a digital showcase portfolio of artifacts which evidence nursing competency achievements. Some of the contents are co-owned by the SNs and the Department of Nursing (e.g. the assessed coursework) and others are owned by the UM with the SNs having some rights over it (e.g. transcripts setting out their achievement) (JISC, 2006).

The following is the guiding definition of the GSPep, adapted from the JISC’s definition (JISC, 2008): “The learning GSPep is the product, created, developed, and maintained by the SNs over a period of three years containing a collection of specific digital artifacts articulating experiences, achievements, and practice placement learning. Behind the product or presentation lie rich and complex processes of planning, synthesizing, sharing, discussing, reflecting, giving, receiving, and responding to feedback.”

The digital learning space the ePortfolio introduced served as a supported virtual environment which drew upon the dialogic potential of the Google system. In a novel and unique manner, the ePortfolio enabled students to consolidate the experiences and learning across all facets of the program. The learning taking place in clinical practice, the learning in simulation teaching laboratories, and the theoretical components of the program meet across the ePortfolio.
The creation and development of the GSPep is underpinned by the social constructivist theory of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Pedagogies comprising reflective and evaluative approaches to learning (Lin, 2008), self-regulation of professional learning through competency-based assessment (Blackburn & Hakel, 2006; Ring & Foti, 2006), and social learning (Bass, 2014; Baxter, 2014) are drawn upon. Throughout the process, learning is constructed through dialogue, guidance, feedback, and social interactions between the SNs and nurse educators. The SNs are therefore posited as active participants in the creation of their learning (Green et al., 2014), shifting from knowledge recall to evidencing achievement that aligns with real-world scenarios.

**GSPep System**

The GSPep system comprises Google Drive and the new Google Sites. Google Drive is a cloud-based storage where SNs create a Folder of Evidence (FoE) to securely upload, save files, edit them online, and access them anywhere from any smartphone, tablet, or computer.

The purpose of the FoE is for the students to collect evidence of placement experience in addition to attendance logs and other documentation pertaining to practice placements and experiences. The important element of the FoE goes beyond compiling the evidence. The importance is focused on
reflecting on the evidence, and, therefore, the compiled evidence is shared with link lecturers, who in turn monitor and guide the growth demonstrated through the FoE which the SN produce. The new Google Sites is a free drag-and-drop website builder and hosting service which enables the SNs to create their own website as a platform for presenting the achievements. Figure 2 illustrates the GSPep system.

The project team designed a GS ePortfolio system supported by the UM's G Suite for Education, based on a set of nursing competencies, which are determined by the European Union Directive pertaining to nurse education. The use of Google Sites was extended to all students and staff in the nursing program for the purposes of the GSPep and endorsed as the product of the UM. Additionally, the project lead designed and developed customized ePortfolio development resources (Figure 4) in the form of an eBook, “Developing Google ePortfolio for Nursing Students: A Survival Guide.”

Alongside this eBook, online sessions were delivered to all users. Wetzel and Strudler (2005) identified the need for sufficient training and support, the need for small planned steps, strong commitment from senior management, and clarity of purpose to boost the confidence of all the stakeholders and contribute to the sustainability of the initiative. The explicit online training sessions mirrored the step-by-step guides which focussed on process, purpose, structure, and content and were recorded to benefit late arrivals and non-attendees. During the online sessions in early February 2020, the ePortfolio facilitator guided the SNs through the process of creating the FoE in Google Drive. Follow-up support sessions were organized by the local facilitators, if and when these were indicated following the online sessions.

Following planning, design, and development of the prototype, the GSPep initiative was implemented in February 2020. At the end of each placement, the SNs were asked to select the best evidence from the FoE, reflect on it, and set future goals. The evidence was to be organized thematically in the Google Sites ePortfolio as per the competencies identified in the European Directive for nurse education. The FoE is to be presented annually at the progression Board of Examination. The GSPep is to serve both an academic product demonstrating their competencies as SNs in
relation to the Clinical Placement Competencies, as well as a way for them to demonstrate their skill sets to potential employers.

**Planned Evaluation**
Evaluation is a process through which data are attained to conclude if there is a need to make changes or eliminations or to accept something in the curriculum. The project team planned to evaluate the introduction of the use of ePortfolio by purposefully, systematically, and continuously collecting and analyzing information using Kirkpatrick’s Four Levels of Learning Evaluation Model, which is extensively employed to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs.

> The introduction of the ePortfolio was weighted by the fact that this was a novel initiative, and none of the educators or students had a clear idea of what was expected. Everything was new.

Although Kirkpatrick’s model comprising Reaction, Learning, Behaviour, Results is a comprehensive model that incorporates the desires and needs of the stakeholders, the project team believed that to make improvements, they would need to examine result-related questions to contribute to continuous improvement by comparing intentions with results.

Hence, reaction has been amended to include input, which covers the training materials such as digital resources that are used to support the training and process. This examines the actual delivery of the GSPep learning experience to see the extent to which they enhance the SNs’ learning and progression.

Ethical approval was sought and granted by the respective UM ethics review and clearance body. Data collection is currently in progress, and it will be reported and disseminated internally. It will also be shared with the wider interested audience at a later stage once the planned evaluation exercise is fully concluded.

**Strengths of the GSPep**
A survey amongst nursing students in February 2020, prior to the orientation and training sessions, revealed that none of the nursing students had ever created an ePortfolio nor did they have the know-how nor the technical skills to do so. However, 93.7% believed creating and developing an ePortfolio had potential for their personal and professional development. These figures highlight the valued strength of the ePortfolio in enhancing the preparedness of nursing students for joining the workforce in the contemporary era wherein ePortfolio is increasingly becoming a tool used in recruitment, retention, and promotion mechanisms.

However, the greater strength of these initiatives stood with the fact that its introduction entailed the creation of a learning environment that promotes active learning, critical thinking, collaborative learning, and knowledge construction. The curriculum team note Ehrmann’s (2006) caution that despite the perceived benefit and impact of embarking on this endeavor, the GSPep will not, by itself, create any magical kind of improvement in education, but by altering the teaching/learning activities, the effectiveness and efficiency of an education program may be favorably influenced.

**Weaknesses of the GSPep**
The introduction of the ePortfolio was weighted by the fact that this was a novel initiative, and, therefore, none of the educators or students had a clear idea of what was expected. Everything was new. The time required from both educators and students to engage in the use of an ePortfolio cannot be underestimated. In the same vein, the training and support entailed in developing it should not be overlooked. These pose significant weaknesses to the process of introducing an ePortfolio in nurse education.

Familiarity with the technology is an advantage for all the stakeholders as the focus is then on the pedagogy of ePortfolio learning rather than the technology. This was not entirely the case with the Department of Nursing at the UM, wherein limited digital skills amongst a few students and educators jeopardized the speed and quality of the initiative’s outcome and impact. In view of this, securing adequate digital...
literacy at the point of entry or admission into nurse education may be advantageous in this regard. Eligibility of nurse education may consist of a digital literacy level which enables the full engagement of a student with the development of an ePortfolio.

The extent of the reflection with regard to the FoE fell short of expectation. A review of the processes towards enabling the reflection of SNs with link lecturers upon the compiled evidence is indicated. During training, students were explained the importance of reflection, but possible gaps in explaining this adequately to the link lecturers led to unsatisfactory outcomes in this regard. The contents of the FoE were made explicit via the spreadsheet which specifies the files required.

Opportunity
Joyes, Gray, and Hartnell (2010) explain that integrating the GSPep in curriculum also supports distance learners, and learners who are work-based. This became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when all face-to-face teaching and learning was delivered online and nursing students, through the GSPep, had the opportunity to remain engaged in collaborative guided reflection and dialogue with designated educators.

A suggestion would be to have specific dedicated lectures (with a small number of students hence divided in groups), where students and lecturers spend some time developing the portfolio at that time. Hence, issues that arise are addressed immediately and a smoother adoption of the ePortfolio would ensue. Hallam and Creagh (2010) contend that the ePortfolio development process allows opportunity for learners to move beyond what they have learned to consider how they have learned and to understand the connections inherent in the creative process of learning through enhanced educator-student interaction.

The interaction which characterizes this paradigm of learning (Andersen & Watkins, 2018) was enabled through the student-academic (Nurse Educator) dyad which the ePortfolio design obliged and supported (Thomas et al., 2014). Against this backdrop and the observed engagement of the nursing students with educators through the GSPep, the curriculum team will consider making the GSPep element credit-based to prevent it from being viewed less as an added task and more as an opportunity to enhance the quantity and quality of learning. The opportunity to map the students nurses' theoretical assignments to the nursing competencies development sought through practice placements has been unleashed through the GSPep’s design and introduction.

Threats
Moreover, the GSPep development is underpinned by connectivism (Siemens, 2005), which acknowledges that learning is significantly influenced by technology and that the learning process is a connection with information sources, including link lecturers, mentors, policies, and professional guidelines in a discursive space. Limited or gaps in connectivism thus prevail as a significant threat. Measures to contain or management of such a threat are indicated but also not readily determined nor resourced.

Individual users were required to declare that the use of Google Sites is, exclusively, for academic scope and purpose. Consequently, every SN was required to insert a disclaimer at the bottom of their GSPep and be responsible for ensuring that IT protocols were adhered to during their time at the UM.

Although this could be a limiting factor and a threat for SNs’ lifelong ownership, the institution-owned GSPep could be downloaded or copied into a personal Google account after graduation, enabling
life-long ownership. Therefore, this threat, despite being prevalent, was easily harnessed.

Concerns regarding accessibility, security, privacy, and confidentiality of the contents of the shared FoE and the presentation portfolio present considerable threat to the take-up and compliance with the adoption of the GSPeP. These were recognised by the team, and, therefore, efforts to comfort and instill support and reassurance had to be planned and employed at all times. Moreover, the educators’ insecurities and fears are also potential threats. Hence, educators were encouraged to attempt the development of their own GSPePs. This enabled them to be ahead of their students; they would have traveled the journey and would thus be confident to support their students through the ePortfolio journey, not solely technically, but also pedagogically.

Conclusion
In summary, to date the GSPeP implementation has demonstrated that the initiative has potential for sustainability. The strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities which were identified and discussed will determine much of how it will evolve and its impact. It is hoped that the solid foundation that it was built upon, the visionary and supportive senior management, the talented and committed technical and curriculum teams, the tried and tested technology for the GSPeP, and the array of resources to support the stakeholders will lend themselves towards the desired impact and the significant longevity and relevance of the initiative to nurse education. The Department of Nursing aspires to integrate the GSPeP learning activities to include explicit mapping of practice learning to campus-based academic and theoretical learning in the coming years. Building upon the current design and structure, which supports the purpose of the ePortfolio to produce reflective nurses, the strategy to develop such a more comprehensive approach can be a more valid reflection of the student development journey through a nurse education program.

It is hoped that this case study presents a critical representation of the introduction of ePortfolio in nurse education at the UM. Moreover, it is hoped that this Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) presentation translates into opportunity to plan or actuate the introduction of similar initiatives elsewhere in view of the potential that ePortfolios are associated with, in relation to workforce development in the health and social care arena.

Acknowledgements
The IT Services Department of the University of Malta, namely Dr. James Cilia and Ms. Naomi Mifsud, have guided and supported the authors extensively in the implementation of the project reported in this paper. Academic staff and students in the
Department of Nursing collaborated and cooperated fully in the use of the GSPep. Dr. Michelle Camilleri developed, introduced, and steered the use of the paper portfolio at the Department of Nursing at the UM.

About the Authors

Dr. Maria Cassar is a nurse educator at the University of Malta. She received her nurse training in Malta and later completed masters and doctoral studies at King’s College, University of London, and the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. She pursued training in online education at University of Illinois, in the US. She has worked as a clinician and nurse educator in various continents. Her main areas of professional interest and research are curriculum development and evaluation, internationalization of higher education, and the use of technology and simulation in teaching and learning, nurse registration, student and nurse mobility. She has participated in a number of transnational projects related to nurse education, including the TUNING-MEDA project (nursing care), the CALOHEE project (nursing care), and the ongoing NNE and SG4NS projects. Maria led the Erasmus + ISPAD project (budget award 334730 €), and is currently leading the following awarded Erasmus + projects: DigIT and TOViD. In 2019 she was elected to the executive committee of FINE.

Barbara Nicolls is a Senior Lecturer in the Student Learning and Achievement team as well as an Apprentice Partnership Manager at Buckinghamshire New University (UK). Barbara received the MSc in technology-enhanced learning with the dissertation on the role of academic staff in the learning eportfolio development in 2010. She has led Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 eportfolio use and implementation at BNU mainly within health care and education courses by collaborating with discipline-specific academic staff designing customised templates delivering conceptual and technical workshops contributing to their CPD. Her advocacy for social constructivism is seen at Staff Development events and international eportfolio conferences where a concerted effort is made to showcase the contributions made by her collaborators for the success of their students’ learning through eportfolios. Additionally, Barbara delivers and evaluates student eportfolio workshops which focus on pedagogy rather than the technology. Barbara was awarded the Bucks Fellowship Award 2015 for exceptional impact on learning and teaching across the university especially for her creativity in applying technology-enhanced learning approaches for student engagement with their academic development. She is a Senior Fellow of the HEA demonstrating her sustained engagement with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) highlighting a thorough understanding of effective approaches to learning and teaching. Her excellence in designing learning activities, delivering them with inclusivity in mind with high impact on student outcomes earned her the National Teaching Fellowship in 2018.

Dr. Corinne Scicluna is presently a lecturer at the Nursing Department in the University of Malta. She was the first Tissue Viability Specialist Nurse who led this service in Malta. She is president of the Maltese Association of Skin and Wound Care, and is the former president of the International Skin Care Nursing Group. She also represents Malta on the International Diabetic Foot Group, the teacher’s network in the European Wound Management Association and is a European member of the World Union of Wound Healing Societies and the Commonwealth alliance of wounds. She is also an honorary visiting lecturer at Cardiff University, UK and a member of the Task Force for Nurses in the European Association of Dermatology and Venerology (EADV). Corinne is a proud alumni of the International Council of Nurses, Global Nursing Leadership Institute.

Sharon Martinelli is an Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Nursing, Faculty of Sciences, at the University of Malta. Sharon is a Senior Registered Nurse (BSc Hons. Nursing) and a warranted Counsellor (MA Couns). She has worked across different sectors in the community including management. She steered the development of a number of projects in community care services both the public arena, and in the private sector and also led development and also coordinated the degree programme in nurse education in community.
She has supported individuals and their families in their most vulnerable times of their lives in Community and Primary Care settings. She is currently finalizing her doctoral studies with the Department of Counselling, Faculty of Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta. Her current research focuses on Women living with Chronic autoimmune invisible illnesses in Malta.

References


Innovative Pedagogy in a Time for Change: Student & Instructor Perspectives of an ePortfolio

Authors: Rita Zuba Prokopetz, Nitesh Patel, & Chan Tran
Review Editor: Barbara Ramirez

Abstract
As pedagogical tools, ePortfolios are deployed in authentic classroom settings to help students connect classroom knowledge with its application in the workplace. A course for students of English as a second language (ESL) in a learning center in Canada relied on ePortfolios to help participants take ownership of their learning. During the spring of 2018, a group of approximately 15 students embarked on a journey unparalleled to any other – a language course with online modules. Evidence of competency achieved in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as well as course satisfaction and student retention warranted subsequent offerings of the course.

Four course iterations followed with a gradual increase in registration. The final iteration of the course graduated 20 participants during an unprecedented time in academia. Students in the spring of 2020 cohort had to pivot overnight from a blended modality of course instruction to learning entirely online due to COVID-19. The transition from three days on-site/two days on-line to entirely on-line seemed seamless to this group of students.

These language learners had embraced ePortfolio pedagogy; as a result, they had built and strengthened a community whose members were resilient, motivated, and goal oriented. The blended program of studies for which these five groups of high-intermediate level students had signed up was a five-month full-time course that included an ePortfolio as a capstone project. These projects, created by the students themselves, highlighted their learning to date, showed evidence of alignment of competencies, and emphasized the role of reflection in value-based pedagogy – relationship-building while strengthening academic skills.

As the course instructor, my goal was to rely on an experiential form of language assessment that was authentic, less judgemental, and more thoughtful. As I perceived in each of the course iterations, the perspective of the students was to complete their project and make a presentation on the final week of class. This article presents perspectives on capstone ePortfolio projects of two ESL students and their instructor and affirms the positioning of
ePortfolio as sound pedagogy in a time of change.

**Introduction**

During the spring of 2018, a group of approximately 15 students of English as a second language (ESL) at a learning centre in Canada embarked on a journey unparalleled to any other – a blended on-site/on-line language course. Evidence of competency achieved in listening, speaking, reading, and writing; strong attendance record; high course satisfaction; and 100% student retention warranted subsequent offerings of the course. Four course iterations followed the first with a gradual increase in registration in subsequent ones. The fifth and final offering of the course graduated 20 participants during an unprecedented time in academia. Students in the spring of 2020 cohort had to pivot overnight from a blended modality of course instruction on March 13, 2020, to learning entirely online due to COVID-19. The transition from three days on-site/two days on-line to entirely on-line learning seemed seamless to these students who, as a result of embracing ePortfolio pedagogy, built and strengthened a community of resilient, motivated, and goal-oriented language learners.

**Context**

Before COVID-19, the five-month intermediate-level English course was facilitated in a blended format. The students met face-to-face three times a week and were required to interact with the instructor, course content, and peers via the Discussion Forum (DF) for a minimum of 10 hours each week – which they often surpassed. These four iterations of the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course, and the subsequent one entirely at a distance after only a month of class, culminated in the creation of ePortfolios where students demonstrated competency levels beyond language learning.

As outlined in the Guide (Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012), competencies in each of the four skill areas were embedded in the course learning activities: interacting with others, comprehending instructions, getting things done, and comprehending information. Tasks involving knowledge application received feedback in the class forum where students would question and/or validate comments provided by their instructor and peers.

This purposeful collaboration helped create a learning environment that validated the construction of knowledge (Vaughan et al., 2013) in our online forum discussions.

**English for Academic Purposes Pedagogical Approach**

The blended program of studies for which the five groups of high-intermediate level ESL students had signed up was a five-month full-time course that included an ePortfolio as a capstone project. These capstone ePortfolio projects, created by the students themselves, highlighted learning to date, showed evidence of the alignment of competencies, and emphasized the role of reflection in value-based pedagogy. As such, students strengthened their academic skills while building a community where social skills were of equal importance. In preparation for the much-anticipated final module, members of this learning community engaged in vibrant on-going communication via the forum to view resources, share ideas, and ask and answer questions.

**Perspectives on ePortfolios as Capstone Projects**

As the course instructor, my goal was to include in the final module of our course an experiential form of speaking assessment that was authentic, less judgemental, and more thoughtful. To complete
each module, the students needed to share their work in the Discussion Forum in text, audio, and/or visual format. The tasks in the first four modules (academic skills and strategies, critical thinking, leadership and project management) aligned with course objectives and enabled the students to show evidence of the achievement of the language competencies. Although they were eager to complete the tasks in the initial modules, their focus was on their final task – a 10-minute presentation to show evidence of their skills.

Nitesh Patel was among the 15 participants in the first EAP course iteration (Spring 2018). Chan Tran was the first of the 20 participants to complete and present her project in the fifth and final offering of the course (Spring 2020). Nitesh and Chan share a few pages of their capstone ePortfolio projects and provide their perspective on how they viewed their experience.

**Spring 2018 Student Perspective:**

&Opportunity for Knowledge Creation and Correlation of School-Work Language Skills

My name is Nitesh, and I was one of the participants in the first iteration of English for Academic Purposes. When I lived back home in India, I used to learn the English language in bilingual form. In Canada, our classroom was multicultural, and we had different ethnic groups of students. Our instructor suggested on the first day that we were to use only the English language in the classroom for all our peer communication, projects, presentations, etc.

During the spring course in 2018, as an ESL learner in Canada, I met one of my most important challenges – to cope with the creation of an ePortfolio project along with my instructor and peers. That was my first phase of learning English as a second language and subsequently applying the knowledge; I needed to rely on a number of resources to complete both the project and my course. As per instructions of our instructor, I started accessing other sources of information to help me create my ePortfolio project.

We visited the Winnipeg Millennium Library and the Manitoba Museum as a group. I also got pamphlets from historical places such as the Union Station, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights as well as additional information from our local newspapers – the *Winnipeg Sun* and the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Since my goal was to get a job, I also used leaflets and flyers of retail markets to become better informed about language requirements for the workplace.
During the creation of my project, I realized that English was a tool to help me make positive changes in my life, and my project would help me show my learning. I chose Weebly and used this platform to express my knowledge creation and language skills to share with my friends and co-workers.

During the development of my project, I used slides to create some instructional tools to show evidence of my learning (Figure 1). Some of the artifacts my peers and I created were related to our research on leadership and project management, critical thinking, and time management. These important instructional materials are still very helpful to me in my current position as a customer service manager; I find it important to manage resources in the retail market. This project gave me opportunities to gain knowledge, create, and connect my learning with Canadian culture not only in the classroom but also in the workplace.

In Module Five, the final project presented a challenge for me, especially in determining a source for the ePortfolio website platform. First, I had to think of what my website was going to be about. There were many choices including informational sites and e-commerce themes; however, these were not appropriate for our learning purposes. Then, I had to think about the structure of the website. I got ideas from the sample our instructor provided in our course. After deciding on the platform and structure for my project, I needed to create tabs and populate the different pages. I found it a challenge to identify what to include. This was a new skill not only for me but also for most of my classmates. But, at the same time, it was very interesting since it allowed me to gain new knowledge and skills in researching and applying the information.

Once again, there were challenges regarding what information to include and what not to include. I wondered if I should include photos, videos, music, and links to information from other websites. In the end, I found myself learning a new skill about web design and online research. I also recognized that our ePortfolio project needed a web platform and I realized that it was not going to be easy to design a website. In the end, I found some interesting ideas. I chose the Wix platform for my project and I was motivated to complete this module.

Improvements were made along the way to help me complete my ePortfolio project using Wix. I found that the sharing and peer discussions in the forum supported my ideas and efforts. I felt that these interactions pushed me and gave me momentum to complete the final project before the due date; surprisingly, I did not feel rushed to complete it. Although we had two former EAP course participants present their capstone projects to our class, I don’t think their presentations impacted the platform I chose. I think the Weebly sample provided and the encouragement from the instructor were the most important motivators.
that helped me choose a platform, create the Wix website, and complete my project. I recall the many hours my peers and I spent devoting our time to strengthen our skills – writing was a weakness of mine. I relied on our online resources for additional assistance.

Since I was among the first to complete my ePortfolio, I was encouraged to be a role model to my peers and to present my capstone ePortfolio project almost a month before the due date. My presentation started with my welcoming message inviting my instructor and peers to enter the site and experience my journey by clicking on the button I provided (Figure 2). I found the capstone ePortfolio project challenging, but I enjoyed working on it. I felt a sense of accomplishment and joy upon completing the project. I enjoyed this course and would recommend similar ones to others.

In the absence of a learning management system at the time, we relied on a Class Wiki for weekly discussions and a Blogspot site for thematic posts on topics of interest based on our readings. In an effort to provide online instruction (albeit in a face-to-face modality), I relied on Screencast and SlideShare to create and upload resources-on-demand related to our units of learning. The students adapted well to our innovative ways to learn and interact and were able to complete – as an extracurricular activity – two tasks in each language skill in their own individual online binders. My goal was not only to foster student agency but also to create awareness regarding the benefits of learning with educational technology. At that time, although my classes were entirely face-to-face, many of the students expressed interest in

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**Figure 2: Chan’s Welcome Button on Wix ePortfolio**

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**Our ePortfolio Learning Journey**

Before implementing capstone ePortfolio projects in my practice as a language instructor, I had experienced ePortfolio pedagogy in the development of my first ePortfolio project in my graduate studies (2011-2013). It was an experiential learning program of studies that required that I apply in my practice what I was learning in my courses. In consequence, I experienced a paradigm shift related to not only how I was learning but also, and most important, how I was facilitating learning to my ESL students (Zuba Prokopetz, 2018a; Zuba Prokopetz 2018b).
incorporating technology in their learning. The availability of free instructional tools on the World Wide Web such as VoiceThread and LiveBinders made it possible for us to transport language learning beyond the walls of our classroom.

Many of the students expressed their appreciation for these technology-mediated learning activities. As their instructor, I was pleased to see the level of enthusiasm among the students and their commitment to their learning. I became eager to introduce ePortfolio projects to future students and welcomed the opportunity to create a blended course in January 2018. This blended course was the first opportunity for me to introduce a capstone ePortfolio project in my practice.

The first group had 15 course participants who had signed up for a course modality they initially knew little about at the time – everyone completed the five modules of the course and successfully presented their projects. Since interest for this blended modality continued, there were four subsequent offerings of the course. Students in the last offering in January 2020, due to COVID-19, pivoted online during the second module.

As in the previous four course iterations, all the students presented their completed projects and shared their learning journey with their peers at the end of the course. Like their colleagues in the other cohorts, Nitesh and Chan made choices regarding what platform to use for their project and which artifacts to include in their ePortfolio. Prior to populating the pages of their ePortfolio, they met the course requirements by conducting the required research, completing their learning tasks, and sharing their work with peers in the forum. The two sites shared by Nitesh and Chan include samples of the work they completed in preparation for their ePortfolio presentations.

Spring 2018 ePortfolio Learning Journey Student Perspective: Nitesh

When I enrolled in my blended course of English language learning, I never realized that I would have to create an ePortfolio project in order to complete the course. Our instructor organized a classroom session with information about the ePortfolio project. She informed us about the tools available and the content we could include in the creation of our ePortfolio.

Before that class, I had a misconception that what I had to do was to create a website with content as a project. But after the guidance from my instructor and discussion with my peers, I realized that this project was an opportunity to express our knowledge, content creation with creativity, areas of interest, etc.

Our instructor offered guidance about many web hosting services, but I chose Weebly for my hosting site. Weebly is a free service, is easy to access, and helps us create content with a variety of output expressions. After my Weebly registration, I was confused regarding which content was proper for my ePortfolio. After careful planning, I included specific content from my blended course such as artifacts, autobiography, and interest-based areas like inspirational quotes and additional knowledge.

Back home in India, I had never had such experience in any course project where I had a chance to express my knowledge creation. This project encouraged me to create knowledge and correlate it with other tasks at my workplace such as donation drive for places like Food Bank Canada, among others. I applied the knowledge gained during the development of this class project at my workplace for poster presentations and content creation to request donations.

Figure 3: Nitesh’s About Me Page on Weebly ePortfolio
More about Nitesh’s ePortfolio can be found by going to his Weebly site, where you can find out more about him and his work (Figure 3).

**Spring 2020 ePortfolio Learning Journey Student Perspective: Chan**

I registered for the EAP blended program because of its convenient online scheduling for my part-time job. At that time, my preference was to have face-to-face rather than online class since I like communicating with others, and I feel more comfortable asking questions in class. Face-to-face classes gave me motivation to be on time in order to greet and chat with my classmates.

Participating in the HotSeat! speaking activity was also another interesting part of this course; this was a daily activity where one student answered questions from each course participant based on a chosen topic (sentence structure, social issues, academic strategies, project development).

Nevertheless, all of the activities were replaced by virtual interaction in mid-March 2020 because of the pandemic. At that time, we were preparing to present our first team projects. Regardless of the learning modality (blended or entirely online), I felt that our class adapted successfully since the first moment in our new virtual learning environment as a result of both encouragement and motivation by our instructor.

The interaction in the Discussion Forum (DF) was active and everyone contributed beyond expectation. Although after March we no longer had a physical space three times a week where we could meet, discuss, and share our thoughts about the tasks like before, we were still able to post our work in the DF. Therefore, we could still learn from each other.

Initially, I was a bit confused once I realized that everyone would review each other’s assignment submissions during peer-feedback interaction. At first, it was difficult for me because sometimes, I had to contribute different ideas after viewing what my peers had already submitted. However, I found the dynamics useful later on when I had tasks that I found hard to understand; these early submissions from my peers helped clarify what I needed to do as per task requirements.

I visited the DF to learn from my peers, and of course, it was only to get ideas on how the task should be done. There was not any form of plagiarism in our class as it would not be accepted. Reminiscing on that time, I need to mention that we relied on our teacher’s encouragement for every one of the tasks we had to do. There was neither pushing nor any pressure for us to complete the tasks in each module. There was much understanding and support to enable us to feel motivated. As a result, we felt compelled to complete our tasks until the day we successfully presented our ePortfolio as a final project.

More about Chan’s ePortfolio can be found by going to her Wix site, where you can find out more about her and her work (Figure 4).

**Conclusion**

As pedagogical tools, ePortfolios are deployed in authentic classroom settings to help students to connect what they learn in class with ways to apply the knowledge in their community and workplace. Properly implemented and developed ePortfolio projects foster a sense of agency evidenced in learning environments that give students time and space to interact. In consequence, they are able to express choices pertaining to what they learn (some of the content, for example); how they learn (choice of...
platform to demonstrate learning); and why their choices matter (articulation of knowledge and explication of choices made).

“The students relied on their ePortfolio projects to make sincere presentations to their peers based on their learning to date. As educators, we must recognize that ePortfolios are less about the technology itself and more about the significance of how they are used (Batson, 2015).”

Knowledge that is visible, such as the one housed in capstone projects, can be shared anytime anywhere whether in a wall-less classroom forum in spaces of the internet, at a community event, or in the workplace, as articulated by Nitesh (Spring 2018 course participant). As a final project in a course or program of studies, these ePortfolio learning experiences are underpinned by construction and co-construction of knowledge as described by Chan (Spring 2020 course participant).

In the four EAP course offerings in a blended format (two each in 2018 and 2019), and the last one in 2020 entirely online after the first month of class, language learners engaged with one another during the development process of their individual project in the final month of their program of studies. They revisited their tasks in the previous modules, interacted with content and one another, and internalized their growth over time.

In doing so, they became aware of what they learned, how the learning occurred in each of the skill areas, and why they made certain choices throughout the process. They also experienced the impact the learning may have had on them on a personal, academic, and professional level.

In other words, the students relied on their ePortfolio projects to make sincere presentations to their peers based on their learning to date. As educators, we must recognize that ePortfolios, as Batson (2015) has suggested, are less about the technology itself and more about the significance of how they are used. Batson further states, and I concur, that colleges and universities interested in improving student learning and career development success should consider ePortfolios in their initiatives. As I have observed, student experiences of their capstone projects position ePortfolios as innovative pedagogy in a time of change.

Nitesh, Chan, and Rita would like to thank the AePR editorial staff for the time and effort on the many versions of this article.
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The Shadows

Merriam-Webster defines a “shadow” as a dark shape that appears on a surface when someone or something moves between the surface and a source of light. Another definition from Wikipedia states that a shadow is a dark area where light from a light source is blocked by an opaque object. It is easy to recognize the “opaque” blockages when emotional shadows from faculty come forth in the process of change in our departments. The blockage of feelings: feelings of dread if the faculty don’t fall in love with the software, complaints of frustration if the software is not user-friendly, whispers of discontent if all does not go smoothly with implementation.

These dark shadows always seem to accompany change and will naturally occur like the gnomon of a sundial. No matter how well-prepared a leader is for roll-out, the reality is our negative emotions have the power to eclipse change, and some of us get stuck. These shadow battles repeat from the regular individuals who seem to loom long in anticipation of the worst and the stated, “I told you so.” However, these shadows do not deeply threaten, as we know where they come from. These naysayers are like familiar clouds of criticism that will pass behind us as we keep moving forward.

However, grim and gloomy silhouettes of the mind are much harder to shake off. These internal thought shadows sometimes can overcast optimism. These type of shadows can cast self-doubt on the overall process.

Alternatively, having inferior feelings provide a backdrop effect of comparison with other institutions and other programs that look so much more polished and put together. All kinds of questions arise in the mind:

“How will we ever move this mountain with just us?” “Are we really going to do this?” “How do we begin?” “Where do we start?” “How far behind are we from other schools?” “How can we catch up somehow?” “How difficult is this going to be?” “Are we going to have to drag folks along?” “Who will come willingly and help us?” “Who will play?” and “What if we are not successful?”

These questions illustrate some random panic thinking that I (Nancy) was going through during
our meeting times when discussing ePortfolios for an assessment model with the Visual and Performing Arts Program. The shadow of self-reflection was immense. Just talking about this process with peers at other institutions made my head spin. My lurking shadows: hard-focused work with shades of fear, but the challenge was going to be worth it.

"It seemed that we had limited "freedom of choice" in the process of selecting software. However, when we heard of the myriad of software options, sifting through the marketplace for software would have been daunting and monumental."

Coming out of the Shadows
Our starting point was the 2021-2022 AAC&U Institute for ePortfolios and Digital Learning. We met monthly to learn more about institutional rollout and challenges other institutions had in the process. While listening to others, we discovered similar challenges.

We were not alone.

The motivation of learning with others virtually was a safe place to be transparent. Actually, our institution seemed ahead of other institutions with two ePortfolio tools already adopted: Anthology Portfolio (our main assessment software) and D2L Brightspace Portfolio (a generalized secondary software). With our pre-selected software choices and the first step done for us, we had a good start, saving us precious time.

It seemed that we had limited “freedom of choice” in the process of selecting software. However, when we heard of the myriad of software options with committee work from others, sifting through the marketplace for software would have been daunting and monumental.

Our adopted institutional software, Anthology Portfolio, seemed to be advanced, flexible, robust, as well as tried and true, giving us confidence to look at the next step to come out of the dark to begin to develop the new contour of an ePortfolio assessment program for the Visual and Performing Arts Program at Savannah State University. In addition, we had a simple collective container software that accompanied the state of Georgia Learning Management System (LMS) software: D2L Brightspace Portfolio.

Finally, we found that there was a great need for “admission software” as students needed to provide their prior work in an ePortfolio for evaluation of entrance to our program. We needed some type of temporary ePortfolio or temporary student account for this process.

Anthology Portfolio did not allow for this feature. Nick found a “work around” to keep this admission ePortfolio concept intact for the program. He found that if we included a third (Web 2.0 software platform) called Slate, we could keep the integrity of formal admission with evaluation and assessment of our incoming students. Slate allowed our program to provide a way for students to share their prior work with no cost to them as well as no additional costs to our institution.

Slate also allowed us to include dynamic auditions within the Performing Arts Major and Music Performance Majors as well as compile rich static images for Studio Art Majors. By adding Slate to the digital palette, our program now had a way to get everything we needed from the “ePortfolio concept” to begin.

With these three very different tools, we finally felt equipped to begin the journey of constructing an assessment protocol for our emerging student artists and our unique program surrounding the ePortfolio.

Throwing Shade
Even though we did not have to take the steps necessary to review a full spectrum of marketplace software, we still had many steps in front of us on
our journey to obtaining a vibrant ePortfolio that met all of our program’s needs, both students’ and faculty’s.

However, in that initial learning process with Anthology Portfolio, we came under some serious gray clouds. The issue: only the student could upload artifacts into the ePortfolio with Anthology Portfolio. This presented difficulty for us, and we had to find another “work around” for both the student and the faculty member to have the ability to upload artifacts.

With our academic assessment, we plan to use the ePortfolio for the students’ individual benefit as well as a vehicle for improving the program. To be limited with only a student upload was problematic for us.

When conducting summative assessment on student learning outcomes, faculty usually like to select the student artifacts in a continuum that displays a variety of work. Nick figured out the “work around” again using both the D2L Brightspace Portfolio for the Anthology Portfolio limitation. First, the faculty member would upload artifacts to the D2L Brightspace Portfolio.

Secondly, after the faculty selections were made of students’ artifacts for upload to the first portfolio, the instructor would then direct the student to upload those artifacts from the D2L Brightspace Portfolio to the Anthology Portfolio. In doing this 2-step process, the faculty member then had some type of selection and control of what artifacts uploaded to Anthology Portfolio.

We realized that Portfolio offered by D2L Brightspace would work for every student on the campus and was a simple collection tool. The Visual and Performing Arts Program needed much more than just a simple reservoir.

Our program needed formative, diagnostic, and summative assessment options to accompany the needs within the capstone courses required by the major. The program needed the flexibility of inviting outside assessors and multiple assessors for student-submitted work. The program needed multiple rubrics and complex schemes for assessment. Our program is unique in that the BFA is a professional degree.

This special type of ePortfolio is needed to exhibit the correct skills necessary to be a working artist. It is a critical statement to say that the artist’s ePortfolio, in most cases, is more important than a degree. The degree document hangs on a wall; the portfolio documents the practice of the artist, highlighting the dynamic development and style of the artist, both with skills and vision.

With our academic assessment, we plan to use the ePortfolio for the students’ individual benefit as well as a vehicle for improving the program. To be limited with only a student upload was problematic for us.

The unique analysis and evaluation in “hearings” for musical technique and “juries” for theater and dance in the Performing Arts are critical for employers to witness expert critiques of student work. Using Anthology Portfolio seemed to have the range or myriad of tools to accommodate for our specific present needs and for future growth.

However, learning the software was challenging. As two administrators, we thought we were ready to rest in a safe umbra of understanding with our special one-on-one private tutoring on the tool.

We found that we were actually “throwing shade” upon ourselves with our newly formed assumptions. We found assumptions of all types. We discovered assumptions that the software would be easy to use and learning would be quick and painless. We also discovered assumptions that the software could do more than we actually needed in a streamlined fashion with no “work around.” And we uncovered assumptions that we as administrators had ample time to learn, retain, repeat, and
then disseminate to faculty quickly. In addition, the ultimate assumption we found was that navigating our time management with other duties around this whole process would be doable.

Within the intensity of all this, we found that we truly needed more help. With key faculty members resigning who could have shouldered the burden of learning and training with others on our new ePortfolio language, we needed to regroup.

Our main concern was that our rollout would have a favorable deliverable product for our faculty. We needed our rollout to be as smooth as possible, especially as now we needed three ePortfolio tools to help our overall process.

Our solution: for the software company to provide a total build-out for our unique program needs. We thought we could do everything ourselves, but the time and energy of our first attempt revealed that we needed more support. We had to concede that asking for help was warranted by such a complex project of multiple moving parts. As we continued to develop in our understanding of the software, learning about elected options and true needs became more apparent.

We first identified that we needed the integration with our Learning Management System (LMS) Brightspace for faculty to access artifacts from their course, and for students to submit course artifacts for assessment. We had the assumption that instructors could upload student artifacts much like assessment software we used in the past. We again were feeling some “shade” from this assumption.

It seems like more effort on the faculty members to have only students upload artifacts. It seems trouble-free and undemanding to have the option of either the student or the instructor uploading. However, it is our adopted software, so we needed to go with it. This type of subtle detail for our program could be an issue, but we will not know that until we get there, and at the time of writing this article, we are still in the beginning process of rollout steps.

Secondly, we needed to take the existing assessment map(s) and identify student artifacts that could be different from the traditional artifacts we were using for traditional assessment. Therefore, instead of a multiple-choice quiz, a more dynamic artifact needed would replace it such as the JPG MP4 and MPV files of reviews hearings, and juries for visual and performing art recorded in real time. Faculty needed to have conversations around these changes and possibly add in new assignments for the needs of unique student artistic artifacts.

At this point, we are at the start of our rollout process. We are gathering content that we need, and we are discovering our real limitations and the justifications for them. We are also discovering a completely new world of digital expansion that will add new life to our academic program and provide a living record of our emerging artists.

We found assumptions of all types. We discovered assumptions that the software would be easy to use and learning would be quick and painless. Assumptions that the software could do more than we actually needed in a streamlined fashion. The ultimate assumption was that navigating our time management with other duties would be doable.

By digitally capturing our student production, we could ignite others by sharing former student examples for recruitment and for motivation.

We will have both a physical gallery and now a permanent digital collection that will attract more students to our program. Our ePortfolio assessment system will follow our students to their job interviews and help students to communicate more about their studies here at Savannah State University.
Even with certain limitations of our software, the advancement of implementing this digital presence within our program is welcome, and we are confident that the slight variations of shade will move and change in time to meet our ever-changing needs within Visual and Performing Arts.

**Shifting Our Shade**

This ePortfolio upgrade was not just a simple updating or migrating of our students’ real artifacts into digital artifacts for infinity and beyond. The transformation to the ePortfolio concept was much more. We discovered that our entire academic program assessment hinged on the connections of course outcomes linked to program outcomes. For example, our SSU nomenclature called Course Student Learning Outcomes (CSLOs) would map onto the Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs). Required CSLOs written within the course syllabi provide an assessment based on the stated CSLOs of “met or not met” for targeted measures to discern changes needed for improvement. PSLOs data points are then compiled in our Anthology Outcomes software to reveal the overall “health” of our program.

What that meant for us in the past is a secondary thought about the artifacts. The primary thinking was about the outcomes stated in each course. This generalized type of thinking about course outcomes did not convey a deeper reflecting on the learning significance for each specific artifact. We quickly realized that the artifacts themselves transcended course outcomes.

For example, an artifact of a student artist resumé would be more deeply conveyed and understood by the individual artist than simply writing a resumé.
in one course to fulfill the CSLO. The artifact of the resumé would transcend. We had to shift our thinking with the ePortfolio format now in place. Connecting the artifact directly to the PSLOs created more emphasis on deep learning due to the explanation for the artifact to connect with the PSLO.

What we realized was that by simply connecting course outcomes (CSLOs), we were only allowing class content to speak for the students' understanding of the knowledge or skill. However, introducing the ePortfolio, the explanation of the artifact, and the justification of the connection provided deeper thinking.

We needed justification from the instructor for creation and development of the parameters of the assignment and an explanation from the student defend the product as meeting those parameters, describing the connection. On the prior page is a graphic showing our shift (see Figure 1).

The ePortfolio assessment will revolve around one class that all the students will take within the major with no credit hours attached. This course, FINE 1000 Art Forum, will introduce students to participate in a Hearing, Jury or Review to allow students to present their classwork as a true body of work selected for their portfolio. The students would then receive feedback from the faculty on this selection of work and the students’ explanation of work, thus teaching students to become a true curator of their creative work.

Shedding Light on Our History and New Culture
Savannah State University is the first public historically black college or university in the state of Georgia and the first institution of higher learning in the city of Savannah. The school was established in 1890 as a result of the Second Morrill Land Grant Act, which mandated that southern and border states develop land-grant colleges for black citizens.

Later that year, the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation creating the Georgia State Industrial College for Colored Youths, which served as Georgia’s 1890 land-grant institution until 1947. A preliminary session of the Georgia State Industrial College was held in the Baxter Street School Building in Athens, GA, before moving to Savannah in October 1891. Richard R. Wright, Sr., was appointed the first president of the institution in 1891, which opened with five faculty members and eight students.

The college awarded its first degree in 1898 to Richard R. Wright, Jr., the son of the founding president, who became the ninth president of Wilberforce University. Cyrus G. Wiley of the class of 1902 was the first alumnus to become college president in 1921, the same year the first female students were admitted as residents on campus. In 1928, the college became a four-year, degree-granting institution, ending its high school and normal school programs.

Upon the creation of the University System of Georgia (USG) in 1932, the college became one of the first members of the system and its name was changed to Georgia State College. Its name changed again in 1950 to Savannah State College, and the institution received initial accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in 1955. The USG Board of Regents elevated the college to university status in 1996 and renamed the institution Savannah State University (https://www.savannahstate.edu/about-ssu/history.shtml).

Today, SSU recruiting efforts yield students from all over the world. However, most of our students
come from public schools. Having a rich history in the state of Georgia, SSU has a reputation of legacy for many families of alumni within the areas of Savannah and Atlanta, Georgia.

We see a pattern in thinking when most students come from high schools where students discard their classroom artwork. The mentality that a work of art is merely classwork and can be thrown away is something students bring with them to college.

Each semester, students throw away their assignments and do not have any type of record of the artifact except the grade in the instructor’s gradebook. Students simply abandon their projects after a semester, and they are unaware that they are losing a valuable opportunity to keep the work and review the work as they matriculate through the program making growth connections. It feels like they are throwing away their baby pictures from a family photo album. Looking back to see development, style, and growth is imperative to articulate deep concepts from the artist.

By keeping a digital log of these artifacts, the student artist obtains visual benchmarks in professional development. This in turn will show hallmarks of the artist’s style as well as a summary of themes and descriptions of motivation for the choices made in development of the works.

Students need to become curators of their artifacts, and the best way to do this is with the digital assistance that the ePortfolio offers. The student will always have a record of their work to carry with them wherever they go. Even if they sell or eventually destroy artifacts, the digital record will be intact. As we write down this experience today, we are not finished. We still have a lot of time to move in the right direction. We are still working on this process. Nevertheless, we can tell you about our vision. We envision that our students will be able to use our ePortfolio system to apply for admission to our majors: Studio Art, Performing Art, and Music Performance. We envision that our students will find our platform easy to use as they upload artifacts.

We envision that our faculty will be able to communicate more relevance to our program, offering assessment with real world examples and artifacts. We envision a use of rubrics to help the faculty communicate helpful feedback and pinpoint areas of strength and weakness that the student can relish the victory of or improve the skill set for. We envision a bright light shining from our tool to allow the students to illustrate their competency in the artistic area of their major.

Our hope is that by using an ePortfolio in Visual and Performing Arts, it will shed more and more light on the deep concepts and constructs that a student may communicate with an employer while interviewing. We hope that our use of this type of tool will bring vitality into our program as a high impact practice within our institution. We want this process to be an easy, organic trend for our students, in that they are starting with the ePortfolio and they are ending with it as well. We hope that our students will be able to find deeper meanings and better communication and expression with their body of work.

The sky is the limit with these types of tools. We are looking forward to sharing more of our journey in the future. It is exciting to think there are uses for ePortfolios that we have not dreamed up yet. We have hope and excitement around the possibilities for our department.

I am not fond of clichés, but the song “The Future’s So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades” by Timbuk 3 from the 80s comes to mind when I think of our new ePortfolio assessment system.
About the Authors

**Dr. Nancy Linden** is the Director of the Center for Teaching and Faculty Development (CTFD) and the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Director at Savannah State University in Savannah, Georgia. She has been a professional educator for more than 30 years. Nancy has been a college instructor of Critical Thinking and Communication, a K-12 assessment consultant, and an author of 32 self-published books. She holds two intellectual patents for inventing a reading comprehension method called: Book & Brain Reading. Nancy earned a BS in Secondary English/Speech from The University of Texas at Austin, and an MA in Educational Technology from Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA, as well as an EDD in Professional Leadership from the University of Houston and a Higher Education Teaching Certificate from Harvard University, at the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning in Cambridge, MA.

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Editorial Team Biographies

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Executive Co-Editor
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 Certificate 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.

Russel Stolins
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Russel Stolins (MA, Educational Technology) heads the Academic Technology department at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. There he evangelizes for ePortfolio practice throughout campus. He also works with faculty on the design and development of distance courses that combine visual elegance with functionality. Russel is the author, co-author, or editor of numerous textbooks on technology over the past 22 years. When he’s not working, Russel advocates for youth in foster care as a court-appointed special advocate (CASA).

Barbara Ramirez
Review Editor
Barbara Ramirez retired from the Department of English at Clemson University in 2019. During her time as faculty member, she served as the Director of both the Class of 1941 Studio for Student Communication and the University’s Writing Center in addition to teaching a variety of English courses and serving as the Arts and Humanities faculty liaison for Clemson’ University ePortfolio Initiative. Currently, she is a faculty member in the College of Engineering, Computing, and Applied Sciences at Clemson where she serves as a technical writer, editor, and instructor. She is also the Assistant Editor for the Journal of Engineering Education. She has been active in AAEEBL, serving on the Conference Planning Committee and helping edit the Field Guide to ePortfolio (AAC&U, 2017).

Deborah Svatos
Managing Editor
Deborah Svatos (Debbie to those who know her) obtained her MFA and BFA at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She writes fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction that often blurs the line between genres, finding writing to be one of her life’s greatest joys. Previously, she has served as an editor of poetry and fiction in the IAIA Student Anthologies Chrysalism and Celestial Refractions in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Her work has been published in these anthologies, as well as IAIA’s 2020 and 2021 Student Anthologies, Remembering What We Carry and Out of Storms, Into Stars, The Santa Fe Literary Review, Haiku Journal, and The Tribal College Journal—Student website as an honorable mention in its 2020 and 2021 Student Writing Competition. She is proud to be a part of AePR in her role as Managing Editor.

Samantha Blevins
Editor-in-Chief
Samantha J. Blevins is an Instructional Designer & Learning Architect at Radford University in Radford, VA. She works as part of the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, specializing in ePortfolio implementation. She received her doctorate in Instructional Design and Technology from Virginia Tech and has broad teaching and instructional design experiences. Her research focus areas include: diffusion of innovation theory, ePortfolio implementation, and effective faculty development. She also serves as Board Representative for the Systemic Thinking and Change division of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology and serves on the Advisory Board for the Instructional Development Educational Alliance Exchange.
Editorial Team Biographies (continued)

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APA Style Editor
Carra Leah Hood is Associate Professor of Writing at Stockton University. She has previously served as Director of Essential Learning Outcomes and Associate Provost. As a writing faculty member, she facilitates writing students’ creation of ePortfolios as a culminating learning experience.

Candyce Reynolds
Web & Social Media Content Editor
Candyce Reynolds is a Professor and Chair of Educational Leadership and Policy at Portland State University. She has an A.B. in Psychology and Social Welfare from the University of California at Berkeley and a Ph.D. from the University of Oregon in Counseling Psychology. Her scholarship is focused on student centered pedagogy, authentic student learning assessment, the role of reflective practice in facilitating student learning, and ePortfolios. 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 by Stylus Publishing in 2014.

Designer Biography

Susan Stehle
Art Director
Susan Stehle’s background is in journalism, education, and design, and she is currently working on an MBA at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She enjoys helping editors and artists understand one another, as well as thinking up ways to make information easier to read and understand.
The next edition of the AAEEBL ePortfolio Review (AePR) is now accepting paper proposals addressing the AAEEBL annual conference theme: A Changed World for ePortfolios: Opportunities for Design Justice, Effective Implementation, and Assessment.

The inequities in higher education surfaced by the COVID-19 pandemic require an ongoing commitment to rethinking the ways that we design ePortfolio implementations so that they center those who are often marginalized unintentionally. AAEEBL has a long history of, and commitment to, practices and pedagogies that enable learners to document and reflect on their learning. Indeed, ePortfolio pedagogies and research have demonstrated the importance of creating space for learners to share the ways that they connect and transfer learning between and among contexts. While these practices are often intended to be liberatory, how might we be inadvertently reinforcing systems and structures that are oppressive and/or marginalizing?

This issue is devoted to an exploration of the various ways that ePortfolios can and should be justice-oriented. As always, we will consider articles focused on other themes.

**CFP Submission Deadline: July 18, 2022.**

Submit an abstract of 250 words or less in the form linked below. Note that completed papers are not accepted at this time. If your abstract is accepted, our editorial team will contact you with further information.

Submit your proposal now!