

The background features an abstract design with three blue circles of varying sizes, each composed of concentric layers of different shades of blue. Two thin, light blue lines intersect to form a large 'V' shape that frames the circles. The circles are positioned in the upper right and lower right areas of the page.

Online Portfolios

e-Folios

By: Amy Hissom
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Introduction

Hello everyone! I'm here to talk about online portfolios, which are sometimes referred to as e-folios; what they are and how you, as college students or job hunters, can benefit from creating one.

To begin, let's talk about what a portfolio is. A portfolio is a container used for storing and organizing samples of one's work. For instance, a photographer might choose some of his/her best photographs to bind together in a three-ring notebook to show potential employers. On the other hand, a journalist looking for employment might put together a folder containing all his/her best writings to show potential employers. These are examples of traditional portfolios. An online portfolio is also a container used for storing and organizing one's work, but in digital format.

So now you're probably thinking, "How would creating a portfolio help me? I'm not a professional yet! I'm still in college!" Well creating a portfolio would help you and that's what I'm here to explain.

We attend college to learn new skills for building our careers. When looking to obtain employment we put together resumes which list our skills and any certifications or degrees we have already obtained or are working towards. We also put together a list of professional references such as past employers or college professors who can verify that what we list on our resumes is in fact, true. A portfolio allows your resume to expand by showing examples of your work which is another way of backing up what your resume states.

These are all benefits of an online or traditional portfolio. Now let's talk more about benefits in terms of online vs. traditional. I have been practicing the technique of building my own portfolio since the spring of 2005 and can assure you that the benefits of an online portfolio tremendously outweigh those of a traditional one. To explain this, I will use a couple examples of my own.

Organization and Storage

Online portfolios are a much better way of organizing and storing your achievements and work samples. How many times have you completed an assignment, turned it in, received it back graded, and then shoved it in a notebook or folder and forgot about it? Then all of a sudden a day comes when you might have to refer back to that assignment for some reason and can't find it. With an online portfolio all your work is stored in one place and can be organized into sections. On top of that, the use of navigational links makes it much easier to find a certain project.

Easier to Maintain and Not as Expensive to Update

Traditional portfolios require a lot of printing especially if you are constantly revising your work to keep it polished or adding new samples of work. What if you are applying for more than one position at the same time and need more than one copy of your portfolio? The cost of paper and ink can be high. With an online portfolio you can add as much new content as you like and revise old content over and over again without ever having to print. Passing out the Web address to your portfolio is much easier than, and not as expensive as passing out printed copies. This brings us to the next benefit.

Easier to Share

An online portfolio is easier to share because it is accessible 24 hours a day to anyone who has access to the Internet making it available for millions to see instead of just a select few.

Free Advertisement

When you share your online portfolio with potential employers or customers you are advertising yourself. A free way of doing this is to add your portfolio Web address to your permanent email signature. Every time you send an email or forward one that has been sent to you, your permanent signature goes with it. Just imagine how many people will see your portfolio's address. Maybe even potential employers you don't even know exist. I can attest to this. My aunt was a member of many organizations pertaining to history and genealogy. Before she passed away she printed out her entire email address book and instructed me to email all those she

had circled once her time came, to inform them of her death. I followed through with her wishes and received many replies. I received two replies from Flora VerStraten, President of the Jefferson County Chapter of the OGS. The first reply was to send her condolences and the second was to offer me a job. She saw the address to my online portfolio in the signature of my email and decided to check me out.

Another good idea is to add the address to your contact information at the top of your resume. If you are posting your resume on Web sites like Monster.com or applying for jobs through the Internet by sending an electronic version of your resume, potential employers will see the link to your portfolio where they can go to learn more about you. When applying for a position where the interviewer or potential employer can see an online portfolio that includes a resume and views of a student's actual work, that student may be more likely to obtain the position.

Enhance Technology and Additional Communication Skills

Today more and more positions require technology skills. By creating and building an online portfolio, you will enhance your technology skills. The time you spend displaying, sharing, and presenting them enhances additional communication skills.

Sense of Accomplishment

And last, but surely not least, you would feel a sense of accomplishment by using your portfolio to keep track of your own progress and by demonstrating what you have learned when sharing, and them with others.

Kent State Server

Kent State University, like most universities, reserves space on its server for each and every one of its students. Your space is free to use for projects such as an online portfolio as long as you are a student of Kent State. It is a good idea to backup your portfolio by saving it to disc when you get close to graduation. This way, you can transfer it to a free Web site service such as Geocities or a purchased one. If you don't transfer it to another space on the Internet, you still have the entire portfolio on a disc that you can make copies of to pass out.

“If you build it, they will come” - Theodore Roosevelt

So now that you know the benefits of creating an online portfolio, what will you do with that knowledge? I'm sure you all have heard Teddy Roosevelt's famous saying “If you build it, they will come”. Before I go, I want you to remember something very important. It is up to you to develop and promote your own career, document your success stories, and build your career portfolio. You are the only person who is truly interested in promoting your work. It is up to you to honk your own horn, stand above the crowd, and get the recognition you deserve.

See you on the Internet!