ePortfolio User Guide

ePortfolio
for All

IDENTITY

COMPETENCIES

EPORTFOLIO

Building my ePortfolio

A guide for building your lifelong ePortfolio

A PORTOLANO publication, prepared by Serge Ravet, EIfEL

Artists have a long tradition to showcase the best of their work in portfolios. Beyond the traditional 'showcase portfolio', the objective of this guide is to help you to harness the power of technology to explore the unique benefits of the various types of ePortfolios and technologies to support your career development, by making visible, to yourself and others, the learning and competencies acquired through work experience, voluntary work, formal education and informal learning through life experience.

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What is an ePortfolio?

An ePortfolio is a purposeful digital collection of evidence demonstrating reflective learning. In other words, it is an electronic document presenting information about who you are as a reflective learner or professional. It may include information on your interests, your experiences, your learning and your skills.

Think of your ePortfolio as a GPS (Global Positioning System), telling you where you are now and what you have to do to reach your destination. But unlike a GPS which can automatically tell you where you are, your e-portfolio is only as good as the data you feed it with.

Your ePortfolio is your own personal online space or digital identity. You can choose to keep it to yourself or share it with others.

With an ePortfolio YOU CAN

- Get respect and credit for what you have learned.
- Reflect on your learning
- Assess your own learning
- Learn how to present your own learning to others
- Get experience from a variety of places
- Grow in confidence and self-esteem
- Identify learning gaps and set goals for meeting them
- Plan future learning

> (**e**)**Portfolio**: *a purposeful selection of (digital) evidence connected through a narrative demonstrating reflective learning*

What distinguishes an ePortfolio from an electronic CV is the *reflective* element, i.e. the self-observation on how we learn, how effective we are at it, making judgements on our own performance, using critical thinking, actively challenging both ourselves and others. Without that reflective element, an ePortfolio is just a sophisticated electronic CV.

An ePortfolio is more than a document or a product: it is the outcome of a process which should help you to better understand not just what you have achieved and learned, but how you have learned and how you will exploit this new knowledge in the future.

It is also the belief of the authors of this guide that artists can contribute to the emergence of the ePortfolio as a new *genre*, bringing imagination and creativity in a field still dominated by rational and structured thinking. There is an opportunity that artists do not simply mimic current ePortfolio practice but help the ePortfolio community to advance and transform its current practices.

What are ePortfolios made of?

ePortfolios usually include:

- A **storage space** (repository) where you can upload and organise your documents and evidence of prior learning. It can contain a variety of data such as certificates, testimonies, application letters etc. and they can be in many different formats like text, photos, video, audio. It is important to organise this space in such a way that the information can be easily retrieved (tagging is often the best way to retrieve the information).

- A **dialogue and reflection space** where you can reflect and get feedback from people you trust, like peers, a tutor, manager or your assessor. Reflection is important to better understand what you have done and learned and how you will use that in the future. This continuous dialogue with people you trust and with yourself is an important way of getting the best out what your have learned and experienced.

- A **presentation space** (the visible part of your ePortfolio) where you can select and sort the information to present to different people or for different purposes. This is the place for a narrative connecting all the pieces of evidence together.

What do ePortfolios look like?

There is a large variety of ePortfolios formats from short narrative presented as a story (story telling) to highly structured documents connecting a number of evidence to occupational standards (competency-based accreditation portfolio), through reflective journals kept by professionals.

What are ePortfolios used for?

ePortfolios are used in a variety of contexts

- **Initial education**—from kindergarten to higher education as a tool to support learning as well as assessment and job search. ePortfolios are also used to support the transition across different learning episodes, like when moving from secondary school to college or to apply to a university.

- **Continuing education**—eportfolios are largely used to support accreditation of prior learning (APL) as well as competency based learning, development and qualification schemes and continuing professional development (CPD)

- **Career planning and personal development planning**—ePortfolios are used for managing transition between jobs, plan future career changes

- **Professional and social recognition**—ePortfolios are used for obtaining a formal recognition, with a diploma or an informal recognition by a community of peers

- **Assessment**—ePortfolios are used to support authentic assessment, i.e. assessment based on evidence collected in authentic situations—as opposed to artificial situations such as exams and tests.

How can the ePortfolio help to achieve my goals?

An ePortfolio will help you to:

- **Identify learning** - Identify the learning achieved through paid and unpaid work, life experiences, leisure activities and courses.

- **Document Learning** - When collecting evidence, it is important to make it clear to the person who is going to review your ePortfolio that each piece of evidence is valid, sufficient, authentic and current.

- **Articulate learning** - Your portfolio must elicit what you have learned, and how your learning is supported by the evidence collected. Your statements of learning must be contained in a learning narrative eliciting the links between the evidence collected and the competency standards against which you want to be assessed.

- **Review Learning** - A subject matter expert, reviews whether the evidence provided are valid, sufficient, authentic and current. This is a continuous process until the final review.

- **Plan learning and development** - The review of ePortfolio can help you to reflect on your current and future career and create the foundations for new job experiences or further learning.

- **Recognise learning** - Recognition is the process by which your existing skills, knowledge and experience gained throughout your life, regardless of how they have been acquired, are recognised towards the achievement of recognised qualification. It can be also in relation to getting a promotion within your organisation or to demonstrate your competencies to a professional body or a future employer.

- **Accredit Learning** - Once the ePortfolio is complete, i.e. the standards are met, it can be reviewed. The ePortfolio could be submitted to an awarding body, a professional body, a training organisation to get approval for a certificate, a diploma or a statement of achievement.

How do I create my ePortfolio?

How to define the purpose of my ePortfolio?

There are many different reasons for creating an ePortfolio. Depending on your purpose(s), the ePortfolio will vary in formats and contents. It is therefore very important to define why you want to create it and who will be its audience (yourself, a current of future employer or client, a university or training body, an awarding body for a qualification?). Defining your goal and the audience will guide you to select the relevant format and contents.

Here are some of the reasons why you might want to create an ePortfolio:

- to apply for a job, I would like to showcase my best work
- I would like to advertise my work to prospects and clients
- I would like to change career and identify the competencies I can use in another context or in another job
- in order to gain a qualification, I need to demonstrate that I have achieved professional standards
- I would like to have my work experience recognised by an awarding or accrediting body
- I would like to plan my personal and professional development
- I would like to apply to a university course and I would like to benefit from recognition of prior learning (RPL) in order to attend only the courses I need
- I want to keep an ePortfolio to manage my continuing professional development
- My professional association requires its members to develop an ePortfolio

How to choose my ePortfolio tool?

If you are not involved with an institution or a programme which is providing access to an ePortfolio platform, there are a number of free software available on the Internet you can use to mashup your own ePortfolio:

- **Storage space**: In order to create a digital archive of your work you can use a hard drive, a flash disk, your iPod or an online disk. Even if you are using an ePortfolio platform provided by your employer or a training organisation , it is most likely that the storage area will be limited to a few megabytes (MB). The solution to increase the storage size is to use free storage spaces like Flickr (photos and presentations) or Youtube (video and presentations), SlideShare (presentations) or Google docs (documents).

- **Space for dialogue and reflection**: blog platforms usually provide the ability to select who can see the different entries in your journal and decide whether you can get feedback from other people. Online publishing spaces like WordPress allow you to create a journal and get feedback from your peers. Social software like Facebook, Elgg or Ning are other options.

- **Presentation space**: online publishing tools like WordPress, Google sites etc. have most of the features you need to create a snappy, well structured and easy to navigate ePortfolio.

ad-hoc ePortfolio tools

Plan learning—social software like 43things allow people to set goals and find other people who are willing to provide support to achieve those goals.

Collect evidence of learning—it is now possible to use a number of online services to store the evidence that will be later displayed in an eportfolio: flickr for photos, YouTube for videos, Google Sites and Google docs for documents, Blogger to store a reflective journal

Reflect—it is now easy to annotate documents online, to use a wiki to demonstrate how one's reflection on a subject has evolved over time, use a blog to keep a reflective journal and collect feedback from peers and tutors

Select—the use of tags makes it easy to retrieve the information in the repository to select the elements that will be displayed to a particular audience

Connect—hyperlinks and tags are powerful tools to connect together what has been learned over time, connect a reflection to a specific competency or a group of evidence. Social networks are powerful tools to connect people and ideas.

Review—it is possible to add comments to documents, blogs and wikis, vote and rate individual items. For example, using the notification function contained in wikis allows to be notified when a document has been changed by the learner or the reviewer (adding comments, for example).

Publish—tools like Netvibes allow the dynamic aggregation of data that can be on a number of different sites.
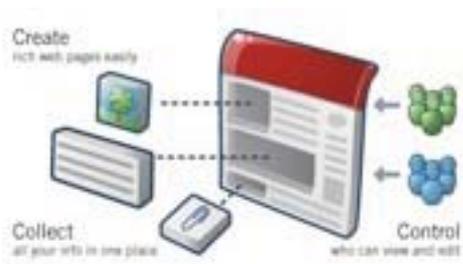
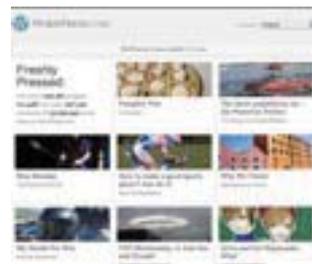With **Google Sites** (sites.google.com) creating a portfolio is as easy as editing a document, and you always control who has access, whether it's just yourself, the people you are working with or potential employers. You can even publish Sites to the world. The Google Sites web application is accessible from any internet connected computer. Google sites requires to create a Google account. Google site as such does not provide a blog, but it is easy to integrate an external bog such as Blogger.

With **Wordpress** (www.wordpress.com) you can start your blog in minutes. All you need is an email address. You'll get your own WordPress.com address and free and customisable designs for your blog, 3 gigabytes of file storage. You can blog as much as you want for free, your blog can be public to the world or private for just the people you choose.

Netvibes (www.netvibes.com)
Netvibes is a free web service that brings together media sources and online services — blogs, news, weather, videos, photos, social networks, email and much more. Its contents is automatically updated every time a page is visited.

If you already have a number of resources available on the Internet, Netvibes will facilitate their aggregation in a coherent format.

For a more detailed list of available tools you can visit Helen Barrett's website:
electronicportfolios.org/web20portfolios.html

What evidence should I collect in my repository?

There is no real limit to the type of artefacts you should collect in your repository, as it is in a second time that you will select the most relevant ones to put into your ePortfolio(s).

The evidence collected in your ePortfolio repository are of different nature:

- direct evidence, like artefacts produced during learning or working
- indirect evidence, like testimonies, feedbacks from peers or clients, assessments
- awards, certificates and diplomas

Whatever evidence you collect should be linked to a particular skill or competency. This can be done by cross-referencing evidence with standards of competence.

How to construct my ePortfolio?

The construction of an ePortfolio is generally described by the following process:

- **Collect** authentic evidence of learning from a variety of sources over time, link new evidence to previously acquired evidence, learning, knowledge, skills and competencies.

- **Select** evidence relevant to the purpose of the portfolio and the audience to whom it is directed. The selection process can be the opportunity for **self-assessment** —review the ePortfolio against standards

- **Reflect** on how or why particular artefacts were selected, the skills and knowledge needed to produce them, and strengths and weaknesses evident in each of them, how they have evolved, how they will be used in the future, etc.

- **Connect** with the audience and peers to get their feedback through dialogue and interaction. This can be an accreditation body, an employer or a potential client.

Of course, the process is not sequential; the four activities of the process will take place in parallel, most of the time.

How to collect and organise evidence?

When you collect artefacts and evidence of your learning it is important to store them in a manner that will make it easy to retrieve them when you compile your portfolio. For that you can use a directory structure. What is more powerful is the use of keywords and tags (c.f. below) as they allow you to connect the same piece of evidence to a number of topics: for example, a piece of work can be related to a specific employer, job or competencies.

Each time you add a new piece of evidence, you need to provide some contextual information – why are you adding it? What does it tells about you? What do you want your audience to know about that piece of work? One useful method to help you provide a succinct description is referred to as COOL which stands for Context, Operation, Outcomes, Learning.

How do I link evidence to competencies?

An ePortfolio will contain a collection of evidence produced at the workplace, or in other settings, demonstrating your competencies against industry standards of competencies. A typical presentation of an ePortfolio is a series of two tables that are cross-referenced: list of evidence, list of standards.

Competency	Evidence	Complete?
Agree with client on a design	E1, E23, E45, E28	Yes
Produce alternative designs	E1, E23,	-
Produce final work according to specification	E44, E22	Revise

Evidence	Description	Date	Valid?
E1	Draft design	25/01/2009	Yes
E2	Letter from the client	26/02/2009	Yes
E3	Revised draft	07/03/2009	Yes
E4	...	...	

Cross-referencing is one of the key activities when building a portfolio used for accreditation of prior learning. How does it work:

- On the one hand, create a list of competencies and criteria and link each of the competencies with a number of evidence (generally more than one, as you need to provide diverse sources of evidence to demonstrate that you can apply the competency in a number of contexts and over time)

- On the other hand, collect a number of evidence demonstrating competencies, and connect each of the pieces of evidence to a competency statement.

When done on paper (or using a spreadsheet or a word processor) this can be a tedious job. With the right ePortfolio platform, this can be made very quickly so you can concentrate on more creative and reflective activities.

If you don't have an ePortfolio platform supporting this process, it can be emulated by using tags: you can tag (add a keyword) to each of the pieces of evidence uploaded. Once all the pieces of evidence have been tagged, it is possible to organise them by tags.

How do I organise my reflection?

According to Dr Helen Barret, reflection is the heart and soul of a portfolio. Keeping a reflective journal, or a blog, is the means to make sense out of the evidence and artefacts collected and presented in the ePortfolio. Reflective writing is your tool reflective learner and practitioner to challenge yourself as well as others and peers on a range of issues through an open and collaborative discussion.

It is important that the ePortfolio does not merely describe what happened, but assess the outcomes against a range of available information such as examples of good practice, observation of other professionals, professional competency standards. Using the evidence collected, you should indicate what you have learnt and the anticipated impact on your future work and the professional practice in your field.

How do I connect my ePortfolio?

It is up to you to decide who you invite to comment on your work and ePortfolio at different points in time. You may at first just want to record your own reflections, then, at a later stage invite peers, managers, tutors or clients to also give you their feedback.

There is a number of Web 2.0 interactive tools that you can use to get/provide comments and feedback on the artefacts selected for the ePortfolio. When providing or getting feedback, it is essential that is *informed feedback*, i.e. a feedback based on agreed rubrics or standards.

How do I structure my ePortfolio?

When reviewing your ePortfolio before publication, or providing feedback to a peer, it is important to have in mind a number of criteria. The following box provides an overview of some of the criteria that can be taken into account when reviewing an ePortfolio.

▪ Reflectiveness	▪ Connection to other subjects	▪ Self-assessment
▪ Insightfulness	▪ Transfer of ideas	▪ Layout
▪ Personal thinking	▪ Creativity	▪ Navigation
▪ Accuracy of Information	▪ Originality	▪ Quality
▪ Completeness	▪ Evidence of understanding	
▪ Diversity of evidence		

There are a number of things that you need to take into account when planning the publication of your ePortfolio, for example:

- which parts will be made public or with restricted access or remain private?
- the contents of home page with an overview of the portfolio and its goals?
- the navigation structure using menus, tabs and hyperlinks
- access to the artefacts providing evidence of your learning
- list of competencies demonstrated

How to keep my ePortfolio up-to-date?

To ensure your ePortfolio gives you the greatest benefit, keep it up-to-date by:

- record the events that are meaningful in your professional life, like seminars, conferences, exhibitions, meetings, readings, etc.

- take time to reflect on your experience and add regular entries about it to journal / blog.

- get feedback from and provide feedback to your peers or colleagues to contribute to the collective reflection on professional practice

- periodically, each week, month, review your ePortfolio and consider whether there are any new experiences or artefacts you could add to it as evidence of your learning.

- personal information and goals
- professional goals
- professional CV (Europass format)

Content structure and navigation

If you do not have a predefined structure for your ePortfolio, you will need to draw a chart to identify its different components, sections and pages.
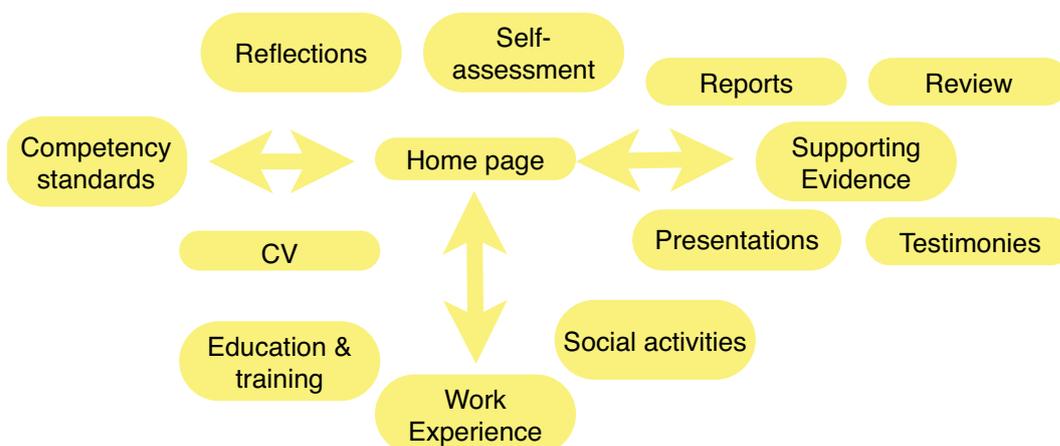
You can organise the navigation structure on the content structure.

NB: Make sure you can always get back to the homepage. Don't rely on the back button!

Access rights management

Depending on the system you have chosen, you should be able to define who has access to what and when.

Tags

According to Wikipedia: In online computer systems terminology, a tag is a non-hierarchical keyword or term assigned to a piece of information (such as an internet bookmark, digital image, or computer file). This kind of metadata helps describe an item and allows it to be found again by browsing or searching. Tags are chosen informally and personally by the item's creator or by its viewer, depending on the system.

Most online platforms offer the possibility to add metadata or tags to uploaded documents or blog entries.

Benefits of using tags:

1. retrieve easily uploaded documents and blog entries
2. connect together different items - all the items sharing the same tags are kind of linked together
3. create a navigation structure with tag clouds or menu items that display all the items sharing a specific tag
4. provide a synthetic view of your ePortfolio with a tag cloud where most used tags are displayed with an increased size font
5. Contribute to everyone's shared knowledge on a given topic using social tags like del.icio.us

For example, if you add the name of a competency to all the pieces of evidence supporting this competency, a simple click on the tag cloud will display all related pieces and blog entries. This makes it easy for the person reading your ePortfolio to find the work you have done to develop a specific competency.
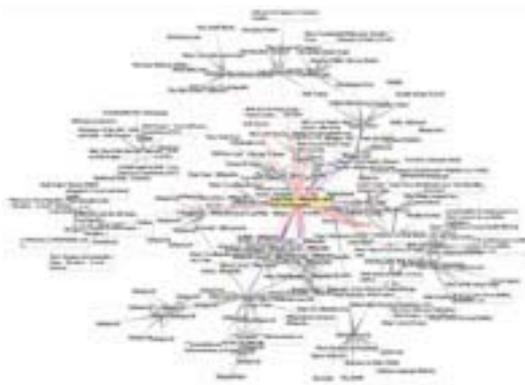
Hypertext links

According to Wikipedia, a hyperlink is a reference in a document to an external or internal piece of information. The most common usage is in the Internet to browse through web pages: some text in the current document is highlighted so that when clicked, the browser automatically displays another page or changes the current page to show the referenced content. The highlighted element is known as a hyperlink (or link for short) and makes a logical connection between two places in the same or different documents.

While tags create links between many documents (all those sharing a tag), an hyperlink creates a link between two documents. In an ePortfolio, hyperlinks can be used to structure a narrative (e.g. use links to move to one part of the story to the next) or to illustrate its elements (use links to explore details or additional information).

Files

Your eportfolio will contains various file types such as text, images, sounds. To make these files easily accessible by a third party it is generally advisable to convert them into a standard format like PDF — there are a number of free PDF converters available.

Most common file formats used:

- HTML – webpages
- GIF and JPG – images
- MPEG, MP4 – videos
- MP3 – sounds
- Flash – animation

More on file formats: http://www.fileinfo.com/common.php

It is also very likely that you will have some of the contents of your ePortfolio in a different storage space, like YouTube (videos) or Flickr (photos). For these, you will have to add links to those files in the directory chosen to collect your evidence.

Folder structure

You need to plan the structure of the folder/directory system you will use to store your files. Depending on the ePortfolio system chosen you will have different options to structure your directories.

You can decide to create a folder structure based on the content structure designed earlier. You can also decide to put all the evidence collected into the same directory, without any sub-directory using tags and metadata to provide additional structure to the contents.

Annex

Contribution of ePortfolios to professional development and recognition[1]

Professional competencies	Comments	Activity	Technology
Having your own identity	The ePortfolio can reflect your uniqueness (and not just the set of skills everybody else has), your inspiration, creativity, how you challenge current practice and ideas, inspire others.	Creating an Internet space where people can find who you are, your values, how you contribute to society.	Social computing and networking provide an opportunity to have one's profile and work visible. Socially connected portfolios empower professionals to be actively engaged with a number of communities, professional, social, with clients and the society at large.
Reflecting on your work as a professional	Elicit your strengths and weaknesses and deal with them—exploit your strengths and correct your weaknesses	Keeping a reflective journal, via a blog or a personal web site, getting feedback from peers, clients, prospects, amateurs or admirers is a mean for you to take responsibility for your work and career,	Blog, personal website, repository of artefacts, comments, mindmaps
Maintaining and developing your professional skills	The ePortfolio can be the place where you plan formal and informal learning	Searching the Internet about the change in skill-set required in your current/future role, collect evidence of your learning, publish the outcomes of your reflection to get further feedback from your peers and clients.	Tags, hyperlinks, social networks, calendar
Doing —getting ahead—persevering	Setting goals, challenging yourself	Getting support from others	Blogs
Planning and organising	Setting the environment and the milestones	Plan the collection and review of evidence/artefacts	Calendar, shared calendar, notification
Verbal and visual presentation	If you are not a graphic designer, this might be the opportunity to get the support from one.	Design a portfolio/personal website consistent with your vision and values	Website design / eportfolio tools
Collaboration with others	Ask others to contribute to your ePortfolio and contribute to that of others	Share and co-publish documents, provide and get feedback from peers and clients. Get help to create your ePortfolio…	Social computing, social networks, collaborative environments (e.g. Google Site, wikis, etc.)
Being customer orientated	Take into account the needs of your customers by collecting	Collect feedback and testimonies from your clients as elements of your ePortfolio	Comments on blogs and website,
Getting on the market,	Using the ePortfolio as a mean to market yourself	Publish a personal website, a presentation ePortfolio	Presentational portfolio, personal website
Being engaged with society		Publish your vision, collect evidence of your engagement, reflect on it	Personal portfolio/blog/website

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[1] Adapted from the 10 competencies of the Artist defined by Kunstenaars & Co