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## CCCC Position Statement

A statement on an education issue approved by the CCCC Executive Committee

### Principles and Practices in Electronic Portfolios

*Conference on College Composition and Communication, November 2007, Revised March 2015*

[Submitted by the CCCC Taskforce on Best Practices in Electronic Portfolios and adopted by the CCCC Executive Committee on November 19, 2007. Revised in March 2015]

### Introductory Premises

Composition professionals in post-secondary institutions—composition faculty, writing program administrators, and technology staff—share concern and responsibility for helping students learn to write at a college level, using the most effective communication technologies. Disciplinary practice and research suggest that portfolio assessment has become an important part of the learning-to-write process.

In turn, electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) have become a viable institutional tool to facilitate student learning and its assessment. E-portfolios can be “web-sensible”—a thoughtfully arranged collection of multimedia-rich, interlinked, hypertextual documents that students compose, own, maintain, and archive on the Internet or in other formats. Web applications designed to support e-portfolio composition can offer additional opportunities for providing structure, guidance, and feedback to students, and can provide students with opportunities to connect selectively with multiple audiences.

E-portfolios communicate various kinds of information for the purposes of assessment. For example, e-portfolios can:

- Identify connections among academic and extra-curricular learning for admission to higher education and vocational opportunities
- Demonstrate applications of knowledge and critical literacies for course or programmatic assessment
- Provide evidence of meeting standards for professional certification
- Display qualifications for employment
- Showcase job-related accomplishments beyond schooling, for evaluation or promotion
- Represent lifelong learning for participation in public service

However, these purposes do not capture important kinds of student learning in composition courses that should carry over to writing tasks in other courses and contexts, such as students understanding different writing processes or learning styles or students setting their own goals for future learning.

As e-portfolios assume a greater role in institutional assessment, First-Year Composition (FYC) will most likely serve as the course that introduces them to students. Therefore, FYC faculty may have a particular, vested interest in identifying the principles and practices of e-portfolio development that prioritize student learning. Such principles and best practices, based on the theoretical knowledge that classroom evidence substantiates, enable

composition faculty to provide students with experiences that help them expand and specialize their writing skills for a variety of cross-disciplinary programs and professional contexts beyond FYC.

## Suggested Principles and Best Practices

E-portfolios develop over time, taking many forms that are unique to the missions of different programs and institutions. No list of principles and practices can describe such assessment *in toto*. Neither can any list suggest an ideal path of development or endpoint, because e-portfolio projects are dynamic, in-progress projects that necessarily undergo changes that are influenced by institutional exigencies and available resources.

Nonetheless, this document proposes that successful uses of e-portfolios share in common certain principles and best practices. The following suggested principles—accompanied by supportive practices in the teaching of writing—can inform the use of e-portfolios in writing programs. These principles and best practices can also inform cross-disciplinary faculty, program directors, technology staff, and university administrators, as e-portfolios are adapted on a wider institutional scale.

It may be most useful to consider these principles and practices in conjunction with the National Council of Writing Program Administrators' "Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition," since that document provides a sound foundation upon which successful writing instruction and assessment rests.

### Principle #1: Learning Outcomes

Students are guided by clearly articulated individual, course, programmatic, or institutional outcomes in their collection, selection, reflection upon, and presentation of "artifacts" (various electronic documents) in the e-portfolio.

At the same time, students structure portfolios around their own learning goals.

Supportive best practices:

- Composition Faculty:
  - Familiarize students with programmatic learning outcomes
  - Share the rubric that will be used in e-portfolio assessment
  - Provide students with models of e-portfolios that illustrate different ways of meeting programmatic outcomes and satisfying rubric criteria
  - Help students identify personal learning goals and adapt programmatic outcomes to those goals
  - Design e-portfolios that demonstrate their own learning goals in teaching
- Writing Program Directors:
  - Familiarize faculty with learning outcomes that the profession values nationally
  - Collaborate with faculty to establish local programmatic learning outcomes based on actual classroom activities and assignments
  - Collaborate with faculty in designing rubrics that consistently facilitate a valid and reliable process of measuring programmatic learning outcomes
  - Collaborate with faculty to cull various models of successful e-portfolios
  - Participate in the selection of software that will help faculty and students meet the program or course learning objectives
  - Observe protocols of permission and confidentiality in obtaining model e-portfolios for instructional purposes
  - Design e-portfolios that demonstrate their own learning goals in writing program direction
- Technology staff:
  - Maintain an archive of student and faculty e-portfolios that successfully illustrate programmatic learning outcomes in various ways

- Make the archive easily accessible for instructional purposes
- Collaborate with faculty and program directors to determine how technology facilitates programmatic learning outcomes
- University Administrators:
  - Encourage authentic assessment driven by locally-designed programmatic objectives and outcomes
  - Select e-portfolio platforms that best support the teaching and assessment of those locally-designed programmatic objectives and outcomes
  - Provide resources for writing programs to develop and share learning outcomes with other programs
  - Highlight how e-portfolios demonstrate student learning outcomes in annual institutional reports and accreditation cycles
  - Factor faculty and director e-portfolios in reviews for promotion and tenure

## Principle #2: Digital Environments

Students develop digital literacies in composing, collaboration, and records-keeping, and consider the rhetorical implications of circulating e-portfolios to both public and private audiences.

Supportive best practices:

- Composition Faculty:
  - Introduce students to the affordances of different digital media
  - Teach students to attend to web design in rhetorically effective and ethical ways, e.g., linking, choosing images, creating webpage formats
  - Discuss the ethical use of digital sources (e.g., fair use, copyright, Creative Commons licenses) and protocols for obtaining permission and documenting digital sources
  - Provide classroom experiences that allow students to practice multimodal composing
  - Encourage students to collaborate when composing and designing multimodal texts
  - Prompt student reflection and discussion on the potentials and limitations of creating e-portfolios with institution-supported e-portfolio platforms or with other outside platforms and tools
  - Facilitate critical discussions on the benefits and disadvantages of students allowing public access to their documents
- Writing Program Directors:
  - Train faculty how to create and teach e-portfolios well in advance of initial attempts to implement programmatic assessment
  - Show faculty how to implement web design for e-portfolios in easy-to-teach steps
  - Give faculty a clear rationale and explanation of how e-portfolios enhance digital learning and assessment, so faculty can explain the same to students
- Technology staff:
  - Develop and test templates for constructing e-portfolios, to assure consistencies in design, layout, and usability
  - Train technology mentors to work individually or in class with students and faculty
  - Provide ongoing, drop-in workshops and studios to support students and faculty
  - Oversee development of online manuals to assist students and faculty with the use of e-portfolio platforms
- University Administrators:
  - Establish budget lines to ensure on-campus technological support and training for students and faculty
  - Show long term commitment to e-portfolios (e.g., purchase equipment, maintain equipment replacement cycles, engage

software consultants, provide central electronic sites where students may access their e-portfolios at any time from any location)

### Principle #3: Virtual Identities

Students represent themselves through personalized information that conveys a web-savvy and deliberately constructed ethos for various uses of the e-portfolio. Students manage those identities by having control over artifacts and who sees them through privacy and access tools.

Supportive best practices:

- Composition Faculty:
  - Facilitate critical discussions of how writers represent themselves in online resumes, profiles, etc.
  - Help students recognize what information, digital forms, and specific artifacts can best represent them as learners
  - Acquaint students with how they construct professional ethos in their own e-portfolios and how they represent themselves professionally, academically, civically, or culturally
  - Encourage students to represent their multicultural backgrounds effectively
- Writing Program Directors:
  - Acquaint faculty with any institutional policies or protocols relevant to Internet publishing, student confidentiality, and personal information
- Technology staff:
  - Set up access protocols that protect student confidentiality and control over who may read e-portfolios, allowing them selectively to deliver and circulate their work in different forms to a variety of audiences
- University Administrators:
  - Provide guidelines for maintaining student confidentiality and use of e-portfolios as an assessment tool

### Principle #4: Authentic Audiences

Students engage in audience analysis of who they intend to read their e-portfolios, not only to accommodate faculty, but also employers, issuers of credentials, family, friends, and other readers. Students coordinate access to their e-portfolios with faculty, programs, the institution, and other readers.

Supportive best practices:

- Composition Faculty:
  - Facilitate critical discussions of different readers' expectations about grammatical usage and digital styles (e.g., font, layout, colors, text-image balance)
  - Teach conventions and principles of user-friendly design and functionality
  - Identify the readers who will assess students' programmatic e-portfolios, and familiarize students with those readers' expectations
  - Help students identify and cultivate appropriate outside readers to respond to their e-portfolios (e.g., former teachers or employers)
  - Teach rhetorical knowledge and dexterity by asking students to analyze how e-portfolios might be written and designed for different readers (e.g., program directors in their major, prospective employers, evaluators of transferable course credits)
  - Encourage students to understand that e-portfolios are dynamic, not static, collections that they will continue to change as they encounter new readers in various contexts
- Writing Program Directors:
  - Invite students to present their e-portfolios in faculty training sessions

- Develop protocols to inform students and faculty about expectations for e-portfolio assessment (e.g., required minimal content, elements of format, reflective artifacts)
- Technology staff:
  - Design websites that showcase programmatic uses of e-portfolios for purposes of recruiting students, informing administrators, attracting employers, and educating legislators or the public (while maintaining the technology that allows students to continue to choose and change whatever artifacts are put on public display)
- University Administrators:
  - Encourage involvement of students in campus-wide workshops to acquaint cross-curricular faculty and program directors in all disciplines with various uses of e-portfolio assessment
  - Include student representation in university assessment committees
  - Provide recognition and awards for excellence in student e-portfolios

## Principle #5: Reflection and E-portfolio Pedagogy

Students create “reflective artifacts” in which they identify and evaluate the different kinds of learning that their e-portfolios represent. In particular, students may explain how various forms of instructive feedback (from faculty, Writing Centers, peers, and other readers) have influenced the composition and revision of their various e-portfolio artifacts, making teaching methods and learning contexts more transparent to their readers.

Supportive best practices:

- Composition Faculty:
  - Teach students different formats and forms that facilitate reflection on their learning at various stages of drafting and web-design (e.g., reflective cover letters that introduce and link readers to various artifacts; concept maps)
  - Teach students that ongoing, rigorous reflection is a crucial part of the process of creating e-portfolios that are dynamic, not static collections
  - Provide opportunities for students to give each other feedback on e-portfolio artifacts, including reflective artifacts
  - Give students clear, constructive feedback that encourages revision and offers tips for improvement in design and communication modalities
  - Encourage students to consult with Writing Center tutors or other institutional support services
  - Collaborate regularly with other faculty, technology staff, and program directors to share the most effective ways to provide feedback and teach reflection
- Writing Program Directors:
  - Acquaint faculty with exemplary e-portfolio formats and forms that show how students can effectively link reflective artifacts with their selected written work (e.g., cover letters, concept maps)
  - Collaborate with teachers to craft effective writing prompts that lead to intellectually rigorous reflective thinking
  - Give faculty feedback on their own e-portfolios and encourage them to incorporate it in their annual self-evaluations
- Technology staff:
  - Coordinate closely with writing program directors and faculty to develop technologies that can help track or display the “feedback loop” between writers and responders/evaluators
  - Keep faculty aware of new technologies that have potential for creating reflective artifacts
- University Administrators:
  - Understand reflection as a critical thinking skill that reinforces student learning outcomes and yields valuable insights about programmatic effectiveness

- Oversee campus events that introduce or advance knowledge about reflection and e-portfolio pedagogy (e.g., invite national speakers, sponsor regional conferences)

## Principle #6: Integration and Curriculum Connections

Students link artifacts in a flexible structure that (1) synthesizes diverse evidence and ideas, (2) invites linear or non-linear ways to read and evaluate e-portfolios, and (3) makes connections to portfolio-related evidence and relationships distributed across the Internet. Students may therefore use linking to represent how e-portfolio artifacts inter-relate with other courses in the larger context of whole-curriculum learning.

Supportive best practices:

- *Composition Faculty:*
  - Encourage students to show learning outcomes by linking artifacts to earlier drafts, or even to artifacts from earlier, relevant courses
  - Encourage students to show transferability of learning outcomes by linking artifacts developed in writing courses to cross-curricular courses
- Writing Program Directors:
  - Facilitate discussions with faculty on how e-portfolios can encourage articulation among related courses (e.g., first and second-semester FYC, or FYC and advanced composition courses)
  - Collaborate with other program directors to stimulate cross-curricular articulation among courses and address shared assessment goals
- Technology staff:
  - Develop e-portfolio systems that feature compatibility with other programmatic or institutional e-portfolio systems
- University Administrators:
  - Encourage faculty, program directors, departments, and colleges to identify and agree upon where in the overall scheme of institutional accountability e-portfolios can play a well-defined, cross-curricular role in student learning and assessment
  - Embrace flexibility in software/technology to accommodate various institutional and programmatic assessment needs
  - Endorse and provide resources for writing across the curriculum

## Principle #7: Stakeholders' Responsibilities

Students receive the necessary support from faculty, program directors, and university administrators who not only use e-portfolios for assessment purposes and program improvement, but also keep informed about what resources are essential for implementing, maintaining, and accessing e-portfolios.

Supportive best practices:

- Composition Faculty:
  - Familiarize themselves with relevant theory and e-portfolio research
  - Participate in ongoing programmatic assessment of student e-portfolios
  - Use findings of e-portfolio assessment to improve approaches to teaching
- Writing Program Directors:
  - Acquaint faculty with the most relevant sources available in portfolio learning, research, and assessment
  - Set up and train a small cohort of faculty to participate in a pilot program when first implementing e-portfolios
  - Expand e-portfolio assessment gradually
  - Conduct faculty scoring of e-portfolios, involving mixes of teachers who are experienced and inexperienced with programmatic assessment
    - Invite teachers to suggest ways to improve training in e-portfolios, and use findings of e-portfolio assessment to improve the program

- Report assessment data promptly and provide university administrators with examples of actual student- and teacher-designed e-portfolios that help interpret what the data means
- Collaborate with directors who are using e-portfolios at their own and other institutions
- Technology staff:
  - Contribute to the development of open-source software and standards that support e-portfolio implementation and maintenance
  - Adapt portfolio rubrics to electronic formats that collect and process data efficiently
- University Administrators:
  - Provide start-up funds for writing directors, technology staff, and interested teachers to engage in professional development related to e-portfolios (e.g., conferences, national workshops)
  - Use e-portfolio assessment findings to help inform further decisions about allocating resources

## Principle # 8: Lifelong Learning

Students are able to adapt their e-portfolios to various purposes/ uses beyond their academic careers, enabling their various readers, in turn, to track their learning longitudinally.

Supportive best practices:

- Composition Faculty:
  - Introduce students to a range of uses for which e-portfolios are used beyond programmatic or institutional goals
  - Provide students with models of e-portfolios that have been adapted for different purposes, to show development of learning over time
  - Demonstrate how their own e-portfolios are examples of lifelong learning
- Writing Program Directors:
  - Coordinate with other program directors and university administrators to develop institutional e-portfolio systems that accommodate longitudinal tracking
- Technology staff:
  - Collaborate with other institutions and organizations, to develop e-portfolio systems that are compatible and interoperable, accommodating “open standards” so that students can easily transfer their e-portfolios to other institutions or sites
- University Administrators:
  - Collaborate with other institutions, state boards of education, and organizations that could provide space and support for e-portfolios that demonstrate lifelong learning

## Current Examples

Current examples of well-conceived e-portfolio projects include:

1. Alverno Diagnostic Digital Portfolio— <http://ddp.alverno.edu/>
2. E-Folio Minnesota— <http://efoliominnesota.com/>
3. Elon University Student Portfolios—[http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/elon\\_college/english/pwr/portfolios.xhtml](http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/elon_college/english/pwr/portfolios.xhtml)
4. Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis, Institutional Portfolio— <http://www.iport.iupui.edu/about/>
5. John Hopkins Digital Portfolio—<http://olms1.cte.jhu.edu/2845>
6. Kapi'olani Community College—<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kirkpatr/kite/kiteloa/>
7. La Guardia Community College— <http://eportfolio.lagcc.cuny.edu/>
8. Louisiana State University Communication Across the Curriculum Digital Portfolio Examples— <http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/cxc/digital-portfolio-examples/>
9. Michigan State University, Professional Writing Alumni Portfolios— <http://wrac.msu.edu/professional-writing/portfolio/>

10. New York City College of Technology ePortfolio—  
<http://websupport1.citytech.cuny.edu/eportfolio.html>
11. Portland State University University Studies Portfolios—  
<http://www.pdx.edu/unst/our-portfolios>
12. Portfolios at Penn State—<http://portfolio.psu.edu/>
13. St. Olaf College Web Portfolios— <http://wp.stolaf.edu/cis/individual-majors-web-portfolios/>
14. University of British Columbia ePortfolios—  
<http://elearning.ubc.ca/toolkit/eportfolios/>
15. University of Denver DU Portfolio— <https://portfolio.du.edu/>
16. University of Washington Bothell ePortfolios  
<http://www.uwb.edu/learningtech/elearning/eportfolios>
17. Virginia Tech ePortfolio— <https://atel.tlos.vt.edu/eportfolios>

Interested teachers, writing program administrators, technology professionals, and university administrators interested in learning more about e-portfolio programs at particular universities should also consult the ePortfolio case studies (Section II, Chapters 23–51) in *Handbook of Research on ePortfolios*, edited by Ali Jafari and Catherine Kaufman (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2006, 248–575).

This shorter list presents examples of professional e-portfolios created by scholars and teachers in composition studies. All e-portfolios are shared with permission from the authors.??

1. Dr. Daniel Anderson, Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, “LitCasting: Sharing Engagement with Literature”—<http://www.teachmix.com/litcast/node/155>

2. Dr. Steven J. Corbett, Visiting Assistant Professor, George Mason University, “Poetics, Rhetorics, and Relationships”—  
<http://writing.colostate.edu/community/portfolios/portfolio.cfm?portfolioid=2870>

3. Dr. Michael Day, Professor, Northern Illinois University, “Assignment for Reflective Teaching Portfolio.” <http://www.engl.niu.edu/mday/600eportf.html>

These sample professional portfolios were generated by teaching assistants at Northern Illinois University in response to Dr. Michael Day’s reflective teaching e-portfolio assignment:

- Jeff Gard, “Teaching Portfolio”—<http://jgard2.wix.com/teaching-portfolio>
- Tim Koppang, “Teach” <http://www.deskandmind.com/teach/>
- Andy Bero, “Teaching Portfolio”—  
[https://sites.google.com/a/students.niu.edu/abero\\_engl103m28/](https://sites.google.com/a/students.niu.edu/abero_engl103m28/)

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