

Educational and Career Outcomes for UBC Arts Students: Towards a New Paradigm—ePortfolio Project

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Introduction

This project clusters a series of initiatives aimed at orienting theory and practice to practical experience to enhance student learning and help faculty build capacity for advising and assessment. Building on Faculty-wide Learning Outcomes activities underway, this project supports students in identifying, articulating, and defining the career outcomes associated with their curricular and experiential learning experiences.

There are two components of the project; this poster focuses on one of the components, ePortfolios that were piloted in 3 Geography courses this year. Humanities courses will be added to the ePortfolio pilot in years 2 and 3.

Materials and Methods

A cross-functional team worked with instructors in 3 Geography courses to develop an ePortfolio tool with the goal of enabling students to collect artifacts of their learning, reflect on their learning in a systematic way, and demonstrate its applicability to a variety of audiences.

TAs offered students training in WordPress and provided additional resources to help students leverage coursework submitted through the ePortfolio for other purposes such as job and grad school applications.

Results

Course assignments and activities were submitted to TAs through the ePortfolio, which were then marked and counted towards the student's course grade. Each instructor incorporated the ePortfolio in their courses depending on the course content and learning goals for the course.

Geography 270: Introduction to Geographic Information Science

- Students created maps during lab assignments, and then uploaded them to the ePortfolio along with a description of the map and what they learned
- At the end of the course students completed a "professional reflection" where they described themselves as emerging Geographers. This statement was used on the landing page for their ePortfolios.
- Students were encouraged to add other tabs to the ePortfolio with samples from other courses, extracurricular activities, co-op terms, etc.
- Students were coached on how to use the ePortfolio in a job search.

Geography 310: Environment and Sustainability

- Students worked in a group to address a case study of a defined natural resource issue, or "Wicked Problem," and created a report with a proposed solution that was submitted through the ePortfolio tool.
- Students were asked to reflect on their experience working as part of a team on the project, and were coached on how to apply that reflection to other activities, such as writing job applications and answering questions in job interviews.
- Course projects are available at <http://environment.geog.ubc.ca/>

Geography 379B: Human and Environmental Geography Field Course

- Students helped their community partner in Williams Lake, BC solve an issue of concern by applying course concepts related to sustainability
- Students worked in groups and used the ePortfolio to submit a variety of course assignments and personal reflections that were shared with their team members through blog posts. Students also commented on each other's work through the ePortfolio.
- Students' reports for their community partners were also uploaded onto the ePortfolio.
- Students were coached on how to create individual ePortfolios, and how to use these portfolios in other contexts, such as a job search or for grad school applications.

Conclusions

The evaluation and assessment program for the ePortfolio project included

- a pre and post course survey for students,
- student focus groups,
- interviews with the instructors and TAs involved in the course

Some of the initial findings are outlined below:

- Several students saw benefit in creating an ePortfolio and reported that they were using the portfolios for other purposes
- Several improvements were suggested which will be incorporated in Year 2 of the pilot, including:
 - Provide clear rationale to students about why ePortfolios are being used in the course
 - Provide more technical support about how to use Word Press at the start of the course and throughout the course
 - Provide more training to TAs on Word Press and rationale for portfolios assignments so they can better support students
 - Career aspects of ePortfolios were somewhat outside of instructors and TAs "comfort zones" so important to have a career educator involved with the project
 - Create marking rubrics for TAs so they know how to assess portfolio design and career focused assignments

Literature Cited

- Catalyst for Learning IRI Framework: <http://c2l.mcnrc.org/framework/>
- The Learning Portfolio: a Powerful Idea for Significant Learning http://ideaedu.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/IDEA_Paper_44.pdf
- The UBC Portfolio Community of Practice Blog: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/portfolios/>
- Peet, Melissa, et al. "Fostering Integrative Knowledge through ePortfolios." *International Journal of ePortfolios*. 2011, Volume 1, Number 1, 11-31.

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Further Information

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