

Foreword

Connecting Ideas to Spur Thinking

A good book can stimulate a reader by providing new ideas, increasing understanding, making practical suggestions for action, challenging current presumptions, and reframing issues. This book will serve diverse purposes for its readers. Novices will be introduced to the wide scope of considerations regarding adoption of digital portfolios; experienced practitioners will find frames and matrices in which to identify their own practices in relation to those of others. A comfortable read that does not overuse jargon or dig too deeply into any one issue, this volume touches on many subjects that can spur further thinking and consideration in a reader's own context.

As a reader experienced with electronic portfolios, I found among many stimulating ideas in this book two particular spurs to thinking. First, Hartnell-Young and Morriss describe the feature of digital portfolios that distinguishes them from Web pages: Electronic portfolios have rhetorical purpose. They are designed on an occasion to move a particular audience for a particular purpose. The authors also take up the continuing debate about the possibility of an ePortfolio serving both formative and summative purposes. As I placed those topics side by side, I thought about the ways in which ePortfolios provide simultaneous practice in the process of making an argument about and for oneself and for the reader. This practice is good for the individual practitioner and for the reader.

The creation of an educational vision statement espoused by the authors challenges each portfolio maker to be explicit about desired outcomes of education. This statement forces the writer

to identify the purposes and attendant goals of the educational enterprise in which the writer is engaged. At the same time, the vision statement differentiates the writer for the reader: What does this portfolio writer envision that will provide a context for all the evidence in the portfolio? Add to the educational vision statement the concept map that situates ideas and artifacts in relation to one another and to the vision statement, and the writer and reader both understand in a clearer way the direction and progress of the portfolio creator. This formative outcome is a learning experience for writer and reader.

Hartnell-Young and Morriss emphasize that self-managed evaluation is part of and aided by the ePortfolio process. A portfolio generator makes decisions about what he or she has learned, what artifacts demonstrate that learning, what needs attention in the future, and how current practice and evidence change past self-evaluation. Whether or not he or she uses rubrics to frame summative evaluation, the ePortfolio learner practices the feedback loop that characterizes effective assessment. When summative evaluation is necessary, for whatever reason, a reader can either see how effectively the person did self-assessment or view materials used for formative purposes within a structure built for summative ones. The writer may be responsible for repurposing the artifacts in a way that speaks to standards or expectations, but the writer is more able to take that step, having had practice in self-assessment for the purpose of learning about his or her own learning. Formative and summative assessment are both enhanced by the process of ePortfolio construction.

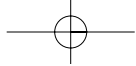
Second, this book posits that educators continue to grow professionally. Indeed, in the 21st century with its rapid change, they must, especially in the area of technology. Hartnell-Young and Morriss state, "A fundamental principle of this book is that educators grow professionally while producing digital portfolios." The authors claim that this growth comes from educators being producers as well as consumers of technology and from the deep learning associated with authentic work and critical commentary that are part of ePortfolios.

As I thought about this central need to grow professionally, I began to consider who helps educators grow. The authors remind readers that students often are more technologically savvy than their teachers. The terms *digital natives* and *digital immigrants* apply here: Students have grown up with technology, whereas many teachers are less acquainted with the culture

of bloggers, gamers, and wiki participants. When Mary Catherine Bateson studied what high school seniors and college freshmen reported having taught their parents, technology was at the top of the list. Are teachers demonstrating their continual professional development to their students by soliciting student help with portfolio production? What better way to demonstrate life-long learning? In campus experience at the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, students have played central roles in teaching teachers about what pedagogies work to help them learn. The same possibility exists for electronic portfolio construction.

Another source of professional growth for educators is peers. Hartnell-Young and Morriss emphasize the importance of communities of practice, pointing to the exciting practice of collaborative electronic portfolios as evidence of collective competencies of teachers in a networked model. The portfolio becomes a store of knowledge of a group, being both a corporate memory and an impetus for further progress. The authors cite McNair and Marshall's contention about portfolios in early teacher education: A portfolio can be "a digital profile of teaching experiences and reflections through which a community of practitioners can engage in online professional dialogue and support" (2006, p. 474). Colleagues in one of the Carnegie Academy clusters have developed the scholarship of teaching and learning as a networked practice. A natural auxiliary is a collaborative portfolio as a central feature for professional growth in a technologically permeated educational environment and society.

As electronic portfolio practice and research proliferate around the globe, it is important to record what practitioners and researchers are learning. Hartnell-Young and Morriss state, "At present, we rely on the reports of people involved in portfolio development to identify the learning that takes place rather than measuring the effect of portfolios directly. In the future, this learning might be measured in other ways." Fortunately, within the three cohorts of U.S., UK, and Canadian colleges and universities in the Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research, institutions are documenting impacts of ePortfolios in systematic ways. However, that research and research being done in other sectors of education and parts of the world benefit from being based on effective practice, and *Digital Portfolios* will contribute to the knowledge base of practitioners beginning and further developing the effectiveness of their ePortfolios. I foresee that readers will make their own discoveries and their



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own connections as they explore this book. I'm sure that the authors will want to hear from those readers as we all continue our lifelong learning.

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