



3. Getting Started on Assessment E-Portfolios



Factors to consider in coming up with an E-Portfolio solution for your campus

How Can I Get Started With Assessment E-Portfolios?

There are many players in the E-Portfolio field, and each has its own strengths. One you're sure to hear about is the Open Source Portfolio (OSPortfolio), which has strong features to support assessment and developmental portfolios.

What is OSPortfolio?

OSPortfolio is software used to structure, create, and manage electronic portfolios. More importantly, OSPortfolio is a community of users, schools, organizations and technicians who work together to support and enhance the OSPortfolio tools as part of the larger Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment (CLE). OSPortfolio is software built by educational institutions for educational institutions.

In January 2003, the University of Delaware and the rSmart Group joined with the University of Minnesota to make their e-portfolio system available as an open source project. That project became OSP (<http://www.osportfolio.org/>), and has become a community source project with several colleges and universities devoting resources to its development and implementation. Recently, OSP became part of the Sakai community source project (<http://www.sakaiproject.org>).

The primary strength of OSP is in assessment and developmental portfolios. The underlying structure makes it easy to provide categories for students to work within—be it accreditation requirements, industry standards, cultural school principles, or degree program mile-

stones, or other criteria.

How the pieces interrelate

There are several components within OSPortfolio that work together, and depending on how you choose to configure your e-portfolios, different tools come into play. Typically, the *matrix* is the primary scaffolding area—a two-dimensional grid—where your department or faculty specify criteria for the students to work within, and the *portfolio tool* is the presentation piece that delivers the student work to evaluators, advisors and to other audiences. Users enter data

into *forms* for purposes of reflection, evaluation, feedback and more. All of these operate on Sakai's *resources*, which is the filing system where students (and faculty) upload their artifacts.

The workflow process

Once the institution decides on a specific use for OSP, you produce a matrix

that reflects the categories in question (and time slices, if appropriate for a developmental portfolio). You then build forms that capture the data required for your purposes, and then you build a portfolio template. When the tools are ready, your users can start populating cells in the matrix with their essays and artwork, filling out forms along the way.

The matrix/form/template building process is iterative; as you learn what the tool can do, your requirements are likely to grow accordingly.

If you choose to take advantage of the optional evaluation/"certification" workflow, you can

| Core Requirements | Freshman | Sophomore | Junior | Senior |
|------------------------------|----------|-----------|--------|--------|
| Reading Comprehension | | | | |
| Oral Skills | | | | |
| Writing Skills | | | | |
| Listening Skills | | | | |
| Math/Quantitative Reasoning | | | | |
| Physical Sciences | | | | |
| Historical Perspective | | | | |
| Humanities | | | | |
| Social & Behavioral Sciences | | | | |

A sample OSPortfolio matrix with criteria as rows and time-slices as columns



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have your students “submit for evaluation” which locks their artifacts against further changes. At this point a formal evaluator, who’s been assigned the task, can go in and evaluate the student’s work. If all is well, that cell and its contents are locked permanently for that student, otherwise it’s reopened so the student can fix whatever requires more attention.

How can Serensoft Help?

Serensoft is a higher education services firm, meaning our goal is to use technology-based services to help colleges and universities meet

their teaching, learning, and administrative objectives. We have helped several institutions work through issues associated with electronic portfolios. From developing a more complete understanding of electronic portfolios in general to focusing on how they might fit with a particular institution, we can help. From designing a best-fit solution to developing a pilot implementation, from training faculty on the use of electronic portfolios to helping your IT staff support them, we can help.

Assessment portfolios? Accreditation? Cost-effective and flexible solutions? We can help.

Where can I get more information?

Serensoft produces this “Wonderings” series with the hope it will help higher education professionals as they explore subjects of interest. An electronic copy of our “Wonderings” can be found at the Serensoft web site (<http://www.serensoft.com/>). In addition Serensoft posts Webinars on related topics to the website—and, below are additional resources for electronic portfolios.

- Dr. Helen Barrett’s Electronic Portfolio website (<http://electronicPortfolios.org/>) provides what may be the most exhaustive treatment of the subject on the web. The website includes Dr. Barrett’s ongoing blog, writing and presentations—and links to numerous other resources.
- As e-portfolios are becoming more prevalent, many publications are devoting more and more space to the subject. Online articles for e-portfolios can be found at publications such as Educause (in particular Educause Quarterly at <http://connect.educause.edu/Library/EDUCAUSE+Quarterly/>) and Campus Technology (<http://www.campusTechnology.com/>).
- *Handbook of Research on ePortfolios* by Ali Jafari and Catherine Kaufman. A comprehensive treatment of the subject. It includes contributions from over 100 authors and addresses major aspects of rationale, technology, and implementation. Dozens of case studies detail current usage.
- *Electronic Portfolios: Emerging Practices in Student, Faculty, and Institutional Learning*. Barbara L. Cambridge, Susan Kahn, Daniel P. Tompkins, and Kathleen Blake Yancey, editors. Thorough treatment of major portfolio categories—student, faculty and institutional—using many case studies to examine and illustrate e-portfolio considerations, issues, and solutions.
- *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education* by Catherine A. Palomba and Trudy W. Banta. Focused on the larger question of assessment, this book does devote a few pages to how portfolios can be a useful assessment tool.
- Assessment Institute (<http://planning.iupui.edu/574.html>). Held annually in Indianapolis, the Assessment Institute is the United States’ oldest and largest conference focusing on outcomes assessment in higher education.
- Making Connections (<http://www.eportfolio.lagcc.cuny.edu/conference/>). Organized by LaGuardia Community College’s Center for Teaching and Learning, this conference provides an opportunity for thought leaders, practitioners, and newbies to gather and exchange information on their e-portfolio research and experiences.