

Preface

It's not new. Portfolios have been around for many, many years (see Blom & Hitchcock this anthology) in areas such as architecture, dress design, dance, visual arts, engineering, nursing, and teaching, just to name a few. All disciplines have asked at one time for evidence of skills, achievements, and qualifications that one has capacity to undertake a role. This is more than showcasing what you can do or presenting what you have done – it is a visual and robust story of who you are.

This anthology presents a view of the electronic portfolio through the eyes of experienced practitioners who have had the word ePortfolio in their vocabulary for many years. As educators, the authors of the 12 chapters presented here have their own story to tell about learning and teaching, institutional challenges, implementation, opportunities, and communities of practice in Australia and globally. The world of higher education is one that expects a vigorous robust investigation into the benefit of new technologies and the effectiveness on student learning. The authors have boldly entered the digital space of Portfolios and present advice, caution, and success stories of their research into enhanced learning and teaching. This book is important as we continue to journey further into the world of accountability for our craft and remain dedicated to providing the optimal learning experience for our students.

To begin, there is a short historical account of the Portfolio emerging as a digital tool internationally and how Australian higher education saw this form of pedagogic practice as essential for developing graduate qualities for a better-prepared graduate. It explores the ecology of ePortfolios with a snapshot of past, present, and future uses (see Miller this anthology) to continue the emerging community of practice that allows full-bodied discourse through what is known as the ePortfolio Australia network.

This is followed by a chapter that describes how one Australia university embraced the research behind ePortfolio process and products and implemented it institutionally. This was managed as a result of the commissioned research project into the benefit of ePortfolio practice for students learning incrementally over a period of time, and the centre of excellence continues today as a centre for the institutionally managed ePortfolio. The original instigators of the Australian ePortfolio

project from 2008 are still dedicated to this endeavour (see McAllister and Hauville this anthology).

Applying the idea of incremental introduction of new pedagogy is better serviced when staff have been afforded training and resources. The chapter by Strampel, Sibson, and Main details the identification of key stakeholders and the professional development workshops that were designed to empower the teachers of students who would be the beneficiaries of the introduction of ePortfolios into their degree programme.

Introducing a new pedagogy and a new tool into any faculty requires some form of 'buy in' from staff, and the story of ePortfolios embedded into a medical science degree programme is verified by the number of authors who contributed to the chapter. The lead academic saw the need for teamwork to be a part of the curriculum and rallied colleagues to embed ePortfolio and reflection into the 10 subjects within the 4-year degree programme with a vision to enhance learning for the students who were encouraged to reflect on their achievements of working in teams. As an intentional curriculum designed to develop the graduate skill of teamwork, the ePortfolio was introduced as assessment task throughout the 4 years to encourage teamwork and collaboration.

Both Strampel et al. and Polly et al.'s chapters refer to and use the AAACU (American Association of Colleges and Universities) as a model for their work in measuring standards-based approaches to assessment. In fact, many authors in the anthology use ePortfolios for assessing and for developing graduate skills in the belief that both the process and products generated by the Portfolio assist in developing a work-ready graduate for a future career.

Most introductions of new pedagogy are often questioned for its effectiveness; the chapter by Bennett and Robertson clearly indicates good pedagogy coupled with robust research can create a valuable impact for students. They detail the community of practice that developed through using ePortfolio with students at their university with a clear vision of improving career identity. The story of the writing students' approach to embracing the portfolio as a pedagogic tool for increasing career awareness is one that demonstrates the power of student enjoyment in a process.

The academic staff at a music faculty wanted to promote metacognition and critical thinking whilst encouraging the development of reflective practice and so carried out research over 5 years into differing students' views of the ePortfolio practice. Depending on degree specialisation, the music students all had a view on the benefit and challenge of the ePortfolio design and value and soon realised that the affordances of the system created wider opportunities. It was evidence from this longitudinal research that ePortfolio was not a teaching and learning tool to everyone's taste or benefit. The music education students were the most receptive as they could see the aim was not only for them to demonstrate their skills against the graduate teaching standards, but to curate learning experiences over their degree and develop a philosophy of teaching.

Brooks introduces the reader to the term 'chronicle' to explain the purpose of the ePortfolios by describing the similarities and differences between two cohorts of

teacher education students who were introduced to the ePortfolio process and platforms. An initial idea to use an ePortfolio to record evidence against graduating teaching standards for students studying in the Bachelor of Music (Music Education) evolved into a richer and pedagogically healthy process supporting teacher development. The students studying to be primary teachers had a simpler technology to navigate yet experienced different challenges and similar barriers to the technology tool.

Newly introduced graduate teacher standards saw the need for a way to capture and record evidence against the standards. In the chapter by Munday, we see teacher education students actually using the ePortfolio to help them to build a professional identity and sense of self and to showcase this because it's purposeful. Asking appropriate and pertinent reflective questions and making students assemble their knowledge and their experience in a meaningful way means making them really focus on self-control through the creation of the portfolio product. This increases their self-identity and their self-awareness and gives them a self-determination.

Returning to the medical science field, we are introduced to a story of blended learning for medical sonographers who were incrementally introduced to the process of assembling evidence of their skills development through the ePortfolio. As this programme had international students who were not able to benefit from face-to-face teaching, the challenges and successes of the ePortfolio for managing a learning environment are detailed.

Blom and Hitchcock present a model that activates a developmental process for those starting with an ePortfolio. Their exploration of two cohorts of music students demonstrates the ease with which some can manage the learning space and the challenges that others face when the technology becomes a barrier to learning. The story they report explores some of the valuable use of the ePortfolio process and student perceptions of those who have traditionally used portfolio practice where the technology was insignificant to them ... showing us that there is not a simple answer to any journey of engaging students in their learning.

Returning to the track of institutionally introduced ePortfolios is the story of a more recent introduction into a regional university who researched thoroughly the journey of their implementation across degree programmes by reflecting on what was needed and how to best manage the staff and students who were to benefit from the personal learning space that the portfolio platform, PebblePad, afforded them.

We finish this anthology back at the beginning concept where the ePortfolio is described as a developmental ecosystem and defined as a function for building professional capabilities. The concept of an ecosystem implies a growth that has multiple components, and this final chapter contains student comments that support the final chapter's model and its description of the ePortfolio's impact on the development of a work-ready graduate. In fact, we conclude by claiming that it is during this developmental phase of students' learning that they are developing their professional identity through the acquisition and practising of graduate capabilities.

It is becoming clear that the 'e' in 'ePortfolio' may become redundant as we live in an electronic world where literacy is only digital. Through the presentation of the portfolio ecosystem model, we see the immortalising of the portfolio technology

tool that represents the story of how it is that you choose to present your educational capacity.

As a member of a vibrant ePortfolio community of practice, I have had the absolute pleasure to engage and work with many of the authors of this book who are dedicated and committed educators and hold high the belief in research into good teaching and learning practice is of benefit to students. I thank them for their commitment and shared vision for engaging students in a real-world experience, where the value of learning is predominantly surrounded by thorough research, supportive colleagues, and strong convictions of education. This book is dedicated to all who have entered the domain of exploring pedagogic practice for the benefit of enhanced student learning.

This book would not have come about without the mentoring and encouragement of a colleague, Associate Professor Dunbar-Hall who was instrumental in supporting my entrance into ePortfolio research many years ago. I thank Peter for his belief that striving for excellence and good pedagogic practice is a worthwhile endeavour.

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