

What the research says about ePortfolios

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– ePortfolios offer a coherent space for reflection/metacognition

- “Portfolios encourage students to reconsider and narrativize their learning experience by engaging in what Yancey (1998) calls ‘reflection-in-action’—a reiterative process of looking back to previous performance and looking forward to goals—and by writing reflective accounts of their learning” (436).¹
- “ePortfolios are designed to promote the integration of learning so that students are not only learning a specific subject but also developing an awareness of their learning and thinking processes as well as an ability to monitor, assess, control, and change those processes, a skill generally referred to as ‘metacognition.’ Since multiple artifacts are posted and reflected upon within an ePortfolio, students can begin to recognize and assess their learning across time, their learning strategies, and their strengths and weaknesses as learners” (33).²
- “One of the ways to stimulate reflection is by use of a portfolio containing selected evidence of performances and products in various contexts accompanied by student’s comments and reflections. Depending on the content and form of the portfolio and the integration of the portfolio in the learning context, a portfolio offers the possibility to get an authentic and complete picture of the long-term development of students’ complex skills and does justice to the complexity and individuality of the educational process” (153).³

– ePortfolios promote personal learning narratives and identities

- “Although we have no commonly agreed upon definition of portfolios, certain characteristics seem constant. Portfolios contain not only a collection of student work but also the process of how the writing got to be included in the portfolio. Ideally, students learn to make decisions about their writing in terms of what to include and how to improve what they choose to work on. Portfolios can also contain the reflective work students do as they prepare a body of their work not only to be evaluated but to represent them as writers. In this sense each portfolio can be an individual record of a student’s journey to understand herself as a writer. Efforts to standardize such a record cut into its ability to

¹ Kimball, Miles. “Database e-Portfolio Systems: A Critical Appraisal.” *Computers and Composition* 22.4 (2005): 434-58.

² Bokser, Julie A., et al. “Finding Common Ground: Identifying and Eliciting Metacognition in ePortfolios Across Contexts.” *International Journal of ePortfolio* 6.1 (2016): 33-44.

³ Oosterbaan, A.E., et al. “Reflection During Portfolio-based Conversations.” *International Journal of Educational Research*. 49 (2010): 151-60.

help the individual student make sense of herself as a literate person struggling not only to make meaning but to create a context within which she learns to read and write” (54).⁴

- Light, Chen, and Ittelson describe how portfolios engender new patterns of thinking. This “folio thinking,” as they call it, enables students to “integrate discrete learning experiences, enhance their self-understanding, promote taking responsibility for their own learning, and support them in developing an intellectual identity” (86).⁵
- “Portfolios help students find ties between the disparate things they have done or learned—what Yancey (1998) calls ‘constructive reflection,’ ‘the process of developing a cumulative, multi-served, multi-voiced identity’ (14). In the process, students create a coherent sense of their own learning experiences and develop a growing identity as a learned self” (437).⁶
- “Because they encourage reflection and revision, portfolios emphasize the process of learning. Portfolio pedagogy assumes that the artifacts collected in a portfolio show this process of learning, creating a deeper picture of the learner than just the finished products of the artifacts themselves” (437).⁷
- “Helping students reflect on and connect their learning across academic and co-curricular learning experiences, sophisticated ePortfolio practices transform the student learning experience. Advancing higher order thinking and integrative learning, the connective nature of ePortfolio helps students to construct purposeful identities as learners” (98).⁸

– *ePortfolios support transfer or adaptation*

- “If what we want is to deepen learning and to facilitate transfer of knowledge, for the first time, e-portfolios provide a strategy that allows students to archive their work over time. The critical part is that they also use those artifacts for intentional and promoted reflection that supports connecting the learning across courses and disciplines and to their own lives and passions. In this way, e-portfolios become a scaffold of learning experiences from the curriculum and the cocurriculum that students use to demonstrate and articulate the increasing sophistication and complexity of their understanding and thinking throughout their educational career and beyond” (11).⁹
- Portfolios promote and enable reflection, allowing students to “review their current progress and evaluate their own skill acquisition, but also can facilitate the active process of retrieving knowledge in order to apply it to a novel situation and increase students’ ability to reach higher order thinking skills, such as comparing, analyzing, and drawing conclusions on the material in which they are focusing” (2).^{10, 11}
- “The ePortfolio format provides a mechanism for students to make connections between both formal and informal learning experiences, including many high impact practices, such as common intellectual experiences, collaborative

⁴ Huot, Brian, and Michael M. Williamson. “Rethinking Portfolios for Evaluating Writing: Issues of Assessment and Power. *Situating Portfolios: Four Perspectives*. Eds. Kathleen Yancey and Irwin Weiser. Logan: Utah State UP, 1997. 43–56.

⁵ Light, Tracy Penny, Helen L. Chen and John C. Ittelson. *Documenting Learning with ePortfolios: A Guide for College Instructors*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012.

⁶ Kimball, Miles. “Database e-Portfolio Systems: A Critical Appraisal.” *Computers and Composition* 22.4 (2005): 434-58.

⁷ Kimball, Miles. “Database e-Portfolio Systems: A Critical Appraisal.” *Computers and Composition* 22.4 (2005): 434-58.

⁸ Eynon, Bret, Laura M. Gambino, and Judit Török. “What Difference Can ePortfolio Make? A Field Report from the Connect to Learning Project.” *International Journal of ePortfolio* 4.1 (2014): 95-114.

⁹ Judith Patton (Portland State University) qtd. in Miller, Ross and Wende Morgaine. “The Benefits of E-Portfolios for Students and Faculty in their Own Words.” *Peer Review* 11.1 (2009): 8-12.

¹⁰ Bowman, Jim, et al. “The Use of ePortfolios to Support Metacognitive Practice in a First-Year Writing Program.” *International Journal of ePortfolio* 6.1 (2016): 1-22.

¹¹ Considering the (mis)use of the term “skill” in this quotation, please also see Christiane Donahue’s “Why Writing is Not (Just) a Skill, or Can We Talk about Skill and Writing in a Liberal Arts Education?”

assignments, research activities, study abroad, service or community-based learning, and internships (3).¹²

– *ePortfolios facilitate information literacy and multimodal composition*

- “ePortfolios can also facilitate the transfer of multimodal composing abilities and information skills. Researchers have found that effective writers in the early 21st century are not only engaged in text-based literacy practices, but need to be able to use multimodal information and communication technologies (ICTs)” (210-11).¹³
- “Paper portfolios, limited by their physical size, can only contain so many pages before they become impractical to carry from location to location and are best suited for an individual course or topic. However, with the variety of types of artifacts that can be displayed and the ability to link between many individual pages, web technologies allow for the creation of much larger, more holistic portfolios of the student experience, including not only academic, but also extra-curricular, professional, and personal experiences. Viewers of the portfolio, therefore, get a much broader view of the individual as a whole” (3).¹⁴
- “Higher education is responding to the challenge of a new social configuration that is based on information and communication technologies and diverse forms of globalization. The wide implementation of e-learning is perhaps the most visible aspect of this process. In this environment, it is necessary to coordinate our educational efforts so that students can take best advantage of these technologies and improve their learning outcomes and, most importantly, become life-long learners. Higher education institutions are making significant efforts to equip all students with the training necessary to deal critically with information—to analyze it, to select appropriate content, and to incorporate information that is relevant into a personal knowledge base. In the present knowledge society, all of us will have to learn to move smoothly in the midst of this flood of information and to develop the necessary cognitive abilities to differentiate what is useful and pertinent from the irrelevant. Higher education is adopting strategies that are now more focused on student-centered learning. This is a method of ‘learning by doing’ and has as one of its goals the management of the glut of information offered by suppliers of online content” (54).¹⁵
- “Information literacy clearly forms part of the effort to develop the generic competencies of university students related to the cycle of the production, communication, retrieval, and use of knowledge in a context of social commitment and teamwork with the help of the new technologies. As diverse institutions and declarations have stressed, information literacy lies at the very core of life-long learning, essentially because it empowers people in all circumstances to seek, evaluate, use, and create information effectively in order to achieve their

¹² Bowman, Jim, et al. “The Use of ePortfolios to Support Metacognitive Practice in a First-Year Writing Program.” *International Journal of ePortfolio* 6.1 (2016): 1-22.

¹³ Whithaus, Carl. “Eportfolios as Tools for Facilitating and Assessing Knowledge Transfer from Lower Division, General Education Courses to Upper Division, Discipline-specific Courses.” *ePortfolio Performance Support Systems: Constructing, Presenting, and Assessing Portfolios*. Eds. Katherine V. Wills and Rich Rice. Anderson, SC: Parlour Press, 2013. 205-20.

¹⁴ Bowman, Jim, et al. “The Use of ePortfolios to Support Metacognitive Practice in a First-Year Writing Program.” *International Journal of ePortfolio* 6.1 (2016): 1-22.

¹⁵ Pinto, María and Dora Sales. “Knowledge Transfer and Information Skills for Student-Centered Learning in Spain.” *Libraries and the Academy* 8.1 (2008): 53-74.

personal, societal, occupational, and educational goals. . . . Given its enormous relevance, information literacy should preferably be embedded in any curriculum design, allowing students ongoing interaction with and reflection on information competencies, skills, and values” (72).¹⁶

– *ePortfolios foster students’ ownership of their educations*

- “Portfolios encourage students to take control of and responsibility for their own learning. Students grow as lifelong learners by managing their work, by using their discretion to choose which artifacts best show their accomplishments, and by explaining how those artifacts show a progress of learning” (437).¹⁷
- “Students are responsible for telling their own stories of learning: for explaining what they did and did not learn, for assessing their own strengths and weaknesses as learners, for evaluating their products and performances, for showing how that learning connects with other kinds of learning (in the classroom and without), and for using the review of the past to think about paths for future learning” (19).¹⁸
- “Current practice and research in eportfolios reveals that the more the learner takes charge of the format and process, the deeper the learning” (2).¹⁹
- “At the heart of this work in electronic portfolios is what was first a hope and then an assumption, and now a research-based claim: that creating, evidencing, connecting, and reflecting involved in electronic portfolios engage students in new and beneficial ways—especially when the portfolio provides a space for student-informed participation” (28).²⁰

– *ePortfolios can re-shape programs and curricula*

- “At a growing number of campuses with sustained ePortfolio initiatives, student ePortfolio usage correlates with higher levels of student success, as measured by pass rates, GPA, and retention rates” (96).²¹
- “Portfolios . . . allow us to see performances across multiple genres; to judge a writer’s ability to revise; to see, via an introductory reflective essay, a writer’s metacognitive knowledge about writing . . . Portfolios can tell us which of our program’s outcomes a given writer can already do, so we can design instruction to help that writer acquire the others” (240).²²
- “While the . . . evidence is preliminary, it suggests that ePortfolios promote learning-centered connection, making student learning visible to faculty and staff across institutional boundaries. Requiring and facilitating collaboration across disciplines and departments, ePortfolio initiatives can help to break down traditional institutional silos. Supporting a richer, more holistic view of learning, encouraging a learning-centered institutional conversation, and catalyzing broad institutional change in structure and culture, ePortfolios can help colleges become more adaptive learning organizations” (110-11).²³

¹⁶ Pinto, María and Dora Sales. “Knowledge Transfer and Information Skills for Student-Centered Learning in Spain.” *Libraries and the Academy* 8.1 (2008): 53-74.

¹⁷ Kimball, Miles. “Database e-Portfolio Systems: A Critical Appraisal.” *Computers and Composition* 22.4 (2005): 434-58.

¹⁸ Yancey, Kathleen Blake. “Digitized Student Portfolios.” *Electronic Portfolios: Emerging Practices in Student, Faculty, and Institutional Learning*. Ed. Barbara Cambridge. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2001.

¹⁹ Cambridge, Barbara. “Introduction: Reflection in Electronic Portfolio Practice.” *Electronic Portfolios 2.0: Emergent Research on Implementation and Impact*. Eds. Darren Cambridge, Barbara L. Cambridge, and Kathleen Blake Yancey. Sterling, VA (2009): 5-16.

²⁰ Yancey, Kathleen Blake. “Electronic Portfolios a Decade into the Twenty-first Century: What We Know, What We Need to Know.” *Peer Review* 11.1 (2009): 28-32.

²¹ Eynon, Bret, Laura M. Gambino, and Judit Török. “What Difference Can ePortfolio Make? A Field Report from the Connect to Learning Project.” *International Journal of ePortfolio* 4.1 (2014): 95-114.

²² Condon, William. “The Future of Portfolio-Based Writing Assessment: A Cautionary Tale.” *Writing Assessment in the 21st Century*. Eds. Norbert Elliot and Les Perelman. New York: Hampton P, 2012.

²³ Eynon, Bret, Laura M. Gambino, and Judit Török. “What Difference Can ePortfolio Make? A Field Report from the Connect to Learning Project.” *International Journal of ePortfolio* 4.1 (2014): 95-114.