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Creating an Eportfolio with MS FrontPage: It Doesn't Get Any Easier!

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Abstract

In recent years, many Colleges of Education have converted the educator portfolio to an electronic version available through the internet. In the summer of 2000, the College of Education at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) decided to embark on a challenge to move from the paper portfolio to an electronic portfolio. Prior to 2000, the college was using paper portfolios, but now, with over 1,600 eportfolios online, paper portfolios are a thing of the past. This paper describes the mechanics of the eportfolio, how it works, how it was developed, and how anyone with basic technology skills can duplicate the eportfolio used at EKU. Links to several resources, including the complete eportfolio template as well as the student and faculty user manuals are provided in the paper.

Introduction

In recent years, many Colleges of Education have converted the educator portfolio to an electronic version available through the internet. Among education faculty already incorporating technology into curricular goals for students, the eportfolio was welcomed. For others, the eportfolio promoted the catalyst for learning new technology and sharing with students in the classroom.

Why develop eportfolios in lieu of paper portfolios? Eportfolio development accomplishes four major goals. First, eportfolios give students the opportunity to apply technology skills learned independently, and in required computer courses, thus building confidence in their abilities. Second, faculty integration and application of technology skills sets the example students will follow in their own future classrooms. Third, unlike the paper portfolio, eportfolios provide an authentic audience for student work when published to the web. Last, eportfolios provide a unique way for students to initially introduce themselves to principals and school councils prior to and during interviews. Many school districts are moving to an online application process and access to a student eportfolio online would prove valuable in the marketability of that student (Kersten, 2004, 1).

The College of Education at Eastern Kentucky University has been using education portfolio's since 1992. (<http://www.pt3.org/stories/easternkentucky.html>) The portfolio was a hard-copy, standards based portfolio, designed around the [Kentucky New Teacher Standards](#). In the summer of 2000, the college decided to embark on a challenge to move from the paper portfolio to an electronic portfolio while "leaving no professor or student behind"—quite a task. The college had just received a [Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology \(PT3\)](#)

[Implementation Grant](#), and one of the major goals of that grant was to create a teacher education electronic portfolio.

In July of 2000, the college had no electronic portfolios. Fast forward to July of 2004 and the college had over 1,600 student eportfolios online with more being added every term. The purpose of this paper is not to discuss the process and the many challenges faced while developing and implementing the eportfolio. Those interested in the process can view the [minutes](#) from the development team meetings. Rather, the purpose of this paper is to focus specifically on the product that has allowed every education student in the College of Education to create an eportfolio without being a computer science major and has allowed every faculty member to view and evaluate those eportfolios without needing a technology expert at their side. This paper will show the mechanics of our eportfolio, how it works, how it was developed, and how anyone with basic technology skills can duplicate our product. The paper contains links to download the entire eportfolio template as well as our student and faculty user manuals.

The Product

We looked at several different options for creating an eportfolio ranging from requiring students to develop their own unique eportfolios to purchasing a commercial product that would allow students to simply upload documents into an online database. All the existing products and approaches we reviewed had pros and cons, but none seemed capable of meeting our basic goals for the eportfolio. Our primary goals called for:

1. A student-friendly design for creating and maintaining eportfolios, requiring only basic technical skills. While technology would be important, it would not be the focus of the eportfolio. We wanted students to be technically competent and build skills needed for the classroom, but we didn't want them to be overwhelmed with technology to the point that it took away from their focus on developing quality products to place in their eportfolio.
2. A faculty-friendly design allowing faculty members to evaluate student eportfolios at three points during their teacher education program—admission to the program, admission to student teaching, and program exit.
3. A web-based design allowing students the option of having it network-based or disk-based if they chose not to put their eportfolio on the web.

After looking at what was available in light of the basic goals for our eportfolio, we decided to develop an eportfolio template using Microsoft FrontPage software. Our eportfolio is essentially a FrontPage website containing a pre-built and linked structure composed of webpage (html) and Adobe PDF templates. In the following sections of this paper, we will attempt to show the structure of our eportfolio in enough detail to allow anyone with basic technology skills to duplicate our product and make changes to meet their own unique needs.

The Structure (Content, Organization and Use)

Content

The eportfolio shell contains templates, organized in folders, for the following required entries:

1. Eportfolio homepage [See Sample](#) (html)
2. Eportfolio description [See Sample](#) (html)
3. Table of contents [See Sample](#) (html)
4. Introduction entries
 - a. Letter of presentation [See Sample](#) (html)
 - b. Philosophy of education [See Sample](#) (html)
 - c. Resume [See Sample](#) (pdf)
 - d. Dispositions [See Sample](#) (html)
 - e. Portfolio at a glance [See Sample](#) (html)
 - f. Reflection on the portfolio [See Sample](#) (html)
 - g. Authorship form [See Sample](#) (html)
 - h. Portfolio interview verification [See Sample](#) (html)
5. Kentucky New Teacher Standards & optional entries. [See Sample](#) (html)
6. Reflections on Kentucky New Teacher Standards entries [See Sample](#) (html)

Organization

We built an eportfolio shell for students to use as a framework to build their personal eportfolio. The shell is structured in a simple and logical manner and contains templates of all required student entries in a single folder called “eportfolio” Figure 1 shows the eportfolio shell including subfolders and files. Since everything in a student’s eportfolio is contained in this single folder it is easy for students to make copies, back-up, or burn their entire eportfolio to CD. In the next pages of this paper, we will look at each of the folders and templates contained in the eportfolio shell. Links and screen shots are provided as support; however, for a more in-depth look at the contents, a complete copy of the eportfolio can be [downloaded](#) as a zip file. Simply, unzip the file and open the eportfolio in FrontPage to follow along with the information provided below.

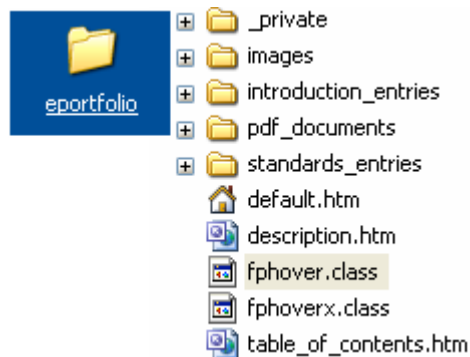


Figure 1: Eportfolio Shell and Contents

Use

The [default page](#) is the homepage of the eportfolio. When students open the default page in FrontPage, they are able to customize their homepage by adding their own information in the template. They do this through the simple “What You See Is What You Get” (WYSIWYG) editing capabilities in FrontPage. No HTML knowledge is needed. Figure 2 shows what the student sees when they open their homepage in FrontPage. They simply replace the information on the page with their own information using basic word processing skills that most students already possess. They can also insert a picture on this page and link to a video introduction they create and save on our video streaming server. Click the image in Figure 2 to see a larger image.

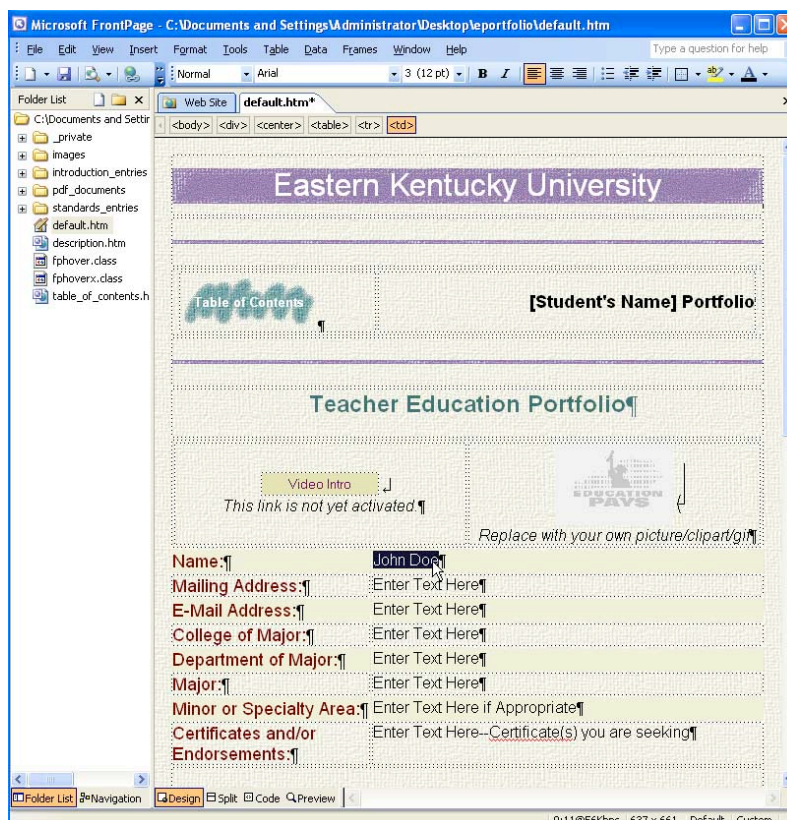


Figure 2: The Eportfolio Homepage

The [description page](#) contains a description of the eportfolio. We included this page for the reader who may be unfamiliar with the purpose of the education portfolio. Students do not need to open and edit this page, but may if they would like to add more information specific to their eportfolio.

The [table of contents](#) provides links to all the major entries in the eportfolio. Buttons on this page are pre-linked to the template pages in the eportfolio; therefore, students do not need to make changes to this page. However, students can add buttons, delete buttons, change the links, etc.

The `_private` folder in the eportfolio contains two forms in MS Word format that students complete, convert to PDF format, and upload into the appropriate sections of their eportfolio—the [professional growth plan template](#) and the [resume template](#). It also contains a [portfolio review form](#), PDF document, which students print and use during their three portfolio interviews—program entry, student teaching, and program exit. Placing these three forms in the `_private` folder provides a very convenient way of distributing them to all students. When each student places a copy of the eportfolio shell in their student webspace, they will automatically have these needed forms.

The last file in the `_private` folder is the “[your_name.htm](#)” file. When a student copies the shell into their webspace, they open this page in FrontPage and replace the words “Student’s Name” with their own name. When they save this page, then their name will appear on each page in the eportfolio. This is accomplished using the “include page” feature of FrontPage and is already preconfigured in the template.

The images folder is used, like in most websites, to hold any graphics, images, pictures, etc. that are use in the eportfolio. When students add their own pictures and graphics to the eportfolio, we suggest they place them in this folder.

The main contents of the eportfolio are separated into two major categories, introduction entries and standards entries. The `introduction_entries` folder contains the template pages for all the required elements in the eportfolio that do not directly support a standard. These page templates are built to allow students to open them in FrontPage and type information directly onto the page. We have also included comments on the bottom of each page that gives students directions for completing the entry. This comment feature allows students to see the comments (our directions and information for them) when they are editing the page in FrontPage, but the comments are not viewable in the web browser. See a [screenshot of the Philosophy of Education](#) page as viewed by the student while editing it in FrontPage, compared to the same [Philosophy of Education](#) page as it’s viewed in a web browser. This ability to enter comments directly on the pages in the eportfolio that will not be seen in a web browser provides a great way to incorporate detailed directions for students directly into the eportfolio. We used this feature extensively throughout all the eportfolio template pages.

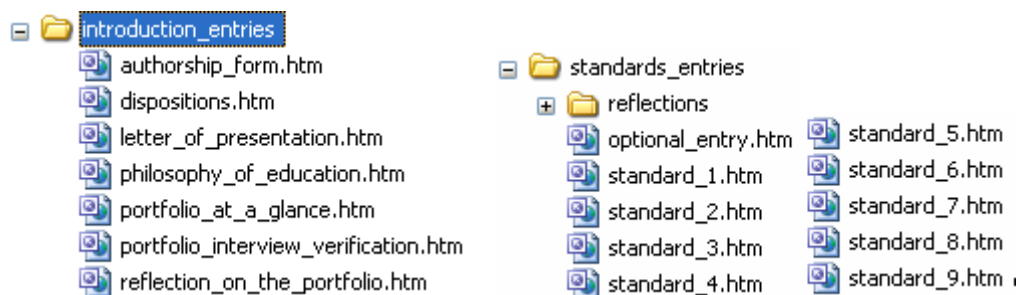


Figure 3: Eportfolio Main Contents

The `standards_entries` folder contains a template page for each of the nine [Kentucky New Teacher Standards](#), plus a template for an optional entry of the students choosing. Students follow three simple steps to enter a document in their eportfolio in support of a standard.

First, when a student has completed a product (for example, a lesson plan) they wish to use as evidence in support of a standard, then the student opens the appropriate template page in the standards_entires folder. For the lesson plan example, that may be [Standard I: Designs & Plans Instruction](#). The student types a brief overview or summary of the lesson plan directly on this page. Once complete, the student simply saves the changes and that is all they do on this page.



Figure 4: PDF Documents Folder

Next, the student will convert their lesson plan to PDF format and then save that file in the pdf_documents folder. If this was their first entry for Standard 1, then they would name the PDF file std1_1.pdf. If it was the second entry, then they would save it in the folder as std1_2.pdf. This action would overwrite the existing PDF template that is stored in this folder. All of the template files stored in the pdf_documents folder are linked to the appropriate pages in the eportfolio, thus eliminating the need for students to create the hyperlinks. Students simply replace the templates in the pdf_documents folder with their entries ensuring they use the naming convention we have established. Therefore, when a student places a PDF document in this folder with the file name, std1_1.pdf, that document will be automatically linked to the “View Entry” hyperlink on the [Standard I](#) page in the eportfolio.



Figure 5: The Reflections Folder

The third and final step to placing a document in the eportfolio as evidence of meeting a standard is for the student to enter a reflection on their entry. There is a subfolder, under the standards_entries folder, named “reflections”. This folder contains templates for students to enter their reflections on each entry they place in the eportfolio in support of the nine New Teacher Standards and their optional entries. For the lesson plan example used above, if it was the first entry in standard 1, then the student would open the [ref1_1.htm](#) file in this folder and type their

reflection directly on the page. The “View Reflection” link on the [Standard I](#) page is linked to this page.

As you can see there are two primary ways students place entries into their eportfolio. On some of the pages, they simply type the entry directly on the template page. Of course, if they already have the entry developed in a word processor, they could simply use copy and paste without having to retype the entry. This way of entering information into the eportfolio is used for the introduction entries and the reflection entries to allow the person viewing the eportfolio to quickly navigate through those entries without having to download PDF documents. The second way students enter items into the eportfolio is through converting documents to PDF and saving them in the eportfolio. This feature is primarily used for more lengthy entries, entries that may have more complex formatting, and entries that students may have completed as part of a class assignment.

Free Resources

Many universities are moving to the electronic portfolio and some methods of implementation, such as the \$10,000 yearly institutional membership required by [Eport Consortium](#), can be very costly (Young, 2002, p 8). When we first started working on the eportfolio as part of the PT3 grant, we made the decision that anything we developed would be considered in the public domain. Therefore, we have made everything we have developed available for use by any non-profit organization at no cost. Below are links to many of the products we developed as part of our eportfolio development process.

1. [Video Tutorials](#)
2. The [Student Manual](#) (pdf document)
3. The [Faculty Manual](#) (pdf document)
4. The [Complete Eportfolio](#) Shell (zip file)
5. [Search Page](#) to View Existing Student Eportfolios

Summary

As stated at the beginning of this paper, the objective in 2000 was to move the entire portfolio process in the college of education from a paper portfolio to an eportfolio. The system described in this paper took one year to develop and was fully implemented in the fall semester of 2001. There have been many improvements to the process and product over the past three years. Although challenges still exist and improvements are being made every year, our transition to an education eportfolio has been a success in many ways. Also, since we developed the system, no fees are paid by students or by the university to an outside company and we have a system that is completely customizable on a system-wide basis and by the students on an individual basis. All of our education students are producing eportfolios and our faculty members are evaluating the eportfolios. We have a successful system and have left no student or faculty member behind.

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