ASSESSING E-PORTFOLIOS

Purpose, Process and Practical Tips

Practical Tips

- Be clear about the purpose of the portfolio – is it intended to be additive or to replace another interaction?

- Select a process (including frequency and type of review) that supports the purpose

- Provide a clear rubric for assessment to maximize objectivity and use of time (two of biggest complaints and reasons for failure)

- Keep the technology requirements consistent (change the subject matter, not the manner of presentation)

Purpose

- Who is the target audience?
  - Teacher
  - Fellow students/peers
  - Student
  - Prospective employer or academic program
  - Potential client

- What type of portfolio was created?

- Is the objective to evaluate the student's abilities or the learning process?

Evaluation or Assessment?

Evaluation	Assessment
"Value" judgment of abilities	Interactive and collaborative examination ("sit beside")
Focused on product	Focused on process
Ratings-oriented	Diagnostic
Summative portfolio	Formative portfolio
Prospective employer, academic program or client	Teacher, peers, student

Evaluation

- Compilation of finest work, showing depth and breadth of user's capabilities
  - For academic purposes
  - Professional evaluation

- Objective is to conveniently highlight ability to learn skills as well as skills learned

- With changing job landscape, including in academia, the ability to learn a range of skills can be as important as specific knowledge

Types of Assessment

- Teacher to student

- Peer to peer

- Self-evaluation by student

- Teacher assessment of learning process

- Student meta-learning reflection

Teacher to Student

- Periodic review built into course schedule

- Discussion format, with teacher as coach

- Platform for open-ended dialogue concerning next steps and ultimate goals

- Objective is to creative a collaborative approach to building skill sets across time

- Caution: Keep the responsibility for the portfolio with the student; avoid 'am I doing this right?/ is this what you want?' discussions

Peer to Peer

- Assessment of peers and self are critical skills, but most students dislike this

- Suggestions:
  - Peer endorsement: Students review each other's work based on clear criteria, e.g., does a paragraph contain a logical argument (whether or not you agree with it)? If so, the work gets a 'thumbs up'; if not, the peer reviewer asks for clarity
  - Peer promotion: Each review period, peer reviewers select one student's work as 'exemplary'

- Objective is for students to receive feedback and to learn the skill of constructive critique

Student Self-evaluation

- Student provides assessment of own work in progress, highlighting:
    - Areas of difficulty
    - Internalized skills ("I got it!")
    - Transformative realizations ("A-ha" moments)
    - Questions

- Objective is for students to be able to assess their own progress against a set of learning outcomes

Teacher Self-evaluation

- See in real time which students are having difficulty with which concepts

- Consider factors affecting students' acquisition of skills:
  - Different approaches or media
  - Student backgrounds
  - Speed and timing of instruction (including overlap and repetition)

- Objective is to gain insights into the relationship between instruction and student growth

Meta-learning

- Critical reflection by student

- Review of learning process

- Consider trajectory of learning:
  - Cumulative effect of multiple iterations
  - Influence of timely feedback from peers/teacher
  - Impact of outside catalyst, e.g., review of peers' work, comment from 3rd party

- Objective is two-fold:
  - To better understand one's own process of learning
  - To create a habit of examining and questioning one's frame of reference

Transformative Learning

- How do e-portfolios and their assessment relate to transformative learning?

- One definition of transformative learning (Mezirow):
  - The process of effecting change in a frame of reference, where a frame of reference is the set of assumptions through which we understand our experiences

- Whenever we critically analyze our assumptions, whether through problem solving (objective reframing) or self-reflective assessment (subjective reframing) we open ourselves to the possibility of transformative learning

Conclusion

- To quote Jack Mezirow:
  - "Transformative learning is not an add-on. It is the essence of adult education."
  - "To facilitate transformative learning, educators must help learners become aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions."
  - "Educators must assume responsibility for setting objectives that explicitly include autonomous thinking and recognize that this requires experiences designed to foster critical reflectivity . . ."[1]

  - We believe that the thoughtful construction and assessment of e-portfolios can be an effective tool facilitating transformative learning.

[1]Mezirow, Jack. "Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice", New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no. 74 (Summer 1997): 5-12.

Workshop

- Break into groups of 3-4

- Considering your field, teaching philosophy and course structure, what types of e-portfolios and assessments might be useful to you?

- What concerns or questions might a student have regarding the purpose or process (including frequency and type of review, assessment rubric, peer evaluations and short- or long-term benefit)

- What ideas or questions came up in your discussions that you could share?

Presentation Assessment

- Please share 1-2 things that you learned from the presentation.

- Please share 1-2 questions that you have regarding the material in the presentation

- Please any other aspects of e-portfolios or assessments that would be helpful to include in a future presentation.

- Thank you!