

Information Resources Council
Minutes of April 1, 2005

Attendees: Sarah Goodwin (Chair), Joe Sims, Brien Muller, Ruth Copans (scribe), Beth DuPont, Paul Dwyer, Jim Burton, Deanne Palmer, David Hamilton, Ann Henderson, Bob Jones, Mary-Beth O'Brien, Tom O'Connell, Ray Rodrigues, Susan Zappen, Justin Sipher, Patrick O'Rourke, Cindy Evans, Kris Szymborski, Denise McQuade, John Weber, Anita Steigerwald, Barb Schallehn, Andy Ashton

The minutes of March 25 were approved with a small revision about JStor.

After a hearty round of applause for Ann Henderson and the others involved with the Oracle implementation and imminent online student registration, Beth Dupont led a discussion about eportfolios. Ray Rodrigues had asked a couple of years ago for eportfolios but there was some hesitation. Leo Geoffrion put together a pilot project that is still being used by the Honors Forum but is not flexible or powerful enough for larger-scale, longer-term use. Lots of colleges are currently using student web pages but this is complicated by the problem of student training. There are also a lot of colleges who are currently doing nothing because of the complexities while others are using home grown or open-source products. It's clearly a new field that is still growing. Much of the discussion focused on the handout that Beth distributed that is found below . Some of the key issues that were raised are the following:

- There is a need for a vision of what role the eportfolio would play.
- It is currently planned as an integral part of the Scribner Seminars and will be used from day 1 for the RAP but that is the only planned role with FY students.
- What is one to do about images/video since the core value is critical inquiry and it can be expressed in a variety of forms?
- Some critical points to address are: funding for more server space, investment in compression tools, how to define the varied, complex uses of an eportfolio.
- There is clearly a tension between classroom use vs. assessment use.
- Most products are easier to use as student repositories because each department has its own assessment.
- There is a need for metadata so the contents can be pertinent, especially over the course of time.
- How interactive would the eportfolio be and how long would a student/alum have access?
- We need to start small and let it grow while examining what it is that faculty are actually looking for.
- We need to come up with a cohesive vision while exploring and focusing.
- Currently we are using tools that we have in place such as Datastor and WebCT.
- This will all require a huge culture change that is being fueled by assessment.
- We will also need to make choices between a shared work/storage space that is not kept forever and something more analogous to publishing where only the best is maintained.
- This must be a developmental initiative.

- Perhaps if we could dispense with the word eportfolio and examine what exactly it is we need and how we can address this need, we might more effectively find solutions over time.

Beth DuPont's handout:

What is an ePortfolio?

- No single definition; different meanings to different people with many interested parties
 - Reflection, collection, tracking, achievement, competency, career tracking, and resumes
 - A web-based information management system.
 - A digital repository of artifacts, used to demonstrate competence and reflect on learning.
 - “Webfolios are static Web sites where functionality derives from HTML links. ePortfolio therefore, now refers to database-driven, dynamic web sites, not static, HTML-driven sites.” (Batson, 2002)
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Who's Doing What? EPortfolio in New England

(Trent Batson – University of Rhode Island; Eileen Palenchar – Brown University; Kim Chambers – University of CT)

Key Values:

- Adds continuity & shared knowledge construction
- Norming around learning outcomes
- Helps nomadic student & life-long learner
- Improves likelihood of revision & reflection of own work

Cautions:

- New technologies; no dominant vendor; immature market
- Integration & lack of staff resources
- Interoperability, long-term storage, data formats
- Technology is “easy” – people part is not
- People are thinking of eportfolio for their own specific uses, but not necessarily for the campus as a whole.
- Lack of faculty buy-in

Recommendations:

- “Your solution now is only interim.” – Trent Batson
 - “Go with “pilots” as long as possible.” – Trent Batson
 - “Develop a vision for ePortfolio use on your campus, then communicate this vision to everyone.” – Kim Chambers
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ePortfolio Resources

- <http://www.deskootenays.ca/wilton/eportfolios/> (definitions & resources)
- <http://electronicportfolios.com/> (Helen Barrett)
- <http://webcenter1.aahc.org/electronicportfolios/> (Academic Resources)

- <http://www.theospi.org/> (Open Source Portfolio Initiative)

Skidmore and ePortfolio

Pilot Projects:

- homegrown ePortfolio system – used for almost 2 years now
- Discussion board (FuseTalk)
- Weblogs

Drivers:

- Scribner Seminars & Incoming Freshmen – RAP (Reflection & Projection)
- Senior Assessment
- Middle States Review

ePortfolio solutions – Oracle Presentation Portfolio & ePortaro

- Concerns: software & hardware costs, support personnel

What features are faculty looking for?

- Digital storage for student work with easy accessibility by faculty
- Ability to comment on student work (preferably a one-one correspondence with the artifact)
- Ability to download a document, make comments and put it back in the student portfolio
- Collection of various file types: documents, pdf, images, video, etc.
- Ability to run varied searches on database contents.
- Ease of use – minimal training needs

Where we are now...

- March 22 meeting to discuss solutions looked at so far, developed into discussion of the impetus for eportfolios, costs involved, and college commitment toward the project.
- Group determined we need a clearer sense of the institutional goal for eportfolio and a longer range vision.
- We need to further explore questions of how to manage and oversee a project such as this. How will it impact staff?
- To address immediate need (Class of 2009 RAP) we will use WebCT
- Continue looking at solutions and meet again week of May 9th

Questions:

- What kind of an eportfolio would you use? What characteristics do you need?
- Does this need to be an institutional portfolio?
- How do we approach faculty and student buy-in?