

Electronic Portfolio Progress Report
10/01/01
A project made possible by the Assessment Fund

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The Manoa Writing Program, Sociology Department, and Speech Department began developing an electronic portfolio system during Summer 2001. During the summer meetings, four Speech faculty, three Sociology faculty, and two Manoa Writing Program representatives discussed

- o portfolios as an assessment tool;
- o department goals and student outcomes;
- o products to be included in the portfolio;
- o establishing standards and measurement criteria;
- o standards and measurement criteria;
- o electronic portfolio platforms;
- o fall 01 & spring 02 participating instructors.

Portfolios as an Assessment Tool

Student portfolios and program assessment were both relatively new concepts to the Speech and Sociology faculty. An on-going discussion during the summer (and one that still continues) concerned the benefits and disadvantages of using portfolios to assess student learning across courses in the major. In addition, explanations of different models were provided and discussed. Because assessment concepts were new, some decision-making could not occur during the summer and these issues will be revisited during fall and spring.

Department Goals and Student Outcomes

The two departments constructed lists of department goals and student outcomes.

Speech Department Goals/Student Outcomes

Communication Skills. Students will be able to

1. Write cogent arguments; use evidence to support arguments.
2. Present messages effectively (informative, persuasive, entertaining); analyze audience.
3. Do critical analysis; take multiple perspectives.

Research Skills. Students will be able to

1. Effectively use the library.
2. Do empirical research.
3. Analyze arguments; assess methodology; interpret results.

Knowledge. Students will have a thorough knowledge of

1. Message Processing (verbal & nonverbal).
2. Relational Communication/Interpersonal.
3. Social Influence/Persuasion.
4. Contexts: intercultural; health; family; organizational/small group.

Sociology Department Goals/Student Outcomes

Content Knowledge. Students will have a

1. Fundamental theoretical grounding in understanding social behavior.
2. Range of quantitative and qualitative research skills.

Skills. Students will be able to

1. Analyze any social activity within appropriate theoretical frameworks.
2. Investigate social phenomena through the collection and analysis of various types of social data.
3. Develop a theoretical framework to guide data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings in a written format.
4. Critique social science research articles (describe strengths and weaknesses; discuss appropriateness of data and of claims made; discuss implications of research).
5. Frame a problem as a sociologist and decide what methods to use to investigate the problem.
6. Write and speak with clarity and focus and in a format appropriate to sociology.

Products to be included in the Electronic Portfolio

One goal was to map out the types of assignments that would allow faculty to assess how well each outcome was being achieved. For example, what types of written products might be needed to determine whether students could adequately critique a research article in a journal? A related goal was to identify classes in which these assignments are currently given or where they may be added in the curriculum.

Speech: products to include in students' e-portfolios

1. Informal Process Writing/Self-Assessment (Academic Journal or Response Papers) (SP 380, 381, 455)
2. Training Manual plus Video Tape (SP 470)
3. Interpersonal Relationship Journal (SP 381) or Conflict Journal (SP 455)
4. Analysis Papers (required in multiple courses)
5. Empirical Research Paper (required in multiple courses)

Sociology: products to include in students' e-portfolios

1. Academic Diary/Journal [alternate = Reflection or Response Papers] (not regularly required)
2. Research Writing (SOC 300, 475, 476, 478)

Standards and Measurement Criteria

Standards and measurement criteria will be fully discussed late in the fall semester, after student writing has been posted to a course web site. The groups were unable to create standards and measurement criteria in the absence of written products.

Electronic Portfolio Platforms

Several different possibilities for an electronic platform were discussed. They ranged from student-generated websites to University-created websites to using course software such as WebCT or Blackboard.

Main concerns raised were security, ease of use, training for faculty and students.

The group attended a WebCT workshop and decided that it was too difficult to learn given the electronic portfolio goals. Information Technology Services was unable to assist in developing a platform in the short time frame (two-three months). In fall 2001, students will submit their work electronically via email attachments. Professors will transfer the files to a course website.

The groups continue to discuss which platform will be appropriate and what technological demands can be made of the faculty and students.

Fall 2001/Spring 2002 Participating Instructors

In fall 2001, two Speech professors and one Sociology professor have informed their classes that they are participating in an electronic portfolio project. These students will submit their writing electronically, to be posted on a class website for later review. Late in fall 2001, the groups will discuss the written products and create standards and measurement criteria. In spring 2002, three Speech professors and three Sociology professors have expressed interest in having their students participate in the project.

Discussion

We proposed a pilot study of the electronic portfolio during summer and fall 2001 but a more accurate description of the current project is a feasibility study: how prepared are the faculty in speech and sociology to assess their programs using an electronic portfolio system?

While the participating faculty are willing to implement an electronic portfolio, several obstacles still exist that must be overcome during fall 2001 and spring 2002.

1. The general unfamiliarity with portfolios and program assessment initially delayed progress on the electronic portfolio project. Instead of moving directly to options associated with using portfolios as an assessment tool, significant time was required to explain background

information. When introducing this pilot project to the department as a whole, trainers will have to focus on the basic concepts of portfolios and program assessment.

2. A lack of experience with technology (both faculty and students) leads to the perception that course content coverage will suffer because technology lessons will need to be added to the course. The final platform selected for the portfolio must be simple to use and require little course time to explain.

3. Faculty see the benefits of an "open-access" portfolio that potential employers could view. However, they are more concerned with privacy issues, plagiarism problems, and how making writing public might change the nature of a course or of individual assignments.

4. When discussing electronic portfolios, there is a tendency to focus on the technology because it is unfamiliar. The focus has not yet shifted to setting standards and measurement criteria. This task will need to be tackled later in fall when assignments are available for review.

The enthusiasm and willingness of the Speech and Sociology participants is encouraging. They understand the long-term requirements of assessing the major and are willing to continue the electronic portfolio project over the next year.