



The Cooperative advancing the effective use of technology in higher education



Comparing Higher Education ePortfolio Systems

WCET, EduTools, and EPAC (the Electronic Portfolio Action Committee) invite you to participate in a research project to:

- 1) compare the features of ePortfolio products
- 2) research select issues in ePortfolios
- 3) share advances made by project participants in the effective use of ePortfolios

Come join us by September 13, 2005

"Most educators accept the premise that, in an ideal world, learning would be delivered in the manner and environment that best suit the needs and learning styles of individual learners. In the future, technologies like personalization, integration, and electronic portfolios will progress toward this ideal by broadening the learning universe. ... The foundation for this future, user-centric view of higher education is already in place today, built upon personalization, integration, and ePortfolio technologies" (Susan LaCour, Innovate April/May 2005 <http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=85>).

As institutions start to make their way down the road of ePortfolios, they are also facing choices on how to author, store, catalog, locate, and share content. A brief survey by the EduTools team found more than a dozen competing ePortfolio packages aimed at post-secondary education, far more if one expands the list to include resume, assessment, and weblog software that some institutions are choosing to address similar problems.

In addition to the ever-growing list of software to choose from, institutions face the difficult task of choosing which features and functionality are important to them in selecting ePortfolio software and discovering which of the competing packages support the features that they need. This decision situation has grown to be quite complex. One way to conceptualize and categorize the functionality can be found in the complex definition reproduced below:

"an educational portfolio contains work that a learner has collected, reflected, selected, and presented to show growth and change over time, representing an individual or organization's human capital. ... there are many purposes for portfolios in education: there are portfolios that center around learning, assessment, employment, marketing, and showcase or best work" (Helen C. Barrett, p. 2, <http://electronicportfolios.org/reflect/whitepaper.pdf>).

You are invited

WCET's EduTools team and EPAC are seeking institutions, statewide higher education governing or coordinating agencies, or multi-institutional partnerships to extend this research to chart the state of the art in ePortfolio technology and implementation issues that affect its impact. Over a four-month period, EduTools team and project participants will conduct the following three activities:

1) Compare the features of selected ePortfolio software products

The EduTools team has now created a successful model for comparing product features (www.edutools.info) for ePortfolio software. The research will include:

- Refining the product comparison features based on feedback from project partners
- Selecting a set of products (as chosen by the project partners) to be reviewed
- Conducting product reviews
- Demonstrating product functionality, either by the software vendors or project staff at a face-to-face meeting to discuss project outcomes.

2) Explore select "topics" related to ePortfolios

Project participants will select a few issues to be discussed in more depth. Presentations on the topic will be made by experts from EPAC or others who have practical experience in addressing the issue. Initial conversations have uncovered the following issues that could be candidates for further research:

- Multiple ePortfolio needs – can you address both assessment and learning needs with the same system?
- Integrating ePortfolios with Course Management Systems and other institutional systems.
- Intellectual property – How can the rights of students and faculty be balanced with institutional needs?
- Technical standards – how do the standards and reference models developed by IMS and other organizations affect the creation and sharing of ePortfolio information?
- Incentives for faculty – What incentives are needed for faculty to create and/or use ePortfolios?
- Open source – How can ePortfolios be developed with an open source philosophy. What are the implications?

Participants will identify a selected number of research topics to be reviewed by the project. EPAC will identify "topic Experts" such as Darren Cambridge, Helen Chen, John C. Ittelson, and Tom Lewis, who already have researched some of the issues. The project will contract with Topic Experts to share their research.



The Cooperative advancing the effective use of technology in higher education



3) Share advances made by project participants in using ePortfolios

Most project participants already possess a great deal of practical experience with ePortfolio issues. Through interviews, shared web space, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings, participants will share their own advances and to learn from the advances of other participants. Participants in past EduTools research projects have found great value in sharing knowledge with others who are struggling with the same issues. The sharing process provides both discipline in addressing the issues and a wider range of points-of-view than can be found inside your own organization. Through EPAC, participants will have the opportunity to share their innovations and discuss research issues with over 800 ePortfolio leaders from around the globe.

Some Potential Products to Review

- ARSIN Corporation;s EPORTFOLIO™
- Blackboard Content System
- Career Wales Online
- CATALYST
- College LiveText edu solutions by LiveText
- CTE ePortfolio by Johns Hopkins University
- eFolio by Avenet
- Elgg Personal Learning Landscape
- e-Portfolio by Chalk and Wire
- ePortaro
- ePortConsortium
- ePortfolio by Ingeniux
- Epsilen Portfolios
- FolioLive
- Foliotek by LANIT Consulting
- Interfolio
- MAPS by TAG Learning, Ltd.
- Maricopa College eportfolio
- Masterfile ePortfolio Manager (EPM) by Concord
- Mosaic by rsmart
- MyPortfolio
- Nuventive's iWebfolio
- OSP 1.5 and 2.0
- PaperFree
- pebblePAD
- PEAKS: Portfolio of Essential Attributes, Knowledge and Skills
- Personal Learning Plan
- Portfolio Community by University of Denver
- Seque
- TaskStream's Web Folio Builder
- TrueOutcomes by Outcomes Assessment Associates

Another survey by the EduTools team of existing software indicated that there were easily 80 different functional features and characteristics of ePortfolio software (initially based on a Regis University listing at <http://academic.regis.edu/LAAP/eportfolio/feature.htm>) that could be used for comparison, in categories such as Collection/Content Management, Reflection, Feedback,

Personal Information, Permissions, Publishing, Technology, Support, Training, Technical Issues, and Pricing/Licensing. The project will also draw on recent ePortfolio product comparisons conducted by JISC in the UK. The project members would guide the selection of product features reviewed in the research. Additional ePortfolio annotated resources can be found at <http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/dd/eportfolio02/resources.php>

Project results will be held exclusive to the project partners for three months past the conclusion of the research project. Past that time the results will be displayed on the EduTools site (www.edutools.info) in a format similar to the one deployed for Course Management Systems. The site would allow users to view products individually or else compare products on any number of features in a side-by-side manner.

Who should participate?

WCET is seeking 6-8 institutions, college or university systems, or multi-institutional partnerships to participate in the ePortfolio Research Project. This project is intended for those who will soon be deciding to select ePortfolio software. Should they build their own? How do some of the leading software products compare to each other? How can an institution be successful in implementing ePortfolios?

Why WCET, EduTools, and EPAC?

EduTools provides unbiased, independent comparisons of e-learning products. EduTools is most noted for its work in comparing course management systems. EduTools principal investigators, Bruce Landon and Scott Leslie, will lead research activities on this project. WCET (www.wcet.info) is a leader in the effective use of e-learning tools. The EPAC virtual community of practice is a leading venue for sharing ePortfolio advanced and best practices. Through its extensive network of members and partners, WCET and EPAC are natural conveners of those leading the way in the use of e-learning tools.

How much does it cost?

The cost is \$6,000 for WCET members and \$7,000 for non-members. This does not include the costs of traveling to a face-to-face meeting to discuss project outcomes.

How do I sign up?

What if I have questions?

To become a partner or if you have questions, contact, Russell Poulin (rpoulin@wcet.info or 303-541-0305). An e-mail committing your organization or institution to participate should be sent to him by September 13. A formal agreement will follow later.