

# AePR

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THE AAEEBL ePORTFOLIO REVIEW

## Building Bridges II

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# Building Bridges: Creating Connections by Building Our Portfolios

Authors: Candyce Reynolds, Gail Ring, Theresa Conefrey, Allie Davidson, and Heather Stuart  
Review Editor: Sandra Stewart

As ePortfolio practitioners, it is easy to tout the virtues of ePortfolios. We all know that ePortfolios provide opportunities to reflect on and demonstrate our learning and our expertise. As ePortfolio practitioners, we have no problem instructing and guiding students in the development of their portfolios. But many of us do not practice what we preach. The authors of this paper were members of AAEEBL's 2017/18 "Out of Practice" cohort, a group designed to encourage and support practitioners in the development of their portfolios. The group also sought to learn from our own experiences of creating a portfolio for particular audiences. This paper will describe how developing and reflecting on our own portfolios with others allowed us to build bridges with other practitioners, faculty, students, and our professional identities. In this article, the authors describe the audiences they sought to connect with, share the design of their ePortfolios, describe their experiences creating their ePortfolios, and share the lessons learned in this process.

As ePortfolio practitioners, we believe that using ePortfolios is one of the best pedagogical and extra-curricular practices for our students. ePortfolios provide opportunities for students to reflect on and demonstrate their learning. Students can use ePortfolios to facilitate their learning and provide information about themselves and what they know to a variety of audiences. Faculty and academic professionals can also use ePortfolios to reflect on their own

learning and demonstrate their competencies. We believe ePortfolios are good for students, ourselves, and our colleagues!

However, many of us do not lead by example. During our presentation on this topic at the 2018 AAEEBL Conference, a show of hands revealed that less than a 1/2 had an ePortfolio and of that, only 1/3 updated and maintained their ePortfolios regularly. Modelling and demonstrating the behaviors we want to see is not only common sense but is also well researched (Yaffe & Kark, 2011). How do we expect our students and colleagues to test the riches that an ePortfolio practice can offer if we do not do it ourselves?

In 2011, a group of ePortfolio professionals decided to support each other in either creating or updating our ePortfolios. We agreed to meet by phone once a month and send each other links to our ePortfolios for critique and discussion. We called ourselves "Out of Practice" as we were certainly out of practice in maintaining ePortfolios. In that first year, we met with some success. All but one of our members created a portfolio. We presented what we had learned in making our ePortfolios at the AAEEBL conference in 2012. Many of us in the original group kept up with our ePortfolios, but many of us fell back onto old habits—spreading the word about the wonders of ePortfolios, but neglecting to maintain our own.

At the AACU ePortfolio Forum in 2018, "Out of Practice" was revived. Two of the original

members, Gail Ring and Candyce Reynolds, participated again and were joined by ten other colleagues from across the country who were also eager to explore their own use of ePortfolios and get support from one another.

### Out of Practice (OOP) Group Process

Part of the purpose of OOP was to help hold one another accountable. As professionals, we are all busy, and like our students, we had difficulty making time to work on our ePortfolios. We agreed to “meet” every two weeks via conference call or video conferencing. Each time we met, we agreed to complete certain tasks. In essence, we created assignments for ourselves much like we do for our students.

We focused on the following topics throughout the time we met:

- Technology choices
- Defining the audience and purpose for our individual portfolios, including but not limited to
  - Life-wide or comprehensive
  - Promotion and tenure
- Identifying categories to showcase in our portfolios, including but not limited to
  - Teaching/Research/Service
  - Expertise/Consulting/Clients
- Identifying specific accomplishments with categories, including but not limited to
  - Conference presentations
  - Publications
- Creating content for our ePortfolios, including but not limited to
  - Reflective essays
  - Photos

After we had completed these tasks, we divided into teams of two or three and began to critique one another’s work. We decided to make this an iterative process and receive feedback, make improvements and meet again.

### The Results

Ultimately, seven members completed the whole process. Five of us are authors of this article. We represent a diverse group of professionals. Some of us are faculty members who use ePortfolios in our teaching. Some are academic professionals who work with faculty and/or students to help create ePortfolios. One of our members is a current student and another

is leader in an ePortfolio software company. We weren’t all able to meet every time, but we kept in touch, did our assignments and were all actively engaged in the feedback process at the end. We each made decisions about the platform we would use to create our ePortfolios, determined our audience, and developed content relevant to that audience.

We were proud and happy to present the results of our OOP experience at the annual AAEEBL conference in July 2018. We focused on providing an overview of decisions and experiences and shared the lessons learned from participating in OOP and from creating and maintaining our ePortfolios. Below, you will find a summary of each members’ results.

### Theresa Conefrey, faculty member, Santa Clara University

Hi Everyone, I’m Theresa Conefrey and I’m a serial ePortfolio starter!

At my institution, we’ve gone through three platforms and I’ve started multiple ePortfolios in all of them but not completed any of them, until now. ePortfolios have been slow to take off at Santa Clara, marked by changing champions and platforms. Some faculty in some courses have tried them for a while in select courses, but very few have stuck with them over time. The introductory writing courses in LEAD, the learning community for first-generation students, is one exception. For more than five years, despite changes in platforms and people, this program has required all students to create an ePortfolio to demonstrate their progress in their first college writing course.

As for me, I was smitten as soon as I learned of the potential of ePortfolios to enable students to integrate their learning and to become intentional life-long learners. Over the years, I’ve been gradually implementing them in all my courses and I’ve been working diligently and persistently to encourage colleagues to give them a try in their classes also. Recently, with internal funding, I managed to persuade some colleagues to join an ePortfolio faculty learning community (FLC), where we met regularly and

built our campus resources. We are also in the process of implementing ePortfolios in our new neuroscience major, and so they are poised to finally take off in a specific program, where the plan is to employ ePortfolio pedagogy throughout a student's academic career in both lower and upper division courses.

But none of us had completed an ePortfolio. No one in any of the ePortfolio initiatives that I organized or participated in was using them for their own personal learning. ePortfolios were a tool we thought would be beneficial for our students. That is until I heard about OOPs and decided that it was time to put into practice what I'd been preaching. After joining this group, I was finally motivated to complete one of my many incomplete ePortfolio efforts. This community was fabulous. We kept each other accountable throughout the months of creating our sites and by the time of our panel presentation, we all had completed our ePortfolios.

We met virtually every 2-3 weeks using Zoom and Google hangouts, and our virtual meetings worked well. Occasionally, we had difficulties with time zone confusion and unanticipated commitments, but we stayed in touch, kept one another accountable, and made it work.

In the early weeks, we talked about the purpose of our ePortfolios, our platform choices, what to include, and whom we saw as our main audience. Our final products varied, with different platforms, different purposes and different artifacts depending on whom we had identified as our audience. I wanted my ePortfolio to serve as both an example to show students and a professional development tool that I could share with colleagues and use for myself to keep track of my learning.

What was most helpful to me was our sharing our ePortfolios with one another and receiving feedback from the group. The feedback was encouraging and motivating, and we all made

changes and improvements to our ePortfolios as a result.

### Lessons learned:

First, building an ePortfolio is hard. It involves a significant amount of metacognitive work. Self-regulation is involved too as creating the ePortfolio requires consistent and persistent effort over time. There are fiddly technical frustrations, no matter what the platform, when you can't get a picture in exactly the right size or location, you forget to save your work or don't save it correctly, or you can't get the ePortfolio to look the way you envision it.

Second, writing for multiple audiences is difficult. What I might initially want to create to show to my students is not necessarily what I'd be comfortable sharing with colleagues. In creating the ePortfolio, one creates a digital persona, and the persona I showcase to my first-year students is not necessarily the same one that I would want to portray to my seasoned colleagues. In addition, what might be interesting to my colleagues might not be accessible to my students.

Third, collecting photos is useful. I would advise collecting significantly more graphics than you could possibly need so that you have sufficient choice. The most engaging ePortfolios are visually interesting and photos work well to engage the viewer. Off course, all graphics have to be purposeful. I realized that some of my initial choices were merely decorative or were possibly misleading and so I had to delete them and search for alternatives. For the final version, I used only photos that I had taken and suggest that this is a good practice to avoid problems with usage rights.

Finally, creating community is invaluable. In our group, we encouraged one another to keep up our efforts and gained from one another's invaluable feedback.

[Allie Davidson, campus ePortfolio professional, Carleton University](#)

I am one of the newbies to the Out of Practice group. I have been working in the ePortfolio field for the past few years, and since I first

started, I have attempted to create an ePortfolio a few different times. Prior to getting involved with Out of Practice, something always seemed to get in the way of putting the final touches on my portfolio. I found it difficult to prioritize my portfolio because it was a personal project, and so it was easy to put on the back burner while I dealt with the usual busyness at work. And if I am being completely honest with myself, I was also anxious about the idea of sharing my portfolio publically. My role at Carleton University is to support instructors using ePortfolio in their teaching. I have been dubbed the ePortfolio “guru” and “expert” by colleagues and, therefore, as a newer professional who is all too familiar with imposter syndrome, the prospect of creating and sharing a portfolio was an intimidating prospect. The doubting voice in my head was saying, “a portfolio ‘expert’ with a bad portfolio, what could be more indicative that you don’t belong in this job?” My worst nightmares would surely be realized as soon as I hit the “share” button: my fraud status would finally be unveiled to the world!

Well, maybe I wasn’t thinking as dramatically as that, but the reality was that the anxiety I felt around publishing a portfolio was enough of a barrier for me to not get it done.

Despite my anxieties, I knew that creating a portfolio would be a useful professional development exercise and would add an extra layer of authenticity to the ePortfolio work that I do. Cue: the Out of Practice group. When I first heard about the group, I jumped at the opportunity to get involved. I knew I needed the extra motivation to complete my portfolio, and I figured I would be in good company with other ePortfolio practitioners who had struggled, for one reason or another, to build their own portfolios.

At the start of the Out of Practice process, we each identified the audience and purpose of our portfolio. I decided to create a professional portfolio—something I could share on my departmental contact page or email signature in case instructors wanted to learn a bit about what I do before meeting me. I can say now though,

in retrospect, the far more important audience of my portfolio was myself—I built a stronger professional identity through creating my portfolio and participating in the Out of Practice group.

### Lessons learned

First, creating and sharing a portfolio can be a useful professional development exercise. Going through the process of creating my portfolio helped me feel proud of who I am professionally and of the accomplishments I’d had so far in my career. Creating my portfolio made my professional accomplishments more visible to me (SHOCKER, I know) and in turn, I could not help but accept that I’ve done some pretty good work and that I actually do belong in my profession and role. Additionally, receiving friendly and supportive feedback from other ePortfolio “experts” and “gurus” on my portfolio was validating. Turns out, sharing my portfolio with others did not “out” me as a complete failure after all.

Second, your portfolio can include both professional and personal information. In my case, I was unsure if I should dedicate a space in my portfolio to my horsemanship. Even though it is a huge part of my life, I wondered if it belonged in a *professional* portfolio. I shared this question with my Out of Practice members and the answer was YES! We talked over a few options of how I might include it in my portfolio, and eventually, I decided to place it front and center on the first page of my portfolio. I also decided, in an effort to integrate the personal and professional aspects of my life in my portfolio, to connect my horsemanship approach to my teaching philosophy. This ended up being a fun and revealing exercise for me, which emphasized the influence that the non-professional aspects of my life have on every aspect of my life, including my work.

Third, feedback on your portfolio is important and can be transformative. One of the pieces of feedback I received from an Out of Practice peer was that I used the word “work” a lot when I described what I do. She did not bring this up as a criticism; instead she mentioned it because

she noticed a disconnect between the way that I acted in person (actually in our case, it was over Google hangouts) and the way that I represented myself as an “employee doing work for a job” in my portfolio. This observation was tremendously insightful for me. I know that the language is indicative of our attitudes and behaviors and so since this observation, I have been cognizant of the way I frame what I do and how I introduce myself to others (in person and in text).

Finally, community is important. Without the support, accountability, and feedback I received from being involved with Out of Practice, I would not have finished my portfolio and I would still feel pangs of anxiety at the thought of hitting the “share” button on my portfolio.

[Link to my ePortfolio](#) (Click to view the webpage)

### [Heather Stuart, campus ePortfolio professional, Auburn University](#)

I was excited to join this group because creating an ePortfolio would give me an opportunity to refine my online presence and professional identity. The timing was ideal because I plan to participate in a professional job search over the next few years. I imagined that my goals and process would mirror what students at our institution experience, which would inform my practices as an educator. Participating in OOP was informative and enjoyable. During the process I learned more about myself as a professional, and I experienced a few surprises along the way.

#### Lessons Learned

Before joining the group, I already had a draft of an ePortfolio from 2015. However, even though the reflective writing was compelling, the structure, design, and content were dated. It was clear that I would need to create a new one. Creating two versions would be useful because I could use both in future workshops or programs. By the end of the semester, my goal was to create a new draft of my ePortfolio with at least two pages of reflective writing and artifacts.

I began the process by researching my audience on job search websites. I specifically looked at the language used to describe the

responsibilities and requirements of these positions. This helped me determine which experiences to include and how to organize my artifacts. After determining that I should include my administrative and teaching experiences, especially my work with the ePortfolio Project, I set to work finding artifacts. In my first portfolio iteration I was only able to identify a few artifacts, and I needed to enlist the help of my friends and coworkers to take photos and create additional artifacts. This time, I had the opposite problem. Over the last few years, I’ve created dozens of workshops, programs, materials, and resources. It took me a few weeks to sort through my work, and I finally identified a few photos, worksheets, and lesson plans that exemplified my range of skills and knowledge.

After identifying artifacts, I started to write my reflections. This part of the process took the longest. Because I wanted this experience to inform the way I teach ePortfolios to others, whenever possible I attempted to use the worksheets and handouts from [the ePortfolio Project](#). The most helpful one for me was [the reflective writing handout](#) because the prompts allowed me think about the range of ways I could talk about my experiences. I spent a lot of time drafting and redrafting my text. The most challenging part was trying to condense my writing into small, manageable sections. Because I’ve been with [the Office of University Writing](#) for six years, I had quite a few experiences to discuss! However, I suspected my audience wouldn’t spend a lot of time exploring my pages, so I intentionally condensed pages and pages of text down to paragraphs of text.

Once I was confident that I had a solid foundation of artifacts and reflective writing, I created a new website in Wix. The ePortfolio Project supports three platforms—Wix, Weebly, and WordPress—and in order to refine my technical expertise I knew I wanted to use one of these three. Wix is the most popular platform at our institution, which is why I decided to select that one over the others.

I took a few weeks to carefully consider my design. I wanted to select a template that was

clean, professional, and inviting. One of the most noticeable changes between my old and new ePortfolio was the design. My old ePortfolio had a gray background with black text, which wasn't very easy to read. In this version, I kept the gray background, but I added white text boxes so the reflective writing was easier to read. I also added teal accents to each of my pages to create a sense of visual cohesion between pages and sections. I also added more images showcasing my work with students as seen in Figures 1 and 2. In addition to providing compelling visuals, these images further reinforced my passion for working with students. I was also especially aware of [basic design principles](#) and [ethical literacy](#). Because we encourage students to use design principles such as contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity, I wanted to demonstrate those in my ePortfolio. I also received permission from all students who were featured in my ePortfolio as a way to model ethical practices.

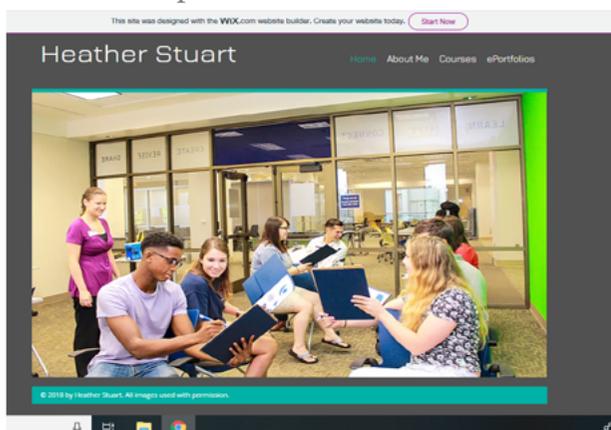


Figure 1. Heather Stuart's portfolio with image of students.

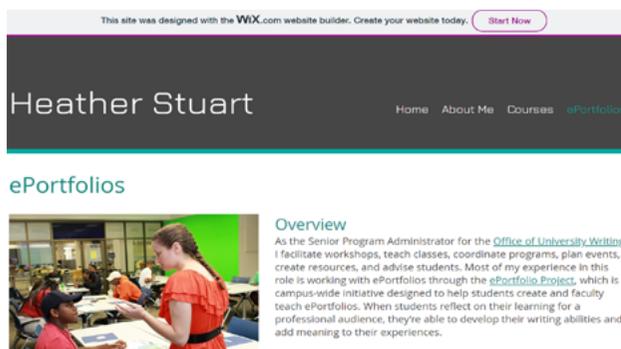


Figure 2. Heather Stuart's portfolio with image of students.

As the semester came to a close, I continued to revise and refine my work. Reflecting on the experience, I most remember the iterative nature of the process. The description above may seem linear, but I was constantly moving between different parts of my ePortfolio. For example, I would revisit position descriptions as I was writing my reflections, or I would eliminate an artifact after I discovered that it didn't connect to my overall message.

The other participants in the group provided helpful feedback as well. Specifically, they encouraged me to add more visual elements and organize the reflective writing into sections with headers. These changes made my ePortfolio visually compelling and easier to read.

Creating an ePortfolio for multiple audiences was a constant challenge. My primary audience was higher education professionals, and I created the ePortfolio with them in mind. However, I also knew that I would be working with students and faculty who may want to see my ePortfolio. As a result, I tried to make my experiences accessible to them as well. This was an unexpected challenge because I thought my audience expectations would align better. For example, I wanted to write deep, meaningful reflections to model best practices for students, but writing about my experiences in a way that appealed to students would often require me to represent my experiences in a way that didn't always align with my professional identity. This is something that I will continue to consider moving forward.

For some reason, I also anticipated that the process would be easier because of my experience with ePortfolios. I thought that I would be able to move through these steps more quickly. This project took a lot more time than I had anticipated, and while I think I understood the process, executing the ePortfolio was still difficult. This has informed the way I work with students. Even though a student may seem bright and enthusiastic, the process can still be challenging and frustrating.

Moving forward, I'm going to add pages about my assessment and research experiences. I think these additional pages will reinforce my message while

maintaining a simple and clear page structure. I'm also going to send my link to potential employers and professionals in the field for additional feedback so their comments will continue to help me shape and refine my ePortfolio.

### Candyce Reynolds, faculty member, Portland State University

Like Theresa, I too am a serial ePortfolio starter. I have over 50 ePortfolios—some more completed than others. I like to try new platforms and see how they work. I use ePortfolios a lot in the courses I teach, and I convinced my colleagues to use ePortfolios as the culminating experience for students in our program and to use the results for our program assessment. As a self-proclaimed ePortfolio evangelist, I often feel guilty that I don't have my own completed, coherent ePortfolio to show students and my colleagues.

I have learned over time as I have worked on these various ePortfolios that defining my audience is very important. I have struggled in the past with trying to create an ePortfolio that will meet the needs or expectations of a variety of stakeholders. I found that this didn't work very well. Instead, the ePortfolio ended up being this static representation of many parts of my academic and personal life that was disjointed. These portfolios did not tell a story, but instead represented disconnected pieces across the tabs of the website.

For the ePortfolio that I chose to create for OOP, I focused on creating an ePortfolio for my students. I wanted my students be able to understand a bit about me, especially about my beliefs and attitudes about education and how I approached teaching. As a faculty member in a program that required an in-depth, integrative ePortfolio, I also wanted to model the creation of a coherent ePortfolio. I work in an adult education graduate program, and we spend a great deal of time having students think and write about their guiding principles as adult educators. We tell them that this serves as the anchor for their ePortfolios. I wanted to show them that

my ePortfolio uses my guiding principles as the anchor for my story also.

I found the accountability of OOP to be tantamount to my success in building and maintaining (still!) my ePortfolio. In my weekly to-do-list, I have had "work on ePortfolio" in my overall weekly goals for years now. During my time in OOP, I was able to check off "work on ePortfolio" on my to-do-list each week. I actually scheduled time to make sure I was ready for the discussion and showcasing of my work for the OOP meeting. I also found the feedback from my small group of critical friends to be invaluable. They had questions for me that allowed me to get out of myself and see how my ePortfolio might be viewed by others, especially students. Their questions pointed to the questions that my students might also have.

#### Lessons learned

Creating a coherent ePortfolio is actually more difficult and complex than I imagined. It is easy enough to gather some artifacts and put them together in an ePortfolio but to carefully think about my audience and consider what they would like to know and what I wanted to share was challenging. As I began to consider what I might want to share, my "education" page became my "schooling" page as I wanted to explore what I had learned from my education beyond where I had gone to college and graduate school. It is now my favorite page of my ePortfolio.

Portland State University adopted PebblePad as its ePortfolio platform and I had been asking students to use it in my classes for several years. I knew the basics but not much beyond that. Creating my own portfolio pushed me to learn how to make my ePortfolio look better and have better navigability.

I set the goal of my ePortfolio to communicate with students. I wanted them to know me better and understand my background and perspective. This has been successful. I have had more students come during office hours and we have had deeper and more meaningful conversations. They refer to things they have read on

my ePortfolio. They ask questions about what they have read. They share similar experiences. I have felt vulnerable in sharing parts of myself with my students, but ultimately I have been rewarded with more engaged learning experiences for me and my students.

Part of the vulnerability came in completing an assignment that is part of the program's ePortfolio expectations. We ask them to engage in highly personal reflective practice to identify their guiding principles as a professional. I did the same assignment and wrote my own guiding principles. We ask students to make their statements illustrative and personal. In writing my own in this way, students get to know me but also have a model (albeit imperfect) of what we, as a program, want to see. Students have told me that they appreciate that I have done a difficult assignment also. We have also seen the quality of assignments go up. Figure 3 is my current Guiding Principles page.

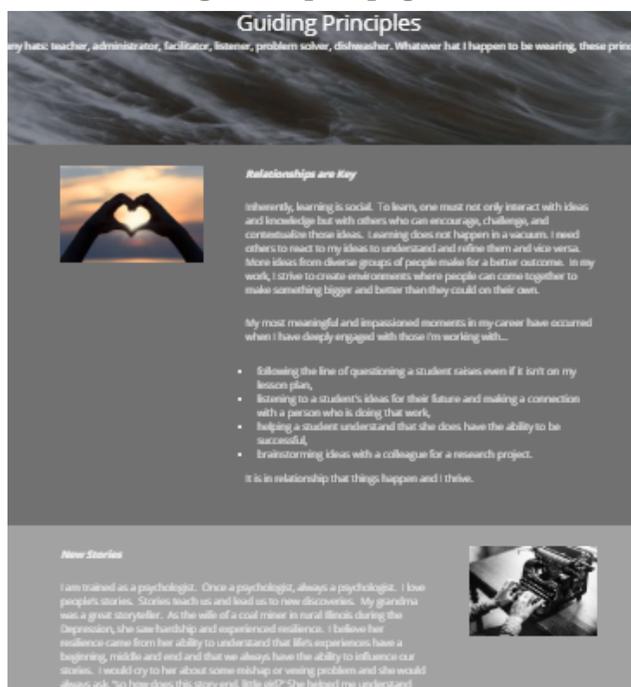


Figure 3. Candyce Reynolds' portfolio.

Given my poor history of maintaining an ePortfolio, it is clear that having an authentic audience is good. At the beginning of each term, I review my ePortfolio and update it. I know my students will look at it. I am grateful

to have the motivation to reflect on my ongoing work. It is good for them and good for me!

[Link to ePortfolio](#) (Click to view the webpage)

## Gail Ring, Director of Operations, PebblePad

As one of the original members of the OOP group, I benefited greatly from participating in this group over the years. ePortfolio evangelists like those of us in OOP talk at great length about the benefits of portfolios for reflection, authentic assessment and evidencing student work, but as has already mentioned, we sometimes don't practice what we preach.

My ePortfolio journey began years ago (1995) when my undergraduate students created portfolios as a way to reflect on and track their growth and understanding over time. The "ah-ha" moment that I had with this group of students and what turned me into a life-long portfolio evangelist and portfolio creator was when students thanked me for the portfolio assignment. Never before had I been thanked for an assignment! But these students thanked me for the opportunity to look back at their work, essentially making their learning visible to them. From those early days trying to motivate my students, I realized that I needed to model this practice if I was to one, have empathy for the challenge of reflecting on work and putting into words what I learned, struggled with or accomplished and two, provide a model of what a portfolio is for my students.

Like Theresa and Candyce, I created a lot of portfolios over the years and with each portfolio comes a new level of learning and understanding. But in addition to creating my own portfolio(s), my career essentially has been to implement portfolio programs. This began with the class I taught as a graduate student, which led to a College of Education-wide requirement for students to demonstrate teaching competencies, to my work at Clemson University where ePortfolios and students' evidence and reflections in them were used to assess both the student's understanding of the general education competencies and the

program as a whole. Skip ahead a few years, my ePortfolio evangelism has not wavered. In fact, in my current position as Director of Learning Partnerships for PebblePad North America, my work includes facilitating strong implementations of PebblePad at partner institutions. Much of this work includes applying ePortfolio pedagogies that support reflection, integrative learning and assessment for learning.

### Lessons Learned

My own portfolio journey over the years has been informed by the work that I do as well as the collaborations with my OOP colleagues. Here are a few of the lessons I learned.

First, and it has been mentioned a few times already but bears repeating, accountability is a motivator and a teacher. In the first OOP group, I was partnered with Wende Morgaine, our then fearless and peerless leader. Those of you that have had the great fortune to work with Wende know that she is highly organized and will keep you organized. Knowing that I had regular sessions where we discussed our portfolios motivated me to regularly update and add to my portfolio. These conversations also led to my strong conviction that a portfolio needs conversation and feedback leading to the second lesson learned.

Feedback improves. I know this sounds like a no-brainer, but in many cases a portfolio is simply a showcase where one puts stuff and says: “Ta-Da!!! Here is me!” I contend in order for a portfolio to become what AAC&U has identified as the 11<sup>th</sup> High Impact Practice (with the important caveat “when done well”), it needs feedback and iteration. My ePortfolio changed in very positive and profound ways after my conversations with Wende in that first OOP group. I carefully revised my navigation, streamlined content and added narration where needed. I saw that with my students’ portfolios as well. What began as an academic list of accomplishments became richer and fuller after our conversations and/or their conversations with peers. They began to see for example that extracurricular experiences demonstrated skills and learning after what we called our

“ePortology” sessions. Their portfolios, like mine, began to present a complete person with vast experiences. This leads to my third lesson learned.

In this recent OOP group, when we reviewed one another’s portfolios, one of the parts that many of us struggled with was how personal our portfolios should be. We wondered if there is room for a personal space in a portfolio. One of the group mentioned my portfolio from the last OOP group and said it had a nice balance of the personal and professional and felt that side provided insight to me a “whole-person.” And quite frankly she was disappointed that the personal page had been eliminated from my current portfolio. That comment reminded me of my job interview at Clemson where one of my interviewers mentioned my personal page and my love of travel and dogs and felt he knew me after reading my “whole” portfolio. So the answer to the question posed above is yes, I think there is!!

Finally, participating in the OOP group has had such a profound impact on me both personally—I have made great friends as a result of this group—and enriched me professionally over the years. I think any campus with a portfolio program or considering implementing one can benefit from a local Out of Practice group. I believe when implemented well, the portfolio initiative can be the connective tissue that supports and binds learner-centered practices throughout campuses. I have seen this first-hand at Clemson where our portfolio assessment each summer was a cross-disciplinary space that led to collaborations in research and teaching across campus. The opportunity to escape the silo that so often exists on campuses today to share our work and our ideas on learning and teaching as represented in our portfolios could have a transformative effect not only on the individual but the system at large.

Back to that accountability thing, now that my portfolio is going live...again...I better get busy!!

[Link to my portfolio](#) (Click to view the webpage)

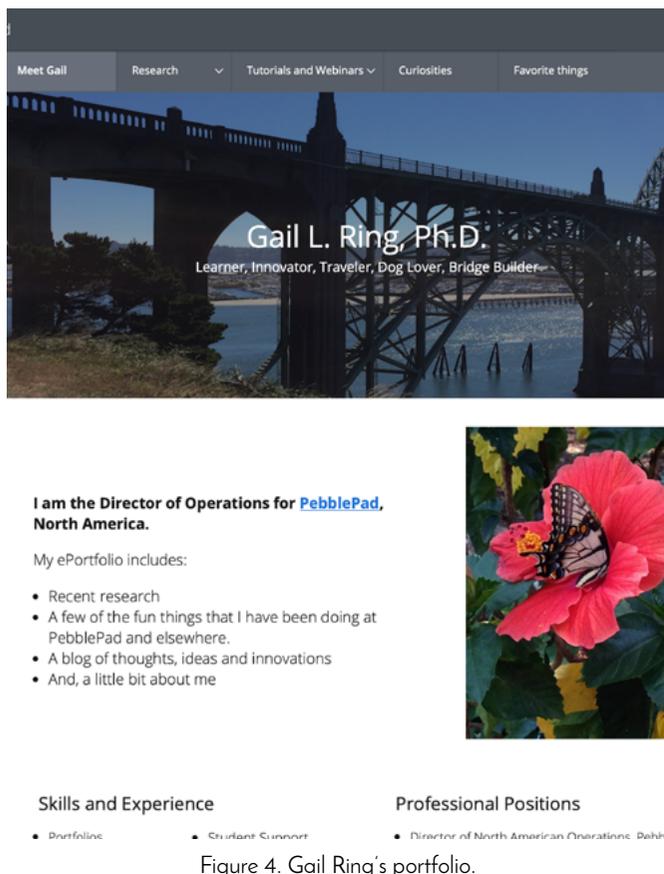


Figure 4. Gail Ring's portfolio.

## Conclusion

Creating and maintaining ePortfolios are more complex than it looks on the surface. In the process of working in OOP, we all discovered the importance of an authentic audience as well as the importance of creating a cohesive message. We all valued the opportunity to reflect on our work. Most importantly, we all valued the critical and supportive eyes of our colleagues. We found that the reflection on our work became deeper and more nuanced with the feedback we received. Reynolds and Patton (2014) contend that reflection can be seen as a social activity and that we have not truly reflected until we have gotten feedback from others.

We hope that in reading this, we have inspired you to consider starting your own Out of Practice group on your campus or perhaps with colleagues at a distance. As Gail said, the opportunity to escape our silos and share and learn from one another not only changes us as individuals but could have a transformative impact on our campuses' communities.

## About the Authors



**Candyce Reynolds** is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy in the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA. She has published broadly in higher education books and journals and has made presentations at a variety of venues throughout the USA and internationally. She is co-author of a book with Judy Patton entitled *Leveraging the ePortfolio for Integrative Learning: A Guidebook of Classroom Practices for Transforming Student Learning* published by Stylus Publishing in 2014. A forthcoming book, *Web U: A Student Guide for Creating an Authentic Digital Identity* will be released in 2020.



**Gail Ring** is a great believer in the power of portfolios for learning and has been using them in her teaching and research since her graduate work at the University of Florida where she earned her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction. Formerly the Director of the ePortfolio Program at Clemson University, Gail joined the PebblePad team in 2015 because she wanted the opportunity to share her knowledge and passion for the transformational nature of portfolios with a broader audience.



**Theresa Conefrey** obtained her B.A. in German and Linguistics with a minor in EFL/ESL. After teaching English in Germany, Denmark, Finland, Japan, and Spain, she returned to the UK to obtain a PGCE in high school teaching before heading overseas again. After graduating from the University of Illinois with an MATESL and a Ph.D. from the Institute of Communications Research, she taught at the University of Hawaii, Hilo, before accepting a position at Santa Clara University, where she teaches oral and written communication courses and carries out research on multifarious aspects of ePortfolio implementation and usage. Through her research, she hopes to help all learners reach their full potential.



**Allie Davidson** is an Educational Technology Development Coordinator at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. Allie consults with instructors on their use of educational technology to enhance teaching and learning experiences in the classroom and is involved in the design, development, facilitation, and implementation of ePortfolio projects and initiatives at Carleton.



**Heather Stuart** is the Senior Program Administrator for the Office of University Writing at Auburn University. In her current role she provides support for students by facilitating workshops, teaching classes, creating resources, advising student leaders, and supervising graduate students. She received her M.Ed. in Administration of Higher Education

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