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Getting It Together! Teaching with Digital Portfolios: Part 2

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Engage


Teaching with Technology @ Connecticut College

Getting It Together! Teaching with Digital Portfolios: Part 2

□ November 8, 2017 □ October 31, 2017 □ Ariella Rotramel

Think S.A.F.E. Project: SafetyNet

This club on Conn's campus is dedicated to raising awareness of and putting an end to gender-based violence and power-based personal violence. As a Peer Educator, I help create and manage educational and fun events around these issues. We emphasize the importance of bystander intervention through the Green Dot training program, and encourage people to help put a stop to the violence.



The Women's Empowerment Initiative

For the past four years I have been involved in the Women's Empowerment Initiative on Conn's campus. This club began as a group of women who performed Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* every year, and then transformed into a more original, inclusive

Partial screenshot of "Extracurriculars" page in a student portfolio.

This is the second of two posts in which professors Ari Rotramel (GWS) and Sabrina Notarfrancisco (Theater) team up to share their experiences teaching with digital portfolios.

Preparing for Graduation through Eportfolio Work

Last spring, I worked with Jessica McCullough to integrate the digital portfolio platform, Digication, into the newly offered Gender and Women's Studies Senior Capstone course. Connecticut College's Digication page is [here \(https://conncoll.digication.com/\)](https://conncoll.digication.com/) and you can visit also their company's site for

more information [here \(https://www.digication.com/\)](https://www.digication.com/). Even better, you can set up a time to meet with Jessica McCullough to chat!

Sidenote: Digication holds possibilities for students tracking and reflecting on their work throughout their studies. E-portfolios are worth considering as an option both for Pathways and majors to support student learning. It is particularly disappointing when students lose an important assignment they had in a lower-level course, and an e-portfolio could help both with preservation, considering why their work matters, as well as making connections across experiences.

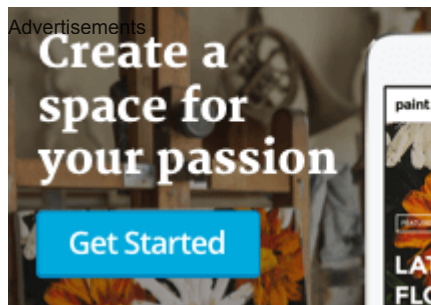
Back to the course... Students were assigned to create a basic portfolio that addressed proposed areas like their “about me” page, coursework, extracurricular activities, and five year plan. The aim was to help them to pull together their work and develop a more professional online presence (they could choose to make their portfolio publicly available). Digication was an attractive option because it has basic functions that are easy to use for editors, we were able to create a template to share, and it is easy to access student work through the Digication site.

I coupled the work on Digication itself with work within a Google Drive folder where students would collect material and images, as well as draft written content for their portfolio. Overall, Sstudents appreciated the opportunity to reflect and organize on their undergraduate work and future goals. As Digication was in its beta stage, there were some hiccups that they found to be aggravating, and that was a challenge to navigate as a faculty member with my main response option being “Keep on trying, let me know if it’s still not working!” In sum, the platform was a mixed bag, but the overall assignment goals were met and students understood the significance of this work.

My discussions with Jessica suggest that this year, we may want to offer students the opportunity to use either Digication or another platform they already are familiar with (Tumblr, WordPress, etc.). While normally it is an issue to have students work on different platforms, in this case as students are preparing for graduation it may be empowering to allow them to use something they already use while also providing a simple and well-supported option.

Concluding Thoughts

Any portfolio requires taking the time to introduce it to students. We also suggest faculty decide how much direct support from instructional technologists and/or peers is appropriate as well as how much time in class for work, troubleshooting, and feedback may be needed. Students respond well to using technology when it has a practical application, so make that connection in your assignments explicit. They also may be very excited about an outward facing portfolio or prefer to keep their work more private.



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