2021 Eportfolio Forum Online

eBook of Shortened Peer Reviewed Papers

A continuing consideration of digital ethics in ePortfolios: Expanding AAEEBL's Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios resource.

Christine Slade PhD

Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation, University of Queensland

Amy Cicchino PhD

University Writing, Auburn University, USA

Abstract

The Association for Authentic, Experiential, & Evidence-Based Learning (AAEEBL) Digital Ethics in ePortfolios Task Force was formed to address international concerns about ethical questions in ePortfolio use. In its first year, the Task Force published the Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios: Version 1, outlining ten principles, exemplar strategies, user scenarios, and links to extra resources about digital ethics issues for ePortfolio stakeholders. In its second year, the Taskforce continued to bring together international ePortfolio scholars and practitioners to articulate digital practices, resulting in a second version of the Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios. Version 2 added three additional principles related to ePortfolio evaluation practices; practices that encourage diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and decolonisation (DEIBD); and visibility of labour. It also revised existing principles and integrated information about eProfessionalism and legal issues throughout the document. Educators, students, professional staff, and others involved in ePortfolio use will find this comprehensive resource useful.

Keywords: ePortfolio pedagogies and practice, digital ethics, inclusion, ePortfolio evaluation, labour

Introduction

Digital ethics in ePortfolio practice is a pressing challenge, especially now as the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated online learning without the time and support needed to adequately prepare students, educators, and administrators for this transition. Indeed, ePortfolio stakeholders require literacy in digital ethics, or the ability to critically consider challenges related to digital ethics that emerge as students learn and create portfolios in online mediated learning environments. However, a literature review of ePortfolio research related to digital ethics by Brown Wilson et al. (2018) found that such work is underrepresented in scholarship. To respond to the needs of the ePortfolio community, the Association of Authentic, Experiential and Evidence-based Learning (AAEEBL) began the Digital Ethics Task Force in 2019 to develop principles and identify resources in this area. The work completed by the Task Force in its first year is summarised in the conference proceedings of the 2020 Australian ePortfolio Forum by Slade et al. (2019)[1]. This paper builds upon their work by sharing how the second iteration of the Task Force (2020-2021) added three principles, as well as revised existing principles. *Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios: Version 2* is available in an online interactive format (Figure 1) and as a downloadable full version. The summary provided below does not include details in the full version, including strategies for application, scenarios, and resources.

---

[1] See ePortfolios Australia, 2020 Eportfolio Forum Online, eBook of Shortened Peer Reviewed Papers, pp. 26-31. Available at https://eportfoliosaustralia.files.wordpress.com/2020/10/2020-eportfolio-forum-online-ebook-of-shortened-peer-reviewed-papers-271020.pdf

Figure 1: [Version 2 interactive online access to the 13 principles](#)
The addition of new digital ethics principles

The second phase of the Taskforce added three new principles to the original suite of ten. These new principles are briefly outlined below:

Evaluating ePortfolios

Educators, students, and external partners benefit from a shared understanding of what ePortfolio content will be evaluated and the criteria used for evaluation. Communication is a key element, so students understand explicitly how the criteria (and standards) used for evaluation align to the intended learning outcomes of the course/subject. As Kelly-Riley (2012) argues, partnerships between educators and students in developing the evaluation criteria can be effective and important in ethical and equitable evaluation practices.

The addition of the evaluation principle offers guidance to several stakeholders. First, we recommend that teaching and learning staff support educators in developing evaluation practices by providing models, resources, and training aligned to learning outcomes and scholarship in ePortfolios. Second, educators are encouraged to develop evaluation criteria that are aligned with disciplinary or professional standards, and pedagogically sound. ePortfolio pedagogies value the production process as well as the final outputs, inclusion, and reflection.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and decolonisation (DEIBD)

Creating an ePortfolio can involve different levels of risk for marginalised and multiply marginalised ePortfolio creators. Such risks, starting with the instructor and continuing with additional audiences, may include bias, assumptions regarding digital access, and expectations regarding sharing personal information. ePortfolio stakeholders, including students, educators, administrators, and platform providers must be aware of these risks, take action to ensure equity, and regularly review and reflect on the ePortfolio experience with students.

The addition of the DEIBD principle brings forward the importance of equity and inclusion in ePortfolio practice. ePortfolios are highly connected to identity and create opportunities to integrate learning and deeply reflect; however, those benefits also potentially put ePortfolio creators at risk as they engage in these vulnerable acts of reflection and connection if in public digital spaces. This principle encourages the ePortfolio community to better attend to representation, diversity, open discussions about identity and culture, considerations for access and risk, and creating inclusive learning environments where students' identities, backgrounds, and cultures can be respected and valued (i.e. see previous presentations related to the inclusion of Indigenous communities in ePortfolio practice (Boyle et al., 2010)). We hope to continue to expand the DEIBD principle as we reflect on the role ePortfolio practice can play in diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and decolonisation.

Visibility of labour

Learning is invisible labour. Constant shifts in technologies, strategies, rhetorical knowledge, technical skills, genres, and professional expectations require ongoing efforts by all stakeholders. The ability to develop, implement, create, support, and assess ePortfolios requires faculty and staff to have multi-disciplinary expertise that should be recognised and rewarded by the institutions in which ePortfolio work takes place. In addition, the intellectual and affective labour and personal risk required of students to learn and employ new platforms, genres, and compositional practices when designing and creating ePortfolios, should be recognised and rewarded.

This principle seeks to recognise and make visible the labour involved in ePortfolio practice for educators, administrators, and students. Within an educational context, we encourage that labour be recognised for students through credit, credential, badges, certification, degree, compensation, public recognition, or professional development. As students develop ePortfolios, they perform several forms of labour: cognitive load, emotional labour, and personal risk. We recommend institutions and administrators assess who engages in ePortfolio work on their campus, what training and resources are offered to those individuals, and how their efforts are recognised and compensated. For ePortfolio studies and administration to be sustainable, we must recognise it as a scholarly and professional field and adequately support those whose labour maintains ePortfolio initiatives.

Other considerations

The Task Force team undertook three other activities as explain below.

Firstly, the existing ten principles from the first year of the Task Force were updated, using a collaborative approach where individual members of the second year took a separate principle to read through and post revisions in a Google document using suggested revisions and comment boxes at the side. These revisions were then considered by the Task Force leaders and, when accepted, became part of *Version 2.*

Secondly, members decided two new areas of research—legal issues and eProfessionalism— would be better represented as integrated elements across the existing ten principles. For instance, the principle on consent for data usage had information added about General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and other legal privacy standards. Also, the practice principle and glossary now include a definition of eProfessionalism.

Thirdly, resource lists were expanded to include publications, scholarship, and materials relevant to digital ethics in ePortfolio practice released within the last year.

Conclusion

The *Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios: Version 2* provides an upgraded suite of principles, strategies, scenarios, and resources that can be used as a stimulus for deeper practice conversations and founding of good ethical decision-making across all stakeholder groups.

References

AAEBL Digital Ethics Task Force. (2021). AAEEBL digital ethics principles V.2: Version 2. *Association for Authentic, Experiential, Evidence-Based Learning.* https://scalar.usc.edu/works/aaeebl-digital-ethics-principles-v2/index

Boyle, A., Wallace, R., Grace, K., & Sharma, R. (2010). ePIE — ePortfolios for Indigenous educators: Successful partnerships for sustainable solutions. *EPortfolios Australia Conference*

2010 Book of Abstracts and Papers. ePortfolios Australia: Widening participation — engaging the learner, Melbourne, Australia. https://eportfoliosaustralia.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/eac2010_abstracts_ebook_20101214.pdf

Brown Wilson, C., Slade, C., Kirby, M.M., Downer, T., Fisher, M., & Nuessler, S. (2018). Digital ethics and the use of ePortfolio: A scoping review of the literature. *International Journal of ePortfolio, 8*(2), 115-125.

Kelly-Riley, D. (2012). Getting off the boat and onto the bank: Exploring the validity of shared evaluation methods for students of color in college writing assessment. In A. B. Inoue & M. Poe (Eds.), *Race and Writing Assessment* (pp. 29-43). Peter Lang Publishing.

Slade, C., Kelly, K., Mize, M., & Stuart, H. (2020) In-depth consideration of digital ethics in using ePortfolios: Resource development by the AAEEBL Digital Ethics ePortfolio Task Force. Short peer-reviewed paper and presentation at the *Australian ePortfolio Forum, Digital Identity-Ethics and Experience,* 29-30 October 2020.