

# Self discovery through digital portfolios: a holistic approach to developing new library and information professionals

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29<sup>th</sup> IATUL Conference  
Auckland, 24 April 2008

CRICOS No. 00213J



# Overview

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- Context:
  - Australian ePortfolio Project
  - ePortfolios in higher education
- Case study
  - Education for the LIS profession
  - The learning environment today
  - LIS education at QUT
  - Professional Practice
  - The role of ePortfolios
  - Questions about the future

# Australian e-Portfolio (AeP) Project



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- Commissioned grant from Carrick Institute  
**(National / Higher Education / Quality of Teaching & Learning)**
  
  - **Consortium of 4 universities led by:**
    - Queensland University of Technology (QUT)
    - University of Melbourne
    - University of Wollongong
    - University of New England
  
  - **Reference group**
    - includes wide range of players
    - Rob Ward, Centre for Recording Achievement (UK)
    - A/Prof Angela Smallwood, Centre for International ePortfolio Development (UK)
  
  - Incorporates examination of links with National Diploma Supplement / Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS)

# Goals of the AeP project



1. To provide an overview and analysis of the **national & international contexts** of ePortfolio practice
2. To document the **types of ePortfolios** used in Australian higher education
3. To identify significant issues related to **the approaches being developed** for ePortfolio practice in Australian higher education
4. To examine the potential relationship with the **National Diploma Supplement** work (Uni New England and Uni Melbourne)
5. To recommend ways to **share excellent practice** in the implementation and use of ePortfolios
6. To identify areas where **further development** could be supported, and provide advice

# AeP research activities

- Data collection:
  - Literature review and environmental scan
  - Audit of ePortfolio practice in higher education
  - Focus groups to better understand cross-sectorial issues
  - Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders
  - Case studies
  - Student expectation and experience survey
  - Mature user perspectives
  - Employer perspectives
- International Symposium 7-8 February 2008
- Report 31 July 2008
- Website [www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au](http://www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au)

# ePortfolios in higher education

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- In the UK and the Netherlands:
  - National policy initiatives and lifelong learning strategies
  - Led to development of ePortfolio tools for use in schools, technical colleges and universities
- An ePortfolio is “the product created by learners, a collection of digital artefacts articulating learning, experiences and achievements” (JISC, 2007)
- An ePortfolio is “a purposeful aggregation of digital items – ideas, evidence, reflections, feedback etc, which ‘presents’ a selected audience with evidence of a person’s learning and/or ability” (Sutherland and Powell, 2007)



# 'Purposeful'...

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- Potential range of purposes of an ePortfolio:
  - Supporting application, eg for study or for a job
  - Supporting transition, eg into a new employment situation
  - Supporting teaching, learning and assessment, eg the assessment **of** learning (ie summative evidence of achievement) or the assessment **for** learning (ie formative process that encourages students to reflect on their learning activities and outcomes)
  - Supporting professional development planning (PDP) and/or continuing professional development (CPD)

# ePortfolio tools

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- Tailored software
  - Home grown
  - Off the shelf
- VLEs
- Open source
- Social networking
  
- It is arguably not about the **tool**, but about the **process** of ePortfolio practice
- The process of reflection is central to ePortfolio activity



# The role of reflective practice

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- A valuable tool to deepen the personal learning experience (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1982)
- Especially when the subject encounters fresh professional situations where new knowledge and skills are developed
- Students become more critically aware of:
  - the learning processes as they take place
  - the increased levels of skills and knowledge that they progressively acquire
- Students become more self-aware, to better understand their strengths and weaknesses
- This helps them to formulate both short- and long-term goals for their future career
- Aligned with the pedagogical framework of **constructivism**



# Constructivism

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- Human learning is not achieved through the passive transition of information from teacher to learner, but through building new knowledge upon the foundation of previous knowledge
- Students *construct their learning*
- **Social constructivism:** *constructing learning with others*

# Case study:

## The development of LIS professionals

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- Challenges facing LIS educators:
  - Multiple demands of students, employers, professional associations, university management, government departments
- “Seismic changes” in the professional arena (Feather, 2003)
  - New ICT developments
  - New approaches to information provision and access
  - Reforms across higher education
  - Changes across society as a whole
- But also a very exciting time to be a librarian or information specialist (Francis, 2008; Byrne, 2007)



# Changes in learning and teaching

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- It's all about 'the student experience'
- eLearning strategies
- Student-centred learning
- Deeper engagement in learning activities
- Movement away from 'pure discipline knowledge' to employability, to be able to 'hit the ground running'
- These factors were all drivers for the development of the QUT Student ePortfolio – not as a tool, but as a process
- “Learning discovery” : students discovering the professional skills and personal qualities they will need in their careers
- Scaffolded development of technical skills, professional knowledge and self-understanding
- Holistic approach to academic learning and career planning

# Education for LIS professionals in the digital age

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- Lack of consensus and consistency in the breadth and depth of LIS curricula, nationally and internationally
- **LIBRARY SCHOOLS vs i-schools**
- social informatics knowledge management information management information economics information resources development IT applications information systems networking Internet virtual library management of information organisations human resource development information organisation information retrieval collection and access management professional ethics records archives preservation digitisation web content management

# Learning strategies to develop life skills

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- Core workplace skills are required “to function across different cognitive domains or subject areas and across a variety of social, and in particular employment situations” (Bridges, 1993)
- **problem solving, critical thinking, teamwork, effective communication and interpersonal skills, commitment to service, high ethical standards, intellectual openness and curiosity, flexibility, innovation, creativity**
- The piece of parchment is just the beginning of a career...

Discipline  
knowledge



Personal  
attributes

# LIS education at QUT

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- Educators need to shift the focus of professional education from training the individual mind, to the social settings in which the individual becomes part of the community of practice (Gonczi, 2001)
- New models of professional education which reflect situated learning theories, to consider the ways people actively learn in a specific social context (Laurillard, 2002)
- QUT: collaboration between academic staff and industry practitioners in order to achieve the holistic development of the LIS professional
- Goal: to develop well-rounded, competent and confident graduates who transition easily from the academic world into professional practice



# Therefore, the role of the teacher is:

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- To introduce students to the authentic world that they will be entering
- To facilitate knowledge construction
- To open the mind
- To encourage passion for learning
- To help students find out where they want to go
- To help them reach the goals they set themselves

# The demands of our dynamic environment

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...staying relevant to the library and information science profession, as well as to our personal and organizational goals, is part of a regular, ongoing process. It begins at the start of your career, or even earlier, I think, with the idea of *becoming* a librarian or information professional, and progresses across a series of educational, training and practical work opportunities that lead to new and continuing opportunities for lifelong learning in what is, after all, a dynamic and ever-changing profession...

‘Staying relevant’ means we never stop ‘becoming’ or evolving in our roles as librarians.

(MacLennan, 2004, p,312)



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# Professional Practice

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- Fieldwork placements in Professional Practice as capstone unit at conclusion of studies to establish links between theory and practice
- The skills shortage in Australia: students now gaining employment *during* their studies
- Fieldwork placements had therefore ‘lost their meaning’
- Redesign of the program to introduce Professional Practice as whole-of-course unit, linking learning activities across all units
- Involves industry seminars, fieldtrips, work placements, career mentoring and professional events
- Focus on personal and professional development
- Encouragement for students to consider their own career planning **right from the very start of their studies**
- The only deliverable is the student’s **ePortfolio**



# The ePortfolio serves to be a key part of the process that:

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“begins at the start of your career, or even earlier, I think, with the idea of *becoming* a librarian or information professional, and progresses across a series of educational, training and practical work opportunities that lead to new and continuing opportunities for lifelong learning”



# Portfolios in LIS education at QUT

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- Initially assessment by (hardcopy) portfolios:
  - To enable learners to experience the compilation of a portfolio
  - To provide a coherent framework within which students can engage in important elements of beginning professional practice
  - To facilitate student control over their own learning and achievements in professional practice
  - To provide a context within which students can continue to learn to critically assess their own learning
  - To enable students to aim for a desired level of achievement reflected by specified criteria and associated grades
  - Compatibility, as an assessment form, with other features of the subject which promote reflective practice; ie the fieldwork diaries, colloquium contributions on professional issues and peer review

(Bruce and Middleton, 1999)



# Pilot project with QUT Student ePortfolio in 2003

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- QUT Student ePortfolio developed collaboratively by Careers and Employment Office and IT Services
- Focus on employability skills (graduate attributes)
- Reflection and documentation for academic, work, community and personal contexts of student life
- LIS Professional Practice portfolio was seen to be a mature part of the postgraduate curriculum
- Contribution by LIS students into the development of a new digital tool
- Provision of evaluative feedback to the project team




# QUT Student ePortfolio

**QUT** Queensland University of Technology  
Brisbane Australia

a university for the **real** world<sup>®</sup>  
**Student ePortfolio**

QUT Home Contact us Search

The QUT Student ePortfolio is a university-wide, online tool designed to enhance the learning process and assist students with the transition from university to graduate employment.



**Project Information**

- Overview
- Project Members
- Project History
- Perspectives
- Publications
- QUT Links

**For Students**

- About Student ePortfolio
- Sample ePortfolios
- Getting Started
- Guides and Tutorials
- FAQ
- Glossary
- QUT Links

**Enquiries**

- Contact Details
- Feedback Form

**Quicklinks**

- QUT Virtual
- TALSS
- OLT and QUT Blackboard
- Library
- Careers and Employment
- Alumni
- IT Helpdesk
- QUT News

**News & Events**  
Carrick ePortfolio Research Project

<http://www.studentportfolio.qut.edu.au/>

# Learning activities and support via the VLE

**QUT** Queensland University of Technology  
Brisbane Australia

a university for the **real** world  
**QUT Blackboard**


QUT Blackboard Home Unit Finder **Community** For Staff System Admin Migration Help Logo

Announcements  
Unit Details  
Learning  
Resources  
Assessment  
Collaboration  
Contact Us  
Feedback

Tools  
Community Tools  
Community Map  
Control Panel  
Refresh  
Detail View

**Online Learning Module 1: An introduction to professional portfolios**

**Introduction**



Interest is growing in the idea of library and information professional building and maintaining a professional portfolio to provide current or potential employers with evidence of their career-related learning. In some countries, a portfolio is required by the professional association as part of a member's accreditation through the continuing professional development (CPD) program. Alex Brine (2005) notes that "it is incumbent upon [library and information professionals] to take individual control of our own professional development and record that development" (p. 36). He recommends that a professional portfolio be used to meet this challenge. This module will provide you the opportunity to consider the role and value of portfolios in your career development. It will also provide you the opportunity to learn about and explore the QUT Student ePortfolio system.

**Learning objectives**

The following activities support your professional portfolio development for Semester 1 2008. At the conclusion of this learning module you will have:

- Considered the role and value of professional portfolios
- Accessed your QUT ePortfolio and explored its many features including creating and releasing a portfolio view
- Practiced using the STARL approach to reflect and record your personal experiences.

**Professional Portfolios - their role in career development and career long learning**

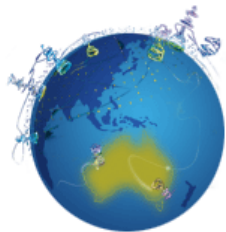
# Scaffolded learning in Professional Practice

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- QUT Student ePortfolio:
  - Guides, online tutorials, sample ePortfolios, FAQs
- Development of skills in reflective practice
- Guidance and support:
  - Teaching staff
  - QUT Student ePortfolio project team
  - Careers and employment staff
  - Career mentors
  - Peer support and group discussion areas
  - Career planning workshops
- The ePortfolio showcases their learning, their achievements and their emergent professional identity



# Sample student ePortfolio

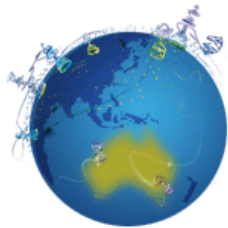


## Introduction

Welcome to my professional portfolio. I have a Bachelor of Arts with majors in Linguistics and Politics and am about to graduate with a Graduate Diploma in Library and Information Studies. I hope to establish a long-term career in librarianship, and ultimately to work in a special library supporting an organisation such as a museum, parliamentary office or media agency.

This portfolio details my work and study experience and presents my plan for the next two years. It includes reflections on professional issues, and describes my contribution to the profession to date and my expectations of my professional role in the future.

It also presents selected examples of work undertaken during the course of my study. This selection has been specifically chosen to demonstrate my exposure to issues relevant to various sectors of the profession, including academic, public and the National Library. This is indicative of my short term goal to gain as broad a range of experience as possible in libraries and related organisations, and is supported by the inclusion of reflections on my "experiences" in various key skill areas.



[Display experiences in all skill areas](#)

[Professional Development](#)

[Life Management / Life-long Learning](#)

[Teamwork](#)

[Communication](#)

[Managing / Organising](#)

[Initiative / Enterprise](#)

[Technical / Professional / Research](#)

## Experiences - Life Management / Life-long Learning

### Personal

#### Developing a Career Direction

During the final year of my Bachelor of Arts I was unsure what career avenue I wanted to pursue. I felt that while that degree had provided me with a number of very valuable generic skills, I would be more confident and motivated in my search for full-time work if I had qualifications specific to a particular profession.

After considering a couple of options, and following the suggestions of several friends, I decided that I would like to qualify to be a librarian. I investigated the available courses and decided that QUT would be the best option for me. I contacted QUT to find out the prerequisites and arranged to complete a required computer skills course as part of my BA.

While the LIS course has been challenging, surprising and even daunting at times, this is the first time in my life I've had such defined and achievable career goals. I can honestly see myself working in the library profession in the long term, and I feel really good about that and excited about what is ahead.

Doing this course has also helped me to develop a greater appreciation for the subject areas I studied in my BA and to more clearly see where those skills and interests could fit into my career plans.

I intend to live up to the library profession's emphasis on lifelong learning, not only to complete my Masters in Information Management, but also to pursue further studies in my areas of personal interest, namely linguistics and editing and publishing.

#### Related Files

- [Career Plan.doc](#)

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“From the students’ perspective, it is holistic, allowing them to build a picture of themselves as a whole person, a picture that cannot be seen in an academic history or curriculum vitae alone.”

(Emmett, Harper and Hauville, 2006, p.411)



# Student views

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- *Drafting the ePortfolio has made me not only think about what I would like to achieve as a librarian and where I would like to go with my career, but it has also given me a chance to record my goals and opinions where other people can see. Potential employers will hopefully see that I am an organised and enthusiastic applicant, and will want to know more about me.*
- *Although this professional portfolio has been an assessment requirement for ITN280, it has proven invaluable to me in regards to my future career planning. It has provided a framework where I can record my professional development activities and the skills I have learnt over the years from my employment and tertiary education.*
- *I plan to use my online portfolio throughout my career, and will continually record my activities and contributions to the profession.*

# The goal of 'being relevant'

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The ePortfolio seeks to meet the goal of 'being relevant' within the LIS profession, which should begin “at the start of your career, or even earlier, I think, with the idea of *becoming* a librarian or information professional, and progresses across a series of educational, training and practical work opportunities that lead to new and continuing opportunities for lifelong learning in what is, after all, a dynamic and ever-changing profession...”



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# Career planning is critical

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“To ensure the individual develops their skills at appropriate points in their career, or earlier, they must plan” (Brine, 2005, p.2)

“Continuous professional development is virtually synonymous with career development” (p.145)

- UK: CILIP: Chartership and Revalidation
  - Requires a portfolio and a mentor (close to the QUT model)
- NZ: LIANZA: Professional Registration
  - Requires a journal
- Singapore: LAS: Professional Development Scheme
- Other professions following the ePortfolio route to career development:
  - Nurses, midwives, doctors, paramedics, teachers...

# The future?

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- ePortfolio practice is still embryonic in Australasian higher education
- However, interest is growing quickly
- What will employers do with graduates who embark on their careers with a philosophy and ethos of lifelong learning and career development?
- Can employers support and encourage them to continue with their ePortfolios?
- Will the new graduates themselves be the driving force for change?

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And what about Charlie in 2020?

