Preface

Rationale

Back in 2002, I spoke at an educational technology conference sponsored by *Syllabus* magazine. My topic was Web portfolios for students and instructors. I proposed the topic out of a desire to feed my own curiosity regarding the research front. At the time, I was teaching a wide variety of digital art and design courses. One of my core principles when teaching in the digital medium is to have learning objectives that direct students toward creating tangible projects and ultimately harvesting portfolio-level work. It made sense for my students and for me to have evidence that the material presented in the course was put into practice, and students needed a dynamic platform to display their work. To accomplish this, I planned and developed a comprehensive Web portfolio of student work with over 100 student Web portfolios (unfortunately, a year later, the university changed over servers and the online sites were lost). I presented the Web site and explained the process to an audience of 150 technology educators. I opened the cluster session with two questions.

When I asked the first, "How many people in this room are provided free Web space from their institution?" almost everyone in the room raised their hand. Then I asked, "How many people are actually taking advantage of it and using it?" Ten hands rose.

I was shocked. These are technology people! Then I realized that they were not behind the curve, they were just reaching the point where they wanted to begin embracing Web portfolio development. That's when I knew that the information I was about to provide would have residual value for them and their students. After further research, I realized that Web portfolio development was in its infancy and I needed to devote research efforts into helping more people embrace the Web portfolio. There are some initiatives in place at the college level to implement Web portfolios. One such example is LaGuardia Community College. The school has mandated the development and output of electronic portfolios for all graduating students. The initiative brought in technology and specialists to provide the instructional and infrastructure support that such a project requires. Regardless of mandates, it is the responsibility of the professional educator to integrate Web portfolios into their pedagogy and teaching and learning initiatives. Ultimately, the instructor must pass on the skills and experience in Web portfolio design and development to their students.

The Web Portfolio as an Information Product for Communication

The desire to help people succeed with communication was a major influence in my decision to dig into Web portfolios as a research initiative. The Web portfolio is ultimately a platform for communication and the concepts, images, and messages within the Web portfolio are centered on persuasion, a major area in communication studies. The Web portfolio takes on the form of an information product for communication. To develop the information product properly, you must first analyze, retrieve, categorize, and manage your professional data so that it is refined into information. The refined information is put into a communication context, the Web portfolio. The communication generated from the Web portfolio is shaped by content, design, visual quality, usability, and overall experience visiting the site. The communication should be persuasive with the goal of getting the visitor to act favorably towards the author, whether consciously or subconsciously. I want this book to serve the reader as a tool for helping establish the foundation skills and act as a motivational force.

In addition, this book intends to give a well-rounded view of the Web portfolio and how it is being used in academic programs and professional scenarios. The skills and experience acquired while creating a Web portfolio must be passed on to others as they begin to explore Web portfolio development.

The Focus and Benefits

In this text, we focus on several areas inside the realm of the Web portfolio:

- The virtues of the Web portfolio;
- The professional software tools needed to create a Web portfolio;
- The important processes that are needed to execute Web portfolio development and production;
- Beginner and advanced techniques using multimedia and Web authoring tools; and
- What electronic/Web portfolios may evolve into as what I call "the postmodern professional appearance" of the information society.

We will examine brainstorming, design, and development. The process outlined in the text takes you through the creation of a Web portfolio. I use examples from my own Web portfolio and others to illustrate key points about design and development. The tools and techniques used in this book can be applied to developing a Web portfolio for a person or an entity in any industry or position. My infinite hope is that this book becomes a results-driven resource for the teaching and learning of Web portfolio development and that the book becomes a cookbook for getting a Web portfolio created. This will hopefully result in students and instructors creating Web portfolios. Putting together a Web portfolio does require some work, but the work is not without benefits. The learning process that occurs during the Web portfolio design process will give you skills and experiences with technology, self analysis, and Web design. When it comes to making the commitment to creating a Web portfolio, both students and instructors will see tremendous payoffs. For the instructor, the Web portfolio is not a course Web site. It has the same purpose as a student portfolio, to persuade. There are other common benefits shared by students and instructors who create Web portfolios. The Web portfolio gives the author nine worldwide mediums to freely disseminate professional information. A Web portfolio offers the creator a cost effective promotional

tool. The Web portfolio also serves as a dynamic hub for communication, between students, faculty, employers, and academia. The power of multimedia applications on the Web such as Macromedia Flash allows a rich multimedia environment for presentations and collaboration. The Web portfolio gives the author an integral advantage in real-world self-promotion. Creating a Web portfolio shows a tangible technology achievement. The Web portfolio and subsequent redesigns throughout your career will yield lifelong learning in Web technology and self promotion. Specifically for instructors, the Web portfolio can act as a testing ground for experimenting with Web technology for pedagogy, exhibition, program, promotion, collaboration, online learning, and archiving.

Here is a brief overview of each chapter.

- **Chapter I — Introduction to the Web Portfolio**

  This chapter puts the Web portfolio into perspective and describes several thoughts supporting the Web portfolio as a communication tool for lifelong learning that presents a professional appearance. The chapter explains how the Web portfolio development process is a skill-building experience that has dynamic benefits.

- **Chapter II — Conceptualization**

  This chapter guides you in developing concepts, images, and messages needed for the Web portfolio. Content collection and evaluation is discussed as the Web portfolio is put into the context of a content management tool. The chapter gives examples on how to develop the scope documents needed to organize the Web portfolio. The concept statement, content list, and content outline are explained and exampled. This chapter represents the first step in the Web portfolio design and development process.

- **Chapter III — Information Design**

  This chapter shows you the process of information design for Web portfolios. You get a chance to display navigation and usability in a functional flowchart that is based on the concept and content scope documents that you worked on in Chapter II. The chapter concludes with creation of a flowchart. This chapter represents the second step in the Web portfolio design process.

- **Chapter IV — Visual Design**

  This chapter explores the visual aspects of creating attractive well-designed Web pages. Focus is on basic design principles and establishing

ideas on how you want the Web portfolio pages to look. Color, composition, and typography are explained so that novice designers can be guided on how to create strong pages. The chapter concludes with instruction and development of story boards that represent rough site designs. This chapter represents the third step in the Web portfolio design process.

- **Chapter V — Content, Collection, Development and Management**

  This chapter provides techniques and strategies for collecting and creating content from existing assets and project files. The chapter gives advice on scanning and photography as well as how to use the resume in the Web portfolio and how to describe projects you present in the Web portfolio. This chapter represents the fourth step in the Web portfolio design process.

- **Chapter VI — Web Page Design**

  This chapter introduces digital tools in the design of Web page screens and graphics. Discussion includes design of buttons, navigation, and pop-up windows. Coverage includes slicing, optimizing, and exporting Web pages. An easy to use workflow is presented that allows rapid development of Web pages using visual tools instead of handwritten code. This chapter represents the fifth step in the Web portfolio design process.

- **Chapter VII — Web Authoring**

  This chapter introduces Web page authoring tools and provides tutorials and workflows for using Macromedia Dreamweaver. Major Web functionality issues are covered and appropriate techniques are explained. The chapter goal is to get the Web portfolio to a stage of functionality. This chapter moves you toward a working Web portfolio.

- **Chapter VIII — Motion, Graphics and Multimedia Production**

  This chapter provides discussion and instruction on using Macromedia Flash for multimedia production and Adobe Audition for audio editing. The tutorials shown guide you in developing essential multimedia components that can be integrated into the Web portfolio seamlessly. Coverage includes creating text animation and using audio tracks in Web pages with Macromedia Flash.

- **Chapter IX — Uploading and Testing Your Web Portfolio Site**

  This chapter provides the last technical step to getting the Web portfolio up on the Internet. Coverage spans the Internet and FTP and discusses how to use Macromedia Dreamweaver for uploading, downloading, and managing site files. The theories of Molich and Nielsen are presented in

the context of Web portfolio usability. The chapter ends with discussion on redesign and the commitment to continual improvement and content flow in the Web portfolio.

- **Chapter X — Launch and Promotion**

  Getting the Web portfolio launched and marketed is the topic of this chapter. The Web portfolio marketing process involves traditional and electronic media to be effective. The chapter provides some marketing ideas that can be used in a comprehensive launch plan or individually for small scale promotions.

- **Chapter XI — Server-Side Technologies**

  This chapter provides the last technical data on server-side technologies and discusses dynamic integration into the Web portfolio. Coverage includes ASP, ASP.net, Coldfusion, PHP, and CGI/Perl. The chapter is intended to give an overview of the technologies and some technical information on versions and updates. I try to provide the latest data, but data is obsolete quickly after deployment when it comes to application technology.

- **Chapter XII — Cases and Interviews**

  This chapter discusses cases and shares interviews that describe Web portfolio challenges and successes. The focus is on exploring different approaches to Web portfolio development in order to illustrate that there is no one defined way to make a Web portfolio. Creating Web portfolios and Web portfolio programs is a subjective process that centers on the needs and goals of the authors. This chapter provides interviews with educators and applies possible characteristic criteria to Web portfolios across disciplines.

- **Chapter XIII — Web Portfolios in the Information Society and Future**

  This chapter focuses on theoretical examination of the Web portfolio in the knowledge worker age and the information society. Theorists' views are synthesized into my theory on the future of the Web portfolio. As technology flattens the world and masses of people continue to get digital for multitude of reasons, the Web portfolio will become a vehicle for responsive communication and connection to the world of work for hire. This chapter concludes the book and I hope it provides food for thought as you continue your expedition toward making Web portfolios a staple part of your public existence. As well, I hope to encourage further research on Web portfolios from scholars across disciplines.

Conclusion

During my literature review over the past two years, I noticed that there are no comprehensive textbooks that describe the Web portfolio from a process centered approach and a theoretical approach. Most books describe the Web portfolio in the context of the K-12 teacher and give descriptive instruction on artifact evaluation and standards based development. This makes sense due to the standardization of the Web portfolio into the curriculum of education departments worldwide. I refer to and quote education based portfolio development texts throughout this book. The clarity of explanation that the education field has developed in the promotion of Web portfolios is exceptional. I could not provide only the views of educators because I wanted the focus of this book to give a wide angle view of Web portfolios. So, I begin the book by describing the Web portfolio and the critical skills and benefits you get when making one. Then, I discuss concepts and content. Next, I provide a quick study of the important design principles needed to create a Web portfolio that has visual presence and shows your work in the best composition possible. Then, focusing on Macromedia tools, I give you professional level tutorials to help you begin the software engagement that you will need to be confident and active in Web portfolio design and development. I provide some thoughts on uploading and launching and lastly there are a wealth of cases and interviews to build your exposure to options for instituting a Web portfolio program in your institution. By taking a pan disciplinary approach to the Web portfolio and its components, I hope to enable you to build your own thoughts and realize your own success with Web portfolios within your institution, your pedagogy, your career, and your life.

I encourage scholars and students to work toward advanced research in Web portfolio development that goes beyond technical situations and software applications to dissect the interactions and behaviors that play a role in Web portfolio development, ownership, and presentations.

Please enjoy this book and the journey into the world of Web portfolios.