Chapter XLVII
Career ePortfolios in the IT Associates Program at DePauw University

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ABSTRACT
DePauw University is a selective, undergraduate liberal arts college of 2,200 students, with an academic year of two 13-week semesters and a three-week January Winter Term. DePauw implemented a career ePortfolio requirement for its Information Technology Associates Program (ITAP) in January 2004. The ITAP ePortfolio serves as both a job-seeking tool and a reflective instrument for students. This case study describes the rationale for introducing ePortfolios into ITAP, the processes used to support students in creating and maintaining career ePortfolios, and the outcomes of the project to this point.

INTRODUCTION
DePauw University is a selective, undergraduate liberal arts college of 2,200 students, with an academic year of two 13-week semesters and a three-week January Winter Term. DePauw implemented a career ePortfolio requirement in its Information Technology Associates Program (ITAP) in January 2004. The ITAP ePortfolio serves as both a job-seeking tool and a reflective instrument for students. While the full outcomes of the program will be realized...
only after the first complete class of ITAP students required to develop portfolios graduates in 2008, so far 82 students have successfully published ePortfolios. This case study describes the rationale for integrating ePortfolios into ITAP, the processes we use to support students in creating and maintaining their ePortfolios, and the outcomes of the project to this point.

RATIONALE FOR ITAP ePORTFOLIOS

ITAP is a program of distinction that provides opportunities for 160 DePauw students to develop advanced skills in a wide range of information technologies, as well as soft skills. ITAP students have rich opportunities for learning and mastery in areas such as digital video production, Web design, information analysis with spreadsheets and databases, and desktop and network hardware. Students selected for the program spend an average of eight hours per week in internship and training activities. Freshman ITAP students are assigned to four- or five-member cohorts and participate in four six-week training rotations during the first year with leading campus information technology (IT) groups, such as Information Services and the Web Team. As sophomores, juniors, and seniors, ITAP interns participate in semester- or year-long on-campus internships, working closely with faculty members and IT professionals. During their junior year, they have the option to serve a semester-long, IT-related, off-campus internship. Advanced ITAP students mentor, lead, and train other interns while working on DePauw’s most important technology-related projects.

Our early research showed that many employers are beginning to pay closer attention to an ePortfolio presented as part of an applicant’s materials. In a 2002 national study of employers conducted by the University of Iowa, “seventy-nine percent of the respondents stated that a job seeker’s ePortfolio can be a significant selection tool along with references, credentials, transcripts, résumé and cover letter, and interviews” (Achrazoglou, Anthony, Jun, Marshall, & Roe, 2002, p. 20). This same survey produced even more convincing data among the surveyed central office administrators and human resource professionals. Among this group, “81 percent indicated that ePortfolios are an important selection tool” (Achrazoglou et al., 2002, p. 20). Discussions with DePauw’s Career Services staff also provided justification for the program, as they emphasized the need for DePauw graduates to provide potential employers with evidence of their skills to help differentiate themselves in the job market. With this increased importance placed on ePortfolios, one goal of the ITAP ePortfolio, then, is to serve as a job-seeking tool that students use to demonstrate their skills and experiences to potential employers.

Further, the principal feature of ITAP is that students engage in authentic, hands-on work activities through which they learn professional skills, both technical and social, that prepare graduates for success. To scaffold their learning, faculty and professional staff members from all parts of the university serve as ITAP hosts—supervisors and coaches who provide a close mentoring environment in which the students work. The ePortfolio process models this strategy. Concurrently with workshops that teach the students technical skills for building ePortfolios, mentors offer constructive advice and feedback related to ePortfolio content and organization. The mentors additionally share professional expertise and advice, helping interns to shape ePortfolios that speak effectively to a targeted audience and that reflect accurately career goals.