Preparing e-Portfolios

Introduction

Portfolios provide a means of presenting a collection of work, and sharing that collection with others. Portfolios are used for many purposes in learning and assessment such as displaying achievements and progress, showcasing experiences and collections of work, or collecting self-reflection. Electronic Portfolios (e-Portfolios) make it easy to share the presentation, and to receive feedback from friends, coworkers, educators, and peers. The *Blackboard Content System* provides a seamless way of linking Portfolios to content stored in the system.

Additional information about Portfolios may be found at:
- ePortConsortium (http://www.eportconsortium.org)
- American Association of Higher Education (http://webcenter1.aahe.org/electronicPortfolios)

Prerequisites

This document is intended for users who are using the *Blackboard Content System* to create Portfolios. System Administrator settings should allow for users to access the Portfolio tool. Before referencing this document, users should be familiar with Content System interface and they should also be able to complete basic tasks. These include, but are not limited to, the following:
- adding, moving, and removing items in the Content System
- searching for items in the Content System
- managing permissions on a content item

Contents

This document provides information on the following topics:

Types of Portfolio Content

Portfolios may include three types of documents: content stored in the *Blackboard Content System*, links to external URLs, and items based on Portfolio templates.

Type	What is it?
Content Items	Link to content stored in the *Blackboard Content System*.
Links	Links to external URLs.
Items	A page based on a template. May contain links to stored content.

Content files and folders

Any item (file or folder) that a user has Manage permission on in the *Blackboard Content System* may be added to a Portfolio, making it easy to showcase accomplishments.

When a Content System item is included in a Portfolio, a Portfolio User List is added to the Manage Permissions page for that item and granted Read permission. Users who the Portfolio is shared with will be added to the Portfolio User List.

If an item that is linked to in a Portfolio, is modified in the *Blackboard Content System*, changes are visible in the Portfolio, and there is no need to recreate the link.

Links

Links to external URLs may also be added to Portfolios, such as http://www.myschool.edu. It is important to verify that the URL remains active when sharing a Portfolio.

It is good practice to not link to Web sites that have advertisements or other pop-ups associated with the pages. Doing so will disrupt the flow of the Portfolio.

Items

Items may be created for a Portfolio from a blank page, or from a template if the System Administrator has provided them. The *Blackboard Content System* comes with 33 templates for pages such as Resumes, References, Certifications, Lesson Plans, and more. Additionally, institutions may create templates and add them to the list.

Once a template is added to a Portfolio, the template may be modified, and links to Content System content items can be added to the page. For example, if the Lesson Plan template is added, each topic discussed in the lesson plan may link to documents stored in the *Blackboard Content System*. Items are a great way to group content links and give context to work.

Preparing content

Before creating a Portfolio, it is a good idea to plan what content will be included, how it will be stored, and how it will be presented.

Plan for stored content

If the Portfolio will include documents stored in the *Blackboard Content System*, review the documents beforehand:

- Check for editorial changes needed.
- If Versioning is enabled, check which version of the document would be best to link to.

The storage location of Content System items should be planned in advance. After the Portfolio is created, the location of the file should not change. Changing the location of the file may result in broken links and issues with permissions.

Bbest Practice: Consider creating a folder in My Content for documents included in the Portfolio. This will ensure that the files remain in the same location. If the Portfolio will include a link to a file that you do not have control of (such as group project files stored in another user's My Content area), consider copying the file to a controlled location.

Consider the audience

Before finalizing a Portfolio, consider the intended audience. There are a number of design options that allow for a customized look and feel. Consider the purpose the Portfolio represents – should the Portfolio appear professional, creative, fun, or exciting? Attention to the types of images and the choice of colors in the design will provide the mood.

Bbest Practice: A good web practice is to consider using four or less colors for the design. This allows for maximum variation while not making the page too busy, distracting viewers from the content.

Finally, consider the content for each user viewing the Portfolio. If the purpose of the Portfolio is slightly different for sharing with one user than another, consider creating two similar Portfolios, using the Portfolio Copy tool to save time.

Creating a Portfolio

There are two ways to start building a Portfolio: Add Portfolio and the Portfolio Creation Wizard:

- Add Portfolio sets the properties of a Portfolio including its name, description, design, availability, and comments. Once the properties are set, content may be added from the Contents page.
- The Portfolio Creation Wizard groups these steps, creating a shell ready for customizing. The Wizard builds the properties, and then allows for linking to content items, links, and blank or template pages. After the shell of the Portfolio is created, the pages may be modified and customized from the Contents page.

Bbest Practice: Determine how the viewer should read the contents when linking to an item in the *Blackboard Content System*. If you use Add Content, the item will open immediately. However, if you use Add Item, and put a link to a Content System item in a blank or template page using links, then the HTML page will open and from the main Portfolio page – this gives users a smoother transition from page to page, and the Portfolio can introduce the document before opening it.

Availability

It is good practice to only make a Portfolio available when it is ready to be viewed. When creating the initial shell of the Portfolio, design and content may not be complete. Set the Portfolio to **Unavailable** until the Portfolio is complete, then modify the properties and set the Portfolio to **Available** when it is final.

Comments

Portfolio comments may be **Private** or **Shared**. Private comments are only viewed by the Portfolio owner and the user posting the comment. If comments are shared, all users viewing the Portfolio may read the comments. Comments are helpful for gathering feedback on the Portfolio or its content.

The status of comments may be changed at any time. For example, if comments are gathered during a review, it may be helpful for all reviewers to see the comments. However, when the Portfolio is complete, those comments may be made private so that the Portfolio viewers do not see the review process.

Tools for Managing a Portfolio

A number of management tools are available for Portfolios on the Manage page. Managing a Portfolio includes the following tasks:

- designing the Portfolio shell and content
- adding links to Content System items
- sharing the Portfolio with users and user lists

Sharing

A Portfolio may be shared with system users, external users, courses, organizations, particular institution roles (*Blackboard Portal System* clients only), or All System Accounts.

When a Content System item is linked to in a Portfolio, the item is shared with the Portfolio User List. A line item for this user list appears on the Manage Permissions page for the item. If Read permission for Portfolio User List is removed from the Permissions page, Portfolio viewers will not have access to the item.

The following list explains other scenarios for sharing a Portfolio:

- Share a Portfolio with another Blackboard user - the Portfolio is listed in the user's Received Portfolios for easy access.
- Share a Portfolio with an external user - a URL is created for access to the Portfolio. This may be emailed to the user from the *Blackboard Content System*.

- Share a Portfolio with a course or organization - the Portfolio is listed in the Portfolios tool in the course, and course or organization users may search for the Portfolio in Portfolio Search.
- Share a Portfolio with an institution role - all users with that role may search for the Portfolio in Portfolio Search.
- Share a Portfolio with All System Accounts - any user on the system may search for the Portfolio in Portfolio Search.

Portfolio Search

All users with whom a Portfolio is shared have the ability to find it using Portfolio Search. Portfolio Search allows users to search all Portfolios that they have access to by username (the Portfolio owner), Portfolio title, Portfolio description, and Portfolio Learning Objectives. These fields are available from the Manage Properties page of every Portfolio. Adding descriptive content to these fields will improve the results of Portfolio Search.

Checking Links

Periodically checking links in a Portfolio is good management practice. Links to Content System items from a Portfolio may appear broken if identifying properties or permissions to the item are altered. The Check Links tool on the Manage page provides information on all links, and alerts the owner of any broken links. If a Portfolio begins to show broken links, or users have trouble viewing a page in a Portfolio, Check Links will identify the problem. The following table lists possible reasons for broken links:

Possible Error	Description
Repairable permission error	Read permission is not assigned to these items. The Content System will repair these errors automatically when **Repair** is selected.
Path not found	The specified path to this item is no longer valid; it may have been moved, removed or renamed. The link is broken.
Permissions error	Read permission is not assigned to these items. You no longer have the correct permissions to make the repair.

Portfolio Copy

The copy function in My Portfolios allows the creation of a new Portfolio that is an exact replica of an existing Portfolio. This function is very useful when there is a need for two similar Portfolios. Create one Portfolio, copy it, and then make changes to the new Portfolio.

Bbest Practice: If many Portfolios need to be created for a similar purpose, it is good practice to create one Portfolio that contains the basics and the design, then copy it multiple times for other uses. For example, if a Student is preparing an achievement Portfolio for multiple job interviews, he or she may want to create the design that best represents the work with links to content that demonstrates achievement. Then, for each interview, the Student may copy the Portfolio and customize the new one for the specific potential employer, such as changing the welcome page text to a cover letter addressing that company then sharing the Portfolio with the company.

When a Portfolio is copied, the new Portfolio is not shared to anyone, so it may be used for any purpose. If the original Portfolio contains any broken links when copied, the system will notify the user so that he or she can run the Check Links tool and make corrections to both Portfolios. Once copied, the two Portfolios are completely independent. Any changes made to one Portfolio do not affect the other.

Download Portfolio

Any Portfolio and its contents may be downloaded as a compressed zip file from the Manage Portfolio page. The zip file contains the HTML pages and content items that make up the entire

Portfolio. This tool is useful for users desiring to archive older Portfolios onto a personal computer, or for moving a Portfolio to another Portfolio system.

Additional Documentation

Additional Blackboard documents can be found on the Behind the Blackboard extranet. Use the following URL to access Behind the Blackboard:

http://www.blackboard.com/products/services/support.htm

A login is required to access Behind the Blackboard. Users may create their own login for roles other than Administrator. Administrators must receive their Behind the Blackboard login from their Blackboard Account Manager.

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Worldwide Headquarters
Blackboard Inc.
1899 L Street, NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20036-3861 USA
800-424-9299 toll free US & Canada
+1-202-463-4860 telephone
+1-202-463-4863 facsimile
www.blackboard.com

International Headquarters
Blackboard International B.V.
Keizersgracht 62
1015 CS Amsterdam
The Netherlands
+31 20 5206884 (NL) telephone
+31 20 5206885 (NL) facsimile
global.blackboard.com