Creating an e-Portfolio: A Guide for Pratt SILS Students

Overview

Starting Fall 2012, all students entering the MSLIS degree program are required to complete an e-portfolio that must be approved by their advisor before they will be permitted to graduate. The e-Portfolio provides students with an opportunity to showcase their best work from the courses they have taken at SILS, and an opportunity to demonstrate they have met the learning objectives of a Master of Information and Library Science.

Whereas a final project for a course reflects your achievements in that particular content area, the e-Portfolio as a whole should reflect the culmination of your learning experiences from the MSLIS program.

We (the SILS faculty) encourage you to think of your e-Portfolio as an opportunity to express creatively your achievements and learning experiences from your time in the program, and an opportunity for you to showcase your most innovative thinking and professional skill-set.

In your final semester at SILS, you should seek approval for your e-Portfolio by your faculty advisor. If you do not know your faculty advisor, or your faculty advisor is away during the semester you wish to graduate, please contact the SILS office to discuss alternatives: infosils@pratt.edu or 212-647-7682.

Structuring Your e-Portfolio

Students should develop their e-portfolio during the course of their program of study at SILS. Faculty advisers are available for students to discuss which projects are best selected for inclusion. Your e-portfolio should not contain every project you completed at SILS, but rather 2-5 projects (with 3-5 projects being ideal) that demonstrate one or more of the following five learning objectives:

1. Research - Students carry-out and apply research
   - Carry-out research, apply critical thinking, and use research methods such as qualitative and quantitative methods and data collection and analysis effectively to assess and evaluate information environments and issues
   - Produce original work and make contributions to the field and demonstrate an understanding of information theory and philosophy

2. Communication - Students demonstrate excellent communication skills and create and convey content
   - Communicate effectively as an information professional across digital media and produce professional writing for research, e-publication, and presentation and for teaching and learning
   - Use social and digital media for outreach and interaction with users and to communicate meaning

3. Technology - Students use information technology and digital tools effectively
   - Use digital tools and technology effectively for information organization, access, retrieval, use, and preservation and management of digital content and collections
   - Apply technical skills in meaningful ways to investigate, analyze, and present information and express and reflect contemporary issues and trends in information technology through their work
4. **User-Centered Focus** - Students apply concepts related to use and users of information and user needs and perspectives
   - Apply and represent user-centered perspectives and concepts of human information behavior and user-centered information services and systems
   - Demonstrate knowledge of diverse of user communities, address diverse information needs, locate, assess, and use professional and research literature and select information products and services that best serve users

5. **LIS Practice** - Students perform within the framework of professional practice
   - Carry-out and produce professional-level work, advance and contribute to the LIS field, reflect ethical and legal practices in global contexts, and keep pace with current trends.
   - Use leadership skills and work creatively with commitment, personal vision and purpose

Your e-Portfolio should satisfy all five learning objectives, with each learning objective pegged to at least one project. Thus, a single project can meet multiple learning objectives. If you have more than five projects that you would like to showcase, you can include these but be sure to delineate them as “additional projects.”

**Choosing projects:** It is recommended that you choose a small yet representative sampling of your work from your time at SILS. Between three and five projects is ideal, although two very strong projects that together satisfy all five learning objectives could be considered. As a whole, your e-Portfolio should demonstrate a trajectory through your course of study, composed of the works that you are most proud of and that are relevant to your academic path and career goals.

If you received feedback on the project such as editorial comments or requests for additional citations, please make these changes before including the work in your e-Portfolio. If you would like to include a smaller class project because it was particularly meaningful to you, consider speaking to your professor about ways to build upon that work.

**Portfolio Organization and Rationale Text:** Your e-Portfolio can be composed of one or more views (if you are using Mahara). For each learning outcome, write a rationale text of 500 words to describe how your work met that outcome. The rationale text should cover the following:

- **Project Title:** The title should reflect the content of the project and should be descriptive. For example, “Rights or Privileges?: Privacy in the Public Sphere in America, particularly in regards to Law Enforcement” is a good title; “Final Project for LIS 611” is not a good title.

- **Project Description:** Describe the project you have developed. You can think of this as an abstract of your project to gives readers a sense of what it is about and the work you completed. You can also use this space to include feedback you received from the project from faculty, fellow students, or others in the LIS field. For example, “this research paper has been selected for publication in Information Research.”

- **Methods:** Describe the methods you used to develop your project or projects and explain how they are relevant to the learning outcome. For example, “I deployed a CMS for a small collection using Drupal, which required in-depth use of web-based technology.”

- **My Role:** Indicate whether your project was an individual or a team effort. For team projects, please clarify your role. For example, “I was responsible for choosing the metadata schema (in this case, Dublin Core) and deciding how metadata should be assigned using this schema.”
Please be sure that your role in the project supports the learning outcome/s discussed in your rationale text.

**Learning Objective Achieved:** Identify one of the five learning objectives.

**Rationale:** Reflect on the strengths of the work as they pertain to the learning objective at hand. Why are you including this project or projects as evidence of this learning outcome? What elements of the assignment, your research question, or your approach to the projects exemplified the learning outcome? For example, “In this project, I was interested in how students at New York University make use of e-Books. By interviewing 15 students, and reporting-out on the major themes that emerged from the interviews, I addressed research skills by developing a research question, collecting data and analyzing it.”

For each project in your e-Portfolio, you can upload a written paper (such as a PDF or DOC file), supply the paper as HTML, upload a video, or include a link to a website that represents the work. Please link projects to all views where they are used as supporting evidence. A rationale text is not required for additional projects.

**Starting your e-Portfolio**

You can choose to create your e-Portfolio using a web-based platform of your choice. What is important is that you supply your advisor with the URL so he or she can view it. However, you are encouraged to use Pratt’s e-Portfolio system, which is available at:

http://eportfolio.pratt.edu

Your e-Portfolio can be a public website, or a private web resource that you create and allow your advisor to view. It is up to you to decide how public or private you wish to make your e-portfolio. Pratt’s e-Portfolio system allows you to do just this: create an e-Portfolio that is either public to the world, or only viewable by you and your advisor.

To begin creating your ePortfolio using Pratt’s site, navigate to http://eportfolio.pratt.edu. Login using your OneKey user name and password. If you don’t know your OneKey user name or password, please contact the IT helpdesk at (718) 636-3765 or services@pratt.edu.

After logging in, select the “My Portfolio” tab, then the select the “Create View” button. Drag and drop the items that you want to include on your e-Portfolio. For example, you can enter text blocks, files to download, images, or videos.

After you have completed your view, click the “Next” button. When promoted, create a title of your view, such as “Debbie Horan’s e-Portfolio.” Click the “Next” button.

Select who you would like to have access to your e-Portfolio. For example, if you wish it to be public to the world, select the “Public” button. Optionally, you can indicate the date-range when the e-Portfolio should be public.

If you only want your e-Portfolio accessible to your advisor, search for his or her name. For example, if your advisor is “Anthony Cocciolo,” search for “Cocciolo,” and click the “Add” button. Optionally, you can indicate the date-range when the e-Portfolio should be available to your advisor.
Sending your Advisor your e-Portfolio

Before you send your e-Portfolio to your advisor, ensure that you are satisfied with your rationale text, and you have addressed all the points outlined above (title, description, methods, your role, learning objectives achieves, and rationale). Additionally, ensure you have specified that your advisor has access permission, and that your portfolio displays properly in common web environments (e.g., make sure your e-portfolio has no “dead links,” and works in common web-browsers such as Firefox or Safari).

Next, submit the URL of your e-Portfolio to your advisor by going to:

http://eportfolio.prattsils.org/submit

Please make sure you give your advisor enough time to review your portfolio prior to graduation, and enough time for you to make changes if needed. For this reason, you should submit your e-Portfolio six to ten weeks prior to graduation during the semester you wish to graduate.

The types of feedback you can expect to receive from your advisor depend on the particular advisor. Most will give minimal written feedback (other than to indicate you have satisfied the e-portfolio requirement); however, you can visit him or her during office hours to get more specific feedback.

Frequently Asked Questions

I was admitted before Fall 2012. Do I need to create an e-portfolio to graduate?

No, only students entering during Fall 2012 or after are required to create an e-portfolio. However, optionally, you may still wish to create one.

I would prefer that my work not be viewable online. Do I have to make it available to the general public?

No, you can create an e-Portfolio using Pratt’s e-Portfolio system (http://eportfolio.pratt.edu), and make it accessible only to your advisor.

I don’t know who my advisor is? Can I change my advisor?

All students are assigned a full-time faculty advisor by the SILS office based on interests that you stated in your admissions application. You can find out your advisor by visiting the SILS office (6th floor of Pratt Manhattan). You can change your advisor by submitting an email request to Quinn Lai (qlai@pratt.edu).

I’m unsure if my e-Portfolio satisfies all the learning objectives?

If you have concerns about satisfying the e-Portfolio graduation requirement, please visit your advisor during his or her office hours, or make an appointment.

Must all the projects in the e-Portfolio be from courses taken at Pratt SILS?
Yes. You can include projects that were taken as part of the Practicum course, or independent studies with SILS faculty, but should refrain from using projects from other programs, schools, or workplaces.

**Do I have to use Mahara (Pratt’s E-Portfolio system – eportfolio.pratt.edu) to create my e-Portfolio, or can I use something else?**

We recommend that students use Mahara to create their e-Portfolio because Pratt is committed to supporting it. Please be aware that the SILS cannot support (or guarantee the continued existence of) third party web providers. However, you can use another method (and acknowledge the risk of doing so) as long you have discussed it with your advisor and he or she agrees.

**Should I make my e-Portfolio public?**

This is up to you. However, you would want to avoid making your e-Portfolio public if it includes items in it that have copyright restrictions (e.g., a copyrighted photograph, a published journal article where the publisher owns the copyright). However, there are many benefits to making it public, including your ability to showcase your work to potential employers.

**Is there a limit to how many group projects I can have in my e-Portfolio?**

There is no strict limit. However, if including a group project, please be sure to indicate your contribution to the project.

**Can I use a project from my final semester in my e-Portfolio?**

You can include projects from your final semester; however, since your advisor needs at least 6 weeks to review your e-Portfolio, you would only want to include completed projects. You are encouraged to include final semester projects as additional projects once they are complete.

**Is there a sample e-Portfolio I can use to see what to include?**

Yes, a sample e-Portfolio is available online: http://eportfolio.pratt.edu/view/view.php?id=4854. This e-Portfolio is for a fictitious student, yet includes work from actual SILS students. Additionally, SILS Alum Sean Fitzell’s e-Portfolio provides an additional model you can refer to: http://eportfolio.pratt.edu/user/view.php?id=2468.

**How will my e-Portfolio be assessed?**

Faculty members use a standard rubric developed by the SILS E-Portfolio Oversight Committee, which is available for download on this page. The E-Portfolio must satisfy all five SILS program-level learning objectives. With regard to the rubric, this means that for each learning objective, students must receive a “Competent” or “Exemplary.” Rubric score values are available from advisers by student request.

**Can I access Pratt’s e-Portfolio after graduation?**

According to Pratt’s Office of Educational Technology, which manages the e-Portfolio system, Pratt is committed to allowing alumni to have continued access to their e-Portfolios.