

To: Amanda Bemer
From: Tera Blackham
Date: December 7, 2007
Re: Reflection of My Electronic Portfolio

Introduction

The purpose of this memo is to share what I have learned while creating my electronic portfolio and reflect on the development of the portfolio itself. First, I have described the design and purpose of my portfolio. I divided the rest of my experiences and impressions into six categories, determined by the six literacies that we have discussed in class: *basic*, *rhetorical*, *technological*, *social*, *ethical*, and *critical*.

Design and Purpose of Portfolio

I designed my portfolio with one word in mind: Professional. My goal was to portray a professional image which would attract professional clients and employers.

Originally, I created a logo that I felt portrayed a sense of creativity. It had several circles in different shades of blue that somewhat resembled bubbles. I sought the opinion of others and realized that the whimsical and child-like design was not helping me accomplish my goal. The logo would not invoke the response I desired from my prospective audience. From that point on, I shied away from anything too feminine or playful.

I ended up creating a logo and header using only two colors, blue and black. The new logo was a simple blue circle with my first name written in the center with white script. The script was a small portrayal of my playful creativity that would not detract from the overall professional image of the portfolio. I felt that the contrast of the bold colors against a white background made the portfolio easy to read and visually appealing. I continued using this basic color scheme throughout the entire portfolio, with black headings, blue text in the body, and a white background. This resulted in a document that was a sharp, clean, and easy to read.

I placed the new logo and header at the top of each web page to maintain continuity. I then formatted each page using tables that exactly mimicked one another. This gave the impression that only the body of the text was changing when moving from page to page.

The header and the body of the text were aligned and justified to the left, leaving space under the logo for thumbnails.

I am concerned that my design was too simple and therefore boring. I feel this is a weakness of my portfolio. Perhaps one more contrasting color, like orange or green, would add interest and a touch of creativity.

Basic Literacy

I placed writing samples in my portfolio that demonstrate my ability to create a wide-range of documents and use different methods for gathering and reporting information. I have displayed samples using PDF, HTML, and RTF formats. I included an empirical research report, a fact sheet, a speech, and a brochure. Each document was created using a different language style and each required different methods of construction. My empirical research report included information from interviews, the internet, and written literature. The language was simple and professional and directed toward students. I used headers and lists to organize and display pertinent information. The information required to write my speech was taken from history books and from interviews with constituents from Congress McKeon's district. Taking into consideration the fact that this text would be spoken, I paid close attention to the flow of ideas and the sentence structure.

A weakness of this portfolio, I feel, is the number of writing samples. I would like to have more samples included in my portfolio with a wider range of styles.

Rhetorical Literacy

I determined the design and content of this portfolio based on my intended audience. I want my portfolio to attract professional employers and potential clients. With this in mind, I did my best to portray myself as a competent and experienced writer.

I decided not to include a personal biography within the portfolio. I felt that adding personal information about me could distract prospective employers from my skills as a writer. I want my audience to see my portfolio and think, "She's a talented writer," not, "I wonder if her children or hobbies will distract her from her work."

I added brief work-related facts to my home page. The goal was to add interesting information that may intrigue my audience and encourage them to look inside the portfolio and find out more.

While working for SafeHome Security, I was responsible for previewing resumes and sending only those that were impressive to the regional manager for consideration. From that experience, I discovered the importance of a well-designed cover letter. It must be memorable. My home page is the equivalent of a cover letter. It will determine whether potential employers will review my resume and writing samples or move on to another portfolio.

Technological Literacy

Many different computer programs were essential to the success of my portfolio.

This was my first time using Dreamweaver, which started out as a challenge. Everything about Dreamweaver was foreign to me. After experimenting quite a bit with some of the

features, I felt much more capable using the program. When I was nearly done with my portfolio, I discovered the benefits of creating CSS pages to maintain consistency within the web site. It saved a lot of time and energy. I will definitely use CSS pages in the future.

I ran into some trouble while transferring text from Word documents to HTML. I copied text from my resume and other documents and pasted it onto my portfolio in Dreamweaver. The first problem I had to overcome was trying to make the web page look similar the original document. Any tabs, spacing, or formatting specific to Word was erased. I attempted to align everything in Dreamweaver with little success. Finally, I figured out the benefit of inserting small tables into larger tables. That helped a lot. Then, I learned the HTML code for non-breakable space, which allowed me to add more than one space between words. Through this, my alignment problems were solved. That's when I noticed the second problem. None of the quotation marks, apostrophes, or symbols (such as ©) transferred from Word to HTML. Because of this, I found random symbols and letters, such as "Â€s€", on every page of my portfolio. I corrected each error in Dreamweaver. It was time consuming, but I am sure it took less time to correct the errors than it would have taken to retype each document in its entirety.

FTP is the program used to place my portfolio onto the USU server. I have never used this program before, but once I was shown how to use it, it was pretty easy. I did, however, have difficulties removing it from the server once it was there. Because it was so easy for me, I was able to help other classmates when they were having difficulties with this program.

I used Photoshop to design my logo and header and add borders to my thumbnail images. I struggled to find the font that I wanted for my logo. I had the font on my computer at home, but it did not exist in the Photoshop program on the PCs in our classroom. After deciding to change the logo to a less desirable font, I discovered that the Macs in the computer lab had the one that I wanted. The other part of Photoshop that caused me difficulty, was trying to add black borders to my thumbnail images. With the help of my professor, I discovered that I could extend the canvas behind the image and indicate that I wanted the extended portion to be black. Luckily, it worked, but I think there must be an easier way. I intend to discover it while working with Photoshop next semester.

Adobe Acrobat was essential to the success of my portfolio. All of my samples, my resume, and this memo can be opened as a PDF document. Without this computer program, it would be very difficult to display the brochure and fact sheet. I would probably present the documents as a photographic image, like a GIF or a JPEG, which would not display the quality that would impress potential employers.

Microsoft Word may seem obvious, but it was very important to the success of this portfolio. Nearly all of my writing samples were originally created in Word. I saved two of my samples in rich text format so they could be opened in Word, but could not be altered by the reader.

Social Literacy

I found that the more progress I made with my own portfolio, the more time I spent helping fellow students improve theirs. I showed many students how to transfer their Word documents into Dreamweaver and upload their portfolios to the USU server. I also relied on others to show me how to use features of Dreamweaver and Photoshop. Although we each had our own portfolio, we worked together to help one another succeed.

Working with others helped me learn something about myself. I realized that I have a knack for explaining things in simple terms. I am sure that this newfound talent will be beneficial in school and later in the workforce.

Ethical Literacy

I found myself reflecting on the ethics of this portfolio, nearly every time I added text. My goal was to portray a professional image. I had to be careful, however, not to exaggerate my abilities or my experience. I want to be seen as a professional and experienced writer, but I must acknowledge that I still have quite a bit to learn.

Critical Literacy

As I described above, I first created a logo that was whimsical. I emailed the image to my sister, to get her opinion and she stated that it was really cute. She continued to explain that my logo would be perfect for a day care or child-related business. Cute was not the image I was going for, so I started over with my design.

After writing the text for my home page, I asked my husband to review it for me. He was very honest and informed me that it was pretty boring. He reminded me of the importance of first impressions and recommended that I add work-related experiences that would capture the interest of my audience.

Each of my writing samples went through several revision processes. Classmates and friends reviewed and edited the documents that I created in school and co-workers did the same for the speech.

I rely very heavily on suggestions made by others. I rarely turn in an assignment without having at least one person review my work. The more time I allow for review and revision, the better quality the document, every time.

Conclusion

Creating this portfolio has been a tremendous experience. I have learned that I enjoy teaching others and that I learn new programs quickly. I have discovered that I take pleasure in using new forms of technology. Taking this assignment seriously and really

applying myself was very rewarding and has solidified my decision to become a professional writer.