

## Digital Ethics in ePortfolios: Developing Principles, Strategies, and Scenarios

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In response to rising concerns about digital ethics in ePortfolio practice, the Association for Authentic, Experiential, Evidence-Based Learning (AAEEBL) created a Digital Ethics Task Force charged with researching and articulating research-based practices for ePortfolios. After year one, the Task Force released the Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios: Version 1. This article describes the process used to recruit Task Force members and develop the resulting principles. In using the Task Force as a model for international collaboration and digital composition, the final section of this paper identifies key takeaways for the field and proposes future opportunities for research in digital ethics and ePortfolio practice.

The international ePortfolio community recognizes digital ethical challenges in ePortfolio practice, particularly if and how community members and students develop the digital knowledge and skills needed to create ethically strong ePortfolios and hone digital practices as technology users. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated technology use without the time and energy needed to debate or define ethical necessities related to digital technology. In education, especially, the rapid transition to remote teaching and learning highlighted the need for understanding and enacting digital ethics principles in ePortfolio use for all stakeholders, including institutional decision makers and management, ePortfolio creators, and platform providers (Slade et al., 2020). As Coley (2012) reminded us, this pivot toward digital ethics requires educators and students to have ethical digital literacy, which raises the question of “how we might go about teaching awareness to these ethical dimensions in a digitally mediated classroom” (p. 106). Clearly, ePortfolios are a part of that digitally mediated classroom space.

Digital ethics discussions at inter/national conferences, such as the 2018 Association of Authentic, Experiential, and Evidence-Based Learning (AAEEBL) conference, the 2019 AAEEBL conference, and the 2018 Annual Conference of the Higher Education Academy UK (now AdvanceHE) raised similar concerns. A multi-institutional Australian research project investigating student use of ePortfolios with vulnerable groups, such as patients, clients, and children, recommended more proactive support for students’ ethical decision making, especially when moving artifacts from a closed assessment model to an open online platform (Kirby et al., 2019). Higher education networking opportunities with educators also suggest that many students lack an understanding of the nuances of digital ethics in ePortfolio practice, despite the fact that institutions may have guidelines in place

(Slade et al., 2018). Pre-pandemic research conducted by Gierdowski et al. (2020) identified digital ethical issues such as access, privacy, data collection, and technology to be important factors in students’ educational experiences, although these issues were not consistently considered by educational stakeholders. A scoping review of current digital ethics and ePortfolio literature by Brown Wilson et al. (2018) found a scant number of scholarly articles on this topic.

More recently, a 2019 keynote at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Forum on ePortfolio and Digital Learning by Sol Bermann, Chief Privacy Officer and Interim Chief Information Security Officer at the University of Michigan, cautioned ePortfolio practitioners to consider how ethical practices related to ePortfolios, student privacy, and data differ from laws. A new contribution by Gray and McGuire (2020) expanded this support imperative by developing a student-centered framework “that encourages students to ask discerning questions about how their content will be viewed or used” (p. 10). While literature is emerging about this important topic, it is obvious that more work is needed.

In this environment, AAEEBL released a global call for interested ePortfolio scholars and practitioners to establish the AAEEBL Digital Ethics and ePortfolio Task Force to develop principles and resources for the sector. The aims of this paper are to detail the rationale for, and the processes involved in, developing this task force and, then, to briefly outline the major output of the task force, the newly released *Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios: Version 1* (Cicchino et al., 2020) resource. In the final section, we discuss the key takeaways from this project and their implications for the field and propose future investigative opportunities for the task force.

### Development Process

Describing the “ePortfolio Decade” in her retrospective for the AAC&U’s ePortfolio Forum, Clark

(2019) identified the ePortfolio community as a driving force for “amplify[ing] the knowledge, skills, habits of mind, and attitudes of ePortfolio practitioners” and acknowledged that it is a “generous space . . . for returning and recursively revising our practice” (p. 62). AAEEBL’s task force represents such amplification and reflection. A result of numerous international conversations over several years, the decision to create the task force, as well as the development of its operating procedures, exemplify the “generous space” that Clark recognized as critical to the ePortfolio movement.

Responding to increasing calls for digital ethics in ePortfolios to be recognized and addressed as central to ePortfolio pedagogy and practice, AAEEBL developed a multi-year focus in this area. The organization’s efforts included conference presentations and conversations, international workshops, forums, and Twitter chats. In 2018, the AAEEBL Annual Meeting fostered multiple conversations on the challenges of digital ethics when implementing ePortfolios. The majority of these conversations focused on the ethics of what students chose to include in their ePortfolios and how those decisions were informed or impacted by issues like privacy concerns and copyright, with little to no attention to ethical considerations and choices made by administrators, educators, and platform providers. The 2019 AAEEBL Annual Meeting expanded on this discussion by incorporating broader digital ethics topics such as data privacy, accessibility, and digital identity. During this meeting, a Digital Ethics Forum promoted collaborative discussion regarding the wide range of challenges, questions, and available resources on this topic. This forum highlighted the need for a more formal resource for practitioners and stakeholders to reference when engaging with ePortfolios.

AAEEBL propelled these conversations forward with two initiatives. First, they partnered with ePortfolios Australia and ePortfolio Ireland to commence a community of inquiry focused on ethics and ePortfolios that included global Twitter chats and interactive panels with international participants. Second, they partnered with Auburn University to create the task force. A call for participants was released in September 2019, and 11 members were selected. A diverse group of scholars and practitioners, task force members included administrators, faculty, and industry professionals from three countries (the US, Australia, and New Zealand). Over the next nine months, members worked to conceptualize, draft, and publish a document to guide a variety of practitioners through digital ethics considerations in ePortfolio development. Due to size, interests, and time zones, they frequently utilized subgroups to maximize members’ expertise with the goal of producing a resource that would guide an international readership in navigating digital ethics within the context of ePortfolios.

As an interdisciplinary, international group, the task force began their process by looking to model principle statements from the Center for Media and Social Impact (2013), the Conference on College Composition and Communication (2013, 2015), and the Global Society of Online Literacy Educators (2019). These offered general principles but lacked guidance on how to apply the principles in local contexts. Reflecting on their roles as administrators, educators, professionals, and platform providers, members asked how they might create a set of principles that, in addition to general guidance, offered clear resources and examples for how to apply each principle in various local contexts.

In October 2019, the task force explored the impact of digital ethics issues and practices on their own ePortfolio experiences, as well as ways in which the field could benefit from additional support in this area. This meeting resulted in approximately 12 key topics for further research. Given the scope of the work and the number of participants, the task force decided to focus on developing the first nine areas during the initial year. Each participant self-identified which topic they wanted to work with, and small group research began.

After each subgroup drafted their principle, members from other subgroups provided peer review. This process included question-raising, suggestions for further study, and additional resources and scholarship. This meeting allowed all task force participants to add their geographic and disciplinary expertise to each principle. Additionally, the members found significant overlap between the principles, so revisions were made to combine or clarify topics. From these models, three sections were designed to accompany each of the 10 principles: strategies, scenarios, and resources. These additional sections offer specificity, examples of application, and additional resources for readers who want to explore each principle’s topic more extensively. For the purposes of length, the print version of the principles included in the Appendix has abbreviated the scenarios and displaced the resources; however, an expanded version of the principles can be read online (Cicchino et al., 2020). Although the work of removing redundancy from the principles is ongoing and only partially feasible given the interrelatedness of these ethical areas, it is important for readers to note that the accompanying strategies, scenarios, and resources may apply to more than one principle, particularly as they affect different stakeholders in various and unique situations. The task force’s goal was to connect each strategy, scenario, and resource to its most relevant principle, but relevancy will necessarily differ across audiences.

In January 2020, the document was refined, and a draft was submitted to the AAEEBL Board for feedback on usability, content, and purpose. The AAEEBL Board completed a survey-style form that allowed the task force to efficiently synthesize multiple

reviewers' feedback and apply their suggestions to the next round of revision. Throughout the spring of 2020, the task force continued to revise the document, shifting focus to usability, word choice, citations, and consistency across the document. A subgroup explored options for a digital platform, a process that prioritized usability and accessibility. Once the platform, Scalar, was selected, this subgroup built the document, and the task force finalized technical edits. Because the full digital ethics principles document is lengthy, an abridged version is presented here with only one scenario for each principle. A rationale has been added to explain how each scenario can support users as they apply the principles.

### **Principle Structure and Content**

As the task force worked through the iterative process of writing, reviewing, revising, and obtaining feedback from increasingly larger audiences, the multiple goals and audiences sparked conversations about how to best conceptualize a clear design and structure that would be equally accessible and valuable to all of the imagined readers. While the primary goal was to guide users in ePortfolio practice as it relates to digital ethics, the various local contexts in which users might find themselves needing and using such a guide had to be considered. In recognizing that students, professionals, educators, administrators, staff, and platform providers would need to make different uses of these principles, each principle had to apply to multiple stakeholder groups. Consequently, for each principle, the task force developed strategies and scenarios that are relevant to different kinds of users and a variety of local contexts.

In settling on a structure, the principles document began to organize around the set of 10 intentionally broad and overarching principles, loosely grouping the principles under three primary audiences: institutions for Principles 1 and 2, ePortfolio creators for Principles 3 through 8, and platform providers for Principles 9 and 10. However, as users explore the resource, the cross-applicability of the principles should be immediately evident. Therefore, each principle is followed by short, bullet-pointed strategy statements that highlight how the principle could/should be implemented in practice.

In order to offer a more complete illustration of each principle's application in practice, a set of scenarios situate each principle in specific local contexts. Each scenario explores a situation that is expressly applicable to one of the following audiences: students, educators, staff, administrators, or platform developers. Moreover, they are written in the second person to address the intended audience directly and are explicitly tagged in the hypertext version according to its primary intended audience.

Tagging helps readers manage the scenarios by providing multiple entry points to discover them. It also allows readers to start the document by reviewing the scenarios designed explicitly for their primary role and work backward to concrete strategies and overarching principles.

The final element of each principle section is a resources page that includes articles, book chapters, digital repositories, guides, and educational websites relevant to that particular principle. Again, though not comprehensive, these pages are intended to provide users with directions for further study and support, as needed. An aggregate list of those resources is available at the end of the hypertext of the principles document, directly following our Glossary of Key Terms, which clarifies basic definitions for critical terms used throughout. These terms are also defined in-context through side annotations on relevant pages. To keep the print version manageable, the glossary and resources were removed.

### **Takeaways**

As a result of reflecting on the process of developing this principles document, takeaways about international and interdisciplinary collaboration and digital composition emerged with several implications for the field.

### ***Creating an Interdisciplinary Document for Praxis***

Undoubtedly, the diversity of the task force team members was a strength in the first year. As the principles began taking shape, interdisciplinary, international, and cross-institutional perspectives led members to consider issues of digital ethics and professional communication that would not have been encountered without the assorted backgrounds of the members. Many hours were spent discussing how various audiences with different purposes might use these principles and how the document's organization and language could facilitate usability for diverse readers. In deciding terminology, for example, the interdisciplinarity of the team revealed how some terms did or did not work across different international and professional contexts. For instance, the term "educator" originally existed as "faculty," "instructor," "tutor," and "teacher." Ultimately, educator had the ability to include multiple teaching positionalities and transfer across international and professional contexts while other terms were less familiar across different contexts or took up unintended connotations in those contexts.

Similarly, the team's interdisciplinarity enriched its ability to focus on different aspects of digital ethics, a topic that is both capacious and dynamic. Having such a diverse set of task force members expanded our thinking to consider a wide range of contexts and use

cases. These contexts stretched across student populations, academic disciplines, and institution types. We are not surprised at the extent to which interdisciplinarity and member diversity positively impacted the task force.

Moving forward, collaborative efforts like the task force must be intentionally designed to include diverse voices and perspectives. As ePortfolio scholarship becomes more international and diverse, creating inclusive representations of the field is vital, especially with regards to issues of digital ethics. COVID-19 has brought to bear an important reminder: issues of digital access, digital agency, and digital ownership intersect with international systems of inequity. If we want ePortfolio scholarship to provide a rich and nuanced portrait of ePortfolio practices and theory, then we must ensure that the voices in our field constitute and reflect the diversity of ePortfolio practitioners.

### ***The Role of Hypertextuality in Creating Documents on ePortfolios and Digital Ethics***

The task force also reflected on the unique nature of a principles statement related to ePortfolios and focused on digital ethics. While many of the national statements reviewed were produced in print publication and heavily text-based, a principles document related to digital topics—ePortfolios and digital ethics—should be multimodal and digital, taking advantage of the affordances of hypertexts. First, producing the principles as hypertext would allow the document to be “living,” in that it could continuously be revised and updated as new issues and resources emerged within digital ethics. Second, building the principles in a digital format allowed it to more easily utilize visuals, design, and hyperlinks to honor the interactive media that are often used in ePortfolios to create what Yancey (2004) called “web sensibility” (p. 746) and flexibility in how to read and engage with the text.

Third, from a practical standpoint, creating a webtext also led to a more manageable document. In developing the first version of the principles, an extensive list of standards, strategies, scenarios, and resources were drafted. This list would only continue to grow as more areas of digital ethics were added to the resource. Digital composition allowed a nested structure so that sections were balanced and usable yet also detailed in the guidance on practice. However, despite these affordances, there was one limitation to creating a webtext. Platforms could internally record a document history that could be accessed by creators, but the evolution of the document over time would be largely lost to readers. Documenting the evolution of the principles required a print version of the principles to be published in an abbreviated format alongside an article that could provide insight into the creation process.

As a final note on the value of hypertextuality, creating this document further allowed the task force to practice the digital creation process that students and professionals engage in as they complete ePortfolios. Reynolds et al. (2019) mentioned the divide between an ePortfolio scholar and practitioner in their article, which detailed their experiences building and revising their own professional ePortfolios. Engaging in digital composition forced members of the task force to learn new technologies, weigh choices in design, and reflect on audience experience and usability. More importantly, we confronted many of the digital ethical issues on which we were writing: in considering our platform, we assessed accessibility standards and looked to End User Licensing Agreements for policies on data collection and ownership. We chose to articulate standards for re-use and attribution in the hypertext’s footer. We participated in the digital ecology in ways that are unlike writing a traditional print publication. However, task force members in higher education questioned whether or not our institutions would recognize this digital publication as scholarship and wondered how to communicate the labor and importance of this work to systems that value print forms of scholarly communication. For that reason, as a field, if we want to align our scholarly practices with the digital labor that we ask ePortfolio creators to engage in, more work is needed to justify and recognize digital scholarship by professional stakeholders.

### ***Digital Ethics as a Capacious Area for Research and Study***

Unsurprisingly, we found it difficult to capture the full range of digital ethics issues as they relate to ePortfolios in only one year of work. The current set of principles identifies 10 areas of digital ethics: institutional support, awareness, digital literacies and practice, author rights, access, privacy, content storage, cross-platform compatibility, accessibility, and consent for data usage. These 10 areas represent a foundation that any new ePortfolio administrator, educator, or practitioner must be aware of. This list of principles will continue to grow in the task force’s second year.

Because so little work exists on digital ethics in ePortfolio scholarship, it was a challenge to consider how existing regulations and issues related to digital ethics broadly could apply to ePortfolio practice specifically. As a field, we must continue to investigate areas of digital ethics with respect to ePortfolios. This call for additional scholarship becomes especially important as some trends in higher education move toward mass student data collection, predictive analytics, and surveillance technologies. If we are to claim that ePortfolios offer ePortfolio creators meaningful spaces to learn, reflect, and theorize their professional identity, we cannot ignore the real risks

that exist within digital spaces. Thus, the field must continue to engage in research at the intersection of ePortfolios and digital ethics.

### Looking Ahead

In acknowledging that this work is not done, we are proud of how the diversity of the task force led us to deeply consider purpose, audience, format, organization, and language with an eye toward interdisciplinary and international application and praxis. The second year of the task force will expand the document to include digital ethics topics that we were unable to take up in the first version of the document: assessment, diversity and equity, legal issues, and labor. Additionally, the existing principles will be revised and updated with new resources and strategies that have come to light in the age of COVID-driven online instruction.

To do this work well, a diverse set of perspectives must be recruited to serve on the task force, including members from different international, institutional, and professional contexts in addition to individuals who hold positionalities that offer much needed perspectives. For example, (a) students making ePortfolios or involved with ePortfolio programs at their institutions; (b) professionals and educators from underrepresented racial and ethnic communities, disability communities, first-generation communities, and transnational or translanguing communities; (c) professionals or educators from different disciplinary or professional contexts; (d) educators holding contingent, non-tenure-track, staff, or graduate assistantship positions; and (e) educators with institutional or regional perspectives currently missing from our task force membership.

### Conclusions

The AAEEBL Task Force on Digital Ethics in ePortfolios has provided an important and timely contribution to digital ethics discussions globally. The output resource, *Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios: Version 1* (Cicchino et al., 2020), supports ePortfolio decision-making and practices across different locations and contexts, enabling important principles, strategies, scenarios, and additional resources to be accessed both interactively and in text formats. Further, the collaborative nature of the task force team enriched the development process, preempting a similar process and outputs for the second year of the task force. This second task force will continue to develop resources for the sector in a time when higher education institutions are recovering from COVID-19 teaching and looking for available digital ethical literacy resources.

A primary intention of the principles is to serve as a vehicle for recursive, reflective practice—a kind of window and mirror to prompt the dynamic process of reflection while stakeholders are in the process of composing ePortfolios that are contextually situated. The principles are designed not only to evoke individualized reflection by the stakeholder but also to encourage reflection writ large for practitioners across higher education. ePortfolios are constantly evolving with the advancement of digital technologies and the socio-cultural laws and conventions that govern digital spaces. In responding to constantly shifting digital environments, digital ethics documents (e.g., the first version of these principles) must be designed to provide stakeholders with tangible strategies for confronting issues of digital ethics in the moment while also looking through these moments to glimpse changes that are just beyond the horizon.

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## Appendix

### Digital Ethics Principles in ePortfolios: Abridged Version

As outward-facing ePortfolios become more common, students, educators, administrators, and staff need guiding principles to ground their ePortfolio practice. Beginning in 2018, the AAEEBL community highlighted a need for a practical and applicable guide for practitioners on the topic of digital ethics. The Digital Ethics Task Force was created out of this discussion and has developed this resource to guide anyone involved in administering, teaching, creating, or practicing ePortfolios, including students, professionals, educators, administrators, staff, and platform providers.

The document is divided into 10 principles relating to digital ethics and ePortfolios. Each principle consists of a description, a scenario of how the principle may be applied, and a rationale to contextualize the scenario. Additional scenarios and resources for each principle can be found in the full hypertext Digital Ethics Principles document.

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#### **Principle 1: Support**

*Institutions should provide appropriate support for students, educators, administrators, and staff who create ePortfolios.*

**ABSTRACT:** Institutions must devote resources to supporting ePortfolios, including professional development in ePortfolios. ePortfolio stakeholders are encouraged to partner with offices that have expertise in disability, informational literacy, technology, writing, and teaching and learning to create inclusive ePortfolio requirements with built-in alternatives for individuals with limited access to technology and the internet.

#### ***Strategies for applying this principle include...***

- Adequately funding and evenly distributing the responsibility for developing, teaching, and assessing ePortfolios throughout the program, department, college, and/or institution.
- Developing and providing training and support on digital ethics, digital citizenship, and effective pedagogical and assessment strategies for educators, staff, and program directors who work with students on ePortfolios.
- Developing clear ePortfolio requirements so that all students can be successful, especially students who have little to no experience with ePortfolio-building technologies.
- Providing alternatives for financially disadvantaged students who cannot afford the costs associated with certain ePortfolio platforms and/or technologies or do not have access to a stable internet connection.
- Identifying institutional resources and partners for ePortfolio support, such as the office of accessibility, librarians, reading/writing/learning centers, technical support, etc.

**Scenario:** You are a writing program administrator and/or staff member, and your dean has recently asked you to bring ePortfolio assessment into the composition program. You are excited at this possibility, as you have heard about ePortfolios at conferences and in academic journals in your field. However, when you ask about funding for this initiative, your dean says you will have to use your current budget. Your program is staffed mostly by part-time and non-tenure-track professionals who carry high teaching loads and already have limited access to professional development funds.

After taking a moment to process the situation, you explain to the dean that an ePortfolio requirement is an exciting, but sizable, commitment. You suggest reaching out to peer institutions that use ePortfolios to understand how much money they spend annually on staff, technology, professional development, assessment, curriculum

development, etc. You also reach out to the disability advocates, technology experts, and the librarians on campus to assess the institution's current resources to support this initiative, as commitment from them in particular would be beneficial. After research and discussion, you meet with the dean and explain the amount of funding and support you feel your program will need to have a successful and sustainable ePortfolio initiative.

**Scenario Rationale:** This scenario addresses a common support challenge for new ePortfolio implementation initiatives in higher education. It showcases the need to include a variety of campus stakeholders at the earliest stages of such a project. Additional activities that foster support for institution-wide ePortfolio initiatives include conducting a needs assessment of all programs to determine their current practices and interest in adopting authentic assessment practices.

## Principle 2: Promote Awareness

*Institutional administrators, staff, and educators are responsible for promoting awareness of digital ethics in ePortfolio making.*

**ABSTRACT:** ePortfolio educators, administrators, and staff should have a working knowledge of the ethical issues related to ePortfolios, including data collection, security, and management; ethical sharing and representation; digital bias; accessibility; ePortfolio security and privacy; copyright, fair use, and open access; representation and digital identity; and intended vs. potential audiences.

### *Strategies for applying this principle include...*

- Asking institutional stakeholders about use and storage of ePortfolio-related data, student rights to ePortfolio ownership, rationale for platform selection, and accessibility standards *before* assigning ePortfolios to students.
- Developing and sharing strategies for identifying, engaging with, and countering potential biases among learners, educator(s), and any others who might review an ePortfolio.
- Ensuring that students can determine who shall have access to their various portfolios on the platform they were asked to use.
- Teaching students about privacy settings and their implications.
- Providing students with examples that help them define and determine the distinctions between their personal and professional online identities.
- Helping students anticipate how diverse audiences will react differently to the information they share (writing, images, coursework, etc.).
- Informing students of what entities or audiences may have access to their identity representations, data, and intellectual property along with any possible benefits and harm that may result from this access.
- Sharing photo and media galleries that foster equal and adequate representation of the diverse set of students creating portfolios at your institution.
- Teaching students basic knowledge about copyright, fair use, and open access.

**Scenario:** You are an educator. Students create a public ePortfolio in your capstone course that they could use when they enter the job market. You work to provide students with example portfolios that represent a diverse group of students and experiences.

One student voices concern that she may encounter bias on the job market if her image is included in the ePortfolio. Although you want to encourage this student to represent her identity fully, you acknowledge potential bias and engage in a conversation about her options.

You provide her with a sample portfolio of another student who also had this worry. He created an ePortfolio without pictures of himself while still maintaining visual representation of his work. You also share with her another example of a student from a similar background as her own that provides an honest narrative about the intersection of her career and her identity. After the conversation, the student decides to use the example of the ePortfolio without personal photos as a model for her ePortfolio. You direct her to other examples of ePortfolios that have powerful design without relying on personal photos as well as websites where she can access Creative Commons licensed images.

**Scenario Rationale:** As we make students aware of digital ethics issues related to ePortfolios, many of us focus primarily on technological issues like privacy and data use. This scenario highlights the need to make students aware of socio-cultural digital ethical issues, as well. Further, the educator in the scenario goes beyond simply generating awareness to supporting student action. The educator does this by having a candid conversation and providing examples that foster student agency. A powerful follow-up activity would be to schedule a meeting to review and discuss her ePortfolio when the student is ready.

### Principle 3: Practice

*ePortfolio creators need opportunities to develop and practice the digital literacies necessary to create accessible and effective ePortfolios.*

**ABSTRACT:** ePortfolio creators need practice with digital literacies. ePortfolio instruction should teach creators what ePortfolios are, why they are creating one, how to employ visual design and Universal Design principles when creating one, and how to work with ePortfolio tools and technologies. When creating ePortfolios, a knowledge of their audience, context, and constraints should guide creators.

#### *Strategies for applying this principle include...*

- Identifying and sharing effective strategies for storing, attaching, and curating artifacts.
- Maintaining an expectation of accessibility, including the ability for an ePortfolio to be accessed across devices and by everyone, including people using assistive technologies.
- Employing universal design principles whenever possible (including color choice, contrast, font size, page hierarchy, captioning, alternatives to drop down menus, etc.).
- Teaching students about visual design considerations, such as font choices, color contrast, image selection and placement, and any other relevant design principles.
- Encouraging students to think about the context of their ePortfolio work, including considering their audience, purpose, and constraints.
- Making sure students understand the many rhetorical choices they are making during the process and how these choices differ from those made during the composition of more traditional documents such as essays, resumes, and cover letters.
- Considering the constraints and affordances of various ePortfolio genres (learning, archive, assessment, showcase, etc.) in regards to composition, sharing, maintenance, design, etc.
- Determining the availability of tools for ePortfolio making and how student materials are impacted by the constraints of their situation.
- Offering basic training in the use of the ePortfolio platform at the time of implementation, as well as periodically, and upon request through student services.
- Having available on-campus and online staff, including students, who can answer questions around the use of any mandated ePortfolio platform and can also assist with instructional design questions.
- Informing ePortfolio creators of institutional or public resources that can support them in creating their ePortfolio.

**Scenario:** You are a non-traditional student, returning to college after many years. Your educator requires you to compose an ePortfolio, which requires the ability to create and add content in digital spaces. They acknowledge that not all of their students may have the necessary digital literacy skills to do so and perform a quick assessment at the beginning of the program, offering direct help and resources where students can self-learn and upskill.

Your educator works with e-terms, who are students employed by the university to assist students as well as educators with educational technology questions. The e-terms are available to answer your questions throughout the term and make you comfortable gaining necessary digital skills to compose your ePortfolio successfully.

You are grateful for this support because while you use your smartphone and various apps on it on a regular basis to communicate with friends and family, you have not conducted academic work digitally and only just bought a new computer to be able to participate in the online parts of the program, conduct research, and complete assignments electronically.

**Scenario Rationale:** This scenario emphasizes the fact that the Practice principle does not stop with providing opportunities for students to add artifacts to their ePortfolios. It is critical that educators take the time to check in with their students to determine if they a) have consistent access to a device through which the student can work in the ePortfolio environment without difficulties, b) have access to a reliable internet connection, and c) can find training and support related to using the ePortfolio platform. If your institution does not offer training, you may find relevant training materials shared as Creative Commons works by other institutions.

#### Principle 4: Respect Author Rights and Re-Use Permissions

*ePortfolio creators should understand and respect author rights, best practices for re-use, and representation.*

**ABSTRACT:** Because ePortfolios ask creators to re-use text and media, they need a working knowledge of plagiarism, copyright, fair use, and licensing. Students should be ethical owners of their ePortfolios and engage in conversations about how to responsibly move artifacts into ePortfolios, particularly when artifacts represent professional or collaborative experiences or involve the representation of others.

##### *Strategies for applying this principle include...*

- Advocating for student ownership of ePortfolios and ePortfolio portability post-graduation.
- Ensuring ePortfolio creators are aware of how the ePortfolio will be used by an institution or employer (e.g., for institutional assessment), and obtaining consent from students for this re-use.
- Distinguishing among concepts related to plagiarism, attribution, citation, copyright, fair use, and licensing.
- Demonstrating how to attribute sources according to disciplinary, professional, institutional, and cultural standards, as well as genre conventions, to avoid accusations of plagiarism.
- Identifying situations in which ePortfolio creators can argue fair use within their institution/culture.
- Becoming familiar with various licensing agreements regarding re-use of resources and knowing how to apply an appropriate Creative Commons license to an ePortfolio to guide its re-use.
- Being thoughtful in how to represent others' identities and ideas, including the use of photos, collaborative projects, and work authored and owned by others. This includes sharing artifacts that disclose others' personal information only when you have the legal right and personal permission to do so.
- Considering how representing others in an ePortfolio can be shaped by social and cultural biases and being rhetorically thoughtful in selecting and contextualizing artifacts.
- Asking professional organizations about using work completed in internships, employment, and work-for-hire before featuring these artifacts in an ePortfolio in case information is proprietary or protected. When negotiating these professional relationships, you should ask about featuring the work you are doing in your professional ePortfolio.
- Providing specific information for students and educators who work with protected and/or vulnerable groups, such as children, patients, clients, etc., and who may include information about this work in their ePortfolios.

**Scenario:** You are a student who is excited to design your ePortfolio. You decide to include artwork from your favorite street artist alongside your bio on the homepage. While the artwork does not have a re-use license at the bottom, you decide to use it anyway. You attribute each piece of art individually at the bottom of the page in APA format with a link to the artist's website. However, when you show your ePortfolio to your educator, you are accused of breaking copyright law.

You are confused—there's a full citation at the bottom of the page. While much of your academic career has prepared you to navigate attribution and citation, very little time has been spent on copyright. Your educator asks you to reconsider the homepage design. Specifically, they ask you to reflect on the following questions: is the artwork used in such a way that you can argue fair use? Should you replace this artwork with artwork from the public domain or artwork with clearer re-use licensing? What are the potential risks if you keep the page's design as-is?

After concluding that this artwork is protected by copyright and you are not using it in a way that suggests fair use, you redesign the page to include an open-access work instead. You still clearly attribute this work to its creator but know that you have permission to re-use it on your personal ePortfolio.

**Scenario Rationale:** Access to the internet provides users with a vast array of valuable resources, information, and media. Unfortunately, many users are not taught about the responsibility they hold to consider how they use and reuse other people's work. When assigning ePortfolios and other digital work, educators should ensure that their students receive guidance on the use, re-use, and representation of others' works. To do so, educators should provide guiding questions to help learners make good decisions about what they share and how, along with links to resource collections and media galleries that support responsible re-use.

### Principle 5: Access to Technology

*Adequate access to technology must be available for all students, and ePortfolio software should be accessible with institutional devices.*

**ABSTRACT:** Students with limited access to technology or the internet should still have opportunities to create ePortfolios using institutional resources. An inclusive ePortfolio curriculum accommodates students who need to build their ePortfolio on a smartphone or gives students access to technology or the internet via institutional resources.

#### *Strategies for applying this principle include...*

- Recognizing that not all students own laptop or desktop computers and may rely on mobile phones and campus computers (available in libraries, labs, etc. at various hours).
- Ensuring that hardware, software, and ePortfolio platforms and support are readily accessible to account for students' diverse schedules.
- Providing students and educators with training, technology support infrastructure, and resources (e.g., samples of successful ePortfolios, tutorials, resources on digital ethics, universal design, etc.).
- Making an institutional commitment to providing adequate proactive support (initial training, tutorials, examples) as well as reactive support (e.g., help desk support) for educators and students.

**Scenario:** You are a part-time student attending courses after your normal work hours. As part of your capstone course, you are asked to create an ePortfolio. While you have a desktop computer at work and know some desktop computers are available to you at the library, you do not have access to a computer at your home—although you have an iPad and a smartphone. Moreover, the library has limited hours. When you talk to the professor after class and explain this situation, they already have a plan in place to meet your needs.

The professor has technical support resources from the ePortfolio platform provider specifically tailored to people using a tablet or smartphone and out-of-class activities have also taken a variety of devices into account. More so, your professor has a list of local libraries with weekend and extended night hours that you can use to work on the ePortfolio and directions for checking out hardware to take home from the university library. While the professor does have on-campus office hours during the day, there are also options for distance participation in these through web or phone conferencing. You are relieved that your educator has already considered your situation and excited to begin the ePortfolio.

**Scenario Rationale:** Campuses work hard within their budgets to offer a variety of technology access solutions. However, there are still a significant number of students who do not have reliable or consistent access to a device and/or a stable Internet connection. This equity issue has been amplified by campus closures due to hurricanes, wildfires and a global pandemic. Institutions must consider how to help students get the technology they need, while instructors must create assignments that can be completed from any device.

### Principle 6: Privacy

*ePortfolio creators should have ultimate control over public access to their portfolios and the ability to change the privacy settings at any time.*

**ABSTRACT:** Students should be able to alter and explain their privacy and sharing settings as owners of their ePortfolios. Administrators, educators, and staff must be prepared to have these conversations with students.

#### *Strategies for applying this principle include...*

- Becoming familiar with all privacy settings available in the ePortfolio system, such as the ability to make an ePortfolio password-protected or “shareable” but not public.
- Prioritizing tools that optimize customization of permissions and permit page-level permissions.
- Acknowledging that how ePortfolio platforms interact with third parties can challenge students' right to privacy.
- Preparing educators, administrators, staff, and students to understand the ways in which student privacy might be challenged via data mining, tracking, etc.

- Balancing the ePortfolio creator's right to privacy and the efficacy of the ePortfolio program's sharing capabilities.

**Scenario:** You are a student. You have a portfolio component in a number of your courses this term. Depending on your class, you are asked to create different types of portfolios. In one class, you create a portfolio for assessment purposes, in your internship requirement you create a developmental portfolio, and for your writing class, you create a showcase portfolio that you can share with future employers.

For each different portfolio purpose, you can define the audience who shall have access to it, as not everything can be shared publicly. Your internship mentor, for example, does not want any confidential data to be made public and only allows you to include images if the portfolio is shared only with your internship advisor at your institution. In contrast, your showcase portfolio is going to be public, allowing you to share it widely with future employers. You are conscious of only including multimedia content and reflections that follow your institution's copyright guidelines and agreed on terms with people that appear in that content. You want to feature an experience you have working in a biology lab in this showcase portfolio. When talking about experiences you have working in the lab, you also do not publish confidential data but rather focus on the transferrable skills that this experience has taught you.

**Scenario Rationale:** This scenario highlights how we collectively ask students to gather their work, reflect on it in relation to a specific context (academic, co-curricular, career bridging), and share it with a specific audience. Therefore, as programs or institutions choose ePortfolio tools for students to share their work, they need to consider those with more flexible privacy permission capabilities to allow students to share different representations of themselves with different stakeholder groups. The work does not stop there. Educators must also make students aware that those permissions exist and show students how to change them. Only then will students truly have control over who can access their work and their reflections on it.

### Principle 7: Content Storage

*ePortfolio creators should know where their content is stored, who has access, and how to remove it.*

**ABSTRACT:** Before working in an ePortfolio platform, students, educators, administrators, and staff should review the Privacy Policy and Terms and Conditions with particular attention to how the platform will collect, store, and use data and if students can opt out of data collection or remove their data. Providers should communicate these details in clear and accessible language.

#### ***Strategies for applying this principle include...***

- Reviewing the Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy (and other relevant documents) of the ePortfolio site and seeking counsel, e.g., at your institution, if you are not clear whether the site is safe or appropriate to use.
- Identifying how the provider will collect and use your personal data, whether you can opt out of data collection, and how you can remove your data *before* creating an account on the ePortfolio-making platform and adding content.
- Recognizing that deleting your account does not mean your user data will be removed from data repositories *unless the end user license agreement says this*.
- Considering how complex, time consuming, or costly the portfolio transfer process is, if there is one.
- Informing students on how the institution, vendors, and/or website hosting system may preserve or share their ePortfolio information with other parties, systems, or entities.
- Sharing guidelines on data ownership, storage, and sharing in clear and accessible end user license agreements.

**Scenario:** You are a program administrator and/or staff member who has been asked by your institution to start a campus-wide ePortfolio initiative as part of its Quality Enhancement Plan, a measure tied to institutional accreditation in the southeastern United States. There is nobody at your institution who regularly vets technologies intended for teaching and learning, and you have limited knowledge of ePortfolios and suitable platforms in general. When you gather a committee to consider different ePortfolio technologies, you make a list of priorities: students' ability to edit and share their ePortfolios both as students and after they leave the institution, universal design

practices for creators and viewers, privacy capabilities for authors, and minimal direct cost to students. However, the committee soon realizes it has thought very little about use of student data, which is a big concern.

As a committee, you develop a series of criteria related to student data and privacy and their acceptable options. These criteria will help eliminate some potential ePortfolio platforms. These questions include the following:

- Does the platform collect identifiable or de-identified personal information?
- Where is data stored, and how is this data protected?
- Does the platform sell this data to third parties?
- Is user data collected/used/shared for non-authorized purposes?
- Can the user remove their data, and what is the process by which they do that?
- How does the platform inform users of changes to their EULA?
- Are vendors held to equitable standards for privacy and data collection/storage?

If students choose their own platforms for ePortfolio creation, you provide resources that inform them about potential platforms and how each platform collects, uses, and stores user data.

**Scenario Rationale:** Many campus-wide ePortfolio initiatives begin by investigating the academic needs across all programs at an institution. Programs interested in participating then share desired functions and features for the Request for Proposals process. Again, these usually relate to those programs' academic needs and sometimes include features for career bridging. It is critical at this stage to consider who owns and who has access to the students' content, their profile information and metadata, and even the server logs that capture their activity patterns over time.

### **Principle 8: Cross-Platform Compatibility**

*ePortfolio creators should be able to make and view ePortfolios across any device, browser, and operating system with equitable ease of use across devices.*

ABSTRACT: ePortfolio platforms should operate across devices and operating systems from both the creator and viewer perspective. ePortfolio creators should have the technical knowledge to create ePortfolios that are readable across devices.

#### ***Strategies for applying this principle include...***

- Considering how all aspects of ePortfolio use function across platforms and mobile operating systems, including uploading, viewing, listening, downloading, embedding, and sharing.
- Considering ease of use and whether the student will use an application or a web browser to access their ePortfolio on a mobile device.
- Providing students with the technical support that they need to use the ePortfolio platform across devices.
- Questioning whether or not other users, such as employers, would need to download an application to review or interact with the ePortfolio.

**Scenario:** You are an educator who has asked your students to complete an ePortfolio as part of a capstone course. Students have already selected artifacts from their learning and co-curricular experiences to include in the ePortfolio but have not yet begun creating and filling the actual site. You distribute a survey to students to identify how comfortable they are using digital devices, if they have used the ePortfolio platform before, and how familiar they are with ePortfolios as a genre. You discover that while students use digital devices often for social media, few have created a website and none know what an ePortfolio is. On the first day exploring the platform, you observe students struggling to make minimal changes to the premade template.

You need to provide students with additional support in how to use the ePortfolio platform: (1) explicitly support the technical knowledge needed in the ePortfolio creation process in the course; (2) put students in contact with institutional, local, or public experts; (3) create classroom spaces for students to share peer knowledge and ask each other questions across a learning community. You should also discuss students' unfamiliarity with ePortfolios with the program administrator and/or staff member to see how students can learn about ePortfolios before entering the capstone course.

**Scenario Rationale:** As educators, we can adopt the common misconceptions that every student has the technology they need and the knowledge to use it in the educational setting. It is important to help students address the needs of different people who will review their ePortfolios on a variety of devices. Hopefully, this is work students can do

with the platform used by your program or institution. If not, you may have to facilitate a conversation with your learners about cross-platform friendly alternatives.

### **Principle 9: Accessibility**

*All ePortfolio platforms and pedagogy should be thoroughly vetted for accessibility according to the standards identified by one's culture, government, or profession.*

**ABSTRACT:** ePortfolio platforms should be accessible to diverse creators as well as diverse audiences. Stakeholders should test platforms for accessibility, and educators and students should be educated about accessible content creation.

#### ***Strategies for applying this principle include...***

- Recognizing that technologies are not always designed with all students in mind, and accessible platforms benefit all users.
- Recognizing that it isn't enough to rely upon a particular software company's assertions regarding accessibility. Decision-makers and other stakeholders should test accessibility prior to purchase or deployment of any ePortfolio platform. This can be done in cooperation with institutional partners, e.g., the Office of Inclusion and Disability (or similar) and affected students and staff.
- Including training so that educators, administrators, and staff understand accessibility standards when selecting ePortfolio tools and creating content.
- Preparing students to practice accessible design for diverse ePortfolio viewers.

**Scenario:** You are a student participating in an internship as part of your work-integrated learning requirement in your Hospitality Management program. Your position as sous-chef in your favorite restaurant in town gives you rich learning opportunities, and you want to document these experiences not just in text but also in multimedia content. Your internship mentor is okay with you taking photos and video of the kitchen and your work to share in your portfolio.

During one of the introductory sessions to the ePortfolio work for your internship, you learned about creating accessible content so that people with differing abilities can read your portfolio and comment on it. Therefore, when you upload photos of the dishes you created, you provide appropriate alternative text descriptions that screen readers can access. When you use video to take viewers through the process of creating a dish or reflecting on a task, you make a transcript or summary available as text that you place next to the video. While this adds work to your portfolio creation process, it also helps you think about your audience, how your portfolio is viewed, and how you can express your ideas and reflections in an effective and concise manner.

**Scenario Rationale:** Institutions or programs should include accessibility requirements for users with disabilities when they go through the procurement process to adopt and implement an ePortfolio platform. Accessibility does not stop with the platform, though. Students need to know how to address a variety of accessibility accommodations for text documents, images, videos, and other media. Those accommodations usually support a large number of people, not just those with dis/abilities.

### **Principle 10: Consent for Data Usage**

*ePortfolio platform providers need consent to collect and store data from ePortfolio creators.*

**ABSTRACT:** ePortfolio platform providers should explain their data collection, storage, and use policies in clear and accessible language. These policies should comply with applicable institutional regulations. When these policies change, platform providers should have mechanisms in place for students and staff to review the changes and decide whether they want to keep their portfolios under these changed circumstances.

#### ***Strategies for applying this principle include...***

- Clearly identifying and explaining how ePortfolio platform providers plan to collect and use student data, whether students will be able to opt out of data collection, and how they will inform the institution and platform users of changes to their licensing agreements.

- Making ‘use of student data’ a criterion for platform selection when negotiating contracts or informing students about data use when allowing them to choose among platform options.
- Being aware of and complying with federal and state regulations regarding student data use and privacy.

**Scenario:** You are an educator. In selecting ePortfolio platform providers, your institution has made data collection a priority. This gives you relief. However, when you are developing ePortfolios with your students, you see that some features of the ePortfolio platform ask students to use other tools. For instance, to embed a video on their ePortfolio page, students are prompted to upload the media to YouTube and then use a plugin to embed that video onto their page.

When you look into YouTube’s EULA, you find it is very different from the platform provider’s EULA. Importantly, it collects user data and users have to alter their YouTube privacy settings to opt out of some forms of data collection. You are confused: are your students protected by the ePortfolio platform’s EULA, or are they subject to YouTube’s EULA because they are using this tool within the platform?

You reach out to your institutional technology resources for clarification and create a short resource for students that explains use of tools within another platform and how that can affect their privacy and data security.

**Scenario Rationale:** Educators should work with their campus technology team to become familiar with how the ePortfolio platform and any other connected environment use students' data. Based on that work, the program or institution should create resources that outline students' rights and suggest effective practices to protect themselves as they work in environments that may seek to use students' data beyond their comfort levels.