# On the Right Track: Using ePortfolios as Tenure Files

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ePortfolios have been used in many disciplines for different purposes. In the following paper, I describe how I created and used an eportfolio as my tenure file over a five-year period. As the first tenure-track faculty member at Delaware County Community College to attain tenure through the use of an online tenure portfolio, the tenure eportfolio played many roles including as a summative, reflective, and showcase tool. Using an eportfolio for tenure promotion has become increasingly popular at my institution which now has an institutional eportfolio software package that all new tenure-track faculty use to create their online tenure files. This paper also discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using a prescribed eportfolio software package in creating tenure eportfolios.

Teachers and students in the education disciplines have used portfolios and eportfolios for years as reflective tools to assess and track growth. In recent years, eportfolios have moved beyond the education field and are now being employed in many different disciplines (Brandes & Boskic, 2008; Diller & Phelps, 2008; Lowenthal, White, & Cooley, 2011; Parker & Hillyer, 2009). Even with this growth, not much literature exists on creating eportfolios for purposes of promotion and tenure in higher education. The purpose of this paper is to describe my use of an eportfolio as a tenure file as part of the process towards tenure promotion. Rather than use a traditional paper binder portfolio, I was the first faculty member at my college to use a tenure eportfolio to go through the tenure process.

## Background

As a faculty librarian at Delaware County Community College (hereafter referred to as "the College"), a suburban community college with 9,000 FTEs located approximately 15 miles from Philadelphia, I was hired in late 2005 to a tenure-track position. I was given a print tenure binder to assist me with the five-year tenure process and its requirements. Tenure binders must be filled with a variety of documents including teaching observations, student evaluations, curriculum vitae, reflections on instructional design, college service examples, and professional development competencies. Although librarians are considered "non-teaching faculty," they teach scores of information literacy sessions a semester to students. As a result, many of the librarians' tenure requirements match those of "teaching faculty." In addition to instruction, a college librarian has many other responsibilities. A tenure file helps document and showcase these eclectic and numerous job requirements to other members of the university community.

## From Paper to Online – Risky?

Within my first year of hire, my supervisor and I had the idea to take my tenure file and convert it to an online eportfolio. Taking a tenure file and changing it from a print format to an online medium can be a risky decision and may not be possible for all tenure-track faculty, depending on their institution. A faculty member hired a few years before me had attempted to create a tenure eportfolio and was denied this option. In my case, the timing to switch to an online tenure file format was perfect as the momentum and use of eportfolios had increased significantly at the College. There was also a culture of support for eportfolios that did not exist in the past. The Provost of the College hired a few years before I began also supported the switch to a tenure eportfolio format.

Despite this administrative support, my supervisor and I had to formally seek approval to make this switch from many constituents including the Departmental Dean, the Provost, and the Tenure Committee (comprised of five elected faculty members) who reviewed all tenure files. I sought approval *in writing* to create the eportfolio tenure file. Upon receiving approval (also provided in writing) from all these groups, I started the process of taking my print tenure file and making it an online tenure eportfolio. Obtaining approval in writing cannot be overemphasized but in terms of shifting to an eportfolio environment, I literally was "at the right place at the right time" and had a culture of support behind me for this shift at all administrative and academic levels. It must be acknowledged that not all institutions provide such opportunities to take such risks. I was fortunate to have such institutional support in pursuing the eportfolio route as I made my way through the tenure process – a process that is often filled with risks and potential political perils.

There are different schools of thought on whether or not a print portfolio can successfully serve as a model for an eportfolio (Gathercoal, Love, Bryde, & McKean, 2002; Love, McKean & Gathercoal, 2004) or whether an eportfolio should be something that is created as an original dossier with no transition from a paper portfolio (Lowenthal et al., 2011). In my particular situation, I did use the original paper binder

to start my transition to an eportfolio format. Using the paper format as a base helped me build a template for the tenure eportfolio and create a structure that I altered significantly over the five-year tenure-track process. By the end of the process, despite its "paper base," my eportfolio looked significantly different from the original print tenure binder I received when hired.

### Building the Tenure ePortfolio

In creating the eportfolio, I chose to start "from scratch" rather than use an eportfolio software package. Building my own eportfolio offered a lot more freedom and independence from the restrictions often found in eportfolio packages designed for students or in-house university use (to be discussed later). In creating a "homemade" eportfolio, I customized it in ways that highlighted all aspects of my position as a librarian while fulfilling all the criteria needed for the tenure file. I created files using HTML coding and cascading style sheets which I would edit using Notepad$^{++}$ and occasionally Dreamweaver. I housed the entire tenure eportfolio on my designated faculty server space that the College provides to all faculty. With the help of the College's web staff, I password-protected the entire eportfolio and created a database of usernames and passwords. This database enabled only specific individuals including Tenure Committee members, the Dean, and etcetera (each with their own username and password) to access and view the eportfolio through a provided link. The tenure file had to include academic transcripts and administrative evaluations of my teaching and job performance, so it had to have some privacy protections placed on it for confidentiality purposes. Password-protecting the eportfolio in this way gave it some security, similar to the print tenure binders, which remain in a locked cabinet in the Provost's office.

As I began designing the tenure eportfolio, I kept the original paper binder in mind. The paper binder contained tabs that listed the required elements to be included in a tenure file including College Service, Professional Responsibilities, Progress Reports, and an Academic Credentials section. The welcome page (see Figure 1) and all subpages on my eportfolio included a sidebar with separate boxed sections that preserved this "tab" feel for easier navigation. I was also *required* to keep this tab format to facilitate the use of this eportfolio by Tenure Committee members who had scores of print binders to peruse and evaluate in addition to mine.

Many constituents reviewed my tenure file and provided feedback on my progress. This structure made it easier for them to comprehend my responsibilities, track my growth, and verify whether I met all yearly tenure requirements. Various reviewers at the College (see Figure 2) used different criteria to track my progress towards tenure, and as a result, the eportfolio had to be carefully designed. The Library Director, under the oversight of the Dean, evaluated my job performance and ensured I fulfilled the requirements of my position on a yearly basis. My faculty mentor had

Figure 1
*Welcome Page of Tenure ePortfolio*



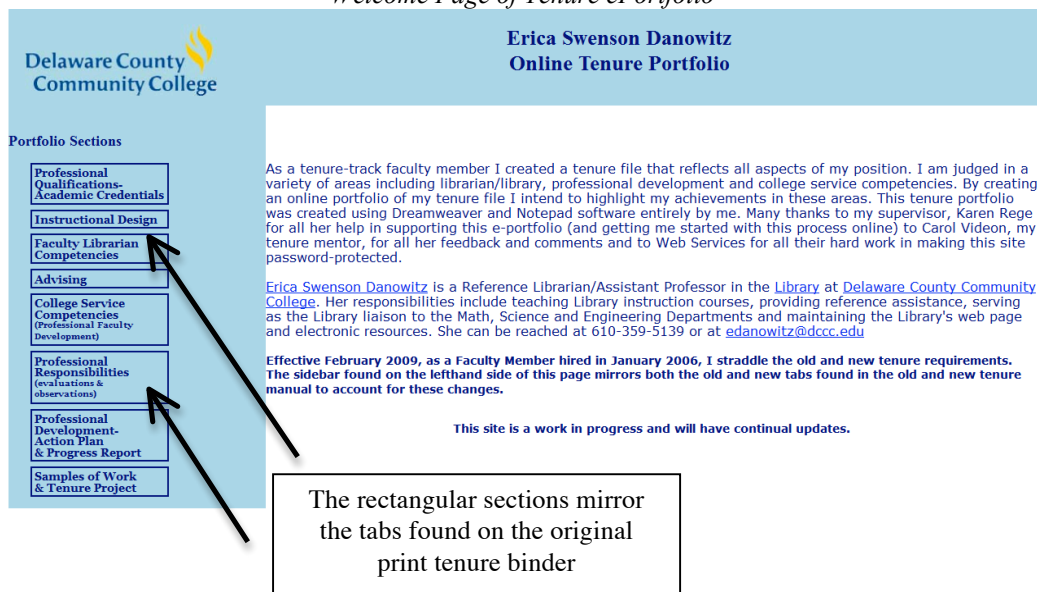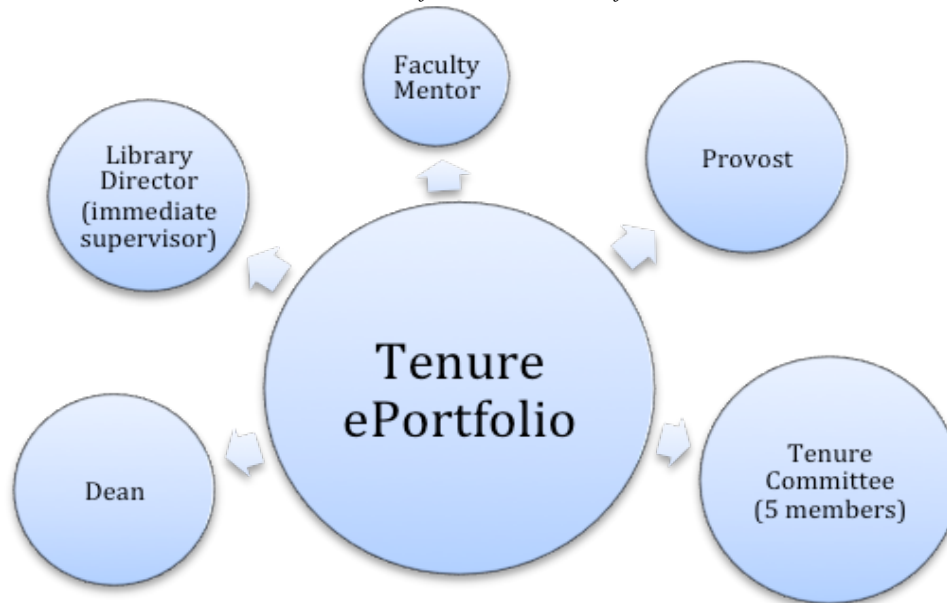The rectangular sections mirror the tabs found on the original print tenure binder

Figure 2
*Various Reviewers of the Tenure ePortfolio*



access to the file in order to provide advice and suggestions. The Provost tracked overall progress and met with all tenure-track faculty members individually to discuss elements of the tenure file and areas of weakness and growth. The Tenure Committee had the most crucial responsibility of reviewing scores of files biannually to ensure that all tenure-track faculty were making adequate progress towards tenure.

### Creating an Evaluation Rubric

Despite the numerous constituents that review tenure files, no official evaluation rubric exists at the College for either print or eportfolio formats. Tenure-track faculty often receive little feedback about their dossiers unless some element is missing. Ideally, the College's Tenure Committee could create a rubric of evaluation that would provide detailed criteria, rating scales and guidelines (Lin, 2008) for both formats. The Tenure Committee would consult administrators and faculty from all disciplines to create the rubric that could be used by everyone involved in the tenure process (for reviewing, evaluating, and creating files). This rubric's guidelines would include a list of what is required during each stage in the tenure process and identify what documents should be included in the tenure file. The guidelines section of the rubric could also assist individuals attempting to transition their tenure files from a print to an online format as it could serve as a kind of checklist. Regardless of a tenure

file's format, the rating scale part of the rubric could be used (by the Tenure Committee, the Provost, and other administrators) as a feedback tool. These different reviewers would fill out the same rating scale to track common strengths and weaknesses for each tenure file. With a print tenure file, each reviewing party could fill out a separate rating scale. In a tenure eportfolio environment, this rubric could be designed in such a way so that all reviewing parties filled out a rating scale that could be posted and viewed simultaneously online. When using an eportfolio, this rubric could be taken a step further where all parties could fill out a rubric and also provide comments or feedback in an online forum. These comments could be shared and addressed by the other reviewing parties. In the ePortfolio environment, this rubric would enable every member involved in the tenure review to easily collaborate openly about an individual's progress towards tenure. By keeping the tenure eportfolio password-protected, only those individuals involved in the tenure review process would see these comments. Each participant in the tenure process (including the tenure-track faculty member) would contribute to the rubric either through filling out a rating scale or contributing to the online forum (see Figure 3). Creating a common evaluation rubric and allowing for online commentary about an individual's progress could change the whole tenure eportfolio review and evaluation process by making it more of a collaborative, collective, and transparent effort.

## Tenure ePortfolios – Summative, Reflective, or Showcase Tools?

Based on the feedback I did receive, I constantly made changes and added documents to the eportfolio over a five-year period as I would have done with a print tenure binder. During this process, the tenure eportfolio played many roles. Hewett (2004) describes most portfolios as being three separately distinct types: a summative, reflective, or a showcase tool. A tenure eportfolio, however, does not necessarily fit into one of these separate categories. All three functions can be represented in one eportfolio and play an important role towards promotion.

### Summative Role

My eportfolio served as a summative (Hallam & McAllister, 2008) collection of all the requirements I had to fulfill during my tenure-track years at the College. It also tracked my development as a librarian and as a member of the College's faculty. Hewett (2004) describes this kind of eportfolio as a documentation portfolio that shows growth toward achieving specified standards. The College's tenure requirements are competency–based and using the eportfolio as a documentation/summative file helped demonstrate how these specific competencies were met.

The faculty librarian competencies section (see Figure 4) of my tenure file is a good example of my eportfolio as a summative tool. I provided a year-to-year summary of how I evolved as an instructor, a librarian, and faculty member at the College. This part of the eportfolio also listed all the required elements of my position and how I accomplished them. The competencies section summarized my various librarian responsibilities and included yearly updates in specific areas, such as in the Teaching/Learning Environment. It also included information about my collection development duties (where I listed all books I ordered and withdrew from the library) and how I collaborated with teaching faculty from other disciplines during my tenure-track years.

### Reflective Role of the Tenure ePortfolio

The tenure eportfolio also served as a reflective piece (Lin, 2008) as it included many areas where I reviewed my own experiences as an instructor and librarian and what I learned from my administrative and student evaluations. Hewett (2004) would call this kind of a portfolio a "process portfolio" (p. 26) where progress is tracked and reflection is emphasized. My tenure eportfolio had many elements that made it a reflective/process type of portfolio including a teaching philosophy section where I stated my beliefs on teaching

Figure 3
*Adding an Evaluation Rubric to the ePortfolio*
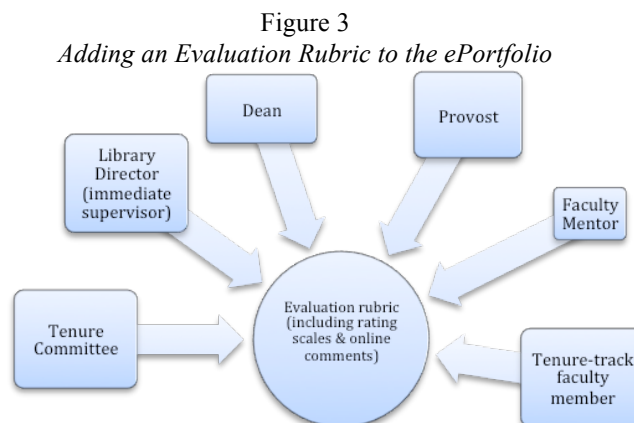


*Note.* Arrows represent feedback

and learning. I also included reflections on my best practices as an instructor and an assessment component where I assessed and compared my student and administrative evaluations over the years (see Figure 5).

My tenure eportfolio also included yearly action plans and progress reports where I reflected on every aspect of my position and highlighted how I developed and grew each year (see Figure 6). I would also track and comment on changes I made to my teaching and other job responsibilities in order to improve.

In retrospect, I wish I had used the reflective area of my eportfolio in more creative ways such as including a film or an audio clip of me reading my teaching philosophy (Hewett, 2004) aloud (in addition to including a text version). Such creative inclusions would not only have further enhanced the reflective characteristics of this section of the eportfolio, it would have underscored the scale of possibilities associated with using the eportfolio format.

### The ePortfolio as a Showcase

As a librarian working in a field plagued with unfair anachronistic stereotypes, the tenure eportfolio also served as a showcase tool (Hewett, 2004) that helped debunk some of the myths and challenge the common images of the shushing "hair in a bun" librarian. Most modern day librarians are very tech-savvy and embrace cutting-edge services in order to assist others. In choosing the eportfolio format as a promotion tool, I hoped to also use it as a kind of marketing "technology tool" (Lin, 2008) that would advertise not only my skills but also market some of the technical accomplishments and advancements of the College's library. In demonstrating my technical skills, I also showcased the library's participation in a 24/7 live chat service, the creation of online library-research

Figure 4

*Librarian Competencies – Summative Section*



Figure 5

*Reflective Section of the ePortfolio*



Figure 6

*Yearly Reflections Section (seen here – final tenure-track year)*

tutorials to assist students with their research needs, and the use of social media to promote library resources. As a faculty librarian, my many responsibilities could be listed in a paper tenure file. In an eportfolio, *not only* were these responsibilities highlighted they were also showcased *prominently* by including links to film clips, social networking projects, and actual online tutorials. A "Samples of Work" section (see Figure 7) on the eportfolio exhibited teaching artifacts, film clips of my teaching, copies of publications, examples of effective online chat reference transactions, completed student web tutorials, and other projects.

### The ePortfolio as a Model

Besides serving summative, reflective, and showcase functions, my tenure eportfolio also serves as a "prototype" for newer tenure-track librarians who have been hired by the College. I was the first faculty librarian to attain tenure in over 10 years and many of the tenure requirements were newer when I began my employment. My eportfolio currently functions as a sample model of the faculty librarian tenure process. It demonstrates what documents should be included and outlines what requirements must be met each year. I provided the newer tenure-track librarians with a login to my tenure eportfolio so that they could access and refer to it any time they needed a guide.

### Why do a Tenure ePortfolio when Print is Enough?

At the time of my hire, paper tenure binders were still the norm, and eportfolios were only being introduced to some select student populations at the College. Lowenthal et al. (2011) underscore that an eportfolio should have a purpose and a structure in order for it to be a success whether as a reflective, summative or assessment portfolio. A tenure file *has* a specific purpose – it serves the ultimate goal of attaining tenure. As discussed earlier, it also fits the characteristics of all three types of portfolios (summative, reflective and showcase) in one. A tenure portfolio's structure and specific goals make it a logical candidate for an eportfolio format.

### Advantages of an ePortfolio Format

Creating the eportfolio took time and required some technical skills; however, the extra effort needed to create a tenure eportfolio was worth the many resulting benefits. Those benefits include the following:

- Many different learning objects such as videos or online tutorials (as mentioned earlier) can be included on eportfolios as teaching samples or artifacts that can be readily accessed and viewed.

- Tracking growth from year to year is much easier with eportfolios where all documents are available simultaneously for viewing, assessing and (when necessary) comparing (i.e., when using the rating scale mentioned earlier).

- eportfolios are readily accessible to anyone, anywhere, unlike paper portfolios which are often locked in an administrator's office and are not easily available. They can also be edited instantly.

- Tenure eportfolios can be used as lifelong dossiers even after tenure is attained. Faculty could use their original tenure eportfolios as benchmarks to measure and track their professional growth and development over time.

- Using online portfolios saves paper and space.

- As mentioned earlier, eportfolios can help market an individual's and department's (in this case, the library's) advancements, technical strengths, and other achievements.

- eportfolios can provide cross-references that are hyperlinked between documents (Driessen, Muijtens, van Tartwijk, & van der Vleuten, 2007). In my tenure eportfolio, I was able to cross-reference areas of my "Best Practices in Teaching" section and link it to my "Samples of Work" section. Users simply click on hyperlinks to quickly access different sections – a feature not possible in a print portfolio.

- If designed well, eportfolios can be easier to read and navigate than a paper folio as a result of this carefully organized structure and the use of these hyperlinks (Driessen et al., 2007; Jun, Anthony, Achrazoglou, & Coghill-Behrends, 2007).

### Disadvantages of Using an ePortfolio

The advantages of using an eportfolio far outweighed some of the disadvantages associated with putting a tenure file online, but there are some upfront time commitments that need to be considered. Keeping files in a print folio medium eliminates having to scan and upload certain documents, which can be time-consuming. Keeping the eportfolio password-protected meant that every new academic year I had to remove former and add new members of the Tenure Committee which was a complicated process that required web staff assistance. During my tenure-track period, the College also changed servers, which required me to backup all online files (another time-consuming process) to ensure I lost nothing during the server transfer. In my case, knowledge of HTML and CSS was

Figure 7
*Samples of Showcased Work*



crucial in creating an original eportfolio, which initially required much more time than inserting pages into a print binder. Individuals who are not as tech-savvy may struggle with building their own eportfolios and might benefit from using an eportfolio software product or system that has its own "built-in" template and requires minimal technical skills.

**Using ePortfolio Software Products – The Pros . . .**

A few years after I started my tenure eportfolio, the College introduced an eportfolio product for in-house use by faculty, students and staff. Prior to the introduction of this product, the College had provided iWebfolio to the few students and faculty who used eportfolios in their courses. This new product was associated with the College's course management system, called WebStudy. A member of the College's Computer Science faculty worked closely with WebStudy's technical staff to create this eportfolio product called WebFolio. This product is available to any member of the College (student, faculty or staff) with a WebStudy account who wishes to create an eportfolio. In minutes, anyone on WebStudy can create an eportfolio. Currently at the College, WebFolio is the preferred product of choice for newer faculty who want to use an eportfolio for their tenure file. Using WebFolio requires a much lower learning curve in terms of technical skills. It is a fairly user-friendly product that also provides technical support through WebStudy's technical staff and the Computer Science faculty member who created instructional tutorials on using and working with WebFolio.

Although I had already built my eportfolio, I assisted the Computer Science faculty member by experimenting with WebFolio. I "recreated" my tenure eportfolio using WebFolio to help test and troubleshoot any possible problems (see Figure 8). In experimenting with WebFolio, I also wanted to compare the advantages and disadvantages of using an eportfolio software package against my "from scratch" model.

In using this product I found many benefits to using an eportfolio software package including:

- Knowledge of HTML coding or other web markup languages is not necessary. Although it is advantageous to possess these skills, they are not required when using these software products to create an eportfolio. Users have the option of typing content using regular text editing views or using HTML coding if they prefer.
- Most products allow eportfolio owners to easily lock down certain areas of their eportfolios to ensure privacy. Having the ability to mark certain sections private also does not require advanced technical skills. Many eportfolio products simply provide different links to different users that will only allow access to certain areas of an eportfolio. Figure 9 shows how WebFolio would look to a particular user (in this case, an employer).
- The basic structure and template of the eportfolio is already created for the user – there is no time-consuming design planning or development.

**. . . And the Cons**

There are limitations to using an eportfolio product including having to adhere to the preset templates and structure created by an institution. Being forced to use a

Figure 8
*My Tenure ePortfolio as it Appeared on WebStudy's WebFolio (in edit mode)*
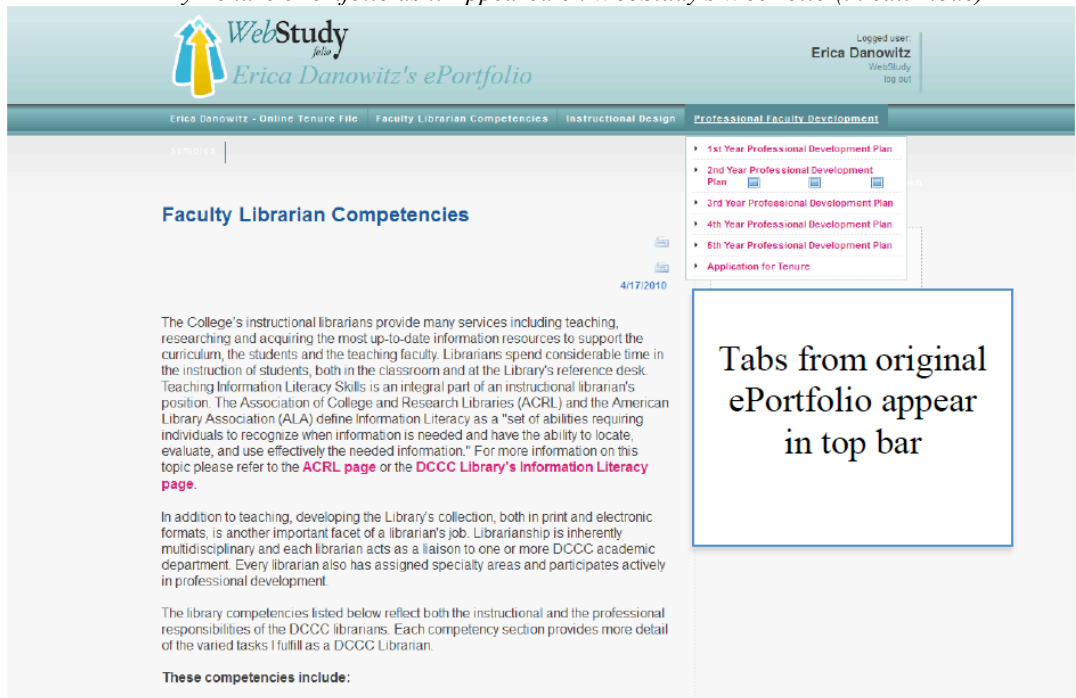


Figure 9
*My Tenure ePortfolio as it Appeared on WebStudy's WebFolio*
*(What viewers who have access, see)*
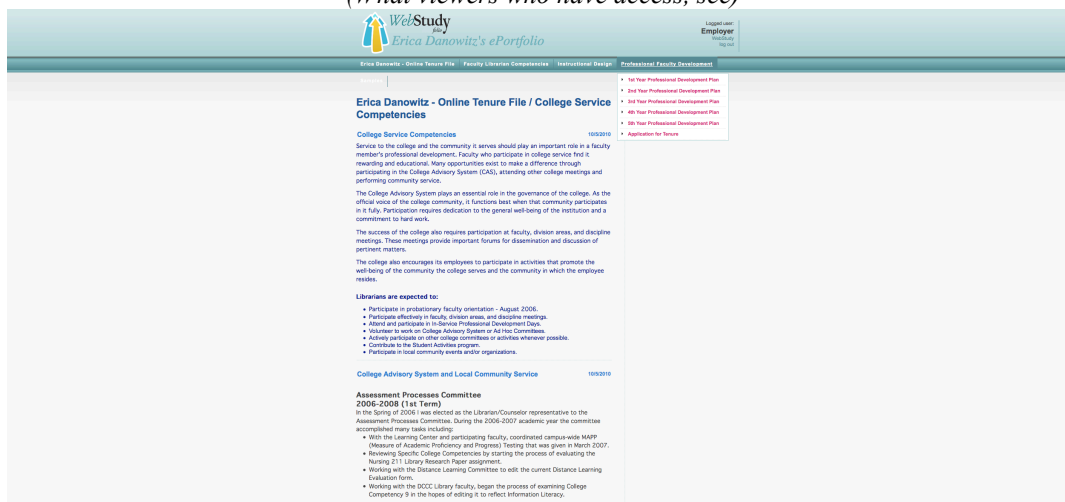


template to give eportfolios a similar look and feel can stymie innovativeness and individuality (Lin, 2008). ePortfolio products can be prescriptive and may circumscribe creativity or originality if templates cannot be edited. Some institutions also require the use of a specific eportfolio package or vendor, which certain faculty members may not want to use to create their eportfolios. WebFolio is one of many eportfolio product options available to faculty. As a relatively new product, it is still a work in progress in certain areas. WebFolio users currently cannot export the content of their eportfolio to another product. If a student or a faculty member leaves the College, the eportfolio cannot be exported or easily downloaded; however, the

original eportfolio can be accessed for up to five years after leaving the institution.

Besides commercial packages, there are also open source options (such as Elgg, Google's Googlio and RCampus) and "homegrown" alternatives. Faculty from different disciplines and backgrounds should be permitted to choose which eportfolio option (commercial, open source, or homegrown) they would prefer to use to design and showcase their tenure eportfolio.

## Limitations and Challenges to Using Tenure ePortfolios

In order for tenure eportfolio programs to increase in popularity and be successful, faculty need the support of their administration and governing bodies who oversee tenure. Finding and maintaining this support can be a challenge especially when considering the culture of many academic institutions. Support from all parties involved in this process is crucial because tenure committees and administrators can change. Even when support to create a tenure eportfolio is obtained, a faculty member should seek this approval *in writing* as a precaution. An administrator supportive of tenure eportfolios could leave. The possibility also always exists that a committee that previously supported tenure eportfolios could completely change in composition. Most tenure committee members are elected to their posts for stints that are not as long as the entire tenure process. Newer members of tenure review committees might not support the eportfolio initiative (and would rather review a traditional print tenure binder), which would be disastrous for any tenure-track professor close to tenure who had spent years putting all documentation online.

Tenure-track faculty interested in creating a tenure eportfolio also needs to keep in mind "the three p's" (practices, policies and politics) of tenure for their institution. These "three p's" may prevent or limit their ability to create a tenure portfolio online. Using a tenure eportfolio might not be the best choice for a faculty member in a particular academic field and/or who works at a college (or within an academic department) with a less supportive culture for eportfolio formats. Tenure rubrics and portfolio criteria are usually not the same between faculty members who teach in different disciplines. The tenure file of an English faculty member will look very different from that of faculty member who teaches Biology. This difference might further complicate the tenure file process if eportfolios were used in certain institutions. Many institutions also send out final tenure files for review by peers located at other colleges who might not support or accept an online tenure file format in this review process. These kinds of issues can pose many challenges to the success of any tenure eportfolio initiative.

## Recommendations

Creating a tenure eportfolio may seem like a risky venture for many new faculty who already feel uncertain about their roles in a particular institution. Institutional cultures can change and keeping a tenure file in a print format may seem like a safer option. Faculty may also question how an eportfolio could advance their career. However, eportfolios are becoming more pervasive in all areas of higher education and hopefully my experience will encourage more tenure-track faculty to make the decision to try the tenure eportfolio option. The recommendations listed below provide some best practices and advice to assist faculty (and administrators) who might make the decision to use a tenure eportfolio.

### Get it in Writing

As mentioned earlier, depending on the institutional culture or context, tenure-track faculty may feel nervous about committing to a tenure eportfolio. It is recommended that all tenure-track faculty who decide to employ tenure eportfolios seek support in writing to pursue this option. The ultimate purpose is to protect against potential changes in this support. Support, when granted, should also be garnered in writing and include a "grandfather clause" which guarantees that the tenure eportfolio can serve as the tenure file throughout the process. All tenure-track faculty should keep this written approval until tenure is attained. The intention of such documentation would be to protect the individual faculty member from changes in policy and personnel that might endanger earlier agreements.

### Start Early and Find the Time

All tenure-track faculty know that they need to dedicate time to work on their tenure files in print or online. In the long run, eportfolio maintenance is not too difficult or time-consuming, but it may take more time to develop, especially earlier in the process, due to needs associated with envisioning a navigable structure and template design. It is also important to find time to edit and add to the eportfolio to keep it updated. Scanning documents, checking hyperlinks, and creating new files can take significant time. In my case, I updated my eportfolio almost weekly and in busier periods, monthly. Ultimately, having the file online was more advantageous because I could make updates instantaneously from anywhere.

## Backup

Backing up all files related to one's eportfolio is also crucial and should be done regularly. Servers can crash and if something has not been backed up, years of eportfolio work could be lost. One should back up an eportfolio on a jump drive, on a work PC and if possible, on a personal computer or network cloud to be safe. The files from my eportfolio were saved as HTML files so that I could have easily converted them to another eportfolio platform or server if it had become necessary. Many eportfolio programs currently do not allow files to be exported, but that feature will become more crucial as eportfolio use continues to increase. eportfolio content that is not saved in the HTML format should be saved as text files as a safeguard so that they can be easily inputted into another eportfolio program or format if needed.

## Provide Choices and Flexibility

Administrators who allow faculty to create tenure eportfolios should also permit them to choose what kind of eportfolio product they want to employ. As long as the necessary criteria required for the tenure file are included in the eportfolio, the choice of product or platform should be left in the hands of the faculty. Fewer faculty would fear transitioning to a tenure eportfolio format if they were given more options and freedom regarding what to use. Some faculty may be more comfortable using a preset, institutional software template, other faculty might value creating an eportfolio on their own; either way, the choice should be theirs.

Faculty should also think about the end-user and provide some flexibility when creating eportfolios. When adding documents and files to an eportfolio, I would suggest creating a printable-friendly option for those individuals who still prefer reviewing work in a print format. As much as this suggestion seems contradictious to the eportfolio environment, it provides a choice to an individual who might not be used to reviewing online tenure files. By providing this option, a tenure eportfolio that needs to be peer-reviewed outside of the institution in a print format, could also be easily assembled for that case.

## Solicit Feedback and Remind Them You are There

As mentioned earlier, eportfolios have the advantage of not taking up any physical space. eportfolios only take up server space. However, as a result, it is important to remind everyone who reviews the tenure eportfolio that you exist. The print tenure binder in itself is a reminder that a file has to be reviewed. In an environment where tenure files may be both in a print or online format, it is important to remind tenure committees and other administrators that your file exists online. As the sole faculty member with a tenure eportfolio initially, I emailed all reviewers annually with information about my eportfolio and how to access it. I also reminded them that I had been granted approval to follow this online format because every year new tenure committee members were elected that did not know my history or my years of work building my tenure eportfolio.

It is also important that faculty solicit and receive feedback as much as possible. In my annual email to all parties who reviewed my tenure eportfolio, I asked them to provide me with comments to ensure that I remained on the right track in addressing everything required of me with each tenure review. As mentioned earlier, my institution had no common evaluation rubric. Creating such a rubric for tenure would have played a valuable role in not only tracking this progress and ensuring all tenure files met the right criteria, but it would have established better lines of communication.

## Form a Support Group, Serve as a Mentor

As more tenure-track faculty begin to create tenure eportfolios, they should consider forming a support group to assist each other in the process. Newer hires at my institution now meet regularly, once a month, to discuss all aspects of the tenure process. Individuals who choose the eportfolio option would benefit from meeting with their "ePortfolio peers" regularly (either online or in face to face forums) to discuss issues, provide suggestions, and to assist each other in the eportfolio tenure process.

As a librarian, my tenure file looks a bit different from the tenure files of the teaching faculty at the College. Despite these differences, my tenure file on Webfolio is used as a model for other tenure-track faculty. I also presented my eportfolio in a poster session held at my College to further advertise its potential. As mentioned earlier, within my department, I serve as a mentor to two newly hired librarians. They have both chosen to do a tenure eportfolio, and they use my eportfolio as a guide.

## Think "Outside the Binder"

If an institution permits the use of tenure eportfolios, the possibilities are endless. Take advantage of the eportfolio format by presenting yourself in ways that a print file cannot. Film yourself reciting your teaching philosophy and then include a film clip of you teaching. List your professional development accomplishments and include audio/film clips and/or multimedia slideshows of your conference presentations. Make the tenure eportfolio reflect all of

the areas of your position in a dynamic way. Ideally, even when tenure is reached, these eportfolios could be updated and used as lifelong eportfolios (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005) for assessment and reflection purposes. What happens to an eportfolio after tenure promotion is attained (or in the case of student eportfolios, graduation or employment is achieved) could be a topic of further inquiry.

## Conclusion

Using an eportfolio to go through and achieve tenure was an excellent experience which helped pave the way for future faculty to create tenure eportfolios at my institution. As the first member of the faculty to create an eportfolio tenure file and to be granted tenure at my institution, the trend is becoming more popular and acceptable at the College since I began (2006) and completed (2010) the process. The WebFolio version of my tenure file serves as a model for newer tenure-track faculty interested in creating a tenure eportfolio since WebFolio remains the preferred eportfolio product at the College. Newer tenure-track faculty now can choose between a paper or an eportfolio dossier, and the number of faculty putting their files online continues to increase. However, as mentioned earlier, tenure eportfolios are not for everyone. Individuals who have few technical skills or prefer a paper format should not consider this option. Using eportfolio as tenure files is not a mandate at the College, and newer faculty who choose the paper option are not penalized for sticking to tradition.

Creating a tenure eportfolio was such a rewarding experience for me that I plan to continue using eportfolios in the future. Not only did my use of an eportfolio help improve the image of my particular profession, it also served as an excellent reflective and summative tool. The tenure eportfolio enabled me to easily track my growth and accomplishments as an instructor and a librarian. I also had the opportunity to use technology in creative ways. Now that I have attained tenure, my file remains online but it is a static format. I no longer make any changes to it as it serves as a model. However, as part of my post-tenure review, I plan to create a new eportfolio to highlight key aspects of my position and to continue improving and growing as an educator.

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