Supplemental Information about ePortfolio Assignments for WBIS Instructors
From Sam Looker, Director of First-Year Writing

As USP instructors, we are all in the process of learning about the ePortfolio. While you're building your overall understanding of the ePortfolio, I'm making it my goal to help you apply that understanding to the specific context of your WBIS classes. Thus, with the help of other members of the USP team, I've created this guide as a **supplement** to the other ePortfolio information you have available to you as a general USP instructor, **to guide you in the specific process of developing/designating an assignment for your WBIS students to upload to the ePortfolio**. This guide isn't intended to substitute for the fuller picture of the ePortfolio's role in the USP that you can get from attending an ePortfolio workshop; if you haven't yet attended a workshop, I strongly recommended that you do so.

The ePortfolio's role in the USP—a quick review:

> *"Many people writing about e-portfolios believe that the benefit of e-portfolios has more to do with the active process of e-portfolio development than with the portfolio product itself. They see the development of the e-portfolio over time as key."[1]*

Very briefly, the ePortfolio serves two major purposes in the USP. Most importantly, it provides an opportunity for students and instructors to reflect on the learning students do within their USP liberal education, and to track that learning as it grows over time. In each USP class, students upload at least one assignment that reflects the ***Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs)*** embedded in the curriculum of that particular class, and as they progress through the USP, they will begin to work on synthesizing and presenting the material they've uploaded. Also, by storing assignments representative of the learning students are doing in USP classes, the ePortfolio serves as a source of data for USP program assessment. (Like WBIS assessment, USP assessment is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the program as a whole, not the abilities of any specific instructor or student.) You can get much more information about both the learning and assessment functions of the USP at an ePortfolio workshop.

WBIS's role in the USP ePortfolio process:

> *As John Robertson, ePortfolio Specialist, frames it in ePortfolio workshops, all instructors in the USP do two main things through use of the ePortfolio: First, we have students produce a key assignment and a reflection in or on that assignment. Equally importantly, we shape students' collection, reflection, and direction in a way that helps them understand our course in a bigger context (including Essential Learning Outcomes, disciplinary knowledge, and liberal education).*

As WBIS instructors, we have a specific set of ELOs that is unique to our classes. As you likely already know from WBIS workshops and other discussions, WBIS targets the ELOs of ***Written Communication*** and ***Information Literacy*** (Appendix 1 contains AAC&U descriptions of these, which you may have already seen elsewhere). As part of the broader USP context, our classes

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[1] Stefanie, Mason, and Pegler (2007), *The Educational Potential of ePortfolios: Supporting Personal Development and Reflective Learning* (p. 19); quote courtesy of John Robertson.

also include ***Signature Questions*** among our learning outcomes, and we seek to encourage students' ***Critical Self-Reflection***. Thus, to aid our students in building and demonstrating learning in these four areas, to facilitate students' future connections among elements of their liberal education, and to facilitate later program assessment work, we will ask students to upload one assignment from WBIS that reflects their learning. By building a shared understanding of this ePortfolio assignment's expectations, we can ensure that all students in our program will have equal opportunity to reflect on and demonstrate their learning.

Your ePortfolio assignment—specifics for our Essential Learning Outcomes:

Because of our shared understanding of the WBIS program goals, which foreground written communication and information literacy, you likely already have assignments, even within your current (pre-USP) WBIS course, that showcase these learning outcomes. However, you may not have a single assignment that showcases them both fully. Take a look at your current or developing assignments and see if you can identify one that includes all or most of the following expectations:

- A persuasive or analytical thesis, purpose, or research question (i.e., a purpose that goes beyond simply summarizing information from sources)
- Attention to organization, audience, voice, and mechanical conventions
- Use of multiple sources
- Use of sources that students have themselves found and chosen (i.e., this shouldn't be a paper for which you've given students *all* of their sources, although it may certainly involve sources you've given in class in addition to the students' own research)
- Use of an accepted documentation style (such as MLA or APA) to cite sources
- Ethical, accurate use of quoting, paraphrasing, and/or summarizing
  (See Appendix 1 for more about the rationale behind these expectations.)

If you already have an assignment that includes all these expectations, great! If you've got one that's almost there, use the above as a checklist to help you in revising that assignment. It's unlikely that anyone will need to construct an assignment from scratch, although you're certainly welcome to do so if you think that will be more effective than revising an existing assignment. If you have an assignment you'd be willing to share with the group, or if you'd like a sounding board for your assignment development ideas, please contact me.

Your ePortfolio assignment—specifics for Reflection and Signature Questions:

> Reflection involves *"a continual interweaving of thinking and doing."*[2]

Within the USP experience, we want students to reflect on their learning both as it happens and in retrospect later on. Adding a reflective element to your assignment will aid in both stages of reflection. Also, as many of us who already include reflective elements in our classes know, student reflections frequently help *us* in improving our own teaching.

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[2] Schon (1983), *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (p. 280); quote courtesy of Carleen Vandezande.

You have a couple of options for a USP ePortfolio reflection: You may choose to build reflection into the assignment; for instance, some instructors do what's sometimes called an "i-search," where students narrate their process of inquiry while relaying their research findings. Alternatively, you may ask students to do a separate brief reflective piece about their learning and writing during this assignment and/or the class as a whole, to be uploaded to the ePortfolio along with the writing assignment. (For those who already have an assignment in mind to reflect the Written Communication and Information Literacy ELOs, a separate reflection may be the more efficient option.)

If you're designing a separate reflection component, work to create one that asks students to think about what they've learned in the areas of written communication, information literacy, and your signature question, and how the assignment they're uploading reflects that learning. (See Appendix 2 for the most recent draft of my reflection assignment, from which you're welcome to borrow, and please let me know if you have one of your own you'd be willing to share.) The ELOs of written communication and information literacy can take up most of the reflection, since students will also be reflecting on the SQ in their Quest disciplinary class, but your reflection is a good place to briefly reinforce students' awareness of how they've enacted their SQ knowledge in the particular context of your WBIS class. Even if they don't explicitly reference the SQ in the assignment they're submitting, given the SQ content of your course, it's likely that students will exhibit and be ready to reflect upon some aspects or outcomes of the SQ. (For instance, I'm hoping to see my students exhibit the empathy and self-awareness aspects of Intercultural Knowledge.)

What you can do to get more information:

Attend workshops and meetings:
- Attend the USP Launch Intensive on August 28 (if you haven't already attended a previous one); there is an ePortfolio/reflection session as well as open work time.
- Look for notifications about future learning opportunities, including open lab times and training appointments, on the technological aspects of the ePortfolio.

Peruse web resources:
- Learning Technologies ePortfolio page: http://www.uwosh.edu/eportfolio.
- D2L ePortfolio FAQ: http://www.uwosh.edu/d2lfaq/eportfolio.

Contact people:
- John Robertson, ePortfolio Specialist, robertrj@uwosh.edu
- Carleen Vandezande, USP Assessment Coordinator, vandezac@uwosh.edu
- Any member of the USP Council (see http://www.uwosh.edu/usp/meet-the-faces-of-usp)
- Me! ☺

Appendix 1: AAC&U information on WBIS Essential Learning Outcomes

The expectations I've listed here for a WBIS ePortfolio writing assignment are derived from a combination of the USP assessment criteria, the WBIS program goals, and the WBIS program's five-traits rubric for assessment. Information Literacy and Written Communication are among the USP's Essential Learning Outcomes, inspired by the AAC&U.

Written Communication is a familiar outcome to all of us who teach writing, and our program goals and five-traits rubric carry many echoes of the AAC&U's Written Communication rubric, which lists five subcategories within the written communication outcome:
- Context of and purpose for writing
- Content development
- Genre and disciplinary conventions
- Sources and evidence
- Control of syntax and mechanics[3]

The source-related expectations for ePortfolio assignments derive from the outcome of Information Literacy. According to the AAC&U, information literacy includes the abilities to:
- determine the extent of information needed,
- access the needed information,
- evaluate information and its sources critically,
- use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and
- access and use information ethically and legally.[4]

Thus, an assignment involving finding, understanding, integrating, and properly documenting multiple sources is most likely to reflect students' progress toward Information Literacy.

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[3] These five criteria are directly quoted from the AAC&U's Written Communication VALUE Rubric, http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/pdf/WrittenCommunication.pdf

[4] These five criteria are directly quoted from the AAC&U's Information Literacy VALUE Rubric, http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/pdf/InformationLiteracy.pdf

Appendix 2: Sam's current draft of the reflection assignment

The reflective letter.

Along with Essay 3, I'd like you to prepare a reflective letter to submit to your ePortfolio during the last week of the semester. In approximately one-and-a-half to two pages (400-500 words), you'll reflect on your progress related to our three goals of **written communication, information literacy**, and **intercultural knowledge** over the course of the semester. As in the introductory assignment I gave you at the beginning of the semester, I have three big questions (in bold below) I'd like you to answer, but you can choose what you want to talk about within those three questions. All the bulleted questions are just possibilities to give you some ideas for answering each big question; feel free to go in other directions of your choice.

How would you describe your experience with *writing* throughout this class and in Essay 3?
- Have you experienced any changes in your attitudes toward writing over the course of this semester? What about your writing experience has surprised you, frustrated you, or made you especially proud?
- What was your writing process like in composing Essay 3? Does considering this process give you any ideas about what you've learned that you may want to apply in the future?
- In what ways has your writing ability improved this semester? Where do you notice evidence of this improvement in Essay 3?
- What goals do you have for your continued improvement as a writer after this class?

How would you describe your experience with *information literacy* throughout this class and in Essay 3?
- What have you learned about the processes and ideas involved in finding sources for an essay, and how did you use that learning in finding the sources for Essay 3?
- What have you learned about incorporating and documenting sources in your writing, and where can we see evidence of that learning in what you've written for Essay 3?
- How have you been able to use sources to help you in making points in your writing?
- Have you used any of your growing information literacy knowledge in your life outside class this semester? Do you see ways you might do so in the future?

How would you describe your experience with *our signature question of intercultural knowledge and our theme of language variation* throughout this class and in Essay 3?
- What have you learned about language diversity and variation that you didn't know at the beginning of the semester?
- How have you seen the ideas we've discussed operating in your life outside of class?
- Have you experienced any change in your ability to understand other people's experiences or points of view?
- Where can we see evidence of your growing intercultural knowledge in your Essay 3?

This piece can be written as a letter to me, a letter to yourself, or a regular essay. I'll be giving you credit for doing it; as long as you answer all three big questions and meet the length requirement, you'll get full points. The reflection will go into your ePortfolio alongside Essay 3 as evidence of where your learning is at right now. I hope it will be interesting for you to think about your learning now, and to think about it again periodically throughout your undergraduate experience.