



# Student ePortfolios: Teresa Whitaker and Eva Kilar

## Reflections on Creating a Personal ePortfolio

### How would you describe your ePortfolio?

My own ePortfolio has a collection of my reflective practice, the papers that I have published, the conferences I have attended. I have reflected on a particular module and how I would like to improve my teaching and my students' learning and my assessment practices.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

I have got loads of, I would say, my own personal reflections on whatever I was studying. I can see my learning curve, from the moment I started my programme, until the moment I finished, and graduated. I have got videos, I have got infographics, I have got different images. I have got my word documents, pdfs as well, different kinds of posters as well.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

### Why did you create an ePortfolio?

I did it as part of a post-graduate diploma in Griffith College. And it was a requirement of that programme.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

As a part of my MSc programme, which was Applied E-Learning. That was part of the whole, I would say, the assessment system.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

### At the outset, how did you feel about creating an ePortfolio?

I certainly wouldn't have done one, had I not been forced into it.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

I was kind of, you know, made to do it. But in this way, like, it was a great learning curve as well.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

## **What were the benefits of creating your ePortfolio?**

Doing the ePortfolio was about developing my own digital capacity. And also, something that I can share with my own students, because the teaching council now, it's going to be a requirement that all teachers need to have an ePortfolio. So the fact that I have done one myself means that I can show mine to my students.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

I think the main thing was like in relation to self-reflection. This was really – I was kind of new to reflecting on my own practice and on my own learning as well. So this chunk was really positive for me. Because, like, I learn how to reflect on learnings, on a kind of everyday basis now.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

## **What technology did you use and what was the user experience like?**

We had to use Wordpress. So I used Wordpress. There were workshops. But unfortunately, I missed them all. So I tried to figure it out myself from the list of instructions that I got. So it was fairly easy to follow, and I did set it up. And there was no major problem with it.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

I went to an online tool which was Weebly. So what struck me with Weebly was this kind of unbelievable user-friendliness. So the features it had were really easy to work on. You can set up a free account. And then you have got loads and loads of different features, which enable you to write the blog kind of entries, which enable you to integrate loads of different kinds of media in it, which is great as well. And what I really loved about Weebly is that everything was just dragging and dropping. So this was great for me as a complete newcomer to the system.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

## **Did you have any technical support?**

I did have to ask somebody in my household, my daughter, you know, when I was having troubles and she then was able to help me with it.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

I had a backup in terms of having my supervisor and the tutors on the course who were just looking after the content itself, but when it comes down to the technical setting up of my portfolio, I managed to do it myself. There are loads of tutorials. So you can learn as you go.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

## **What were the challenges of creating your ePortfolio?**

No particular challenges apart from the usual challenges of technology. Any new piece of software, you have to be stupid again and so you have to go back into that learner's space where you think you are entirely stupid and that you know absolutely nothing.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

I kind of stumbled at the very beginning. It was a really really huge learning curve for me. You see like my background is not IT at all. So I didn't have any technical skills whatsoever, if you know what I mean.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

## **How did you overcome these challenges?**

So once you have actually experienced that, and you have sunk to the bottom, and then you start playing with it, so learning is also about play. So allow myself time to play with the technology. So that overcame the challenges.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

I was just like experimenting. This was very like by trial and error kind of situation. So I was just experimenting with the tool itself to make it look as it looks now at the moment.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

## **What, if any, plans do you have for your ePortfolio now?**

I built an ePortfolio that I was very proud of and I was very happy with. So certainly I will go back now and I will continue to work on it, and I will keep it live. And I will open all the blogs so that my students can communicate with me through the ePortfolio.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

So now I have got my ePortfolio kind of in a very - in a different digital form, because I keep the track of whatever I learn. So after graduating, after formally finishing having it done with DIT, I kind of continued, but just in a different manner. Because I got so used to it.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

## **Final thoughts or words of advice?**

Like all new technology, the first time you use it, you are like, oh my God, why am I doing this? Am I crazy?

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

When you work and then you have to devote some extra time to writing reflections or just reflecting on whatever you learn. Unfortunately, it is time-consuming. But I think it's worth it anyway. So the time and the input is there, but still I think you know it's really worth it once you see the final outcome.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)

It's like a lot of learning experiences in life. If somebody doesn't push you into it – it's like when I was learning to swim, the instructor said, are you going to stay in the shallow end all your life.

(Dr Teresa Whitaker, Director of Research at Hibernia College)

The most difficult part is to start. Once you start, then it gets easier and easier.

(Eva Kilar, eLearning specialist at Harvest Resources)