

# The Institutional e-Portfolio: Making it for Learners and Staff.

Neil Carrant, e-portfolio lecturer  
University of Bradford

[n.carrant@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:n.carrant@bradford.ac.uk)

<http://www.brad.ac.uk/iss/tqeg/profiles/carrant.php>

I think there is a simple answer here. I think I've got this debate solved already.

It's not

E-portfolio: Learner benefit *OR* Institutional  
benefit



It's not learner benefit or institutional benefit?

With (the right) institutional system

It is

E-portfolio: Learner benefit *AND* Institutional  
benefit

It is Learner benefit and institutional benefit and indeed staff benefit.  
How? The institutional e-portfolio of course.

E-portfolio systems are now mature enough that we can implement  
them in our institutions. Certainly in HE there has been a flurry of  
implementations this academic year of institutional systems.

Why? Because it makes it easier for everyone.

- Learner-centred, learner owned
- Institutionally owned

With a space for personal and a space  
for more formal work.

With the right system, you can have personal learning areas and institutional spaces.

- Web services approach
  - Not available yet
  - Difficult technically to implement
- Learners own web 2.0 tools
  - Difficult for the learner to manage
  - Difficult for staff to manage
  - Outside of the safety of the institution
- Example, [netvibes](#) personal homepage

What I am primarily arguing against is the web services example, which just seems far too complicated to get to work in as seamless a way as a single system and still really just an idea at the moment and very complicated, I don't even fully understand it. Do we sit and wait for this to be working.

I am also arguing against the web 2.0 learners use their own tools (such as blogs, wikis, personal homepages etc. to compile evidence and make portfolios. Which I think puts a huge burden on students and makes it very difficult to manage for staff and totally out of the safety of the institution.

Netvibes – great in theory and I enjoyed doing it but took ages to set up and have loads of different accounts with different services. The services don't talk to one another (although this is getting better). Final result – I went back to the institutional systems because they were easier and they work without this level of hassle. I still use some of the services but not as an eP and not trying to stitch them together.

- Everyone is using the same tool
  - Easier for staff to support students.
  - Students can support each other.
  - Easier to provide central support.
  - Easy to share between staff & students and student to student.
  - Easy to mark / validate work

Easier for staff to support students – Everyone is doing the same thing  
Students can support each other – e.g. midwifery 2<sup>nd</sup> years supporting 1<sup>st</sup> years

Easier to provide central support – easier to maintain resources, awareness of common problems

Easy to share between staff & students and student to student – if I create a portfolio template it takes a matter of seconds to share it with all my students or I want to share my module guide. Students can collaborate on work because it is in the same place and can pull names down from LDAP.

Easy to mark – all the work is in the same place, you can validate identities, external people and tutors are validated by the system and work can be archived for audit purposes easily.

- Students and staff get an entitlement to a level of service
  - backup
  - requirement to keep the service running
  - security / privacy of data
- ...

Backup – Students work won't get lost (e.g. comparison to using web services to do an eP, my web 2.0 podcast service suffered a disk failure and my podcasts were lost)

Uptime – updates are done out of term time or at night when students won't be using it and they are given clear warnings (e.g. my Ning site for my course that I teach was offline Sunday morning, US sat midnight, when myself and a number of students were using it. Twitter was overloaded recently and gets so frequently)

Security / privacy – one word 'facebook', if your data is not held at your institution or locally on your own computer are there any guarantees about what happens to it, especially if it is on US servers.)

And in fact the list can go on as IT services manager will tell.



- I'm not an IT manager so I won't go on more about this line of argument.
- An example is what we really need.





- Student view
- <http://portfolio.pebblepad.co.uk/bradford/viewasset.aspx?oid=60790&type=profileresponse>

	EDT	AGES	SLED	Pharmacy	Psychology	
Academic Writing		3.48	3.21	3.34	3.55	4.03
Academic reading		3.32	3.10	3.19	3.45	2.53
Expectations		3.85	3.60	3.89	3.71	3.50
Individual skills		3.63	3.58	3.30	3.53	3.12
Communication skills		3.29	3.53	3.80	3.47	2.89
IT		4.14	4.23	4.27	3.79	3.93
Library skills		2.92	3.25	3.09	3.51	2.69

If you want to know more see Becka's presentation



- Targeted support
- Can feed into policy / decision making...

This is powerful stuff

- An institutional e-portfolio benefits everyone; learner, staff, institutions.
- Flexibility is important but if we all start doing our own thing we are **DOOMED**.