

Video Title: “User Testing Student ePortfolios Video Walkthrough” by Jenae Cohn (Kairos 23.1 PraxisWiki)”

Transcript:

Hello, Kairos Praxis Wiki readers! My name is Jenae Cohn, and I’m an Academic Technology Specialist in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric at Stanford University. This screencapture video is a supplement to a Kairos Praxis Wiki I shared on user testing student ePortfolios. This screencapture video will give you a little bit more context into where this user testing activity fits into our curriculum. And it shows some real examples of student ePortfolios that have emerged from this activity so that you get a clearer sense of what students are actually user testing. So, let’s dive right into a little more context about the curriculum.

So, I designed this user testing activity as part of coursework for a special program that we offer called the Notation in Science Communication. Housed in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric, the Notation in Science Communication gives students the opportunity to earn a notation on their transcript that denotes special expertise they’ve cultivated in communicating science to expert and non-expert audiences. We might think of it as kind of like a mini minor because students have to complete three components to earn this notation.

They have to take a few classes in science communication, some of which are offered by the Program in Writing and Rhetoric, some of which are offered in science subject-based courses. They also have to take two courses in portfolio preparation to get them ready to complete the final ePortfolios that I’m sharing examples of in this video. These are the courses that I help support as an academic technology specialist, and these are courses where students learn about metacognition, the value of visually representing their ideas in an electronic format, and some guidance on content curation and the ways in which they think about which artifacts or which of their written or auditory or visual work they want to represent their identities as science communicators. And the culmination of all that preparation shows in the final ePortfolio.

I’m going to show two examples of these final ePortfolios, both of which were produced in June 2017. I should note that the two ePortfolios I’m showing are from two students who have since graduated from Stanford University, and I have obtained their written consent to use their ePortfolios as part of the screencapture video for this Wiki.

So, why don’t we take a look at one of the ePortfolios now?

The first ePortfolio is by a student named Emma, and we’re going to pull up her ePortfolio here in a moment. Emma’s ePortfolio does a really fantastic job of capturing her experiences as a global science communicator. She balances visual design and usability by creating multiple navigational pathways to the different parts of her ePortfolio. By using her own images from her global travels as her background images throughout her ePortfolio, it’s clear that Emma is a globally-minded scientist interested in solving environmental problems all over the world. If we were going to capture the story that Emma’s ePortfolio tells in one sentence, it would probably

be something like, “Emma is invested in unearthing global environmental concerns and finding local, sustainable solutions to solve them.” The fact that her navigational menu is organized by the different places that she’s visited reinforces the idea that her global travels are what define the pieces of science writing that she has produced during her time at Stanford.

As you’ve probably noticed as I’ve been clicking through her ePortfolio, each parent menu item drops down to the children menu items where the artifacts included in her ePortfolio are showcased. Given the nesting of these artifacts under these parent menu items, it’s clear these artifacts were either created in these places or were created in the service of research for these places. So, for example, these artifacts were either created in Palau or are about her work in Palau. The overview pages I’ve been clicking on are also clearly labeled to demonstrate that Emma is going to orient us as readers and as users to what we might expect to find in each section. So, we can see that she has an overview of what this Patagonia section is going to include as well as direct links to the artifacts within this Patagonia section.

So the meaning here is reinforced both by the menus themselves and by the images throughout the ePortfolio.

Let’s look at the second ePortfolio example here. This ePortfolio comes from a student named Noah who has a more minimalistic aesthetic and does an equally as good of a job orienting the user to what we might expect to find in his ePortfolio. Noah’s ePortfolio does not have a content-based theme in the same way that Emma’s does. Rather, his ePortfolio is organized based on which of his pieces of science writing are oriented to different audiences. That is, we see that he has writing that is oriented towards more specialist audiences, like academic audiences and business audiences, and to more popular audiences, what he calls “general audiences.” This includes a mix of a research paper from a first-year composition course and a popular science communication that he also took within the Program in Writing and Rhetoric.

The visuals in Noah’s ePortfolio - the white background, the photographs of Stanford University, in particular this picture here on the right is a picture of the engineering quad on-campus where Noah likely took many of his classes as a computer science major - suggest a desire to affiliate himself with the campus community and perhaps by extension the professional community that will recognize the rigor that he has received as a result of his Stanford education. So if we are going to capture the story that Noah’s ePortfolio tells in one sentence, it might be something like, “Noah is a young professional adept at applying his research in computer science in a way that is legible to multiple audiences and contexts.” What makes Noah’s ePortfolio particularly user-friendly emerges back on the home page where he has his menu not only at the top but also at the very bottom. This additional menu reinforces the idea that he is a student capable of adapting his ideas to multiple audiences and genres, both professional and academic that he may encounter moving forward. Plus, he includes another image here that’s a really interesting choice, this post-it note prototyping activity may likely appeal to professionals in computer science that he is attempting to reach.

So, these two ePortfolios are, of course, only a couple examples of the many exemplary ePortfolios that have emerged out of the Notation in Science Communication program at Stanford University. If you're interested in learning more about the Notation in Science Communication program, I would suggest exploring our website at nsc.stanford.edu. Thanks for your interest, and I hope that you find the rest of this webtext useful in learning more about how we might help students engage in conversations about user experience in the construction of ePortfolios.