ALIA /AeP2 Pilot Study: learn – reflect – develop – network

Learning and professional development play a strong and fundamental part in the career journey of any information professional. Imagine a tool that can guide and help you to actively learn, reflect, network, and develop your skills. ePortfolios are such a tool.

PebblePad is one of the many ePortfolios available and is currently being used by participants in the ALIA/AeP2 Pilot Study. The Pilot Study lead by Gillian Hallam explores the use of ePortfolios in learning and career development across a range of library and information services (LIS). The objective for individuals in the group is to develop an ePortfolio that focuses on study, career planning, PD, and performance reviews.

For the majority of participants, the study began in February 2009 with our attendance at the Australian ePortfolio Symposium (AeP2) in Brisbane. This International Symposium was a lead up to the pilot study and gave attendees a broad understanding of the context and potential for ePortfolios in both education and career development.

According to Gillian Hallam, the commitment required from participants is the desire to engage with the ePortfolio processes, both individually and collaboratively, over the period 2009–2010. As such, the participants are also research subjects in a project that will be run and managed within strict ethical guidelines for research. At a higher level the pilot study will help acknowledge the LIS sector as a leader in the arena of PD and lifelong learning. Participants are at various stages of their careers and geographically diverse.

What is an ePortfolio? It is 'a personal learning system' (PebblePad website). A place that you can record your achievements, reflect, learn, store information, network, and plan your studies and career path. It is up to the individual or institution (school, university, professional body, or work place) to determine the context of this learning, and learning can be tailored to meet such things as graduate attributes, professional development, and organisational goals and objectives. ePortfolios have the potential to assist the learner right through their education from primary school to post graduate level and then into career development through a continual process of evidence, reflection, and feedback.

PebblePad is versatile. It is possible to create blogs, action plans, webfolios, CV's, profiles, and proformas. Profiles and proformas are set by a teacher, professional body, employer, or administrator and require the individual to complete them for assessment, performance planning, or PD. Participants in the pilot study are currently working through a set profile based on *ALIA's Core Knowledge and Skills*. This is for self-audit purposes and individuals can create a development plan for improvement in key areas.

It is possible to record abilities, achievements, experiences, meetings/minutes, and thoughts. Once items are completed and saved, they are stored as assets. It is possible to receive and share completed assets with both internal and external users, via the web and inside gateway communities. Commonly you would share with a teacher, supervisor, or mentor. There is a glossary available if you are not familiar with the terms used and help sheets and movies if you need guidance.

PebblePad is visually appealing and individuals can express themselves by personalising their ePortfolios. A vast array of templates is available, along with the ability to create your own. There are several pathways to create, store, and organise information. It is possible to upload photos, websites, scanned images, and videos. These assets would typically be added to CVs and webfolios and enable the creation of a rich portfolio of reflective evidence and information about the student or employee and their learning and development journey.

It is up to the individual how actively they engage with their ePortfolio. The potential lies with the user and is therefore self-driven. ePortfolios take time, but are a sound investment as they provide direction and purpose.

Networking and collaborating is a key element and important aspect of the ALIA/AeP2 pilot study. PebblePad has allowed the participants to do this in one space. We have been able to share thoughts, suggestions, and achievements, troubleshoot technical difficulties, and, as information professionals, establish and debate the best way to organise, display, and retrieve information stored in our PebblePads. Gill is monitoring and guiding our progress with regular show-and-tell meetings scheduled in Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra, Adelaide, Katherine, and Mackay.

As a member of the ALIA/AeP2 pilot study, I have found PebblePad to be a useful tool for progression and enhancement. Like others in the group I am a first time user, but already my PebblePad has proven to be a valuable investment in my future career. It has enabled me to identify my strengths and weaknesses and plan activities and programs that will enhance and rectify these areas. It has also motivated and enriched my learning experiences both in my current position and within the LIS sector.

Rebecca Randle
Reference Librarian, Logan City Council Libraries
rebeccarandie@logan.qld.gov.au

Useful websites

Australian ePortfolio Project AeP2: **http://www.eportfoliopractice. qut.edu.au/**

PebblePad: **http://www.pebblelearning.co.uk/**