

Pedagogue Bonus: ePortfolios in Graduate Education (w/Kristine Blair)

Pedagogue podcast

Transcript

Welcome to Pedagogue Bonus, a short episode that covers a single topic or question. I'm your host, Shane Wood.

Kristine L. Blair is Dean of the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts and Professor of English at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Since 2011, she has served as editor of Computer and Composition.

Kristine, thanks so much for joining us.

SW: Do you mind talking about the value and benefits of ePortfolios or using ePortfolios in graduate education?

KB: With regard to preparing future faculty to be digital literacy educators, I strongly believe in the power of ePortfolios to do as Yancey and others have suggested, provide that sense of development over time to promote strengths as those skills and dispositions emerge to enable purposeful selection and deselection of materials that allow students and ultimately faculty to shine. I've used them in ways in both course specific environments as I taught multimodal composing in graduate programs, but always with the eye that these artifacts were going to be part of a larger story that students told as they prepared for the academic job market. If you want to go on the academic job market as a digital rhetorician, what are your digital rhetorical chops, so to speak, and being able to show the ways in which you can develop some of the types of materials that you'll ultimately be teaching.

A website that's effectively designed and navigated and so forth is, I think, a really important component of that process. I think the tool is very effective for those wanting to go into computers and writing and so forth, and I'm not alone in that. People have been doing that for decades. I think more generally, ePortfolios in graduate education as a whole, I'm sure we all have our horror stories of what our comprehensive exam days were like. My first exam was sitting in a little room for four hours and responding to five questions and crying during the process. My second exam was the same thing, except I got to cry at home by myself because it was a 24-hour take home. I think those types of artificial examination genres are really, I hope, by the way of the past, but an ePortfolio for comps can be a wonderful way for students to document both knowledge of the discipline through an essay that they develop, and then revise for potential publication with an audience in mind that they rationalize their revision choices. A well-designed syllabi and educational philosophy to go with it, an annotated bibliography that would lead to the dissertation proposal. All of those genres, whether it be an ePortfolio or a print-based portfolio, I think really set students on their way to developing, not as students, but as professionals. I think that ePortfolios in particular, portfolios in general, enable graduate students to get that sense of scholarly and teacherly identity through the genres and modalities that they can contain, and ones that aren't just add-ons. How do the things that students produce in seminars or in comps really get them there? Nothing is wasted. Everything that a student produces has a lifespan. That's why I think they're beneficial.