



Selecting Your ePortfolio System: Needs, Issues & Possibilities

Presenters: Susan Lambert and James Richardson
Friday, April 10, Room E-501, 3 PM-3:45 PM
&

Saturday, April 11, Room M-152, 10:30AM-11:15AM

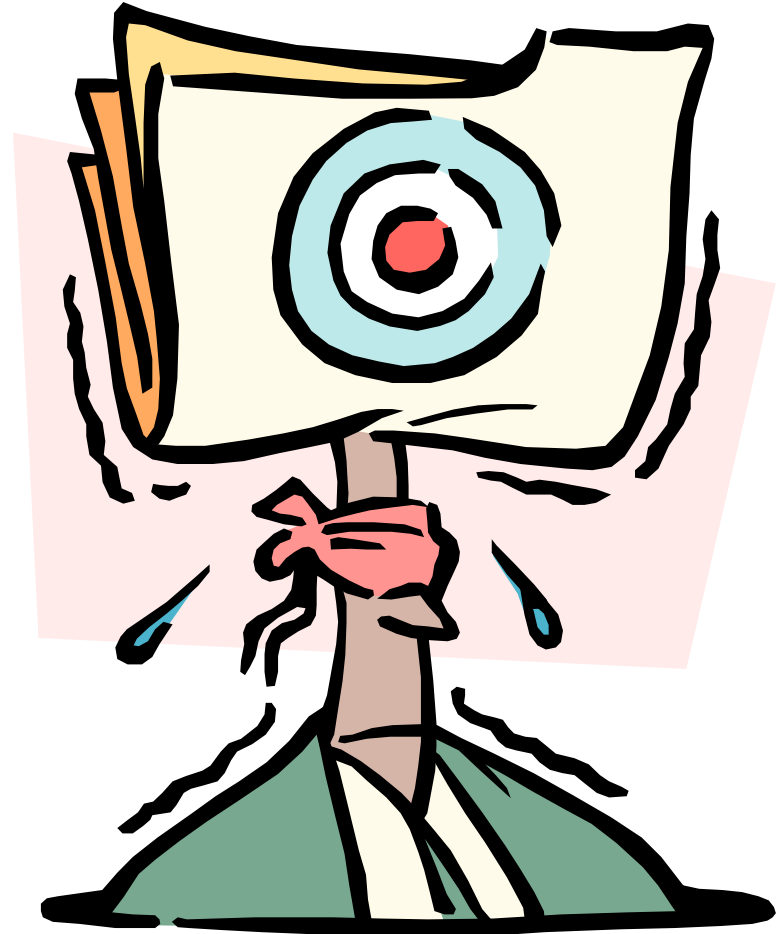
James Richardson

Assistant Professor of New Media
&

First LaGuardia Community College
ePortfolio Technical Director

Decisions, decisions

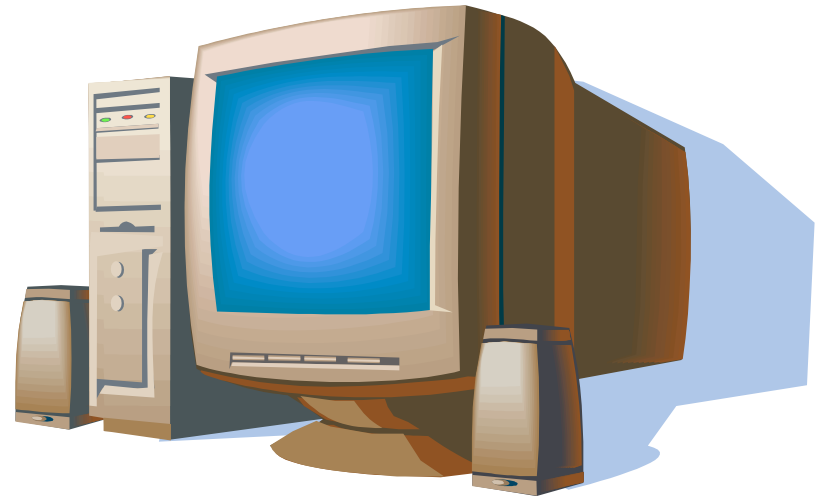
What system should
you choose for you
ePortfolio project?



ePortfolio

System Selection Choices

- **Buy** a system solution
- **Build** a system solution
- **Customize** an open source system solution
- **Hosted** or **Non-hosted** solution



Selection Choice: BUY

Pros

- Benefit of a dedicated support team (i.e., one stop shop for implementation)
- Can be cheaper than a custom build solution
- Product and security updates available from vendor
- Vendor can provide technical and consulting assistance if you lack internal IT experience

Cons

- Can still be costly for ongoing license and support
- Sometimes lacks customization for your environment
- Ties you to a vendor for ongoing support
- Vendor must be financially sound and stable or project failure may occur

Selection Choice: BUILD

Pros

- Can be economical if built internally
- System can be tailored to your existing environment
 - Process integration
 - Systems integration
- Maximum control over the final product
- Dedicated vendor support is available

Cons

- If built internally you are at risk if builder switches jobs
 - So you better treat them well
 - Proper system documentation is critical for ongoing support
- Can be **very** costly if built by outside vendor
- Updates and bug fixes can be costly
- Can tether you to the builder for support if you lack internal IT experience
- Vendor must be financially sound and stable or project failure may occur

Selection Choice: Customize

Pros

- Open source platform are inexpensive (free)
- System can be tailored to your existing environment
 - Process integration
 - Systems integration
- Maximum control over the final product

Cons

- The skills needed to maintain and manage the open source platform can be expensive and hard to find
- The updates, security, and modifications are all up to you
- Very little if any dedicated outside support if problems arise

Seven Steps of Systems Selection

1. Project Initiation
 - Selling the idea and getting institutional buy-in
 - Faculty, IT department, the administration, and students
2. Investigation and planning
 - Define the needs and the scope of the project
 - Needs should drive the Technology and not the other way around
3. Vendor evaluation and selection
 - Reviewing the vendor landscape
 - Buy - Build - Customize
 - To host or not to host....that is the question

Seven Steps of Systems Selection

4. Implementation
 - Keep everyone in the loop
 - Set realistic goals
 - Maintain momentum by setting realistic timetables
5. Project Launch
 - Don't be afraid to scale back if needed
6. Project Evaluation
 - Review what you did right and what could have been done better
7. Ongoing support and monitoring
 - Technical, academic, and institutional support is critical

ePortfolio Systems

Open Source Solutions

- [Klahowya](#)
- [OSP](#)
- [Mahara](#)
- [dotFolio](#)
- Elgg
- [Peeblepad](#)
- [Moodle](#)
- [MyStuff](#) – Moodle based
- [Moofolio](#) – Moodle based
- [Drupal](#) – Modified CMS
- [Plone](#) – Modified CMS
- [Joomla](#) – Modified CMS

Commercial Solutions

- [LiveText](#)
- [Concord](#)
- [ePortaro](#)
- [ePortfolio2](#)
- [Desire2Learn ePortfolio](#)
- [Avenet eFolio](#)
- [Factline ePortfolio](#)
- [Digication](#)
- [Taskstream](#)
- [Nuventive iWebfolio](#)
- [Foliotek](#)

ePortfolio Systems

Hosted solutions

- [Epsilen](#)
- [rCampus](#)
- [myEport](#)
- [zPortfolio](#)
- [Myportfol.io](#)



What Drives the Selection?

- Cost
- Existing environment
 - current technical equipment
 - Invested value in existing hardware (i.e., you may have to use what you have versus totally new solution)
 - current technical AND administrative support
 - Do you have it? Can you get it?
- Internal Politics
 - It is a reality
- The Institutional Process
 - The purpose and focus of the project is a factor

Final advice

The system that you choose will only be as good as the support that you have in place and the process that you develop.

Let the process drive the technical solution!!

Susan Lambert

Acting LaGuardia ePortfolio
Project Director

&

Former ePortfolio Project Director at
Queensborough Community College

My Perspective

- Acting ePortfolio Project Director, LaGCC (present)
- Project Director at Queensborough CC, CUNY (3 years)
- Interested in ePortfolios primarily as a tool for integrative learning and for developing multiple literacies.
- Visual Artist, MFA
- Courses taught: Digital Design, Drawing, Ceramics, Surveys in Art History

ePortfolio Represents a Paradigm Shift

The emergence of ePortfolio in higher education is symptomatic of a paradigm shift toward integration across disciplines and a more student-centered/participatory approach to teaching and learning.



Issues, Challenges & Possible solutions

- **In context of the field -**
 - Eportfolio technology still emergent.
 - Many systems designed mainly to support data collection efforts.
 - Web 2.0 approach eclipsing single software platform approach.
- **At your school -**
 - Culture of the institution
 - Staff roles often unclear
 - Competing campus initiatives
 - Issues around resources, staffing needs, IT support

Possibilities

- Commercial Software Systems (Epsilon, etc.)
- Open Source & Open Source Commercial Options (OSP/Sakai, Elgg w/ Drupal, etc.)
- Developing an “In-House” System – U. of Washington (Catalyst)
- Generic (Web-editing tools such as Dreamweaver, Netscape Composer, etc. and uploading websites w/ FTP)
- Existing Online Services, Web 2.0 Services (Commercial and generally free to users) - Blogspot, MySpace, Google’s web-editing/authoring app., Deviantart.com, etc.

DEFINING THE PROJECT

DISCOVERY

Gathering Information

Gaining a Broad View of the Field

Understanding ePortfolio Pedagogies

Understanding End Users
and Audiences

Developing Functional
Requirements

PLANNING

Creating a Project Plan

Setting the Budget

Creating Schedules

Assigning the Project Team

Setting Up Staging Areas

Planning for User Testing

CLARIFICATION

Determining Overall Goals

Preparing a Communication
Brief

Kicking Off the Project

Lessons Learned

- The scale of the project must be considered - it pervades almost every aspect of campus life/activity and requires that:
- All stakeholders must be engaged.
- Upper level administration must strongly support the project.
- Faculty development must happen in a sustained way.
- Infrastructure and staff must exist and be robust.
- ePortfolio pedagogy and departmental/program/institutional goals must be conjoined.
- Start with a small implementation/start big with faculty and administrators on faculty development.
- Build partnerships and form alliances to avoid redundancy and to promote sustainability and transfer.

Resources

Electronic Portfolio Consortium

<http://www.eportconsortium.org>

Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research

<http://www.ncepr.org/index.html>

“ePortfolios for Learning” (blog)

Authored by Dr. Helen Barrett, this blog discusses important issues involved in choosing an ePortfolio system and categorizes ePortfolio software tools.

<http://electronicportfolios.org/blog/2007/11/categorizing-eportfolio-systems.html>

Dr. Helen Barrett’s ePortfolio Site

This site offers a collection of favorite links to commercial ePortfolio vendors and Open Source System options, among other resources.

<http://electronicportfolios.org/portfolios/bookmarks.html>

“Comparing ePortfolio Systems” (webcast)

<http://www.mnsat.mnscu.edu/programs/compareportfolio/index.html>

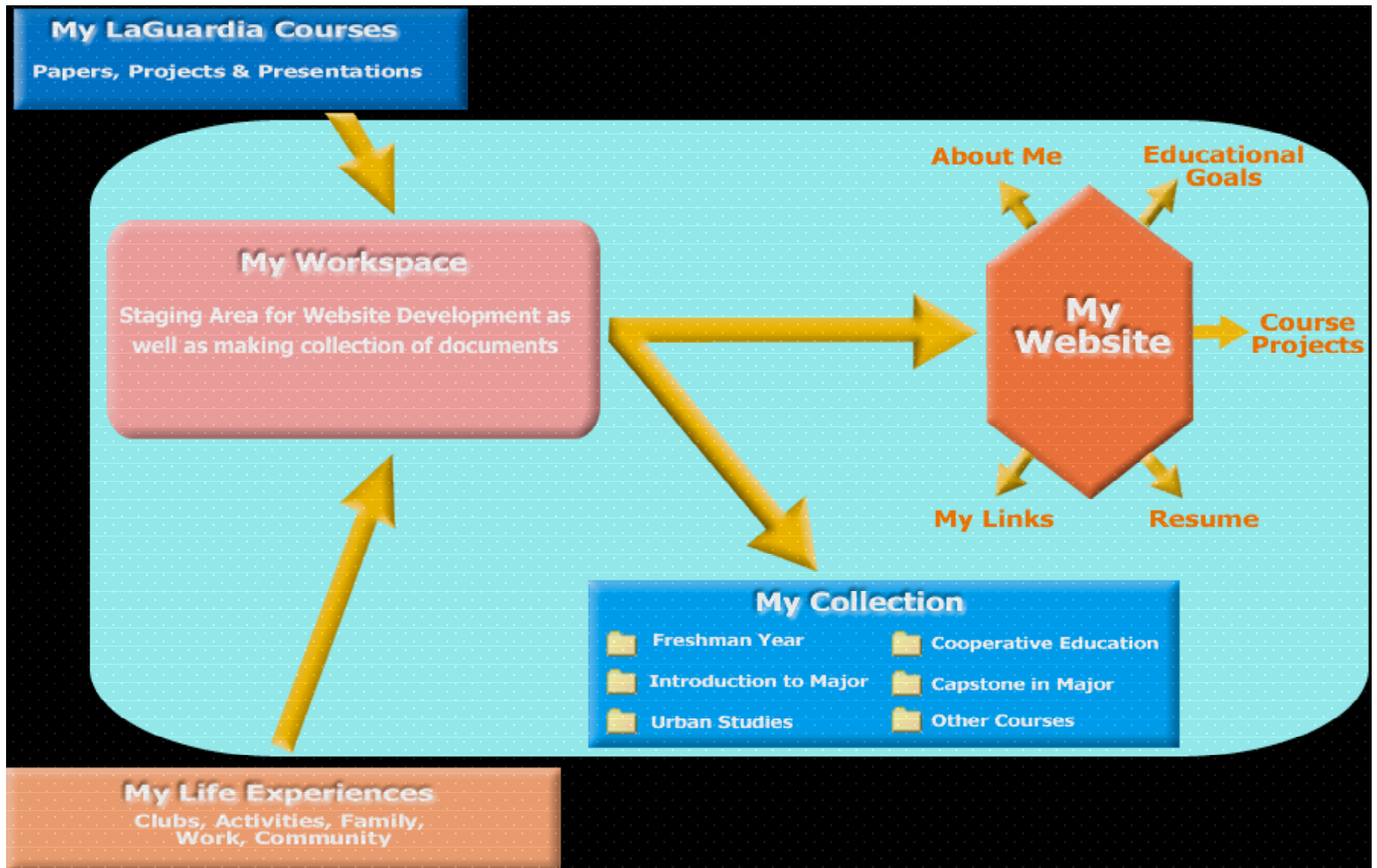
Consumer’s Guide to ePortfolio Tools and Services

<http://www.futured.com/documents/ePConsumersGuide.pdf>

LaGuardia Community College: The early years

An ePortfolio Systems Case Study

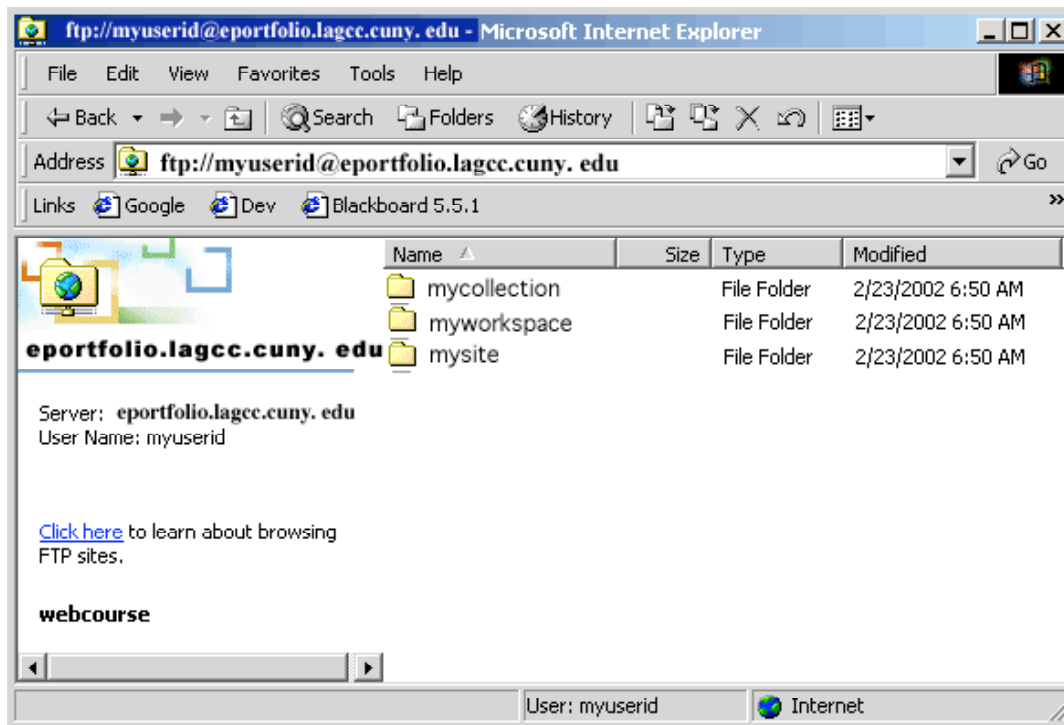
The early ePortfolio Process



Early ePortfolio Account Structure

Files systems

- A standard web account is be setup for each student's portfolio.
- Each account contains a protected area for assessment documents (MyCollection), a FTP directory for work files in progress (MyWorkspace), and a area for displaying selected documents and information on the web (MySite).



Early File structure

The three parts of an ePortfolio account

- MyCollection - Instructor selected assignments will be placed into this special area for future institutional assessment
- MyWorkspace - The student's personal storage space on the ePortfolio system
- MySite – The area where the web based presentation of a student's ePortfolio is stored.

We needed to upgrade

Almost immediately after the project launch we started to outgrow the interim solution.

We began to investigate what we would want in a perfect world, and then began to search for that solution.

IT DIDN'T EXIST!!!

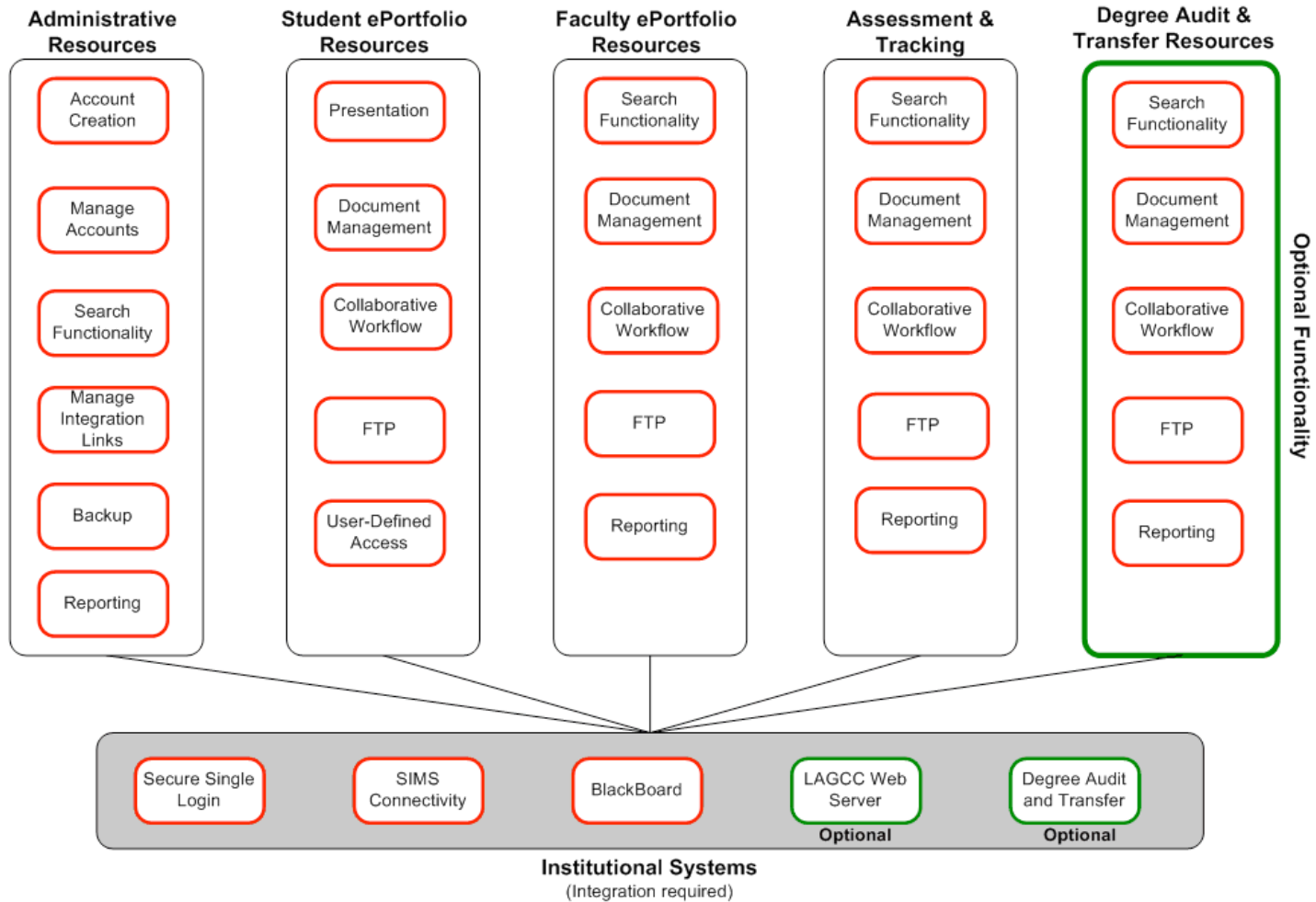
System Requirements

What we needed in a new system:

The Functional Specs



ePortfolio System Functionality Requirements: Task Specific





ePortfolio System Function Description: Administrative Resources

Account Creation

Definition:

The ability to create user accounts on the eportfolio system

Needed sub-functions:

- Verify that student user is a current student.
- Verify that student user is registered in a specific class
- Batch creation of user accounts based on semester class list
- Establish same password and login as Blackboard system

Dependencies:

- Real-time (or near) system connection to SIMS database
- Connection to Blackboard system

Search Functionality

Definition:

The ability to locate specific ePortfolio user accounts

Needed sub-functions:

- Search by student, class, major, semester, file, competency
- Search by current or past students

Dependencies:

- Real-time (or near) system connection to SIMS database
- Connection to Blackboard system and Web server
- Connection to Degree Audit and/or Transfer systems

Backup

Definition:

The ability to archive eportfolio user accounts

Needed sub-functions:

- Save and store user files and accounts
- Restore user files and accounts

Dependencies:

None (system feature)

Manage Accounts

Definition:

The ability to modify existing accounts on the eportfolio system

Needed sub-functions:

- Manually add and delete user accounts
- Set permissions per users & groups
- Modify & change user passwords
- Batch creation of user accounts based on semester class list
- Admin access to all files and folders

Dependencies:

- Real-time (or near) system connection to SIMS database

Manage Integration Links

Definition:

Maintain critical connections to external resources

Needed sub-functions:

- Create single user login for Blackboard and ePortfolio systems
- Verify that ext. connections/extractions are active and current

Dependencies:

- Real-time (or near) system connection to SIMS database
- Connection to Blackboard system and Web server
- Connection to Degree Audit and/or Transfer systems

Reporting

Definition:

Create reports on eportfolio user accounts

Needed sub-functions:

- Reports on account activity, student groups, majors, classes, percent of completion, files, access, transfer, etc.

Dependencies:

None (system feature)



ePortfolio System Function Description: Student Resources

Presentation

Definition:

The ability to create public and private views of files

Needed sub-functions:

Templated and non templated presentations
Web Based presentations
VIEW PROCESS: User Defined Access

Dependencies:

Possibly none, if system features integrated web server
Else: connection to existing LAGCC web server

Collaborative Workflow

Definition:

The ability to share and modify documents between students and faculty

Needed sub-functions:

Tracking of dates and file versions to prevent "overwrite"
Designer notes on changes made by user

Dependencies:

None (system feature)

FTP

Definition:

The ability remotely place files on system

Needed sub-functions:

Create subfolders and directories

Dependencies:

None (system feature)

Document Management

Definition:

To store and retrieve specific files and documents

Needed sub-functions:

Establish who can access and modify specific files
Establish which folders and directories can be accessed

Dependencies:

None (system feature)

User-Defined Access

Definition:

Determine who can view documents & custom presentation files

Needed sub-functions:

None

Dependencies:

None (system feature)



ePortfolio System Function Description: Faculty Resources

Search Functionality

Definition:
The ability to locate specific ePortfolio user accounts

Needed sub-functions:
Search by student, class, major, semester, file, competency
Search by current or past students

Dependencies:
Real-time (or near) system connection to SIMS database
Connection to Blackboard system and Web server
Connection to Degree Audit and/or Transfer systems

Collaborative Workflow

Definition:
The ability to share and modify documents between students and faculty

Needed sub-functions:
Tracking of dates and file versions to prevent "overwrite"
Designer notes on changes made by user

Dependencies:
None (system feature)

FTP

Definition:
The ability remotely place files on system

Needed sub-functions:
Create subfolders and directories

Dependencies:
None (system feature)

Document Management

Definition:
To store and retrieve specific files and documents

Needed sub-functions:
Establish who can access and modify specific files
Establish which folders and directories can be accessed

Dependencies:
None (system feature)

Reporting

Definition:
Create reports on eportfolio user accounts

Needed sub-functions:
Reports on account activity, student groups, majors, classes, percent of completion, files, access, transfer, etc.

Dependencies:
None (system feature)



ePortfolio System Function Description: Assessment & Tracking

Search Functionality

Definition:
The ability to locate specific ePortfolio user accounts

Needed sub-functions:
Search by student, class, major, semester, file, competency
Search by current or past students

Dependencies:
Real-time (or near) system connection to SIMS database
Connection to Blackboard system and Web server
Connection to Degree Audit and/or Transfer systems

Collaborative Workflow

Definition:
The ability to share and modify documents with other assessment users

Needed sub-functions:
Tracking of dates and file versions to prevent "overwrite"
Designer notes on changes made by user

Dependencies:
None (system feature)

FTP

Definition:
The ability remotely place files on system

Needed sub-functions:
Create subfolders and directories

Dependencies:
None (system feature)

Document Management

Definition:
To store and retrieve specific files and documents

Needed sub-functions:
Establish who can access and modify specific files
Establish which folders and directories can be accessed

Dependencies:
None (system feature)

Reporting

Definition:
Create reports on eportfolio user accounts

Needed sub-functions:
Reports on account activity, student groups, majors, classes, percent of completion, files, access, transfer, etc.

Dependencies:
None (system feature)



ePortfolio System Function Description: Degree Audit & Transfer

Search Functionality

Definition:
The ability to locate specific ePortfolio user accounts

Needed sub-functions:
Search by student, class, major, semester, file, competency
Search by current or past students

Dependencies:
Real-time (or near) system connection to SIMS database
Connection to Blackboard system and Web server
Connection to Degree Audit and/or Transfer systems

Collaborative Workflow

Definition:
The ability to share and modify documents with other assessment users

Needed sub-functions:
Tracking of dates and file versions to prevent "overwrite"
Designer notes on changes made by user

Dependencies:
None (system feature)

FTP

Definition:
The ability remotely place files on system

Needed sub-functions:
Create subfolders and directories

Dependencies:
None (system feature)

Document Management

Definition:
To store and retrieve specific files and documents

Needed sub-functions:
Establish who can access and modify specific files
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None (system feature)

Reporting

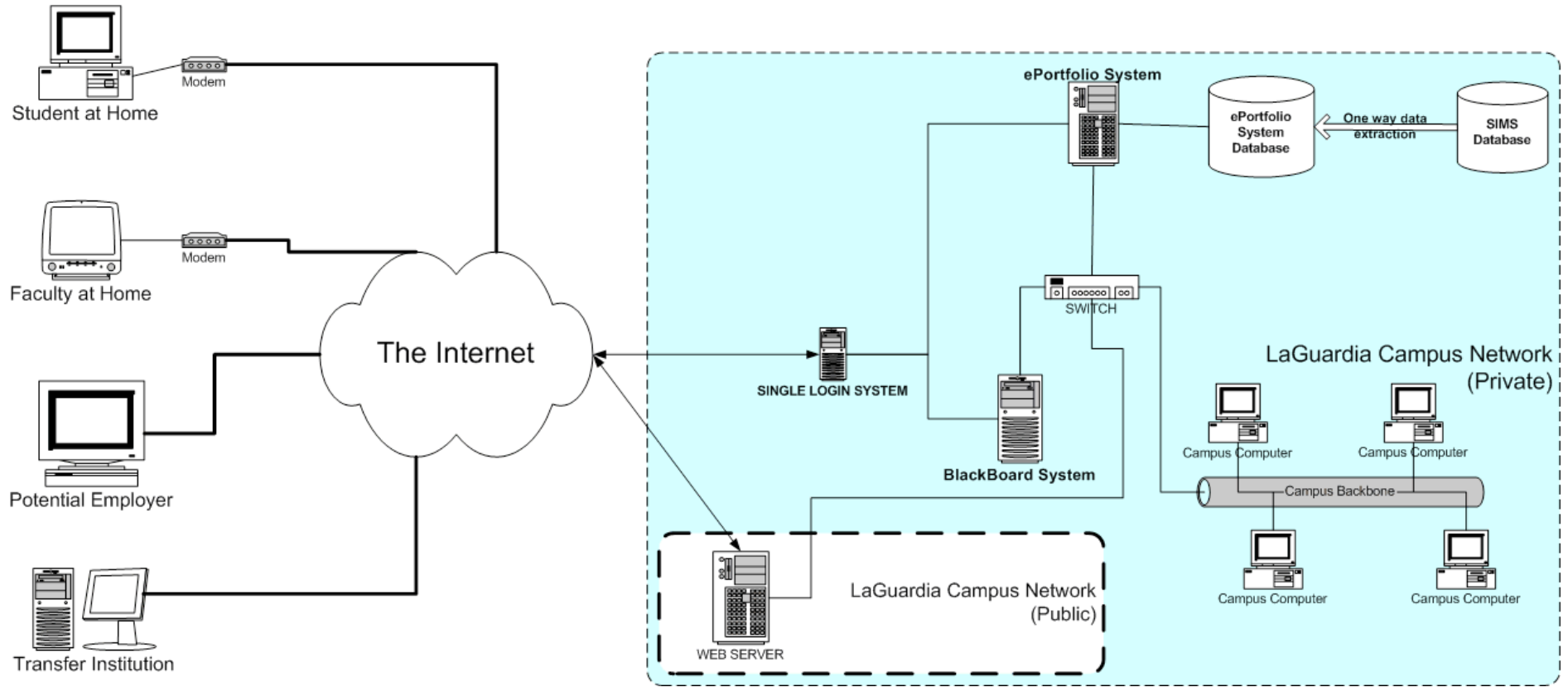
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Dependencies:
None (system feature)



ePortfolio Process Flow



Vendors selection

We looked at the only dedicated ePortfolio system vendors at the time

- Concord
- Nuventive
- ePortaro

Based on our requirements, we selected Concord because at the time it offered the most customization, the best price, and easiest integration with the BlackBoard system.

Questions and Answers