

CHAPTER 3.

THE SOCIAL EPORTFOLIO: INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA AND MODELS OF LEARNING IN ACADEMIC EPORTFOLIOS

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As recent research by danah boyd, Nicole Ellison (2007), and Caroline Haythornthwaite (2005) has shown, social network sites have attracted millions of users. The academy has begun to recognize and incorporate opportunities the reconfigured social space of the web affords for “identity formation, status negotiation, and peer-to-peer sociality” (boyd, 2007, p. 119). Even more recently, industry professionals have begun to embrace social network sites for the “web-based social values” that they encourage in their employees (Hamel, 2009, ¶ 17). In each of these contexts, however, users continue to view social network sites as distinct from sites such as ePortfolios, which present professional work to a public audience.

These days, the business world is atwitter with talk of social media. In a 2009 *Wall Street Journal* article, management consultant Gary Hamel mapped out the transformations to the workplace that must take place should businesses hope “to attract the most creative and energetic members” of the “Facebook Generation.” “Gen F,” Hamel explains, will “expect the social environment of work to reflect the social context of the Web” (¶ 1). Meanwhile, in the academy, where the Facebook® generation is currently being trained, the environment continues to reflect a division between traditional approaches to learning and the “social context” of Web 2.0. Blackboard, a course management system with significant market share, has only begun to include aspects of social media in its online learning environment (Gerben, 2009). The majority of ePortfolio systems, including eFolio and TaskStream, offer carefully template-based solutions to displaying student work, with few options for sociability. I argue for the pedagogical benefits of social media in terms of opportunities for con-

nection, communication, and collaboration. ePortfolio systems can emphasize social media alongside professional presentation encourage students to develop individual voices and produce a range of content. This content, which can be translated across media and contexts, puts students' intellectual leadership, analytical ability, and personal creativity on display.

SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINED

The term social media denotes a set of Internet-enabled environments and practices through which people connect, communicate, collaborate, and share. At present, these environments include social network sites such as Facebook® and MySpace®, social bookmarking sites such as Delicious® and Digg®, media tagging sites including YouTube® and Flickr®, blogging and micro-blogging sites such as Twitter®, and wiki-based sites such as Wikipedia (see Duffy, 2008). However, rather than define social media as a set of web-sites, social media is best understood in terms of the modes of interaction that it facilitates and the methods by which its content is produced (see Sweeney, 2008).

The concept of social media inverts Marshall McLuhan's (1964) famous phrase, "The *medium is the message*." In the case of social media, the method is the message. Three unique characteristics associated with social media and the idea of the medium is the message emerges in relevant literature: the ability to forge relationships between individuals and within communities; the ability to communicate, collaborate, and share ideas within these communities; and the organic, egalitarian nature of the ideas themselves. The first characteristic, the ability to forge relationships, is best modeled by popular social network sites. These sites provide opportunities for interpersonal connection in what boyd (2007) characterizes as "networked publics," which include both real-life friends and "latent ties" (Haythornthwaite, 2005). Social network sites make use of the mediated nature of online interaction to bring pre-existing groups online and to bring new groups together.

The second characteristic of social media, the ability to communicate, collaborate, and share ideas, can be observed in blogs, on wikis, and in social bookmarking and tagging sites (Richardson, 2006). While these sites encompass a diverse collection of media, including text, photography, video, and web links, they are similar in their orientation toward a single community. Each individual is considered a member of the site, and as such, contributes his or her own content to a collective whole. This creates an online forum for

the participation in what Bruffee (1962) memorably describes as the “conversation of mankind.”

Finally, in order to grasp the egalitarian nature of the ideas and content produced through social media, it may be helpful to consider user-generated sites like Wikipedia and meme-spreading sites like Twitter. As Hamel (2009) explains, on sites such as Twitter® “all ideas compete on equal footing” (§ 4). Similarly, on Wikipedia it is consensus, not credential, which functions as the arbiter of value and truth. While the networked, collaborative, and non-hierarchical nature of social media signifies a conceptual departure from most traditional modes of research and representation, the methods associated with social media foreground new models for integrating interpersonal interaction with uninhibited production of ideas. Schnurr (2013), too, discusses relevant identity construction categories based on social construction and interaction principles in ways that relate to methods for learning (pp. 122-127).

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE ACADEMY: METHODS FOR LEARNING

What are the benefits of social media for the academy? One needs only to look at the (online) evidence in order to see the benefits of users having an opportunity to connect, communicate, and collaborate. Moreover, the egalitarian nature of content associated with social media meshes seamlessly with pedagogical models for empowering student voices. Incorporating social media into classroom activities and research assignments also increases opportunities for the cross-contextual “movement” that has been recognized by Jamie Bianco (2007), among others, as a powerful tool for learning. Rethinking the major components of social media within the context of the academy reveals the ways in which social media can enhance a range of traditional learning objectives.

CONNECTION

Scholarly discussions about the role of technology in the academy often center on creation of virtual classrooms and online environments for distance learning. In these discussions, scholars distinguish between the digital, online world and the so-called “real world” (see the CCCC position statement on teaching, learning, and assessing writing in digital environments). The unique ability of social media to forge both on- and offline can play an important—and as yet unmet—role in connecting the physical world to the virtual one. Within

communities formed through social media, as Moxley and Meehan observe, “students can write documents for tangible audiences, which can often lead to a greater sense of accountability on the part of the author” (2007, ¶ 1). In addition to these benefits, the ability to connect with others through online communities also begins to address the counterproductive, “counter-pointed” relation between the forms of writing that are used in- and outside of the academy (Yancey, 2004).

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Teachers have debated the pedagogical value of collaborative learning for decades, but social media provides a new model and new tools for communication and collaboration. In 1984, Kenneth Bruffee theorized a relation between conversation and analytical thought and to that end began to introduce collaborative, conversation-based pedagogical strategies into his classroom. He admitted mixed results, concluding only that “understanding both the history and the complex ideas that underlie collaborative learning can improve its practice and demonstrate its educational value” (p. 636). Because of the rapid spread of social media tools, teachers should rededicate themselves to collaborative learning; now that technology has caught up to theory, teachers can put ideas about process-oriented writing, procedural authorship, and critical multimedia literacy into practice (Jones & Lea, 2008).

STUDENT-GENERATED CONTENT

Empowering student voices is a frequently-mentioned objective in the field of Composition and Rhetoric (see Geraldine de Luca, Peter Elbow, and others). Within the context of social media, this objective gains not only a technological framework, but also a conceptual one (Warner, 2009). Students, more so than teachers, are comfortable in the credential-less environment of the Web. When teachers frame assignments in this new social context, students become more inclined to express themselves in their own voices rather than in the register of “clarity” they believe is required of them in the academy (Minh-ha, 1991, as cited in Bianco, 2007, ¶ 13). In addition, the polyphony of voices that emerges from this social context confirms the “active role” of writing and other forms of expression in “producing different theoretical discourses and creating specific social identities” (Giroux, 1992, p. 221). Such attention to professional discourses is highly useful, as Schnurr (2013) points out: “discourse and profession-specific ways of using language create, reflect and reinforce those activities, knowledge and skills that characterize a specific profession” (p. 14).

CROSS-CONTEXTUAL MOVEMENT

Another benefit of introducing social media to the academy is an extension of what Bianco (2007) identifies as “cross media movement.” She describes a learning environment in which “digital objects are produced such that compositional intertextuality folds into and/or unfolds across composited cross mediation, resonant through particularized and distributed fields and domains”—media that is capable of moving across and between different contexts, both online and off (§ 22). By adapting Bianco’s conception of “cross media movement” to social media’s methods and modes of representation, we arrive at a conception of cross-contextual movement that underlies the work that we do at the Macaulay Honors College of the City University of New York to develop, promote, and sustain our social ePortfolio system.

THE MACAULAY EPORTFOLIO COLLECTION: A CASE STUDY

HISTORY AND TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

The Macaulay ePortfolio Collection was introduced fall 2008 to incoming students at Macaulay Honors College, CUNY. Students were presented with the concept of an ePortfolio through a *cabinet of curiosities* metaphor conceived by Joseph Ugoretz, Director of Technology and Learning at Macaulay. We encouraged students to place “artifacts” of their thinking, their learning, and themselves on display in their own ePortfolios. We emphasized that the work that they engaged in might consist of a range of formats—research and essays to be sure, but also conversations, quotations, photos, and other online artifacts. In the same way that a curiosity cabinet, during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, was arranged according to the owner’s individual organization scheme, we impressed upon each student that ePortfolios must reflect a sense of self.

We chose WordPress Multi-User (WPMU) as the platform for our ePortfolio system. WPMU began as a personal web-publishing platform—that is to say, a blogging platform—although it has since expanded to support a wide range of applications. WPMU integrates an updateable blog with standalone pages that are all created and edited through a personal “dashboard,” where students can enter text and other media via an easy-to-use visual editor. Students customize the look and feel of individual ePortfolios by selecting from a set of pre-designed “skins,” by adding new skins, or by editing preexisting ones. They

can invite other students to contribute to collaborative ePortfolios in a variety of roles, and can allow or disallow comments on any page. Individual ePortfolios can be private, password-protected, or open to the public (the default). Students can have additional functionality via WPMU plug-ins, such as the ability to embed video or a calendar, or include an RSS feed. WPMU is also free and open-source (FOSS).

When we selected WPMU as the technical platform for our ePortfolio system, we believed that the blog-style format would encourage students to create and curate a range of multimedia content for public display. We hoped that the social context of the WPMU platform would facilitate the connection, communication, and collaboration associated with social media. We saw the WPMU system as a method of encouraging creative expression and cross-contextual movement. In addition, we hoped that the self-managed aspect of the WPMU system would engender a sense of ownership and empowerment in each student.

In spring 2009 we introduced the Macaulay Social Network, powered by the WPMU BuddyPress plug-in. BuddyPress allows each student to create a profile associated with his or her ePortfolio. Through our social network, users can create profiles, befriend other users, join groups, and view other users' posts and comments. In this way, our ePortfolio system now adheres to boyd and Ellison's (2007) definition of a social network site. Although we designed the Macaulay ePortfolio Collection with social media in mind, the overlay of the Macaulay Social Network implements an explicitly social mode of interacting with others within an otherwise conventional ePortfolio system.

The following four examples demonstrate the advantages of incorporating an ePortfolio system with a social setting, not only in terms of the ideas outlined above, but also in terms of new opportunities for personal reflection, interpersonal conversation, professional presentation, and intellectual growth.

EXAMPLE: "CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS"

One reason for our decision to use WPMU as our ePortfolio platform was that our students were already familiar with WordPress from their experiences with various course blogs and websites.¹ When Roslyn Bernstein decided to replace her course blog with a class-wide ePortfolio, the transition was seamless; students could use the same editing interface they had used in previous courses with the added benefit of a single login screen for all their ePortfolios, both personal and class-related.

Bernstein shaped the course ePortfolio, "Cultural Encounters," around a

multimedia collage project. For the assignment, students were asked to create individual, themed collages that expressed a personal “cultural encounter.” They were encouraged to use a range of physical materials, including found objects, and were then required to write a short essay describing their collage. Each collage was scanned and put on the course ePortfolio alongside the accompanying critical essay.

One student created a collage containing artifacts from his upbringing in communist China. It includes cutouts from his elementary school textbooks, images of school supplies, and drawings of significant items from his childhood, such as the red scarf he wore to indicate his membership in the Chinese Communist Party (see Figure 1). In his written analysis, the student described the artifacts in the collage as “permanent reminders to me that I lived a life which many people today in America have never experienced.” In his essay, expressing a sentiment of difference, the student provided a detailed rationale for including each of the artifacts, assuming that his classmates would require additional context with which to interpret the experiences of his childhood in China. However, in the comment section of the ePortfolio page, his classmates reflected on the collage in ways that expressed both identification with and admiration for his work. A Russian student wrote, “I could relate to this because of the red scarves that my parents also had to wear in the Soviet Union.” Another student, palpably affected, praised the “emotion and symbolism [that] were embodied in that report card” that the student from China included.

This single ePortfolio page—the scanned collage, the written analysis, and the comments below—models many of the benefits of social media in terms of opportunities for connection, communication, and collaboration. Although no single aspect of the collage assignment is explicitly social, its placement on the course ePortfolio site contributes Moxley and Meehan’s “tangible audience” to an otherwise personal project. Initially a document of a life apart, the student’s collage became a means of connection. Sure enough, as other students began to post their collages on the site, a conversation developed. Empowered by their own experiences and bolstered by their online interactions with others, the students of the “Cultural Encounters” ePortfolio demonstrated a deep level of analytical ability as well as a creative engagement that moved across media and contexts. This creative engagement was confirmed by the frequency with which students involved in the “Cultural Encounters” project reposted their collage projects on their own ePortfolio sites. These students have recognized that their collages, placed within the social context of the Macaulay ePortfolio Collection, represent not only their personal histories, but also their collective future. These are the minds of the future (Gardner, 2007).

EXAMPLE: “AWAY AND ABROAD”

“Away and Abroad” is a more explicitly social instance of a collaborative ePortfolio (see Figure 2). The site, designed by Joseph Ugoretz functions as an aggregator of content posted on the personal ePortfolios of students studying



Figure 1. “Childhood” by Jack.

abroad. When a student writes a blog post on or uploads a photo to his or her individual ePortfolio, the content becomes immediately viewable on the “Away and Abroad” site. Initially conceived as a site to showcase the diversity of students’ experiences studying abroad, the ePortfolio quickly became a social hub for the students themselves.

A recent visit to the “Away and Abroad” front page reveals one student’s photos of graffiti near the Gare du Nord in Paris, another student’s written reflection entitled “An American in China,” a third student’s link to a *New York Times* article about international urban planning, and a fourth student’s blog post about hamburgers. Clicking through to each of the students’ individual ePortfolios reveals a range of topics and formats. The photographer’s site takes the form of a blog, with frequent short updates about his life in Paris. The student in China, along with a detailed personal profile, has charted his semester-long itinerary to the day. His blog posts, each a carefully composed meditation on life abroad, are tagged and cross-referenced so that they can be viewed by topic, location, or medium of composition.

The screenshot shows the 'Away and Abroad' ePortfolio website. The header features the title 'Away and Abroad' with the tagline 'Macaulay Students Learning...Elsewhere!' and a moon icon. Navigation links for 'home' and 'about' are visible. The main content area displays a blog post titled 'Big wall of graffiti' dated June 15, 2009, posted by JNJ in an 'Uncategorized' category with comments closed. The post text reads: 'I'm pretty sure I haven't posted pictures of this previously. I kept meaning to take photos of this wall, which stretches out along one really long block near where the train lines head north from the Gare du Nord and all, not too far from the dorms. Starting at the west end of it:'. Below the text is a photograph of a graffiti wall at night. To the right of the post is a search bar and a 'go!' button. Below the search bar is a text box stating: 'This is a collection of the eportfolio posts from Macaulay Honors College students who are studying away and abroad. You'll find posts here from students on all our seven campuses, and from all over the world. Read and explore-and even better, go to their blogs and give them some comments! They need your feedback.' At the bottom right, there is a section titled 'Macaulay Bloggers Abroad' with sub-sections for 'From Baruch College', 'From Brooklyn College', and 'From City College', each listing several blog posts.

Figure 2. The “Away and Abroad” Study Abroad ePortfolio.

Study abroad ePortfolios are noteworthy for their diversity of structure, content, and tone. Abrami and Barrett (2005), in their pioneering study of uses for ePortfolios, distinguish between “process portfolios,” which document learning processes, and “showcase portfolios,” which demonstrate skills and knowledge attained. With the open-ended WPMU platform, Macaulay students can decide for themselves—at any point in time—about the primary use and the intended audience of each ePortfolio. In the case of the study abroad ePortfolios, some students, like the student in Paris, opted for more flexible, process-oriented ePortfolios. The student in China, like many others, conceived of his site as showcase for both scholarly and personal growth. Common to both sites—and to the study abroad ePortfolios as a whole—is the knowledge (or perception) of an audience, and the belief that the experience of traveling abroad is worthy of documentation. With no prompting from any classroom assignment, each student engaged in substantial analysis of differences between life at home and abroad. Through written reflections, digital photos, and—in some cases—short films, students demonstrated critical multimedia literacy, the ultimate learning objective of many college-level courses (see Clive Thompson’s discussion in *Wired* on the new literacy, 2009).

An additional, unanticipated outcome of the “Away and Abroad” site was the conversation that developed between students studying abroad in different countries and between the students studying abroad and those about to depart. After recounting a harrowing night at a youth hostel in Tokyo, one student received a comment from a friend who had had a similar experience at a hostel in Rome. Another student, preparing to leave for his own semester abroad, left a comment on the student in China’s ePortfolio, asking how much he should be prepared to spend on food. A third student in Argentina received a comment from a classmate at home: “It’s so wonderful to read your impressions thus far. I can almost taste the steak and other more mysterious foods!” In the process of documenting their experiences abroad, these students engaged in additional, unexpected forms of connection and communication. By producing content that not only moves across contexts, but also moves across continents, the study abroad students provide tangible evidence of the advantages of the social ePortfolio.


EXAMPLE: “ALTERMANIA”

One student’s personal ePortfolio exhibits ways in which social media has begun to shape how students present themselves to future employers. Consider “Altermania,” the ePortfolio of Tyler, a college sophomore (see Figure 3):

The front page announces: “Tyler is a student in the Macaulay Honors College at CUNY Hunter. He’s pretty into creative multimedia production and

his inherited tie collection. For the future, Tyler aspires to get into the design/ guerrilla marketing business and create things like this, this, and this.” (The links lead to graphic design and marketing companies whose work he admires). On the right-hand navigation menu, links lead to Tyler’s contact information and résumé as well as examples of his audio, video, and graphic design work. A tag cloud provides an additional method of navigating his ePortfolio. In place of a traditional mission statement or employment objective, Tyler describes his career aspirations in his own voice (see Amarian & Flanigan, 2006). His self-description mimics a profile on a social network site, but Tyler, a member of the Facebook Generation, considers his casual tone appropriate to describe his professional goals. His tone exemplifies the new “social context” of our Internet-infused society (see Zhang, Olfman, & Rachtham, 2007).

In his design portfolio, which can be accessed by following a link from the navigation menu, Tyler includes a similarly conversational narrative that describes his involvement in a marketing campaign for an arts event. He provides a scanned version of a “submission-garnering flyer,” an embedded promotional video that he created to publicize the event, a screenshot of the Facebook® event



**YOU
HAVE
REACHED**


the ePortfolio of Tyler Alterman.

Tyler is a student
in the Macaulay Honors College
at CUNY Hunter.

He's pretty into
creative multimedia production and
his inherited tie collection.

For the future, Tyler aspires to
get into the design/guerrilla marketing business
and create things like this, this, and this. (And this and this.)

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REGARDING T.A.

- Contact
- Résumé

WORK

- Audio
- Campaigns
- Creative Writing
- Design Portfolio
- Video

CATEGORIES

- Arts Night CUFF Flyer
- Design Fun Logo
- Design Magazine Design Nucleus
- Promotion
- Speculatives The Scallion USG
- Web Design

Figure 3. “Altermania” the ePortfolio of Tyler.

page, and photographic evidence of his own guerilla marketing campaign: “I set the default home page on every computer to the [promotional] video,” he explains. Tyler uses the same conversational voice in each of his reflections on the various components of the campaign. Through the content of his ePortfolio, Tyler demonstrates his marketing skills, but through the tone of his descriptions, he demonstrates himself. As Tyler intuitively, in the increasingly social context of the Web, skills and personality play an equal part in professional presentation and future success.

EXAMPLE: “A DESIGN A DAY”

By exploring Tyler’s profile on the Macaulay Social Network, one discovers that he is involved in a second, collaborative ePortfolio. “A Design A Day,” developed in partnership with another student, Phoebe, documents a challenge to “create one new work or learn one new graphic design technique [or] principle per day.” This ePortfolio, intended as an informal record of the students’ whimsical challenge, consists of each day’s completed design followed by an explanation of how one or the other accomplished the effect. The ePortfolio functions as a collaborative “progress portfolio,” as a means of communication between the two students, and as a technical reference for other aspiring designers (see Figure 4).

In this ePortfolio, Tyler and Phoebe embrace the flexibility of the WPMU system in order to upload, comment on, and converse about a range of media. The self-managed nature of the system, in addition, allows the two students to demonstrate their personal creativity, professional engagement, and intellectual leadership. In the future, this ePortfolio might be integrated into each student’s individual ePortfolio, accompanied by a narrative that conveys the ideas behind the project and the skills they each acquired. In this way, “A Design A Day” demonstrates the possibilities for a productive synthesis of social media and professional presentation while facilitating acquisition of skills, collaboration between peers, and public display of knowledge.

THE SOCIAL EPORTFOLIO: A NEW CONCEPTION OF PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION

The above examples demonstrate how social media enhances opportunities for connection, communication, and collaboration and provides opportunities for showcasing a range of student-generated content when integrated into a traditional ePortfolio environment. From the perspective of potential employers,

the social ePortfolio can supply additional evidence of skills and qualities valued in the workplace: analytical ability, intellectual leadership, and creativity, which are often difficult to discern in other presentations of student work.

ANALYTICAL ABILITY

The social ePortfolio encourages commentary and reflection. Because of the blog-style format, students often frame their work within narratives that can account for weakness in early work or express ideas for improvement. One student, in the process of constructing her ePortfolio, apologized to the public for her inexperience. “I am very excited to begin sharing my work with you,” she wrote. “You will have to excuse me as I take some time to get acquainted with all of the available features.” In her admission, she expresses her desire for a higher quality level for her site and additional knowledge about the publishing platform. Commentary like this can provide valuable information to potential employers about students’ thought processes as well as their ability and desire to continue to learn. In the case of this student, as she began to post her work

A Design A Day
Tyler and Phoebe’s Ultimate Summer of Learning

Jun 14 **Two more banner concepts**
Posted in Tyler Tagged banners, DC.org, illustrator, marketing, photoshop No Comments »

DonorsChoose.org
An online charity connecting you to classrooms in need.

Help Center | My Account | Giving Cart: 0 items

See Projects Gifts About

Celebrate Summer Sharing!
become a supporter of year round schools today!
(learn more)

Classroom projects: [More Projects](#)

The Little Red Hen Says, Who Will Help My 1st-Graders Read?
As a little girl, I remember having a set of books on tape. The Little Red Hen was one of the books that I listened to over and over and over again. I can definitely tell you that listening to books on tape, along with

Give \$ **to go**
Any amount welcome.
Why give \$100 or more?

Redeem your gift card
Support Our Troops
Give-Back Birthday

Teachers go here!

“Happy birthday, Katy! Your awesome mom, who’s a girlfriend of mine, tipped me off that it was your birthday. Way to go! I hope these projects fulfil promptly, so all these great students can have an even more excellent learning experience.”

Diane from Santa Clara, CA gave to this project 2 hours ago

Figure 4. “A Design A Day” by Tyler and Phoebe.

on her ePortfolio, her self-analysis continued. In this way, the social ePortfolio facilitates commentary and reflection, offering potential employers a glimpse of a particular student's analytical ability and capacity for self-reflection.

INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP

In terms of presenting a student's intellectual *ethos* to future employers, the benefits of a social ePortfolio system extend beyond showcasing techniques of analysis and reflection. Because they offer opportunities for communication and collaboration, social ePortfolios allow students to demonstrate intellectual leadership in a variety of contexts. Through the conversations that take place in the comment section, students provide evidence of their ability to convey their own ideas and accept others' criticism. One student, after posting a link to an article he had written for his campus newspaper, received a comment from a fellow student suggesting that he might revise his critique. The conversation continued, culminating with a comment from a professor that validated the student's original angle as well as the commenter's concerns. This evidence of the student's ability to engage in constructive dialogue with peers and superiors might provide future employers a window into the student's workplace personality and intellectual *ethos*.

CREATIVITY

The flexible format of the social ePortfolio allows students to showcase more than intellectual leadership; it provides a forum in which they can pursue multiple ideas. Because social ePortfolios encourage students to rapidly produce and display content in a context of peer comment and review, students can test out a variety of approaches to exhibiting their work. At Macaulay, students have created ePortfolios that document short-term events, such as attending the 2009 Presidential Inauguration or organizing a school-wide movie night; or ePortfolios that persist through long-term commitments, such as a semester spent abroad or a summer involved in community service. Students can choose to adapt these event-based ePortfolios into cumulative, showcase sites, or they can simply begin again. The Macaulay ePortfolio Collection, infused with an *ethos* of openness and experimentation, encourages each student to pursue a range of projects and ideas. Some projects culminate in polished, public-facing ePortfolios while others remain fragmentary and unfinished. But with each project, students demonstrate—to their peers and to future employers—their enthusiasm for learning and their willingness to pursue creative ideas.

CONCLUSION

Gary Hamel is not alone in identifying the value of social media for workplaces. In a recent article for *Business Week*, Stephen Baker and Heather Green (2008) describe the changes to workplace environments and practices that social media will affect. “Blogs are not a business elective,” they declare, “They’re a prerequisite” (§ 2). Significantly, they draw upon academic constructs—the “elective” and the “prerequisite”—in order to convey the urgency of adopting the blog as a new business practice. In their symbolic language, Baker and Green underscore the fundamental interconnection of social media and models for learning. Indeed, social media and models for learning influence each other; incorporating social media into academic practices not only enhances traditional learning objectives, but also introduces new methods and skills with which to prepare students for productive roles in the workplace.

The case study of the Macaulay ePortfolio Collection demonstrates the myriad benefits associated with integrating social media into ePortfolio systems. In terms of opportunities for connection, communication, and collaboration, social media supplies an exceptional technological and social framework for interaction. Furthermore, situating student ePortfolios within the social context of the Web fosters authentic student voices and facilitates student-centered social content. This content in turn may provide potential employers with evidence of students’ analytical ability, intellectual leadership, and capacity for creativity, productivity, and growth.

As businesses move to embrace the social environment of the Web as a new model for professional interaction, the academy must not only follow suit, it must innovate. As Baker and Green make clear, academic models of learning continue to hold influence in the workplace. With the scholarly support of professors and the technical knowledge of students, the social ePortfolio can become a valuable tool for producing productive members of the business world—confident in their abilities, experienced in their methods, and positioned to enter the workforce with intellectual energy and entrepreneurial drive.

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goes to Joe Ugoretz, Director of Technology and Learning at Macaulay, for his continued encouragement and support.

WEBSITE LIST

- WordPress Multi-User: <http://mu.wordpress.org>
- BuddyPress: <http://buddypress.org>
- The Macaulay ePortfolio Collection: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios>
- The Macaulay Social Network: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/social>
- Childhood-Cultural Encounters: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/bernstein08/2008/12/21/childhood/#more-1157>
- Away and Abroad: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/abroad>
- Altermania: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/ty274>
- A Design a Day: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/adesignaday>

NOTE

1. I owe a debt to Jeff Drouin, my colleague at Macaulay Honors College, for his thoughts on the “Cultural Encounters” ePortfolio. Many of the ideas included in this analysis derive from our conversations about the site.

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