

IDS 493 E-Portfolio Reflection

1MAY26

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My skills come from everywhere academically—Archaeology, Marketing, Entrepreneurship, IDS, Special Education, Civil Engineering, History, my Special Collections Research Internship, and AI, to name just a few. The skills I’ve chosen to highlight in my E-Portfolio are “Museum Technology and Curation,” “Public History and Research,” and “Digital Tools.” I will go into each one in detail and discuss my artifacts below.

Museum Technology and Curation

This is the foundation of my degree. This is what I want to do, and each artifact explains more of what I mean, and how I will go about doing it. It also highlights my research and writing style.

Please Touch the Exhibit is the first time I was able to succinctly state my goal. Written for IDS 300W, I used a fictional house museum “Tristdale” to elaborate on my ideas, and where this degree could conceivably go. I used the Interdisciplinary Research Process (IRP), applying the Horizontal or Side-By-Side method (Repko and Szostak, 2021, pp. 336-337) to look at the problem of funding and accessibility for a small museum. At the crossroads of Archaeology, Disability Studies, and Computer Science, this paper cemented the job title “Museum Accessibility Technologist” almost accidentally, which gave me a much clearer idea of what I’m looking for and where I want to go. It serves as both a foundation document, and goal of everything I’ve been working towards over the last 20 years.

A Light in the Darkness is the reflection essay from my internship with the Tidewater Queer History Project (TQHP). This paper describes an exhibit that never came to fruition but was fully planned. 10-15 3D printed lithophanes (a lithophane is a 3D printed picture that only shows when light is projected behind it), mounted to a large map, with a control panel of buttons to illuminate each picture in turn. I did deep, very specific research for this- trying to find addresses and photographs of places that no longer exist in Norfolk, Virginia. It tied well into my own personal research interests—Namely places that no longer exist in Norfolk and Virginia Beach. While my interests are tied to my family, this paper expanded and drilled down into the Queer history of Norfolk. I was able to use my Archaeological and Archival knowledge to use Sanborn Insurance Maps, which “...combine the documentary power of historic photographs, city directories, and birds-eye images and as such offer immense value to historians interpreting the history of American cities, towns, and crossroads from the late-19th century through the beginning of the second half of the 20th century” (Tenny, C; 2022). Even though this research was so specific, and not tied to my family, I stumbled across a reference to the Spiritualist church that my Great-Great Grandfather Echols attended. I had never seen reference to it in print until this project, only whispered about amongst the older, now gone, generations of my family. A very important find for me!

“The JBD Designs Promotional Video” was put together using AI images and narration for AI in Business Class (MKTG 318), and while not fully polished, it does a solid job of explaining, in under a minute, the goal of my degree, what I plan to do with it, and how Computer Science, Archaeology, and Disability studies come together in a meaningful way. It also

illustrates my use of AI prompting to create video clips, some of which I think are fairly amusing, so it holds a special place in my heart.

Public History and Research

These skills are so closely aligned, I count them as one. The artifacts show my level of commitment to Public History, and my research ability in various contexts.

Have I Made My Point? was created for Archaeological Methods and Research class at VCU and ended up being presented at the 2014 VCU Undergraduate Research Symposium, which led to another presentation at the Virginia Archaeological Society Conference the same year. This was a very fun and informative dive into practical research, where I was able to get hands on with stone, antler, mud, sap, and other natural materials that were used around the world for thousands of years. While on the surface, I was exploring methods for creating chipped stone tools—Referred to as Projectile Points and Knives or PP/Ks in Archaeology, I was also looking at trade routes and material procurement among Native Americans in Virginia. It was a very grounding experience for me- working with raw materials straight from the earth, and thinking through how each step of this would have been done—From the chipped stones themselves, to the hafting, to making not only the glue, but the tempered shell clay (Herbert; 2008) vessel in which to make it—was a very satisfying process. I got to play in the mud at my Great-Grandparent's former home as a plus.

Susurrations of the CCC was a deeply personal project for me (as well as an exercise in working out project titles!). It was done in tandem with *Have I Made My Point* for the above-

mentioned class, as well as being presented at the 2014 VCU Undergraduate Research Symposium. My family has been in Tidewater (Mostly Virginia Beach and Norfolk) for almost 400 years, and I grew up spending summers listening to my Great-Grandfather tell stories of his family to the sound of water lapping at their bulkhead on the Lynnhaven River. One thing he talked about frequently was the time he spent working with the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression.

As a Captain in the Army Air Corps, he was responsible for overseeing the construction of what is now Pocahontas State Park in Chesterfield, Virginia. Having grown up on a farm (Stolen by the Navy to expand Oceana NAS) he identified with the men (mostly boys, really) under his command. One story he told was how the men started stealing watermelons from a neighboring farm to supplement Depression-Era Army Food (I don't blame them). While he identified with the boys, he also identified with the farmer who was losing his crop. He came up with what I think was a pretty genius and satisfactory solution to both problems. First, he used his savings to buy the farmer's whole watermelon crop. I can't imagine what that would have cost in 1935, and don't remember if he ever said—That really wasn't part of the story he wanted to focus on—He always highlighted the men.

Now a bunch of 14–18-year-olds get kind of froggy in the middle of nowhere with nothing to do, so the second part of his plan was to build a boxing ring. “Grudge Fights” (Knepler; 1984) cost a nickel, with the opponents shaking hands, and whatever argument being settled afterwards. He recouped the money he spent on the field of watermelons a nickel at a time, and after that, the money went towards buying other crops from other farmers to allow for fresh food to stay in the camp's diet. Everyone won.

I dug *deep* with my research but couldn't find any reference to boxing rings being set up at other CCC or similar camps. I found nothing. One afternoon I was looking in the attic of his former house on the Lynnhaven River and found his Army trunk, with a $\frac{3}{4}$ aerial shot of his camp. There was the boxing ring, clear as day. Now I wanted to find its exact location on the grounds of the park, where only one building remains. Using the remaining building, the photograph, Google Earth satellite imagery, and a sheaf of graph paper, I was able to recreate a top-down 7x5 foot map of the camp on the wall of my dorm. Using that map, I stood in an empty field, in the exact spot where 70+ years earlier my Great-Grandfather sanctioned boxing matches to pay for fresh food for the men under his command. It was an extremely gratifying experience.

Early Virginia Laws is a basic research paper with two required sources written for Virginia History (HIST 356). I included it as an artifact because it shows how I can use just a couple of sources to create a broad picture of a specific place at a specific time. In this case, The Virginia Colony in 1619. Moving on.

Digital Tools

The last skill I wanted to showcase was my use and explanation of Digital Tools, including Civil CAD, Project Gutenberg, and AI use in business.

The Temple of CET Supper Club was my final project for Civil Engineering Technology 120. I was given specifications (Lot size, setbacks, number of parking spaces, square footage, etc.) and asked to create a lot to fit. I included it here to show that I can follow exacting instructions, do a decent job with math, and create something (I think) is pretty.

The Project Gutenberg Presentation was created for Assistive Technology class, (Sped 440) to introduce the resource as a tool, and how access to 75,000 free eBooks (Gutenberg.org) could be useful in Special Education classrooms and in other locations for people with special needs—And anyone in general. I include it here to give an example of my public speaking voice (unfortunately no one in class knew *The Twilight Zone*) and video editing skills.

Customer Segments Brief was an assignment I completed for Entrepreneurship 301, where AI use was mandatory. The product I came up with was a 3D printed key fob cover, because I am forever hitting the alarm button, and I'm sick of it. The Brief essentially looks at whom this product would benefit, thereby showing whether there is a market for it or not. I developed the 'Day in the Life' part based on my own frustrations. I included it here because it shows I can use AI (Gemini, in this case) as a tool, rather than letting it do everything for me.

Conclusion

I wouldn't be here without the IDS General Studies program at ODU, and I told the Board of Visitors the same thing. I don't see myself pursuing a degree at all without it. I left high school in 1999, got a GED, and joined the Navy a few years later. I have 25+ years of experience and education that would be of little service to me in another degree program. With this program, however, I was able to take that hard-won experience, take those things I love to do, and have something tangible to show for it. When I next apply for a job, I don't have to just lean on experience, I now have the education to back it up. I was able to create

my own program of study for a job that doesn't exist yet—Whatever the future of museum curation (plus) looks like, I'm 100% prepared for it—There aren't a lot of people who can say that about anything.

References

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