IDS 493 ePortfolio Project

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Abstract

The following is an eportfolio project reflection essay. I will introduce three skill sets, and provide three supporting artifacts for each of the skill sets that will showcase how I developed each skill, and the outcome of that development. This will serve the wider goal of self reflecting on my past experiences, and how they prepare me to meet my future career goals.

Keywords: reflection, eportfolio, skills

Nguyen's 2013 work on eportfolios is a fantastic academic work for describing concretely the real tangible benefits of now only eportolios, but also the outcomes they foster. Some critical findings in the work are that the eportfolio as a tool, allows students to reflect upon the past, integrate it into their present, and potentially enrich their future (Nguyen, 2013). With the eportfolio then serving as a catalyst for reflection, one could then hopefully identify the past experiences that helped one develop and hone specific skills, reflect upon those experiences in the present, and use those reflections to better understand and craft a desired future. In the following, I will present three skill sets of my own I wish to showcase, using three artifacts per skill set to reflect on the development of those skill sets into what they are today, for the purpose of forecasting how each marketable skill set could have future benefits and positive ramifications.

The first skill set I am aiming to showcase is flexibility. I have found that "flexibility", while certainly a skill that can be and must be developed, is also not necessarily one flat and static skill, that works in one way. For comparison, many often imagine or visualize something like swimming as being a skill set or major skill, despite the fact that Olympic level swimmers will vary wildly in their skill set depending on whether they swim butterfly stroke, backstroke, or freestyle. To some, swimming is swimming, just like being flexible is being flexible, but upon reflecting upon my academic journey I can firmly say I believe it to be more of a web of skills under a wider umbrella that could be simply referred to as flexibility.

One such example of what I mean can be showcased through my first artifact, a case analysis for PHIL 355e or Cyber Ethics. This specific assignment, and the course as a whole,

required me to choose from a set of different ethical frameworks, and then make a case for a position using that framework itself. While each case within the course certainly aroused some sort of feeling from me on a personal level (indignation, agreement, and contemplation for example), my own personal feelings were seemingly irrelevant for the purpose of the writing. In this example, I argued for a position on consumer data regulations as it relates to European Union and United States legislation, by using Ubuntu philosophy, a philosophical lens native to South and Eastern Africa (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2020). This assignment, and course, I believe then, helped me to further a flexibility of mind, opinions, and thought. It's a type of flexibility that is pro social, fostering communication as it makes it easier to both empathize, and better understand those around you.

The next artifact was a PowerPoint for one of my Chinese Language and Culture courses. The task for this presentation was to detail information about an assigned city for the purpose of promoting it, as a good tour guide or tourism board member would. I think this task, and my Chinese Courses in general, showcase potentially two types of flexibility within it. Firstly, similar to the previous type, it showcases the development of flexibility in thought, fostering an ability to see through the eyes and lens of another individual, or even culture. Another type of flexibility, though, is a more general and direct form. This one is showcased by the fact that my studies have not only been about cybersecurity, research papers, and coding, but also about learning another language, making presentations, and delving into a culture that is very different from my own. This kind of flexibility shows that my interests are varied, and my ability to learn, adapt, and grow to new conditions, situations, and environments is a skill I have cultivated and am proud of.

The next artifact further showcases my adaptability and range of skills in different areas. In this assignment, I was tasked with crafting a plan that would create a lab and have

it running for 3 years. This required me to detail the roles and responsibilities of employees,

understand and detail the tools needed to run the lab, craft a plan for proper maintenance,

have a plan for initial accreditation, and the ability to use a chart creation tool to detail a

diagram of the lab itself. I think this assignment in particular really led me to understand and

appreciate not only interdisciplinary studies, but intradisciplinary studies as well. On the

outside looking in, many have often given me the sentiment that the discipline of

cybersecurity is a monolithic one, easily summarized by the roles and responsibilities of an

IT technician. But within the cybersecurity umbrella, are numerous divisions and disciplines

in their own right. Some have even proposed there may even be six different types of

cybersecurity itself (Chudasama 2021). This assignment in particular showcases a great

number of distinct aspects and disciplines within the cybersecurity umbrella, complete with

sets of skills and aptitudes required at each step of the way. To me, it not only helped me

exercise each of those skills more individually, but, as previously stated, led me to also

further develop and cultivate my wider skill set that is my flexibility.

The second skill set I will showcase is depth. While my previous skill set of

flexibility showcased that I can perform a variety of tasks, have varied interests, and can fit a

variety of environments, among other things, this skill set serves as a contrast. What I mean

by depth, in this case, is that when beneficial, I have the ability to limit my scope to a certain

skill, topic, or responsibility, and either develop my proficiency in a skill, or deepen my

knowledge. Each of the artifacts I have chosen for this instance are good examples of this,

as they are all in-depth research papers on varied subjects.

I think one lesson I took away from each of these, is the importance of

interdisciplinarity, and how to utilize it for in-depth topics. Each research paper required me

to go in depth, and reach a number of objectives when detailing an ascertain topic. Doing so

would almost require me to utilize interdisciplinarity if I were to properly meet every requirement. I would need to utilize other respective disciplines to further my current understanding and needs to be related to my own current topic of focus. I learned to further embrace this endeavor, as I learned that there are many topics that are best taught through interdisciplinary education (Bates, 2002). Importantly, though, I could also not allow the interaction with other disciplines to sidetrack or overshadow my ability to holistically engage and detail a specific subject matter. In this sense, I believe I succeeded, as the artifacts show my capability in detailing a subject matter comprehensively as needed.

The final skill set I will showcase is introspection. This skill set, I believe, is one that is one of the most important, but also one of the most difficult to accurately showcase in any capacity. In a sense, each artifact, even beyond the three used to highlight this skill set, did contain a significant amount of introspection within. To me, introspection is not only a means to correct mistakes by addressing negatives, but also a way to achieve goals by reflecting on, and then utilizing positives. As one introspects, and crafts their personal narrative, one could even develop the ability to turn bad events into positive outcomes (McAdams 2001).

To attempt to showcase some of my introspection skills, my artifacts are all self assessment and reflection assignments I have completed within my academic career. While these do not, and likely could not, show the full scale of my introspection skill set, they hopefully provide some level of backing of how developed my introspection skills are. For instance, the first artifact shows my ability to craft a personal narrative. Part of this involves my ability to understand my past, and how I have developed, grown, and potentially where I can and should continue to grow in the future. The other two artifacts provide a more detailed look at specific courses I have taken. These show that I am not only curious and

introspective in the grand scheme, and in more abstract ways. I also can diagnose specific

events, assignments, courses, subjects, and topics, and see how I interacted with them, the

errors I have made, what I can do to improve, and how I should move forward.

   In conclusion, the eportfolio provides a method for which individuals can

self-reflect. In the process of self reflection, I identified three marketable skill sets I possess.

Still within the self reflection process, I have produced three artifacts each for each skill set

that showcases how I developed the skill set, and the quality of said development. In doing

so, I have provided a look into my overall quality of skills, and made a case for the strong

foundation that I have, that would enable me to meet my career goals.

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