1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In April 2007, the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), then the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, released a research brief for a study to scope the use of ePortfolios in higher education. The commissioned study was required to examine the diverse approaches to ePortfolios for students in Australian universities in order to identify the scope, penetration and reasons for use, as well as the issues associated with, different approaches.

The successful research team comprised four universities: Queensland University of Technology (QUT) as the lead institution, the University of Melbourne, University of New England and University of Wollongong. As the University of Melbourne and University of New England were already leaders of a consortium of 14 universities commissioned by the then Department of Education, Science and Technology (DEST) to develop a single agreed template for a national diploma supplement, the research team provided the linkages required between the National Diploma Supplement study and the ePortfolio research project. QUT has an institution-wide ePortfolio system in place, with more than 40,000 students accessing the tool, and the University of Wollongong has a growing number of student cohorts utilising a mixture of common and specialist ePortfolio tools across the university. The research project was to conclude at the end of July 2008.

1.2 Scope of study

The overarching aim of the research project was to examine the current levels of ePortfolio practice in Australian higher education. Six specific project goals were presented:

| Goal 1: | To provide an overview and analysis of the national and international context related to the development of portfolios, particularly ePortfolios, in tertiary education and schools. |
| Goal 2: | To document the types of portfolios, particularly ePortfolios, used in Australian higher education including the different approaches, purposes, audiences and infrastructure. |
| Goal 3: | To identify any significant issues related to the approaches being developed in Australian education and the likely impact on what is happening in Australian higher education. |
| Goal 4: | To examine the potential relationship with the National Diploma Supplement work being conducted by a consortium of universities led by the University of New England and the University of Melbourne. |
| Goal 5: | To recommend ways to share excellent practice in the implementation and use of ePortfolios. |
| Goal 6: | To identify areas in which further development could be supported and provide advice on how this might be achieved. |

The project sought to investigate these six goals and to examine the key issues associated with ePortfolio practice in Australian universities. A range of research methodologies was used to investigate current practice and to capture data about the scope and relative penetration of ePortfolios: the literature review and environmental scan covering the issues associated with ePortfolio practice nationally and internationally, a preliminary audit of individual Australian universities, and a series of focus groups and semi-structured interviews. As the project team acknowledged the existence of different stakeholders who might well represent divergent perspectives within their institutions, several different survey instruments were developed to record the diverse responses, for example, staff directly involved in learning and teaching (lecturers, tutors, educational developers etc.); academic management (vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, executive deans, as well as IT/ICT directors etc.); and those involved in human resources (HR, organisational development etc.). Separate surveys were developed for new university students who may be encountering an ePortfolio for the first time, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and graduates who had been using ePortfolios for some time.
The questions posed in the surveys were deliberately open and exploratory. The researchers believed it was important to discover the respondents’ own view of the ePortfolio world through open ended questions, rather than potentially ‘leading’ the respondents by offering them the chance to simply ‘tick the box’ to allocate an answer. The result included a large volume of rich data, which was textually analysed to identify the conceptual issues that underpin ePortfolio practice in Australian universities. At the mid-point of the project, a two-day symposium was held with a number of international speakers leading the discussion on the policies and practices of ePortfolio use in higher education.

The focus groups and semi-structured interviews amplified and enriched the audit findings. There is a strong appreciation — especially at the grass roots level of the education sector where learners interact directly with educators — that ePortfolio opportunities are immense for the Australian higher education sector. ePortfolio policy and practice in other countries seek to draw together the different elements of integrated education and learning, graduate attributes, employability skills, professional competencies and lifelong learning, ultimately to support an engaged and productive workforce. The current state of play in Australian universities is currently fragmented. Ideally, the higher education sector should strive to bring together the different pieces of the ePortfolio puzzle to build a cohesive composition that will benefit individual students, the quality of learning and the value of higher education outcomes.

1.3 Structure of the report

The report has been structured to reflect the different research goals for the project. In this first chapter, the background of the study is provided and specific themes are introduced to contextualise the study: the need for a shared vocabulary as the basis for common understandings about ePortfolio issues; the purposes for ePortfolios; an overview of ePortfolio tools; and an outline of the common activities associated with the ePortfolio process. The discussion in Chapter 2 responds to Goal 6, to identify the areas in which further development could be supported.

As further contextualisation, the research methodologies used in the project are presented in Chapter 3. The analysis of the national and international contexts for the development of ePortfolios (Goal 1) is presented in Chapter 4, while the issues associated with the ePortfolio approaches (Goal 2) are discussed in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 discusses the research findings drawn from the national audit of ePortfolio practice, the regional focus groups, semi-structured interviews and student surveys to provide insights into the different approaches, purposes, audiences and infrastructure (Goal 2). The Australian ePortfolio Symposium, hosted by the research team in February 2008, is also reviewed.

An examination of the potential relationship with the National Diploma Supplement (Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement) project funded by DEST (Goal 4) is discussed in Chapter 7. In Chapter 8, consideration is given to ways in which excellent practice in the implementation and use of ePortfolios (Goal 5) may be supported through the establishment of an ePortfolio community of practice in Australia, as well as through strategies to facilitate collaboration across international ePortfolio groups. The report concludes with a summary of the research activities and the project’s recommendations.

1.4 Towards a shared vocabulary

The literature abounds with definitions of ‘ePortfolio’; it can be argued that the various definitions encompass similar attributes, but there is no single, collectively accepted definition. Consideration must therefore be given to the different terminology for electronic portfolios presented by designers, users and stakeholders. It is also evident in the current research literature that different terminology is employed to present the electronic portfolio in specific contexts.

While the current project promotes the use of the term ‘ePortfolio’, the broad analysis undertaken of practices across Australia and internationally should also take into account terms dependent on the different perspectives of use. For example, early education providers utilise terms such as ‘digital portfolios’, digital storytelling’ and ‘digital learning portfolios’. Higher education uses ‘electronic portfolios’, ‘e-portfolios’, ‘webfolio’ and ‘efolio’. In other contexts (for example, a corporate or business environment) these electronic tools may be referred to as ‘performance management tools’, ‘career management tools’, and ‘personal development records’ etc.
Each term used to describe the electronic portfolio will be dependent on different ownership, user
guidelines, criteria, rules and interoperability, and will have been developed for a particular stage of
learning or perhaps to support personal development planning. Indeed, it is widely noted that one of the
key challenges for emerging projects wishing to establish best practice standards is the lack of a common
language, not only within the higher education sector but also between the sector and outside agencies.

The lack of common language and the absence of an easy set of descriptors carry with them a further
danger of obfuscation, of reducing ePortfolios to a product as opposed to a process (Barker, 2006). There
is, undeniably, a suite of electronic tools that is can be described as an ‘ePortfolio system’, but it is the
process by which these tools are used and combined that effectively defines the ePortfolio experience
and captures its potential. To depict the ePortfolio as merely a technological tool is to deny the agency
and input of its users and much of the pedagogical and other complexities of its use.

Some of the confusion of simply describing ‘what is an ePortfolio’ results from the development
different systems to handle different usage, yet all being grouped under the common banner of
‘ePortfolio’. The situation is further exacerbated in the international context, since there is some slippage
in the usage of different terms across countries and systems.

Nevertheless, there are examples of efforts to establish some common understandings. The general
characteristics of an ePortfolio are described by the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) as being:

- A “repository” for “artefacts”
- A means of accessing personal information, perhaps held in distributed databases
- A means of presenting oneself and one’s skills, qualities and achievements to others
- A means of collecting and selecting assessment evidence
- A guidance tool to support review and choice
- A means of sharing and collaborating
- A means of encouraging a sense of personal identity.

(Ward & Grant, 2007)

The various definitions of a portfolio acknowledge that it is a collection of work, objects or items selected
by the portfolio author that provides evidence of a particular nature for a particular purpose. An
ePortfolio is therefore defined by the nature of the system in which these objects and items are collected,
stored and presented. Abrami and Barrett (2005) suggest that an electronic portfolio is a ‘digital container
capable of storing visual and auditory content including text, images, video and sound ... they are
designed to support a variety of pedagogical processes and assessment purposes’.

The process side of ePortfolio has been further defined as goal setting, continuous reflection, selective
communication, social networking across institutional boundaries, developing social capital, practice
with a purpose, supporting learner organisation, valorising non-formal and informal learning
experiences, supporting instructor planning and management, shifting control from instructor to
student, and changing curriculum design up to promoting reform of the traditional education system
(Bratengeyer, 2008). The role of an ePortfolio to represent digital identity is also gaining increased
attention (European Institute for E-Learning EIFEL, 2008a).

1.5 The purposes for ePortfolios

The fact that there are also multiple purposes for ePortfolios makes the landscape complex. In its
ePortfolio specification, the IMS Global Learning Consortium, an association to support standards
and best practice in the areas of learning and educational technology, has identified six major types of
ePortfolio, providing an example for each type (IMS, 2005):

**Assessment ePortfolios**

Used to demonstrate achievement to some authority by relating evidence within the ePortfolio to
performance standards defined by that authority. Rubrics are commonly used to score assessment
portfolios. For example, nursing students at a university might be required to submit an assessment
ePortfolio that presents evidence that they have a set of competencies defined for nurses in their country
as a graduation requirement. Departments or schools may use assessment ePortfolios for accreditation
purposes.
Presentation ePortfolios
Used to evidence learning or achievement to an audience in a persuasive way. Presentation portfolios often contain instructions about how their contents should be rendered. Presentation portfolios are often used to demonstrate professional qualifications. For example, a software engineer might create a presentation ePortfolio that incorporates and shows the relationships between professional certifications she has received, code she has written, and her employment history in order to convince a potential employer to hire her. Faculty members might use presentation ePortfolios to collect materials for tenure track review purposes.

Learning ePortfolios
Used to document, guide, and advance learning over time. They often have a prominent reflective component and may be used to promote metacognition, to plan learning, or for the integration of diverse learning experiences. Learning ePortfolios are most often developed in formal curricular contexts. For example, secondary school students might be asked to develop a learning ePortfolio that tracks and allows them to reflect upon how their technology skills improve over the course of a year.

Personal development ePortfolios
Personal development planning is defined in the UK as ‘a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.’ Thus, an ePortfolio for personal development planning contains records of learning, performance, and achievement which can be reflected on, and outcomes of that reflection, including plans for future development. This could include a learning ePortfolio, but goes beyond that, as it is often related to professional development and employment, so also possibly used as a presentation ePortfolio.

Multiple-owner ePortfolios
Used to allow more than one individual to participate in the development of content and presentation. A multiple owner ePortfolio might combine elements of the above portfolio types, but most likely takes the form of a Presentation ePortfolio when used for such purposes as a website or group blog and a Learning ePortfolio when used by a group of learners to present evidence of their academic growth through the group collaboration. Multiple owner ePortfolios are often used to represent the work and growth of an organisation or organisational unit and, when so employed, may be referred to as program or institutional portfolios.

Working ePortfolios
Working ePortfolios combine elements of all of the proceeding types. They often include multiple views, each of which may be analogous to an assessment, presentation, learning, or development ePortfolio. In the terms of the NLII definition, a working portfolio is the larger archive from which the contents of one or more ePortfolios may be selected. The whole of a working ePortfolio is generally accessible only to its subject, while views are made accessible to other individuals and groups.

The various purposes of the ePortfolios are illustrated by a series of use cases that highlight the different stakeholders and the preconditions for each specific scenario, as well as highlighting the circumstances where the migration or transfer of information may be required within or across institutions:

- Submitting an ePortfolio to an external review system
- Sharing an ePortfolio with another ePortfolio system
- Sharing an ePortfolio to receive feedback
- Moving an ePortfolio between ePortfolio systems.

(IMS, 2005)

In terms of the funding of projects in the UK, the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) (2007a) succinctly outlines four principal purposes for ePortfolios, indicating that the areas of use tend to reflect different degrees in maturity of implementation that may, in fact, overlap:

Supporting application
- Providing a selection of material for application for admission to study or job, induction, appraisal or assessment

Supporting transition
- Through presenting a richer picture of learners’ achievements on application, and in better preparing for the transition to a new environment
Supporting learning, teaching and assessment
- Supporting the assessment of learning, evidencing competencies or standards for summative assessment.
- Supporting assessment for learning, encouraging learners to present their experiences, achievements and reflections, share with peers, tutors and employers, and incorporate feedback into their learning

Supporting personal development planning (PDP) and continuing professional development (CPD)
- Providing scaffolding to support lifelong learners in reflecting on their current and completed learning, achievements and experiences, and on goals and opportunities, to guide learning (formal and informal) and professional development over time.

This framework of ePortfolio practice is used by JISC to guide the organisation’s financial support for research projects (JISC, 2008a).

One of the challenges facing institutions considering (or already involved in) the adoption or implementation of ePortfolios is that there may be multiple interests within the university that represent some, or indeed all, of the different reasons for using ePortfolios. This situation may be compounded by the wide range of ePortfolio systems and tools available to the institution.

Given the range of purposes and applications, ePortfolios can inevitably include a wide variety of information:
- Personal information
- Education history
- Recognition — awards and certificates
- Reflective comments
- Coursework — assignment, projects
- Instructor comments
- Previous employer comments
- Goals and plans
- Personal values and interests
- Presentations and papers
- Personal activities — volunteer work and professional development.

It is stressed that the content of and artefacts included in an ePortfolio ‘should have a purpose — they should demonstrate a skill, an attribute, and learning acquired from experience’ (Siemens, 2004). Siemens discusses the attributes of ‘an ideal ePortfolio system’, which should allow for flexibility in input, organisation, retrieval and display of content and artefacts to support the needs of all stakeholders, including learners, teachers and academic managers (see Figure 1.1).

![Figure 1.1: Attributes of an ideal ePortfolio system](image)
The ePortfolio tool needs to be sufficiently versatile to ensure that all four functions effectively meet the needs of all potential stakeholders. Stefani, Mason and Pegler argue that, when compared with paper-based portfolios, it is the digital environment that specifically offers the flexibility ‘to rearrange, edit and combine materials’, ‘to connect documents together’ (for example, through hyperlinking of internal and external resources) and to be ‘portable and mobile’ so that the content ‘can be transported and transferred with ease … can be accessed and used in a variety of locations and can be replicated and shared with others’ (Stefani, Mason, & Pegler, 2007, p. 17f).

### 1.6 ePortfolio tools

Even a very cursory search of the web for ‘ePortfolio software’ or ‘ePortfolio tools’ inevitably results in an array of resources that highlights the assortment of products and systems available. The landscape is in a constant state of flux, with many new services being launched, but at the same time, support for some older tools is being withdrawn by developers. Efforts have been made to try to categorise the different types of ePortfolio tools, with a dichotomy occurring between the institutionally hosted systems and the individually developed tools:

> There is evidence in current literature that for some users and developers, an e-portfolio system is virtually synonymous with an electronic learning environment (ELÉ), whereas for others it is something more contained, individual and limited in facilities

(Stefani, Mason, & Pegler, 2007, p. 9)

Barrett (2007) maintains a website where she categorises the types of ePortfolio tool and provides links to the developers’ own sites. Barrett’s categories include:

- Content management systems (CMS)
- Commercial systems (higher education and teacher education)
- In-house developed systems
- Free website builders with free web space
- Open source tools.
- Blog software and Web 2.0 tools.

In some contexts, common software tools such as Microsoft Word or PowerPoint may be used as the ePortfolio platform. Early adopters of ePortfolio may initially work with a number of different applications that serve different purposes in order to explore the ePortfolio processes, rather than being overly concerned about the functionality of specific tools. Some commentators have described their wish list for an ePortfolio product as a ‘Swiss army knife’, which can in fact detract from focusing on the opportunity to start working with students from the ground up.

Stefani, Mason and Pegler (2007) have refined the range of categories to present the benefits and drawbacks of four types of system currently being used in higher education:

- Commercial software (which includes CMS with an ePortfolio module)
- Proprietary systems (often designed by universities)
- Open source ePortfolio software
- Open source common tools (such as web authoring tools).
The following table presents a brief summary of some of the key points to be considered.

**Table 1.1: Categories of ePortfolio system**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of software</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Drawbacks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial software</td>
<td>No direct software development costs</td>
<td>Licences must adapt to vendor’s pricing structure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Technical support handled by the vendor</td>
<td>Customer service and technical support may be poor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Choice of software system</td>
<td>Requests for adaptation may be slow and expensive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CMS may have built-in ePortfolio solution, offering integrated environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proprietary (in-house) systems</td>
<td>Institution develops exactly what it wants</td>
<td>Development costs can be prohibitive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No software licence fees</td>
<td>May require time and energy to build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institution owns intellectual property</td>
<td>High levels of technical expertise required to build and maintain the system</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Need to retain expert staff to sustain and scale the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open source ePortfolio software (OSPI)</td>
<td>No charge for open source software</td>
<td>Costs associated with technical support and maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members of OPSI participate in software development</td>
<td>Possibility of open source initiative drying out and/or the community disbanding</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSPI designed to work with Sakai Project</td>
<td>Software and development may not keep pace with needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open source common tools</td>
<td>More creative ePortfolios are possible</td>
<td>Students need web authoring skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ePortfolio creators can design and enter artefacts in any way they choose</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low software costs</td>
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As with any eLearning application, the issues to be considered by individual teachers, faculties or institutions are multifaceted. These issues may include:

- Licensing conditions
- Development costs
- Maintenance costs
- Level of integration with campus-wide systems
- Degree of adaptation desired
- Level of technical support available
- Quality of vendor support
- Speed of implementation prescribed
- Potential longevity of a system or a project
- Degree of structure and guidance required for users
- Degree of creativity offered to the users
- Level of ICT literacy amongst students and educators.
In the lead up to the Australian ePortfolio Symposium held in February 2008, an ePortfolio Showcase was hosted by QUT (see Section 6.5.2). The event, attended by 70 people representing more than 20 different Australian and New Zealand universities, included nine presentations of ePortfolio applications that offered insights into open source (Sakai, Open Source Portfolios and Mahara), commercial (Blackboard, PebblePad, Desire2Learn and CareerHub) and proprietary (QUT). The contexts for the ePortfolios encompassed national initiatives, institution-wide projects and discipline based applications. Feedback from participants was very positive: they appreciated the opportunity to see the different ePortfolio systems and to talk with some of the vendors and users of the various tools. Links to the individual presentations have been provided on the ‘Showcase’ page of the Australian ePortfolio Symposium website (www.eportfoliopractice.qut.edu.au/symposium/showcase.jsp).

On her website, Barrett (2007) compares a number of different ePortfolio tools, provides information about the issues of hosting, storage space, licensing and maintenance costs, and discusses her views about different tools. The systems she lists include Plone, Blackboard, Drupal, Folio Live, iWebfolio, Open Source Portfolio Initiative (OSPI), KEEP Toolkit, eFolio Minnesota, Epsilen, Elgg, WordPress, WikiSpaces etc.

Sweat-Guy and Buzzetto-More (2007) have prepared a review of eight widely available systems, comparing a range of features such as intended user groups, supporting file types, storage, accessibility, hosting options, vendor support and pricing. The platforms reviewed are predominantly North American, including ePortfolio (Chalk & Wire), Foliotek, LiveText, TaskStream, Tk20, TrueOutcomes, Blackboard Portfolio Platform and Open Source Portfolio Initiative (OSPI). The review provides a comparison of different features of ePortfolio tools, but acknowledges that each institution will need to soundly consider the role and purpose of ePortfolios within their own context: ‘There are any number of considerations that may influence the electronic portfolio adoption process. Uses, needs, and stratagem may vary and some features may be more important than others’ (Sweat-Guy & Buzzetto-More, 2007).

Lorenzo Associates, Inc. (2008) has recently launched a website that offers detailed coverage of ePortfolio system vendors and their products. Subscribers can access interviews with the vendors about the features of the systems, as well as client case studies about the adoption, implantation and future use of the tools. The first four products reviewed are Chalk & Wire, Digication, LiveText and TaskStream.

Nuventive LLC (2008), developer of the iWebfolio software tool, has prepared an analysis tool to support stakeholders with system evaluation and decision making. The checklist covers a number of factors relevant to the different ePortfolio stakeholders (owners, reviewers and system administrators) as well as some key issues associated with assessment tasks, reporting requirements and technical specifications (for example, security, file compatibility etc.). While no single checklist can be totally comprehensive, the document may be used to stimulate enquiry and discussion about the features and functionality of different systems.

1.7 The ePortfolio process

Regardless of the specific purpose for the ePortfolio and of the actual software platform or the type of tool used, there are some common activities involved in the process of developing an ePortfolio. It is often referred to as a ‘Plan–Do–Review’ cycle (Pallister, 2007), which reflects the theories of Kolb’s Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and the theories of Action Learning (McGill & Brockbank, 2004).
Chapter 1: Introduction

A relatively simple model for creating an ePortfolio identifies four central activities: **Collect, Select, Reflect, Publish**. Ithaca College in New York State, USA, provides learners and teachers with detailed guidance about the use of ePortfolios at the institution, acknowledging the work undertaken at Penn State University (which has a long-established ePortfolio environment). Particular attention is paid to the four-stage ePortfolio process (Ithaca College, 2007).

### The ePortfolio process

**Collect, Select, Reflect, Publish**

*Taken from the Penn State e-Portfolio site ([http://portfolio.psu.edu](http://portfolio.psu.edu))*

Penn State University describes the ePortfolio process as ‘Collect, Select, Reflect, Publish,’ a fitting slogan for the steps involved in creating the online representation of an individual’s work and thoughts. Each step in the process is a crucial part of the development of an ePortfolio.

The first step, **Collect**, is the process of gathering evidence of academic, professional, or personal growth; projects from classes, work from internships, certifications or commendations, and work from co-curricular activities are all examples of evidence. Evidence comes in many forms and many formats, but for an ePortfolio, a piece of evidence must be in a format accessible on the Web. This step also involves the preparation or translation of evidence into a Web-ready format such as PDF (Portable Document Format), Microsoft Word, JPEG, etc.

Second is **Select**: this step involves examination of a collected body of evidence and the selection of those pieces of evidence that are most representative of an individual's work. Even though most work represents some aspect of an individual’s thoughts and growth, not all pieces of evidence are appropriate for an ePortfolio or for the Web. This is an important step and cannot be skipped; an ePortfolio should not inundate the viewer with redundant evidence, but neither should it under-represent its creator. This step and the one after it, **Reflect**, also involve the actual creation of an ePortfolio using the IC Web Profiler.

**Reflect** is the most personal part of the ePortfolio process; this step involves reflection and discussion of what an individual has learned. An ePortfolio should not be just a collection of work and evidence. It should also contain evidence of academic, intellectual, and personal growth. It is important to not only present hard evidence of work, but to also simultaneously present the lessons learned or the growth achieved through the completion of the work presented. An ePortfolio isn’t just about what has been done; it is about what has been learned.

Finally is the step **Publish**. This is the process of posting an ePortfolio to the Web server, making it accessible to the Ithaca College community or to the Web-viewing public. However, this is not a purely technical process, as careful thought must be given to the intended audience of an ePortfolio, and the potential impact of the evidence presented.
In other ePortfolio contexts, the final step in the process is seen as the opportunity to connect the different aspects of an individual’s life (Siemens, 2004):

1. **Collecting** items for the portfolio  
2. **Selecting** items best able to demonstrate competence  
3. **Reflecting** on the items selecting in order to demonstrate learning derived from experiences  
4. **Connecting** various aspects of life — personal, learning, work, and community.

In this way, the ePortfolio has the potential to establish connections between the different phases of the individual’s life, work or learning:

- **What? (The Past)** What have I collected about my life/work/learning? (my artefacts)
- **So What? (The Present)** What do those artifacts show about what I have learned? (my current reflections on my knowledge, skills and abilities)
- **Now What? (The Future)** What direction do I want to take in the future? (my future learning goals)

(Barrett, 2008)

At LaGuardia Community College, the maturity of the work with ePortfolios has been recognised, so that it is felt that the staff are now ready to use the ePortfolio process ‘to improve the connection between students, faculty and learning’ (LaGuardia Community College, 2008).

## 1.8 Summary

The brief overview of the concepts, purposes, tools and processes associated with ePortfolios represents an introduction to the context and background of the topic of the report. The Australian ePortfolio Project has been an intense, but wide-ranging project that has involved a spectrum of stakeholders who have been able to help the project team develop a rounded view of current ePortfolio practice in Australian higher education. The following chapters consider the changes that have taken place in recent years in the learning and teaching environment, and some of the policy drivers that have led to the implementation of ePortfolios in education and employment. Both the domestic and international contexts are examined, with a focus on the two levels of policy and practice.

With the Review of Australian higher education (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations DEEWR, 2008a) coinciding with the later stages of the ePortfolio project activities, it is acknowledged that the university sector faces a number of challenges. In the next chapter the research team presents some of the critical issues associated with the potential for further ePortfolio development in this country, specifically focusing on government policy, international standards, academic policy and the learning and teaching context. Four scenarios are introduced to stimulate thoughts about the possible options that might either stimulate or restrict engagement with ePortfolios in tertiary education.