

## **Our journey into the future: Using ePortfolios to capture our learning and development**

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In recent years, interest has been growing in ePortfolios (electronic or digital portfolios) to support learning, professional accreditation and career development activities. In the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, specific research studies have examined the potential of ePortfolios in the higher and vocational education sectors and in employment. In late 2008 the Australian ePortfolio Project (AeP), a major research study funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, reported on the state of play in Australian universities, with further funding granted to help ePortfolio stakeholders establish communities of practice to share learning and experiences of quality ePortfolio activities in higher education, in order to encourage ongoing research and dissemination. The project's website can be accessed at [www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au](http://www.eportfolioppractice.qut.edu.au).

One specific community established under the auspices of the AeP project focuses on learning and development in the library and information services (LIS) sector, to explore the use of ePortfolios by professional and paraprofessional staff in a range of libraries and information services, with the support of managers and mentors, as well as the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). The participants in the ALIA/AeP2 LIS Pilot Project agreed to commit to the project for a period of two years (2009-2010), with access to an ePortfolio system, PebblePad, in order to establish a rich portfolio of reflective evidence on their own learning and development, as well as build a community of practice within the LIS discipline.

Through this community, the participants have the opportunity to engage with the ePortfolio processes, both individually and collaboratively, and to directly contribute to an innovative initiative that seeks to address key issues in professional education and employment within the LIS sector in Australia. At the commencement of the project, demographic data and information about the participants' own motivations to join the project were captured through surveys and interviews, with further experiential data collected as the participants progressively developed their ePortfolios. The project attracted 28 participants, ranging from students and new graduates to mid-career staff. The study effectively encompasses representatives from public, academic, TAFE and special libraries located in both metropolitan and regional areas of Australia.

The online presentation allows the participants to tell their own personal stories, through the use of multimedia, to highlight how their ePortfolios have helped them embrace their past and current experiences and achievements to help them better understand how they can advance their own future careers. At a high level, the presentation highlights how the LIS sector is recognised as a leader in the arena of professional development and lifelong learning.

The participants' collaborative ePortfolio can be viewed online: [www.tiny.cc/ALIAeportfolio](http://www.tiny.cc/ALIAeportfolio).

The presentation includes the contributions made by Joanne Beazley, Rebecca Randle, Corrinne Hills, Jane Orbell-Smith, Kathryn Lindsay, Brenna Cook, Rebecca Ramm and Leesa Philip.