Tips for Building a Better Public Portfolio

1. **Identify your audience before you start**

   Your portfolio must be designed to help you achieve your post-graduation goals (e.g., get a job, go to graduate school, etc.). Once you've identified your goals, select a specific audience: What job do you want? Which graduate field of study do you want to pursue? All of your text, visuals, and samples should be carefully selected for your chosen audience. Remember, CxC is NOT your audience.

2. **Organization is critical**

   Your site should have a clean, clear navigational structure. Before viewers click into a section, they should know exactly what to expect from the link label. Be sure to put things in their proper place and avoid duplication or unnecessary sections (e.g., there's no need to have an "About Me" page if your homepage is "about you").

3. **Select the creation tool that's right for you**

   There are many CxC-supported web development tools, including Weebly, Wix, WordPress, Yola and iWeb. Some tools are easier to use than others, so select one that fits your level of technical expertise. Also, each tool comes with different templates and site styles, so you'll want to select the one that best complements your post-graduation goals and meets the needs of your intended audience.

4. **Quality, quantity, and purpose matter when presenting work samples**

   You need to provide viewers with multiple high-quality work samples that demonstrate your disciplinary knowledge and communication skills. All of your samples should be relevant to your audience and help explain why you are the ideal candidate for the job or graduate school to which you are applying. Strong portfolios typically include a minimum of five high-quality, relevant work samples.

5. **Craft clear, concise, professional web text**

   Remember that web writing is a different style of formal writing. Ideas should be presented in chunks (short paragraphs) and in list-format when appropriate. Viewers do not want to scroll forever to read your story.

6. **Be sure your message matches your design**

   Backgrounds, borders, colors, photographs and fonts communicate a lot about your skilled-eye as a visual communicator. Design also sends direct signals to the viewer about your messages. If your text says you are an organized engineer but your design is cluttered and pink, you are sending mixed messages.

7. **Save all work sample files as PDFs or JPGs and upload videos to YouTube or Vimeo**

   These are the most commonly used file formats and will ensure viewers don't have to fumble with downloading clunky PowerPoint or video files. It will also alleviate incompatibility issues with Word and other software, which keep viewers from being able to properly access and view your files.

8. **Set items to open in the appropriate window**

   If you are linking to a page within your website, set the link to "open in the current window." If you are linking to one of your files (PDF or JPG) or to an external website, set the link to "open in new window."

9. **Rework your resume for the web**

   Your resume is a critical part of your portfolio and should be included as a text page within your site, as well as a downloadable PDF. The text you put on your resume web page may be more in-depth as you have additional space beyond the printed 1-page PDF resume. You may also need to reformat it for readability on the web. Remember, this is a public site, so be safe and remove personal information such as your home address or cell phone number.

10. **Use inline-linking**

    Do not write: "To email me, click the contact me link at the bottom of the page." Websites are all about user-friendliness. Instead, simply write "email me for additional information" and link the words "email me" to your email address.

11. **Proofread, and proofread again!**

    Typos and grammatical errors often standout to readers, but are particularly alarming when found on a website created by an LSU Distinguished Communicator. Proof your site carefully and have friends and family read over it for you too.

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