

## Module 3

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WRA 210

**Interviewee:** Izabela Babinska (PW alum 2011, concentration in Writing in Communities and Cultures).

### Questions and Responses:

1. How do you decide which pieces/projects to include in your portfolio?

When choosing pieces, I wanted to make sure I represented myself as a well-rounded writer and designer, so I decided on a variety of pieces that I was not only proud of, but showed versatility. My focus was referring to myself as a "cross-cultural communicator" which I not only wanted to show by including a piece that was entirely in Spanish, as well as a travel blog, but to show how that was applicable in the work place. I used the descriptions as an opportunity to try to explain that and make it a cohesive story - you can decide how successful I was on that front!

2. What design choices did you make in order to communicate your style/personality through your portfolio?

My main concern was to make it realistic from the design standpoint - I didn't want to use anything too complicated, because, quite honestly, I'm not a very skilled web designer. I didn't want to mislead anyone about my capabilities. Besides that, I wanted something simple that let the pieces speak for themselves, because that is where I thought my strengths were. I have a pretty minimalistic design aesthetic as is, so using white with a couple of accent colors was a simple choice for me.

3. How did you use design choices to communicate professionalism through your portfolio?

Again, as in number 2, I tried to let my pieces speak for themselves and tried to think of the type of employer I would want to attract. I don't know that I would have said it in these words back then, but I wanted to come off as hard working, straightforward and efficient and appeal to an employer who would respect those qualities.

4. Do you still use the portfolio you created while a PW student? If no, why not?

(Hiding my face in shame from Laura Julier!) I do not. A lot of the work I do now - major gifts fundraising for a large health system - is either internal or confidential and I would not want it to be publicly accessible. I do keep a paper portfolio of grants, appeals, letters, etc., but more for my reference than anything

else. I have also not been job seeking recently, so it has not been a priority.

5. Do you update your portfolio often? What sorts of changes do you make?

See number 4. The paper portfolio I currently keep I categorize by "job function"... so I have tabs for grants, major donor communications, donor relations, planned giving and materials/brochures from conferences I attend. I try to keep a variety of things so that if I *were* to submit a portfolio to an employer I could customize it based on the job description and types of tasks they require from the position. Because I do more writing and editing than creative, having a portfolio to showcase my work has never been a top priority....

6. How do you go about promoting your skills and sharing your portfolio? (for instance, through LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, your website)

... HOWEVER (cont from #5) I would say I'm much more apt to share the outcomes of my work. So if I have a grant funded or there is an article about something I was involved in, I'm more likely to link to that from Facebook or Twitter (which I stopped using b/c my account was hacked and I never took the time to rebuild my "network" on there). I do use LinkedIn quite a bit though. I do my best to update my profile with job capabilities, new connections, etc. Especially in terms of network-building it's a great tool - I've even been contacted by a recruiter who invited me to meet with her or keep her organization in mind if I was ever looking for a new job. (You should add me on there! And never be shy about sending invites to people you know/are interested in knowing... the best way to not make it awkward or uncomfortable is to send a personalized note like "I heard you speak at x conference and was really interested in the topic you covered" in addition to the generic message LinkedIn populates for you.)

7. Is there anything you wish you had known when you were first building your portfolio that you'd care to share?

Hmm... a lot! Probably the things I listed in number 8 as advice.

8. Do you have any suggestions for students building their first portfolios?

Start early! Give yourself time to edit. Decide on what you want and then how to accomplish that within your design capabilities - if you use tool or techniques you're not familiar with, you're less likely to use it in the future. Think about who you want to look at it and what you want them to get out of it (and also how much time are they likely to have to look at something like this). Don't be afraid to ask someone in a job you'd like to have to look at a draft and give you feedback.

## Synthesis

From Izabela's responses to my questions, I gathered that she tried very hard to represent herself as a cross-cultural communicator. She deliberately included portfolio pieces that she felt showed her interest in cultures and her abilities as a designer within different cultural spaces. Izabela's work with the Asian Center and her brochure on Latin cinema strengthened her image as a cross-cultural communicator, and her simple portfolio design showcases her style as a designer. She wrote that she is not a very skilled web designer, and so keeping her portfolio very simple was a deliberate move so as not to mislead potential employers about her skills as a web designer. I greatly appreciated the simplicity and her honesty in both her design and her responses.

As I begin to craft my own portfolio, I will be taking Izabela's advice and starting to plan early on! I am new to web design, and so I will be giving myself extra time to plan, create, and edit my portfolio design. I will also be using fairly simple design functions that I will be able to replicate and/or change in the future. If I don't know how to change things later on, I will be very tempted to abandon my portfolio like Izabela did (although she no longer uses hers for different reasons). I plan to keep pdf and paper copies as often as possible for my own records. Since interviewing Izabela, I have also created a LinkedIn profile and begun to build my network through that form of social media. Overall, I will be referring to Izabela's suggestions often as I move closer to joining the workforce.