

Natalie Orcutt
Module 3 – Alumni Interview

Alumni: Hollyce Balentine, Class of 2012

(Professional Writing with a focus in Digital and Technical Writing whom is currently working as a User Experience Architect, which is my major)

Question 1: Were there any initial ideas or things that you thought you really needed to incorporate into your portfolio when you were first starting out and making it?

Hollyce answered:

I knew that I wanted my portfolio to showcase a wide skill set, since I was not certain what career path I wanted to take immediately after graduation. I did know that I loved digital media and the idea of user experience architecture, which is why I chose UX as one of my portfolio categories. Other than that, I knew I wanted to showcase pieces I was proud of.

Question 2: I've noticed that a lot of your site has some visual emphasis but is still relatively simplistic in style, was this mostly based on your personal taste or was more due to the who you thought would be viewing your site? (This question was mainly asked because I am just very interested in User Experience so I was wondering at what point she made stylistic decisions for her own taste or the viewer)

Hollyce answered:

Really, I wish that my portfolio did have a little visual pizzazz, but that is definitely not my forte. Some of the design choices were purposeful. The font of my name is both feminine and professional. I chose a blue color scheme since it elicits feelings of trustworthiness in color psychology. Also, the inclusion of thumbnails for portfolio pieces (even though I wish I had made the thumbnails larger) was important to me because I knew it would give users a preview of the pieces and make them more likely to view them.

Question 3: What did you learn the most about/ what was the major take away you got from first building your portfolio?

Hollyce's response:

Coding by hand is tedious, but necessary to learn. Organize your code in a way that is easy to skim so that making updates is easier. When you go on to take 410, you'll learn how to use and make your own templates in a content-management system (CMS) which is MUCH easier to update.

4) Is there anything you wish you would have known when you were originally starting out in building an online portfolio?

Hollyce answered:

Not for the actual website, but for the work I would put in it. Treat every assignment you have in undergrad as if a future employer might see it. It will make populating your portfolio much easier.

I definitely took a lot out of talking to Hollyce. Not only did she explain her current job situation, where she is working as a User Experience Architect, but talked to be a bit about how the field of Experience Architecture was growing and changing which was really nice and exciting to hear. Moving forward with my portfolio, I definitely want to incorporate some of the key choices that she mentioned such as potentially looking into color psychology and being particular about the tone of the types of fonts that I choose because these two things I had never considered. I definitely think I would like to focus more on the aesthetics of my portfolio than Hollyce did in hers, just because that's of greater interest to me but I appreciate and admire the simplicity of her portfolio's structure. The idea of including thumbnails is also a really good idea I think because not only does the image break up the text, but also as she pointed out, thumbnails make a potential employer more likely to open the links of interest to them. Currently I don't have as many things to put in my portfolio, as I'm only a freshman, but going into future Experience Architecture and Professional Writing classes I will be sure to always think about maintaining high quality work so that I won't ever run into trouble with not having enough projects that I'm really proud of to put in my portfolio. I will also try to take her advice about really trying to understand and learn coding as much as possible, not only because it is involved in my major, but because I think it is really a key aspect of making a cohesive and user-friendly site, and after all if my portfolio is not easily accessible then I probably would not get any jobs in User Experience.