

Module 3

Interview Questions/Replies with Lindsey Brandvold

1. What did you include in your portfolio that didn't come from coursework?

Now that I am reviewing my portfolio carefully for the first time in awhile, I've realized that all of my writing samples were actually coursework. However, this is not necessarily negative; if anything, it's a testament to just how well-rounded MSU PW courses are! Each one taught me valuable skills and left me with samples that can showcase these skills strongly.

2. What extracurricular activities were you involved in and how do you use represent them in your portfolio?

My main writing extracurricular was working at the Writing Center. Since the majority of this job involved one-on-one tutoring, I was not able to spotlight it via samples in my portfolio. BUT, this did provide some great material to highlight in my resume as well as conversation pieces for interviews.

3. How did you decide the design of your website?

I'm not great with html/css coding, so I played around with the portfolios of alumni so I could find a simple layout that worked for me. I did use the css code from the one I liked, but I was careful to tweak it and make it my own. The actual design came through messing around with color swatches and fonts until eventually I decided on a design that would let me literally highlight each of my skill-sets as a PW (writer, editor, designer).

4. How did you make your portfolio personal and professional?

First of all, I decided against using a picture of myself because I wanted my name to be prominent and my design memorable

enough that a profile picture wouldn't be necessary. I also wanted my samples to be front and center, which is why I included preview pics and brief descriptions of all of them.

5. How has your portfolio helped you in your career?

In terms of potential future employers, if you are able to link to a personal online portfolio, you instantly associate your name with tons of personality and concrete, accessible work samples, and your resume can be limiting in these areas. I have had very positive commentary on my portfolio by then-potential employers who are now current employers (I've had a few within the same company as I move up and around), so I'm sure it's had a wonderful impact on the decisions of those who hire me.

6. Do you update your portfolio?

I have not updated my portfolio since graduation. It's definitely time for a tune-up! But don't learn from my bad example; if you create a web portfolio for yourself, you should update often! The main reason I haven't updated mine is because I don't have access to

DreamWeaver or another web development program. I think it may be time to move my portfolio to Weebly or somewhere that would make it more manageable for me to make updates.

7. If you could go back and recreate your portfolio what would you of done differently?

I think I would have linked the "writer," "editor," and "designer" text in the center of the site to the actual writer, editor, and designer pages. It's cool that they light up in accordance with which page you're on, but this would have been a slight improvement to the navigation.

8. Do you have any tips about creating an online portfolio?

1. Play around! A lot! Get really familiar (if you aren't already) with the Adobe suite. I had lots of design ideas in my head that just didn't look so good once I "sketched" them out in InDesign or Photoshop. 2. Browse through lots of web portfolios to help you brainstorm. Try to recognize what they have in common. Recognize which ones have a wow factor and why it works. 3. Be very selective with your samples. Ask why you are including each one and maybe ask peers to review them and point to which skills they showcase most. Revisit all of your samples once you've chosen which ones you want to use. Edit and polish them. 4. Proofread EVERYTHING. Once. Twice. Five times. Have peers review your site before it goes live. Then proofread again.

9. How do you present your portfolio?

I link my portfolio at the very top of my resume (after name and contact information, of course). I'm also not afraid to invite interviewers to check it out if they haven't already. I can also use it as a conversation piece for interviews by discussing specific samples (bonus if the interviewer has already glanced it over).

10. How did you make your skills marketable?

I made my skills marketable by first dividing them into clear categories on my portfolio. If someone is interested in one skill-set over the other, they can quickly jump to that section. It's also important to consider what type of job you'd like, and tailor your portfolio to market the skills for that type of position. Also, any good web portfolio will include a download of or a link to a resume. The language used in your resume will have a huge impact on whether your skills are marketable or not. You could have some awesome, unique skill, but if your resume description isn't up to par, then you may have just lost an interview chance. You won't be

able to market your skills very well if your polished online portfolio links to a resume that's lacking.

11. What did you struggle most with when creating your portfolio?

My main struggle when creating my portfolio was my lack of web development skills. I had learned to identify elements of great web design/user interface through my classes, but I often felt lost when it came to actually turning this knowledge, combined with my design ideas, into an actual website. If I could do it over, I would get more comfortable with my web development skills in the months leading up to launching my online portfolio.

Synthesis

Lindsey Brandvolt made it very clear to me that having a deep understand of designing through the Internet is very important when developing a portfolio. I also learned that I can take ideas from other people's portfolios and tweak it to make it more personal. She decided to make her name stand out instead of pictures, but in my portfolio I want to make pictures prominent so they can put a face to my name. Lindsey told me to update often, which makes sense because the hirer is going to want to see a current portfolio. Then she described to me how important it is to reread. She said to reread as many times as possible. This is very important because this is a website open to the world and every possible person who could be interested in hiring you and if there are errors it will make you look sloppy. Finally she talked about using skills that make sense in the business world, yet are unique in your portfolio.