

California State University Monterey Bay

Integrative learning with ePortfolios



**California State University
Monterey Bay**

Seaside, California
<http://csumb.edu/>

Graduate program boosts learning effectiveness and student success with ePortfolios created and shared using Adobe® Acrobat® Pro software and Acrobat.com

Electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) are more than just a technology. They represent an integrative learning approach that helps instructors and students plan, track, and evaluate learning, performance, and presentation of material. ePortfolios also help students absorb information in personally meaningful ways and visibly showcase the value of what was learned.

Few people understand the promising role of ePortfolios in education better than John Ittelson. He is Professor Emeritus of Information Technology and Communications Design at California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB); a university that emphasizes access to quality higher education for traditionally underserved and low-income populations. Ittelson has written numerous articles on the topic of ePortfolios and has integrated them into his online graduate course, Interactive Multimedia for Instruction. His tools of choice for enabling students to create and share ePortfolios and instructors to evaluate them are Adobe Acrobat Pro software and Acrobat.com.

"Acrobat Pro is ideal for creating, managing, and sharing ePortfolios and other course information. With its PDF Portfolio functionality, Acrobat Pro not only enables students to easily aggregate digital artifacts that evidence their achievements over time, but also allows instructors to embed comments and suggestions directly into the PDF Portfolio so that students can view their work in the context of instructor feedback," says Ittelson. "On the receiving end, PDF is ideal because the files are universally portable, and can be viewed using free Adobe Reader® software."

In CSU Monterey's Interactive Multimedia for Instruction class, graduate students learn the principles and application of media to design effective instructional materials. Students often exchange PDF Portfolios with faculty for evaluation and feedback. Students also create PDF Portfolios to capture their achievements to help land jobs and learn valuable professional skills. Former student Michelle Alvino used Adobe Acrobat to create a PDF Portfolio to show a potential employer projects she had been working on for her Masters in Instructional Science and Technology degree.



Challenge

- Help students absorb information in personally meaningful ways
- Enable instructors to plan, track, and evaluate evidence of learning and performance
- Help students launch careers

Solution

- Use the PDF Portfolio capabilities in Adobe Acrobat Pro
- Leverage the web conferencing and file sharing capabilities of Acrobat.com

Benefits

- Supported deeper learning experience
- Made learning more integrative and meaningful
- Provided one place for assignments and materials to streamline instruction
- Enabled students to land jobs upon graduation

Toolkit

- Adobe Acrobat Pro
- Acrobat.com
- Adobe LiveCycle® Designer
- Adobe Captivate

Support for integrative learning

Ittelson's Interactive Multimedia for Instruction class helps graduate students learn the principles and application of media—text, images, audio, and video—to design effective instructional materials. During the course, students learn how to create and edit digital images, audio, and video for use in individual and team projects. As part of the class, every few weeks students exchange PDF Portfolios containing instructional materials with Ittelson for evaluation and feedback. At the end of the 15-week course, students have a collection of digital artifacts that documents their achievements and development over time.

In Fall 2009, Ittelson first integrated Acrobat.com—Adobe's free set of online services, for easy, reliable web-based file sharing and access—into the class curriculum. Today, his students not only create PDF Portfolios using Acrobat, but also can access the material—assignments, resource information, and instructions—on Acrobat.com at anytime to use as a resource.

"Together, Acrobat Pro and Acrobat.com provide a robust course management system that preserves the integrity of student and instructor materials," says Ittelson. "With Adobe tools, everything is conveniently in one place—and the content is in its original form regardless of the browser, applications, or plug-ins that students or instructors may use. With Acrobat, the fidelity of the original content is preserved."

The PDF Portfolio

When considering solutions to use for his coursework, Ittelson explored different formats for students to create and share their work in an ePortfolio. Students might generate digital portfolios using presentation software or tools to create web pages. Or, they may use virtual learning environments (VLEs) to capture and display a learning record. Those options, however, presented several drawbacks.

Presentation software can prove limiting in terms of combining a multitude of different media types. Creating a web page can require knowledge that extends beyond the technical acumen of some students. Recipients of an ePortfolio created using presentation software typically need to have the presentation software installed in order to view a student's work. In the case of the VLE, an ePortfolio often cannot be easily accessed outside the learning environment.

In contrast, Acrobat Pro enables students to easily combine PDF documents as well as other file formats including audio, video, and image files into a single, dynamic, and easy-to-navigate PDF Portfolio. Students can send an ePortfolio in PDF to any recipient; all that is required to view the work is free Adobe Reader software. Ittelson has students post their PDF Portfolios to Acrobat.com and makes use of the Share and ConnectNow features that allow students and instructors to share documents and collaborate online through web conferencing. For these reasons and more, Ittelson uses Adobe Acrobat technologies to integrate PDF Portfolios into his courses.

Former CSU Monterey student Yaniv Oded used Adobe LiveCycle Designer, included with Acrobat Pro, to reduce costs and streamline administrative procedures in his new job by transforming paper forms into interactive electronic forms. Oded relied on PDF Portfolios for packaging and presenting his findings to company decision makers in a visually compelling way, including dynamic forms and video along with simulations created with Adobe Captivate®.



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Professor emeritus,
California State University,
Monterey Bay

Asynchronous, yet coordinated

Ittelson’s class meets face-to-face only twice during the term; once in the beginning and once at the end. Because the course is online in asynchronous mode, students can sometimes lose track of assignments and their related materials. With Acrobat Pro, students can easily create their PDF Portfolios that include resource information and artifacts and then upload it to Acrobat.com, giving each student a single source for everything they need to successfully complete their coursework. It also provides Ittelson with one place to access each student’s assignments.

Acrobat Pro simplifies life for students and helps Ittelson more easily give feedback. Ittelson and his students use many of the tools available in Acrobat Pro to review each other’s work and collaborate in teams, including commenting via sticky notes and other review and markup features, as well as the Typewriter tool that allows text to be typed anywhere on the document.

“Acrobat Pro and the PDF Portfolio tool, combined with the Share and ConnectNow collaboration features in Acrobat.com, provide a cohesive learning environment that is engaging and efficient for both students and instructors,” says Ittelson. “Other faculty are also looking at rolling out the course management system based on Adobe.”

Launching professions, one student at a time

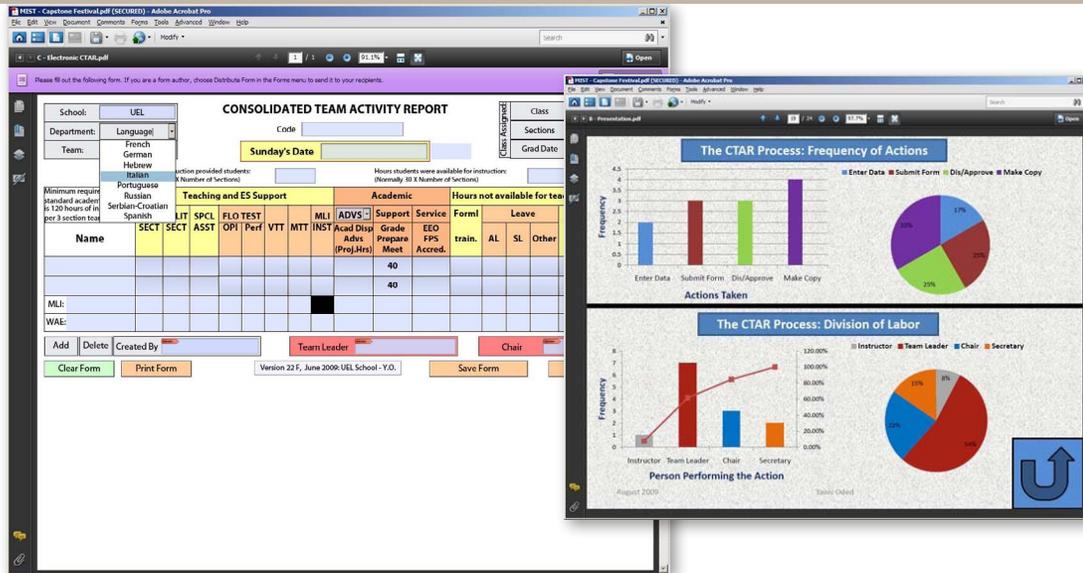
PDF Portfolios do more than just help students learn and communicate more effectively in the classroom. They also help students capture their achievements; visibly showcasing the value of what was learned to better help land jobs and learn skills that are valuable in professional settings.

For example, a few months after Michelle Alvino took Ittelson’s class, she was being considered for a job at DeltaTRAK to create training material for the company’s distributors, sales representatives, customer service, and end users. When she was asked to show DeltaTRAK some of the things she had been working on for her Masters in Instructional Science and Technology degree from CSUMB, she decided to create a PDF Portfolio.

“I used Acrobat Pro to deliver my product as a PDF ePortfolio that organized DeltaTRAK’s specification sheets and product information,” says Alvino. “DeltaTRAK was especially impressed with the interactive, visually compelling interface of the PDF Portfolio created in Acrobat. The polished presentation of materials was an influential factor in my ability to obtain the job.”

After taking Ittelson’s course, Yaniv Oded, an assistant professor at Monterey’s Defense Language Institute (DLI), used Adobe LiveCycle Designer, included with Acrobat Pro, to reduce costs and streamline administrative procedures at DLI by transforming paper forms into interactive electronic forms. By eliminating the need to make copies and hand deliver paper forms, and by relying on dynamic calculated fields, electronic forms help enable users to complete key administrative processes about 15% faster and with savings of up to 100% on paper and printer cartridges.

Adobe Acrobat Pro helps students easily combine PDF documents as well as audio, video, and image files into a single, dynamic and easy-to-navigate PDF Portfolio. Interactive Multimedia for Instruction students post their PDF Portfolios to Acrobat.com and make use of the Share and ConnectNow features that allow students and instructors to share documents and collaborate online through web conferencing.



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John Ittelson
Professor emeritus, California State University, Monterey Bay

“I relied on PDF Portfolios for packaging and presenting my findings to decision makers at DLI, incorporating into my presentations dynamic forms and video and simulations created with Adobe Captivate. My project has been successfully implemented in the European and Latin American School which is one of the largest Schools at DLI and is currently being evaluated for implementation across all of DLI,” adds Oded.

For more information
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www.adobe.com/education
Get off to a quick start with Adobe software. Join the Adobe Education Exchange to access free teaching and learning resources contributed by a community of educators and the Adobe Education Team.
<http://edexchange.adobe.com>

A major shift in learning

For Ittelson and CSUMB, PDF Portfolios are a major step forward in education. Ittelson notes that the effect in terms of success and learning effectiveness for students—who can now evaluate, analyze, and reflect on their learning in the context of their own personal experiences—is remarkable.

“PDF Portfolios deliver the next generation of ePortfolios—where students and faculty can enhance and modernize learning from more active online interactions—which is helping to advance knowledge and individual creativity in interesting and engaging ways,” adds Ittelson.



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