Getting Feedback: Responding to and Revising Portfolios

When the portfolio process first begins, there are all types of ideas that float around. We have grandiose ideas about what our portfolios should be like, including all the bells and whistles. However, in discussing our work with our peers, we get a more grounded center and we can more easily draw our attention to what is most important. Judith

INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives advice on finishing the first draft of your paper and electronic portfolios, providing guidelines for an effective peer response from classmates and/or colleagues. It also discusses feedback for use in revision and the ways you might reshape and polish your portfolios for professional presentation. Chapter 7 covers the following topics:

- Importance of feedback
- Feedback during invention
- Feedback on developed drafts
- Developing criteria for paper and electronic portfolios
- Establishing feedback criteria for portfolio workshops
- Conducting a workshop session
- Processing and implementing feedback
- Editing

IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK

In the chapter-opening quotation, Judith discusses the importance of getting feedback from others. The creation of your portfolios is often a messy process of revision that involves many changes. Judith describes the way she was able to shape her ideas with the help of an audience of interested readers willing to give her productive feedback. As we have emphasized throughout this book, your portfolios do not exist in a vacuum. You can gain valuable insights for recursive revision when you bring others into the processes of composing from invention through final draft. We incorporate feedback into our students’ projects throughout the portfolio-building process. We recommend early feedback on your proposals and initial ideas, feedback from mentors in the field, and feedback on finished drafts before producing your final products. Our students had structured workshop/feedback sessions as part of their class. However, if you are not in a classroom setting or want feedback beyond the classroom (something we strongly recommend), you can still elicit a response from others. Colleagues, potential employers, professional mentors, and general users can all provide valuable perspectives throughout the development and revision of your portfolios. Bringing in outside readers is the only way to know how your audience will react to and interpret your portfolios. This type of productive response will help you revise your portfolio more effectively.
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FEEDBACK DURING INVENTION

Throughout this book, we have described many ways to generate ideas for your portfolios. Feedback during the process of invention can help you to shape and refine your ideas and resolve the tension between the fantastic and the realistic. Some students find early feedback helpful because they are stuck or unable to find common threads in their work. Many students, like Judith, start with “grandiose ideas” that need to be grounded in reality. Judith describes the way early feedback helped her to modify her ideas to create something that worked:

Showing our ideas in these beginning stages gives us a better idea of our audience, which is desperately needed in the document conversion process as well as in the creation of our portfolios.

She goes on to explain the transformation of her original metaphor into an image and a theme that became the driving force for her portfolios:

In my initial stages I was trying to work on a metaphor for my portfolios. I had in my mind an angel-type figure flowing over a scroll creating words with her breath. Now I thought it was an absolutely terrific idea. However, when presenting it to others, they were not half as excited as I was about it—so there went the idea. However, during my presentation, my peers did like the idea of using a silhouette, and people commented on the concept of defining colors and what they represented to me. I ended up using the colors as my metaphor.

Judith's original angel figure came across as a bit too whimsical. She thought that it gave her portfolio a theme of “ethereality and poetry,” but her audience did not feel that it presented a serious, professional image. Her final silhouette image, presented in Figure 7.1, shows her attention to detail and design along with her technical skills. This silhouette, originally only a minor feature in Judith's portfolio, became a major one that eventually appeared on her home page and in her introduction.

Judith originally presented the colors to show connections to her personality, but through discussion her peers helped her realize that the colors themselves might act as a guiding thread. During her proposal presentation, she created a collage of images and textures representing the range of colors for each section (see Figure 7.2). Although she did not initially intend the colors to come to the forefront, they ended up defining the portfolio and dividing her sections. At the time Judith presented this color collage, she was brainstorming about design features. However, she made such distinct connections between the colors, character traits, and areas of specialization that the collage was strong enough to act as a grounding metaphor for her portfolio. She pulled the whole thing together by incorporating the colors into the silhouette image to form a comprehensive representation. It was through feedback from her peers that she was able to discover this connection.

While Judith ended up radically changing her ideas as a result of audience feedback, Joy used feedback during invention to modify and simplify an idea that was originally very complicated. Early on, Joy presented the idea of a kaleidoscope as a dominant image. Originally, she presented multifaceted images that were somewhat confusing and visually too busy (see Figure 7.3) and proposed changing the color schemes for each section to correspond with particular qualities. Her peers encouraged her to simplify and push for a stronger connection between the image and her work. She says:

I learned that using the image of the kaleidoscope would have been too busy as a graphic. But the concept of triangulation and multifaceted perspective (as in the three mirrors inside a kaleidoscope) was encouraged and developed as a result. Also, I was encouraged to explain to my audience why I used the image to help them better understand the connection.

Joy modified her original idea into a sleek, simple design that functioned as a logo throughout her work (see Figure 7.4). Her home page and introduction eventually included a short explanation of the connection between the kaleidoscope image and the triangulation of her skills. Joy modified her original design once her
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FIGURE 7.4
Joy’s Final Design
Source: Used with permission
from Joy Leake.

Audience helped her realize that the changing colors and complexity might distract readers. Her new design created a clean image and a way to easily brand herself through her logo and slogan, which are found throughout her portfolios, on her business cards, and on her CD cover. Angela, on the other hand, came to her original feedback session with several possible ideas but unsure about which direction to take. She spent quite a bit of time defining her professional identity and looking for images to reflect these qualities. She says:

My theme originated in our first class feedback session. My original idea was to depict sincerity and truth through various Southern visuals. I wanted to relate my quest for truth and community understanding to the unpretentious honesty of Southern culture.

She presented images of rocking chairs on porches, beautiful oak tree canopies draped in Spanish moss, and Southern scenes. Although these images embodied Southern culture, her audience did not necessarily perceive the personal qualities she hoped to convey. Her peers indicated that the “front porch rocking chairs in no way resembled her personality.” Instead, they saw her as honest, forceful, and professional. To them, the rocking chairs and the Southern theme reflected a laid-back style that did not reflect her strong work ethic. During the feedback session, her peers collaboratively brainstormed with her to come up with images and themes that seemed more fitting. Her final image—light—emphasized her connection between technical communicators as “bringers of light” and clarity along with a correlation between light and truth. As Angela admits, “some ideas came out of a collaborative process as she tried out her ideas on others. As she says, “My willingness to accept their opinions led to a metaphor that suited my conception perfectly.”

Other students, such as Nanette, worked closely with a professional mentor while creating the portfolios. Some of his feedback prompted her to make important decisions regarding the length and number of documents. She also realized that she needed an objective outsider to help her come up with a new idea rather than struggling to modify an old one. Sometimes, as writers and designers, we get so close to our own work that we doggedly hold on to ideas merely because we have created them. Nanette describes how her mentor helped her to move beyond this circular struggle:

I met with my mentor that week, and he also (along with classmates) agreed that my portfolio needed more “spark” to it. My change occurred when I showed him my page that I had designed with the colorful street signs and arrows. He said, “Use this as your theme,” and I said that I was hesitant to make changes. He said that I had a choice: either I can spend ten more hours trying to make what I have work or use the same ten hours to create something new.

Nanette convinced herself early on that she wanted to use an existing document to create her home page and theme. She originally thought this would be a good starting place since she had put so much time and energy into the original document. She was so determined to make it work that she lost sight of the fact that the document did not even reflect her current professional identity or skills. It took the feedback from her professional mentor to get her to “go back to the drawing board” and let go of her earlier ideas. Peer feedback is valuable for larger thematic issues, but it also helps to resolve issues of selection and categorization. For example, when Joy presented an early version of her table of contents, her marketing material was spread throughout the portfolio in a genre arrangement. In her feedback session, the group of her peers suggested that she group all of these pieces together to demonstrate a “marketing campaign” since she had several different kinds of documents (Web pages, brochures, business cards, press releases) for the same nonprofit organization. By grouping them together rather than in discrete genre sections, she was able to present her strong marketing persona as well as demonstrate her diversity and skills. This feedback encouraged her to change the overall structure of her portfolio.

We also found that during these early feedback sessions, students helped one another to inventory and expand their technological skills. Often, viewing samples from others demonstrated new ways to approach document design and presentation. For example, Tom learned valuable lessons about creating documents in a new format for faster access. Wilda shared information about working with templates, and Sarah demonstrated how a PowerPoint presentation could be designed to imitate an active Web site. The process of creating your portfolios might engage you in learning new software applications or finding new ways to present material. Discussion with knowledgeable peers during the invention phase can often help you see a path that you might not perceive otherwise.

FEEDBACK ON DEVELOPED DRAFTS

Although revision takes place throughout all phases of creation, this section focuses on revising the nearly finished drafts of your paper and electronic portfolios. This takes place after you have revised your individual documents for portfolio quality (see Chapter 4). Once you have decided on your contents and themes, you should begin to develop mature drafts of your portfolios for feedback. This means pasting up sample pages of the paper portfolio and creating a working template of the electronic version. At this point, you should also have a clear idea of the table of contents, as well as finished drafts of your section introductions and transitions. You will need to find a forum and a way of presenting the portfolios so that others can respond collectively to your developing drafts. As we said earlier, if you do not have access to a classroom setting, you will have to find ways to set up your own peer response sessions (use the contacts and timeline you generated in Exercise 7.1 to structure your sessions). It may be necessary to modify the questions or format based on your particular situation and audience. Our students presented their work in 15-minute response sessions in which they displayed the paper portfolios and projected the electronic versions. These sessions were followed by 15-20 minutes of verbal and written feedback focusing on particular criteria. At this point in the process, respondents are encouraged to point out both strengths and areas that need development. These might include issues of writing, style, design, or navigation.

We find it most productive to set up final criteria that guide respondents through this process. It is important to recognize the purpose of response and feedback in this setting. It is not for evaluation—as in a purely academic setting between a teacher and a student—but should focus on helping students move toward productive revision of their work. We advocate a balance between pointing out strengths and areas that need development. We also feel that the most effective comments include both identification and explanation. It is not enough to say, “This is interesting” or “Move this section.” Effective evaluation involves identifying specific places in the text and giving reasons along with ideas for improvement. In order to respond effectively, you should practice this kind of productive feedback.

Our model relies on the terminology used by response theorists Richard Straub and Ronald Lunford in their study on response styles and criteria. They state that there are two perspectives from which to analyze students’ comments: although they use this model to analyze teachers’ comments on students’ papers, we use it to train students in effective responding strategies: the focus and the mode. As they say, the focus
identifies what a comment refers to in the writing,” and the mode “allows us to examine how the comment is framed.” Focus comments concentrate on issues such as ideas, development, wording, organization, and style. The mode of the comment “characterizes the image a teacher creates for herself and the degree of control she exerts, through that comment over the student’s writing” (Straub and Lansford 1995, 158). Their study, along with others in the field, suggests that the most effective modes encourage writers to re-see their ideas and texts rather than commanding or directing them to change discrete units. Comments delivered in the form (mode) of “questions,” “reflective statements,” and “suggestions” are more productive than those delivered as “corrections,” “evaluations,” and “imperatives.” We encourage you to think carefully about your role when responding to your classmates’ or colleagues’ portfolios, along with the way you phrase your comments. Remember, it is not the responder’s role to change or appropriate the work of others but to help them find the best way to communicate their ideas and demonstrate their skills. When responding to the texts of others, consider yourself an interested, knowledgeable reader who is reporting your experience while reading their work.

DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR PAPER AND ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIOS

In order to define a strategy for response, it is important to establish criteria prior to your workshop session. Undoubtedly you have come across elements of quality while designing your portfolios. By the time you are ready to present them in a workshop or distribute them for feedback, you should have a strong sense of what your community values in terms of content, design, and usability. Although there is some crossover between the paper and electronic portfolios, we provide a starting point for developing your criteria. These versions may not necessarily be identical, but both portfolios should have a consistent design and theme so that they work as a package.

Paper portfolios

To review, the paper portfolio is targeted to a live audience. You will generally use it during an interview or in a setting where you are present to explain it. Occasionally, readers will flip through it on their own, but it is used primarily to create talking points and should be flexible to be tailored to different situations. Generally, our students use an oversized, zippered case (with a handle for easy carrying). However, one of our students, Wylie, modified this model and created his paper portfolio to imitate a magazine in size, layout, and presentation. Whatever vehicle you choose, there are some common elements that organize your work like a book with a table of contents, section divisions, introductions, and context statements for sections and individual documents. Our students also provided the following tips when constructing their paper portfolios:

- Use plastic page covers to protect your work as it is handled.
- Print all final documents on high-quality, acid-free paper.
- Use permanent, acid-free, archive-quality glue-stick, spray adhesive, or double-sided tape (rather than liquid glue).
- Choose a portfolio binder (but not one that is too heavy or cumbersome) that is larger than your documents so that you will have room for design elements and context statements.
- Choose a portfolio binder with the handle on the zipper side rather than the binder side. If the handle is on the binder side, the weight of the work combined with the pressure of the handle on this side loosens the fasteners over time.
- Back your documents with layers of colored paper to give them visual depth and to pull in your theme and design. You can also use colored paper to delineate different sections.
- Consider placing tabs on each section for presentation flexibility and organization.

Electronic portfolios

In many ways, your electronic portfolio will be similar to your paper portfolio (refer to Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of electronic portfolios). For example, you will still have a table of contents (links), an introduction (on your home page), and transitional sections. However, the online format creates some differences. First and foremost, your electronic portfolio will be dynamic and extremely flexible. You have the opportunity to work with layers of information and guide your readers/users in ways that the paper portfolio does not provide. Although you might have the chance to present your electronic portfolio live, generally it will be viewed when you are not present. Many job seekers use their electronic portfolio as a supplement to the paper portfolio or offer it as a leave-behind item that provides a more specific portrait for a closer look. This form gives potential employers time to actually read their writing and carefully consider their particular skills. Because of the portability of the electronic portfolio, you can also include longer documents, interactive elements, and live action (such as audio and video components) in this format. You will need to consider issues such as navigation and technological access, along with the general issues discussed in the section on the paper portfolio. It is important to conduct user studies to gather feedback on how others interact with your electronic portfolio. Carol Barnum (2002, 7) generally defines usability as “the art and science of making documents and products usable, useful, and most of all satisfying.” This includes the user’s perception of

- Friendliness
- Ease of use
- Usefulness
- Ease of learning
- Ease of relearning

Although usability testing can involve complex, long-term research and data analysis, you can certainly apply these criteria to help define how potential users might interact with your electronic portfolio. Like any form of response, usability testing involves the “interaction of a person with a product” (Barnum 2002, 7) and exposure of your work to a live audience. Here are some other considerations when designing your electronic portfolio:

- Create a clear home page with a simple, intuitive navigation system.
- Add thumbnails of documents and graphics for another dimension of visual appeal and to provide an additional link to full documents.
- Include technical instructions for your user, including issues such as the best viewing size and the software programs needed.
- Encourage others to try out your electronic portfolio and run it through a modified usability test (for more information, see Barnum’s (2002) detailed discussion of usability testing).
- Try out your electronic portfolio on several computers. Often you will find that elements such as screen size, software, or spam-blocker programs will affect the way the portfolio is viewed.
- Establish consistency between your paper and electronic portfolios in terms of color, design, and theme.
- Include “back” buttons or static frames to make sure that your audience does not get lost within the electronic portfolio.
ESTABLISHING FEEDBACK CRITERIA FOR PORTFOLIO WORKSHOPS

It is important for you and your audience (responders) to develop particular criteria for your response sessions. You must consider where you are in the process. For example, early drafts focus more on concept, design features, and organization, while later drafts emphasize readability, usability, visual quality of the document, and final presentation. The following considerations should help you develop your own criteria as you structure your feedback sessions.

Organization/structure

How does the portfolio work as a whole? Does it have a logical, easy-to-read structure? Does it have all the elements of a book, including a table of contents, an introduction, and clearly delineated sections? How does the work flow and project a flexible structure?

Contents

Do the contents represent the range of documents in the portfolio? Is there a balance in terms of documents and sections? Are the contents presented in a logical order? How do the contents connect to your professional goals as a generalist or specialist?

Range and variety of skills represented

What skills are represented in the portfolio? Is a wide variety of skills demonstrated? Is it easy to find the skills through clear labels and context statements?

Consistency/theme

How is the theme or metaphor used throughout the portfolio? Does the portfolio have a consistent design? What similarities between the paper and electronic portfolios establish consistency between them?

Document design

How effective are the documents in terms of design, layout, and visual appeal? Are the documents arranged on the page or electronically to be both attractive and accessible?

Visual/graphic elements

How do the visual elements tie the portfolio together as a whole? Are they clear and sharp in quality? Does the portfolio reflect effective document design, image quality, captions, and an overall attractive visual impression?

Technological elements (primarily for the electronic portfolio)

How does the technology contribute to or weaken the electronic portfolio? How has the designer considered elements such as navigation and technological access?

Audience

How will others interact with the portfolios? How do the portfolios reflect industry expectations and standards?

Editing

Although this should not be the main emphasis of feedback, you might proofread the whole portfolio—including individual documents—and comment on areas of grammar and correctness.

CONDUCTING A WORKSHOP SESSION

If you are in a classroom setting, you might participate in a workshop session to get feedback on your portfolios. As we said earlier, if you are not in an academic setting, you will have to hand-pick and organize feedback individually. Whether you are in a classroom setting or on your own, you must establish criteria and guidelines for response. Practitioners use workshops in many writing and communications classes. As suggested in the previous sections, you should get feedback during all phases of this project. This section focuses on how to set up and participate in a workshop session on mature drafts of your portfolios for final revision.

We find workshops beneficial because they support a collaborative environment and encourage social learning. They are particularly useful when participants are all working toward a similar goal and have common knowledge of industry expectations and technology standards. You might even invite professionals to participate in addition to peer group respondents. Consider starting with a mock session in which you respond to an online portfolio. This will allow you to practice and analyze your responses to others in terms of both focus and mode. Once you have completed the mock session, reflect back on its purposes and results. The workshop should help its members move toward substantive revision. It is not necessarily the goal of the workshop to arrive at a solid consensus. Instead, think about collecting multiple perspectives and looking for patterns and issues to consider as you revise.

Begin by establishing criteria for the session (use Exercises 7.2 and 7.3 as a starting point). This might require some outside research to determine community expectations and effective models. It is important that as you develop criteria, the group talks about this as a way of structuring guidelines. In the assignments at the end of this chapter, you will find a sample of a response grid sheet and guidelines for a portfolio workshop session. Use these sheets or design ones that fit your particular community and industry expectations.

EXERCISE 7.2 DEVELOPING PORTFOLIO CRITERIA

For this exercise, return to the online portfolio Web sites you analyzed in Chapter 1 (if you did not complete this analysis, you can search now alas at this time). Use these sites to create a list of criteria that you feel are important and productive, focusing on both strengths and weaknesses. Generate a list of issues that you consider vital and try to define each one through ideas and questions for a potential group of respondents.

EXERCISE 7.3 DEVELOPING GROUP PORTFOLIO CRITERIA

Form groups of four or five and have the members share criteria lists. Look for patterns and similarities along with differences. As a whole group, work to categorize and simplify the criteria and create a communal peer response sheet that your audience can use when providing feedback on your portfolios.

During the presentation of your work, discuss your intentions and design, displaying both the paper and electronic portfolios (it is best to project your electronic portfolio on a large screen for easy viewing). Go through all the major features, including contents, theme, and design. During the presentation, responders should take notes and write specific comments using agreed-upon criteria.
When the presentation is finished, respondents should review their comments and choose several for the full group discussion. It is generally best to have a facilitator or moderator to run the session and monitor the order and time. Respondents should work to create a discussion that is issue based rather than list based. In other words, rather than considering several issues at once, respondents should bring up a particular issue for discussion by the whole group. For example, a respondent might turn the group’s attention to a part of the document—such as the introduction—or to an element such as theme, design, or color. As stated before, it is more important to encourage discussion and multiple perspectives than to reach a consensus.

As people respond to your portfolios, you might find it a bit uncomfortable to listen and not defend your choices. Try to resist an immediate reaction to their comments. You will have time later to process them and make your own choices as you revise. Hopefully you are participating in a community that has established trust and authority along with carefully designed guidelines. Although it might be difficult to hear others talk about your work, consider their perspective as you participate in your workshop session:

I tend to take criticism personally. I know it is wrong, and anyone who criticizes my writing is not really going after me personally. I must say, as a working writer, I am learning to handle the criticism as just a matter of difference.

She understands that criticism is just a matter of difference and that you can grow by considering multiple perspectives of your work. Try to deemphasize the feeling that the comments are personally motivated and instead view them as helpful suggestions designed to produce stronger work.

PROCESSING AND IMPLEMENTING FEEDBACK

There is no one way to interpret your documents; this is why you expose them to multiple readers with different interpretive lenses and experiences. The workshop session should not be perceived as overtly critical. In fact, you might see it as Norma does, saying, “After sharing my ideas with the class, they gave me the confidence to believe that my ideas were good.” You also might find that you have serious disagreement on a particular item or element. Ultimately, it is not your job to accept all of the advice gathered in your workshop sessions. You are not trying to please everyone and should not feel manipulated by these comments. Upon revision, you still maintain control and ownership of your final work. However, the workshop session will help you to consider possibilities for revision. For example, here are several of the revision suggestions brought to Nanette’s attention during a feedback session with her mentor:

- The theme elements and color scheme are strong and tell a great story about Nanette’s own academic journey. I would only suggest that the “communication specialist” phrase bring the theme full circle and the portfolio to a nice close with elements of “the journey,” “paths taken,” “combining skills,” etc.
- Remove the “class project” language in the descriptions to keep a more skilled, professional tone.
- The amount and variety of the content in the hard-copy portfolio felt like the perfect amount as I flipped through.
- Strengthen navigation in the online portfolio.

Nanette must process and decide which of these suggestions (along with others from her classmates) she will implement. After the group workshops of your portfolios, you will also be faced with the task of revising. You should have collected many different perspectives and issues to consider as you revise. It is your job as a writer to consider the suggestions and make choices as you rewrite and revisit design issues. In your revision, consider both global and local changes in relation to your ideas and structure. Refer to the peer response criteria you developed to determine directions for your revision.

The best way to start is to categorize all of the comments you received. This is often difficult. We find it helpful to transfer the comments from multiple forms or sheets to a single location. You might also use the response criteria to create subcategories. As you review the comments, there will be some that you immediately discard for some reason. Consider time, technical knowledge, and design abilities when deciding which revisions make sense. Some respondents might suggest ideas that sound great but are unrealistic because they require skills or materials that you might not have, such as flash animation or original illustrations. Other suggestions might be interesting but could take you away from your own purposes and intentions.

Once you have discarded suggestions that you don’t want to use, you can focus on those that are left. Pay particular attention to ideas that are mentioned several times. Even though you might find disparity in the nature of the comments, when you have multiple responses to an issue, they should motivate you to at least consider the suggestions. Focus on areas of strength as well as weakness; you can learn a lot from what people admire and emphasize or duplicate that feature throughout the portfolio. You might prioritize the comments according to their importance and practicality. Create one list that includes your top priorities and another that you might address if you have time.

Once you have decided on the issues to focus on in your revision, go back to your portfolios and start to make changes. Of course, if you can get additional feedback on successive drafts for quality control, this is extremely helpful. The more feedback you get as you revise, the better.

EDITING

After completing your final revisions, it is essential that you carefully proofread the portfolios to eliminate all superficial errors. There is nothing as discouraging or embarrassing as a portfolio that does not reflect the careful eye of a trained communicator. Although we all make mistakes, it is not uncommon for an employer to immediately cast aside a portfolio that contains such oversights. Carefully edit your portfolios to eliminate errors in typing, spelling, documentation, and grammar. It is time to shape and refine your text for professional presentation.

Carefully reread your whole portfolio and individual documents. You might try reading them aloud or looking at them in a different order or format. However, as we noted earlier, it is often difficult to edit your own work. Over time, you have become so close to it that you might overlook obvious mistakes. At this point, it is best to seek the help of an objective, trained reader, such as a colleague or classmate, to proofread and edit your portfolio. Make sure that you choose someone who is familiar with the grammatical and mechanical conventions of your field. Ask this person to also double check your citations and instructions.

SUMMARY

Your portfolios are constructed for particular audiences and purposes. Chapter 7 helps you to connect with your audience as they review your portfolios, describing guidelines and processes for eliciting feedback throughout the portfolio-building process. The tips provided in this chapter should help you to draft your portfolios and create response criteria, as well as conduct a response workshop session and implement feedback. Brian D. sums it up nicely with his closing comment: “Probably the most important idea I learned in this class is that you should always talk a design through with at least one other person.”

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Conducting a Peer Response Workshop

The following guidelines and forms summarize the chapter discussion to help you set up a peer response workshop for your portfolios.
PORTFOLIO WORKSHOP GUIDELINES

The goal of these workshops is to provide productive suggestions for revision. It is important for the participants to show mutual respect and a genuine desire to help one another; Harsh or judgmental comments are unacceptable. Although we are looking for solid, constructive feedback, we hope that you will consider the tone, purpose, and audience in providing comments (both written and verbal).

- As a group, you will need to choose the order of the presentations, as well as a moderator for each workshop session (every person should get a chance to moderate a session).
- As the moderator or facilitator, it is your job to promote the discussion and to be a particularly close reader of the portfolios. It is also your responsibility to keep time. If the discussion starts to lag, bring up new points for discussion and help the group summarize the suggestions at the end of the session. You should also take notes during the session.
- As a responder, it is your job to come to the session ready to focus and give thoughtful written and verbal feedback to your classmates. You should also pay attention to the issues discussed, as they most likely represent universal issues that you might reflect upon as you revise your own work.
- As the author/designer, it is your job to listen to the group’s comments without reacting. You don’t necessarily have to take all the advice, but the discussion and written comments should help you reconsider your ideas and choices and the ways they are interpreted by your audience. You should be prepared with questions that will enable you to get the most out of your response session. Remember, this is a great opportunity for you to get ideas for the revision of your portfolio. Since there will not be time to consider all the verbal feedback suggestions, you will also have the Portfolio Feedback sheet to consider in making revisions.

Workshop Structure

The workshop session should run as follows (30 minutes):

15 Minutes: Visual Presentation of Portfolios
- Presenter: In a short presentation, discuss and display your portfolios, including samples of introductory sections, individual selections, and overall layout and design. The electronic version should be linked and active.
- Responders: Take notes and record impressions during the portfolio presentation (Portfolio Feedback sheet). Take a couple of minutes after the presentation to transform notes into concrete revision suggestions.

15 Minutes: Revision Feedback Discussion
- Start the discussion by talking about the strengths of the work.
- Then discuss revision suggestions—areas to develop further and other issues.
- The author asks final questions for clarification.
- Submit all written feedback to the author (Portfolio Feedback sheet).

Note: All discussions should focus on issues that are considered by the whole group. Talk through the responses and generate multiple perspectives.

Assignment 2: Workshop Response Grid

The following grid is a model of a form that you might use for the workshop response. Modify or use it to respond to your classmates’ work during workshop sessions. Return copies to the author/designer upon completion of the workshop so that they can consider the responses and implement revision suggestions.

REFERENCES