Digital Portfolio for Communication Majors

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Research/Papers

Research Papers are typically the easiest format to deal with electronically. Any one of these formats will work well with a simple text document. Obviously the original Word file will maintain the most accurate reproduction, but Acrobat PDF (portable document format) does a very accurate job as well. The HTML format is the most compatible (least likely to not work), but the least accurate. When in doubt use multiple formats to insure readability.

- Acrobat PDF
- Word (Microsoft Word 97, 2000, XP, etc)
- HTML

Tools needed—Word, Adobe Acrobat (not reader), Web Authoring tools (optional)

Photography

Photographic portfolios are best represented in slide or print form, but this is a very costly way to share your work. Digital portfolios give you a quick and easy way to share your photographic work with very little cost. Remember to use image sizes and qualities that are high enough to look good, but not so high that they will not fit on an average screen or load in a Web site. Typically 800 pixels and "high quality" (Photoshop Save for Web JPG quality 60) is a good rule of thumb for your maximum dimension (width or height) and image quality. Use GIF files only for black and white images and make sure to use all 256 colors that the file format allows. GIF files will not work for color because it has only 256 maximum colors to utilize, but for a black and white this will work (think 256 shades of gray).

- JPG
- GIF (b/w only)

Tools needed—Photoshop (Full version, LE, Elements, Deluxe) or Fireworks, Web Authoring tools (optional)

Publications

Quark, PageMaker and InDesign documents (publications) are generally best saved as Acrobat PDF files. Newer versions of these programs will save documents as HTML or XML and if these are available they make a good second (redundant) format. Try to make sure that all of your working graphics and fonts are available when you create the PDF for the best-looking, most accurate results.

- Acrobat PDF

Tools needed—Quark (or whatever your document's original format is), Adobe Acrobat (not reader), Web Authoring tools (optional)

Graphic Arts

Graphic arts projects such as Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop files should be saved in either the GIF or JPEG formats. GIF files contain only 256 colors and so are good only for graphical elements with few colors and little shadowing/graduation. Logos, wordmarks, and illustrations make good GIF files. Projects with photographs, graduations, or shadows should be saved as JPG files. Use the same rule of thumb that apply to photographs to determine size (800 pixels as a maximum dimension). Similar to photographs, if your image is monochrome (e.g. black and white) you can use the GIF file regardless of the photo-realism or graduation. The Acrobat PDF file format can be used here as well, typically if your Photoshop or Illustrator project is a brochure, flyer, or other document style project.

- JPG
- GIF
- Acrobat PDF

Tools needed—Photoshop (Full version, LE, Elements, Deluxe) or Fireworks, Web Authoring tools (optional), Adobe Acrobat (not reader), Web Authoring tools (optional)

Radio/Audio

Audio productions are typically WAV files (44,000 Hz, 16 bit, stereo). These can be maintained at their original quality for most CD-based portfolios, but for Web use they should be saved as a compressed file format. Several common formats exist and they are all similar. Windows machines (PCs) come with Windows Media Player installed and Macs come with QuickTime installed, however Real is the most popular music format online today. Always consider your audience when you are making Mac vs. PC format

decisions. PCs are 85% of the computers out there, but Macs dominate the design, publications, and to a lesser degree video industries. All formats are accessible to either Mac or PC with the proper plug-in, but you can't count on the end user having this. When in doubt use multiple formats to insure that your work will be heard.

- WAV
- WMV (Windows Media)
- MOV (QuickTime)
- RM (Real)

Tools needed—SoundForge (Any version) or CoolEdit (any version) or Peak (any version) and Web Authoring tools (optional)

Television/Video

Video productions are typically saved on VHS, Beta, and DV (or other digital) formats. The DV or digital format is by far the easiest to use in a digital portfolio, because it is made to be processed on a computer. DV footage can be captured using a simple (and cheap) Firewire (IEEE 1394) card. Analog video (VHS, Beta, etc) needs to go through an A (analog) to D (digital) converter to be captured into a computer. These are more complicated and more expensive than Firewire. Compression is obligatory with video files and the same three computer media formats used for audio are used for video. Again think of your audience when choosing a format and when in doubt create files in multiple formats.

- WMV (Windows Media)
- MOV (QuickTime)
- RM (Real)

Tools needed—Premiere or FinalCut Pro or Avid Express DV, and Web authoring tools (optional)

All of these projects can be done with alternative software if it can create the proper file formats. Dreamweaver is the Web authoring tool of choice, but Word, Front Page, even Notepad can be used to create Web content. At the simplest level an instructional document can accompany a CDROM of raw materials.

Remember, if it doesn't add to your credibility it takes away from it. Aim for quality not quantity.