RETHINKING DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS

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Rethinking Digital Portfolio Evaluations

A Mixed Methods Study

Information based on a two-phased explanatory sequential study developed to provide a deeper understanding of any differences that exist between evaluation scores for portfolios assessed through individualistic and holistic methods.
BACKGROUND

The Art & Design faculty at UNK are tasked with evaluating high-stakes portfolios.

Assessment & Scholarship Committee
The A&SC is comprised of UNK Art & Design faculty who are committed to providing the best portfolio reviews they possibly can.

High-Stakes
High-Stakes evaluations include those that have a direct impact on students’ finances or continuation in education.

History
From physical portfolios to the digital, the history of portfolio evaluation for the Art & Design faculty has always been one of steady progress and growth.
ON THE ROAD

Portfolio evaluations at UNK have taken many turns to get where they are now.

**Roadblock**
Originally, physical portfolios were evaluated at UNK, it halted everything.

**Hot-Mess**
Portfolio-roadkill was the next mess that encumbered evaluations.

**Resistance**
Honestly, humans can be such a nuisance.
The current portfolio format is a go!

Choices about Individualistic vs. Holistic, that pesky rubric, and some statistics just for the fun of it.

The high-stakes nature of these evaluations begs for research to be conducted in this field. There is currently an alarmingly small amount of research done on how these evaluations occur, the methods that are used to conduct them, and the validity of the results.
PROBLEM
At UNK, there are currently two methods being used simultaneously to evaluate portfolios. This has simply always been the case. Recently, the question has been raised about whether or not it matters which method is used. In order to answer that, we need to know if there are differences between those methods.

PURPOSE
The purpose of my current research is to identify and explain the differences between scores that are given to DVAPs at UNK when they are scored individualistically and holistically, and more importantly, WHY they occur.
Inter-Rater Agreement
There isn’t any.
Okay, there’s a little, but virtually none.

Fleiss’ Kappa: \( \alpha = 0.045 \)
Krippendorff’s Kappa \( \alpha = 0.018 \)
You need an alpha of at least \( \alpha = 0.41 \) for a significant amount of agreement to exist.

Professors Don’t Agree on Stuff
Gasp
WHY DON’T THEY AGREE?

So, I asked them, “what’s up with that?”

• All nineteen participants specialized in a different form of art-making.
• Years of experience as a portfolio evaluator ranged from 4 to 20+ (exact number redacted for my own safety).
• Length of time spent evaluating four portfolios ranged from 1 to 8+ hours.
• Ages of participants ranged from 20something to much, much, older (exact numbers redacted for my personal safety again).
• Essentially, their varied backgrounds make them different.

As it turns out, professors are human.

Gasp again
HOW WILL I EVER TRUST AGAIN?

Calm down. Honestly, we expected a group of people who have made it their life-work to teach and research art to be ... well ... different. So, I asked them, “how do you know your judgment’s any good?”

Essentially, they said, “this ain’t my first rodeo, Bill.”
HOW WILL I EVER TRUST AGAIN?

Essentially, my deep interests in the process and look of objects which requires hours and hours of study has all qualified me to evaluate portfolios.
HOW WILL I EVER TRUST AGAIN?

There’s a logic to art evaluation. The more art I see, the more I am able to use it in comparisons, and I have seen a lifetime’s worth of art.
HOW WILL I EVER TRUST AGAIN?

There are other portfolios floating around in my head, you know, like files in a computer, I guess. The files are students’ works and portfolios, undergraduate and graduate that I’ve seen, even works in great museums. When a piece is in front of me, I can make immediate connections to other work I’ve seen of similar quality.
HOW WILL I EVER TRUST AGAIN?

This ain’t my first rodeo.
HOLISTIC
The entire portfolio gets evaluated at once.

Positives
Much faster to evaluate. Rubric is used once and then a score can be calculated.

Negatives
More prone to being effected by outlier, feedback tends to be less helpful. Evaluators feel more passive. Grade seems generic.
INDIVIDUALISTIC

Every piece of art is evaluated within the portfolio.

Positives
Scores are more meaningful to artist. Outliers have less impact.

Negatives
Evaluator fatigue. Portfolio is no longer the focus. Difficult to understand the “story” of the artist. Evaluators feel “nitpicky.”
Holistic Distribution
Holistically, the scores are skewed.

SD Indi $\alpha = 0.045$

You need an alpha of at least $\alpha = 0.41$ for a significant amount of agreement to exist.
Individualistic Distribution

Individually, the scores are normal.

\[ SD \text{ Indi} \quad \alpha = 0.045 \]

You need an alpha of at least \( \alpha = 0.41 \) for a significant amount of agreement to exist.
Thanks Bill, but what am I supposed to do with this info?

**Know what method is used**
When your students apply, help them find out what method is used.

**Develop variations**
Depending on the method used, decide what to include in the portfolios.

**Reflect on your own policies**
Your assessment criteria may reflect what you’ve seen here, make adjustments as necessary.
WORDS OF WISDOM
Quips from art professors for art students applying with portfolios.

**Only show your best work!**
“Some students present a broad range of work and skills instead of showing only their best work. Don’t do that.”

**Only show your best work!**
“Focus on your strengths. I don’t like the shotgun approach of throwing everything in but the kitchen sink. Good artwork is like you’re starting a dialogue with me.”

**I HATE WRINKLES!!**
“Bill, please, just tell them not to put something in if it’s wrinkled. I really, really hate that. I mean, care a little, jeeze.”

**Put your third best foot forward.**
“Start with your 3rd best piece and end with your best. Your 2nd best should be in the middle. It’s like a 3-act play. Keep me engaged.”

**Title it.**
“Tell me what you call it, describe the media, give me the size. I don’t want your life-story, just give me the info.”

**Be weird.**
“If your work looks like everyone else’s I’ve seen, why should I care? If you want my attention, surprise me.”