
A Visit to ePortfolioland

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Memorial Day is a day of memories. In 2005, the holiday was especially poignant because Bob and I were married on this holiday weekend 30 years ago. On Memorial Day, I called my mother to wish her a happy holiday. "What are you doing?" she asked me. "Writing about my memories," I responded. "What memories are you thinking about?" "My wedding day." "I have enough memories." Mom continued, "I don't want to think about the sad ones." Mom has different recollections about this holiday than I do. She was a war bride during the Second World War, along with many others who experienced firsthand what Memorial Day commemorates.

"Are you going to take a walk today?" I asked. "No, I'm afraid I may fall if I go out by myself," she responded. At the age of 87, she is becoming physically frail. Mom spends more and more time living in her memories. We live across the country from each other, so I can't just hop on a plane to visit her any time I would like to be with her.

Later that day, Bob and I went to the Farmer's Market, then took a walk in along the Bay and visited some friends in Sebastapol. But at 7:30 Sunday morning, I was in a mood to share my reflections. On Memorial Day eve, we watched a DVD of *Finding Neverland* http://www.miramax.com/jmbarries_neverland/. Did you see it at the movies? Remember the boys' frail mother walking into the scene set of Neverland? I envision Mom walking into some place in the future, where I can visit her in my mind, where we can continue to have our daily phone calls, virtually, rather than in this world.

I have an idea – let's create "ePortfolioland" – a place where we can record our memories and receive feedback from each other. "ePortfolios are like resumes, aren't they?" queries an innocent respondent at a recent institute that I presented. "Isn't an ePortfolio something you submit to prospective employers or teachers to evaluate you?" "Yes, ePortfolios (short for electronic portfolios) are used for that purpose, " I

agree, “But ePortfolios are also used for sharing our memories and accomplishments to learn more about ourselves and each other.” With the power of the electronic portfolio, employers have new ways to measure employee performance and determine suitability of applicants to meet hiring standards; educational institutions have new ways to mandate student accountability; and individuals can track their personal and professional development.

You are welcome to take a trip with me to ePortfolioland. First, I’ll share with you how I became interested in ePortfolios...

I come from a long line of storytellers - 17 generations of rabbis (teachers), one of whom was written up in Eli Weisel’s *Souls on Fire*. Rather than lead a wealthy congregation in one community, he was a wandering teacher, who preferred to offer his services to people of all walks of life. Like my ancestor, I hold my home in my heart. Since my immediate family has moved numerous times, across the country, across an ocean, and throughout the county, and since my mother and daughter and extended family live on the East Coast while my husband and I live on the West Coast, I carry my family with me – virtually.

Since you may be in business for yourself, as I am, or contemplating being CEU of your own life, you may find that work takes up a good part of your time. When my daughter, at the age of 16, decided to spend a year in Southern England on a student exchange program, I embarked on a doctoral program, choosing for my thesis – mother-daughter influences on lifework success. I researched other women’s mother-daughter relationships and reflected on my own mother-daughter relationships. Although I could not see my mother and daughter on a daily, weekly, or even monthly basis, I was able to bring my family to work – virtually.

When my daughter left for college, I wrote a [mother-daughter book](http://www.AskDrSal.com/) <http://www.AskDrSal.com/>, including activities that I had created to understand participants in my doctoral research, as well as my own mother-daughter influences. She remained in New York after graduating from college, and my mother became too frail to visit me on the West Coast. Therefore, I decided that I would find work that I could do anywhere in the world. I created an [online job research and lifelong employability program](http://www.jobjuggler.net/workforce/1jumpstart.html) for career practitioners <http://www.jobjuggler.net/workforce/1jumpstart.html>, and set up [speaking engagements](http://www.AskDrSal.com/services/publicationspresentations/presentationsschedule.html) <http://www.AskDrSal.com/services/publicationspresentations/presentationsschedule.html> throughout the country (especially where my relatives and friends live) on distance learning and career/family influences.

Remember the word “Portmonteau” - creating a new word by joining two others and combining their meanings? “Port” means “carry”. I carry my family with me wherever I go. You are welcome to join me on this journey into ePorfolioland, where we carry our personal and career stories with us and share them at every port. “Port” also means “interface” or “hold”. Through ePortfolios, we hold our memories in our heart. “Ports” are openings of communication through which people can enter or leave a country easily. A computer circuit consists of hardware and circuitry that links one device with another. Data is transferred from one computer to another via a cable that links connecting “ports.” Metaphorically, an ePortfolio is a virtual harbor, a refuge, a sanctuary that

brings families, professional colleagues, communities, and world families together.

ePortfolios are not a phenomenon somewhere off in the future. They are happening NOW, and we have an opportunity to shape their development - in the school, home and workplace. Through ePortfolios, we can easily navigate between standards, goals, outcomes, reflections, and demonstrations of work achievements. The [European ePortfolio consortium](http://www.europortfolio.org/portfolio) <http://www.europortfolio.org/portfolio>

has a goal for every citizen to have an ePortfolio by the year 2010.

The United States ranks 14th in technology usage around the world. Job outsourcing and global competition is impacting the U.S. workforce. Career professionals and educators have an opportunity to enhance employment and self-growth opportunities for clients, as well as to expand outreach to the global workforce. The use of ePortfolios reaches beyond the domain of career professionals to counselors, in general, because ePortfolios can be used for self-growth, as well as for career development.

Since many ePortfolio platforms are free or low-cost, the use of ePortfolios is an equalizing delivery system, of special value to people with special needs, and to those who have mobility, time, and cost barriers. Since more families than schools have computers, families can support the personal and professional development of individuals in the family through ePortfolios.

There are several recent indications that ePortfolios are a rapidly growing phenomena. "Using Technology in Career Development and Job Search" is among the top three areas of interest for Professional Development activities for NCDA members. In a 2004 National Career Development Association survey of professional development needs, 489 respondents cited this as a top activity preference. ePortfolios can employ many technology applications and distance modalities, such as eResumes, Weblogs, [Career Assessment eMaps](http://www.ncda-forums.org/index.php?showtopic=217) <http://www.ncda-forums.org/index.php?showtopic=217>, [videos](http://jobjuggler.net/jobjugglerweb.mov) <http://jobjuggler.net/jobjugglerweb.mov>, [flow charts](http://www.jobjuggler.net/Job_Juggler_Flow_Chart.pdf) http://www.jobjuggler.net/Job_Juggler_Flow_Chart.pdf and sound recordings.

You are welcome to join me <http://elgg.net/sallyg/> by setting up your own ePortfolio on a free or for-fee ePortfolio platform. You can access for free, on the National Career Development Association eForum, my ePortfolio presentation with 56 live links to ePortfolio websites: http://www.jobjuggler.net/NCDA_ePort.pdf.

Antedated ports of protection in the form of naval bases are closing down in some regions of the country. Unlike portholes in ships, originally used for firing at enemy ships, ePortfolios open channels of communication. Let's fire thoughts, not guns, through ePortfolios to commemorate Memorial Day weekend and to celebrate, throughout the year, personal and professional development.

Join Marilyn Harryman and me on this journey to ePortfolioland at the American Counseling Association Conference in Montreal on March 30 - April 3, 2006. Whether or not you can attend, you are welcome to join me virtually to discuss how counselors can use ePortfolios and other distance modalities with families to support the career development of individuals in the family: <http://www.ncda-forums.org/index.php?showtopic=145>. Time, date, cost, and location are not a barrier in the world of technology. If you love to explore new territories, then join me on these

virtual adventures. I am looking forward to visiting with you in ePortfolioland!

Bio

Sally Gelardin, NCC, Ed.D. (International and Multicultural Education), Distance Credentialed Counselor, Career and Life Transitions Counselor, and Career Development Facilitator Instructor, provides training and counseling/coaching to organizations and individuals. In addition, she teaches career development and serves as a Women's Studies Portfolio Evaluator at universities in the San Francisco Bay area and is a Fellow in the University of San Francisco's Children's and Young Adult Multicultural Literature Institute. Recipient of the 2004 NCDA Merit Award, Dr. Gelardin is dedicated to providing career practitioners with opportunities to learn and earn. She is Past-President of the California Career Development Association and Professional Development Chair of the National Career Development Association.

Dr. Gelardin is author of "The Mother-Daughter Relationship: Activities for Lifework Success," (2004, CAPS Press) and creator of the Job Juggler's Web-based job search and employability program for career practitioners and their clients. The Job Juggler program is approved by the Center for Credentialing and Education <http://www.cce-global.org>, an affiliate of the National Board for Certified Counselors <http://www.nbcc.org>, to be both incorporated into the Global Career Development Facilitator Curriculum <http://www.jobjuggler.net/gcdf/1jumpstart.html> and for GCDF CEUS <http://www.jobjuggler.net/cceceu/1dontdrop.html>. One of the Job Juggler's nine lessons centers around Portfolio and ePortfolio development. Dr. Gelardin is available for consultation on ePortfolios and for speaking and training engagements on the topics of distance counseling and education and family/career influences. Contact: counselor@jobjuggler.net.

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