

WKU Folk Studies MA Portfolio Guidelines

Updated November 15, 2017

Submission Requirements

The portfolio is required for all Public Folklore and Historic Preservation track students not writing a thesis. The portfolio must be submitted before you take your comprehensive exam and defended following the successful completion of the exam. Your portfolio must be an e-portfolio delivered live via the Web.

Why Have a Professional Portfolio?

The purpose of your portfolio is to help you secure employment by demonstrating the breadth and impact of your education, skills, and experience. Therefore, you should construct your portfolio in such a way that information is clear and easily accessible and it is easy to customize its contents for different purposes. Used in a job search, your portfolio is intended not to show everything you've ever done but rather to present useful, persuasive information about you relevant to the types of positions you are seeking.

Portfolio Contents

Your portfolio should include at least the things listed below, in a sensible order. Remember, you want to guide the viewer through your materials in such a way that it clearly indicates what skills and experience you have and how you can fulfill the requirements of the position you seek. Your portfolio should also be easily used and understood even if you are not present while others review it.

Your site index or table of contents should account for every item. Dividing your portfolio into sections (some with multiple pages if necessary) can help emphasize skills or experience to your advantage.

Every entry or item you include should be labeled to:

1. clearly identify the item as referred to in the table of contents and
2. offer a brief explanation of what the item shows about your qualifications

Your portfolio should include items such as the following if you have produced them and if you have permission to share them publicly:

- curriculum vitae or resume
- sample ethnographic report
- sample academic paper

- grant proposal materials
- K-12 lesson plans
- sample museum materials (photos, reviews, etc.)
- National Register application materials
- field notes
- sample verbatim interview transcription and index
- sample photos and accompanying index with captions
- internship materials (make selections geared toward briefly indicating for whom or what organization you worked, emphasizing your responsibilities; provide any relevant praises such as evaluations of your performance and samples of work you did there, letters or other documents recognizing your participation—volunteered or compensated—in special projects or activities)
- letters or other documents recognizing you as the recipient of any awards or special recognitions you've earned, including thank you letters for relevant activities
- relevant information or materials from activities conducted before enrolling in the Folk Studies program (be selective, including only what is strategically reasonable for possible job searches)

Portfolio Web Site

These instructions are minimum requirements. You may go well beyond these structural and technical requirements if you can do so effectively and professionally. Every portfolio must do the following:

1. Project a clean, professional, and consistent theme across pages and items.
 - a. clearly and neatly identify yourself on the main page—you want no ambiguity should your portfolio be one among many on a prospective employer's to-view list
 - b. avoid light text on dark backgrounds, more than two different font styles, etc.
 - c. ensure that the address has your name in it and is simple and professional (nothing like www.lazygrrrl.com or www.lookieiamafolklorist.org)
2. Be easy to navigate with a clear, intuitive method of organizing each page and the collection of pages. Give careful thought to how you will present your gathered materials and information so that it will be useful and appealing to your audience.
 - a. have your name and contact information clearly visible (discreet is fine) on every page (though you do not need to include your address and phone number)
 - b. have links to main portfolio areas on each page, including a “Home” link
 - c. strongly recommended: create a “site index” page that lists all items for presentation so that visitors don’t have to guess or remember on which pages particular items appear

3. Offer material items in formats that are accessible and convenient for your visitor.
 - a. provide scanned image copies of important documents you receive (such as letters of commendation, awards, etc.); include these scanned documents as images or PDFs on your web pages
 - b. provide both PDF version of documents (see formatting rules below) and inline text (words right there on your web page) so that visitors are not required to download and open PDFs in order to view your materials
 - c. provide audio and video samples where appropriate (to represent your interview techniques or video editing skills, for example)
 - d. when providing a collection of photos, incorporate them in a way that minimizes distractions, permits captioning, and highlights your images and captions
4. Include photos or images but do so considering the purpose and audience of your site.
 - a. caption every photo to briefly indicate the contents and clearly designate photo credits or permissions
 - b. stick with images that communicate something specific about you as a folklorist
 - c. no cat photos, random vacation photos, or abstract mysteries
 - d. never use a photo you did not create or for which you do not have permissions
 - e. use image files that are suitably small for web delivery (72 dpi, no more than 600 pixels wide, for example)
5. Follow acceptable standards for Internet content delivery.
 - a. Represent your original material or materials produced by others only with permissions or under fair use rules (no plagiarizing or copyright infringements!); if you didn't produce it, don't use it unless you have written permission or are certain you have fair use rights or the item is in the public domain. If you do have permission to use the materials of others (such as photos), clearly credit the creator.
 - b. Make every effort to make your portfolio ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. Some web-development software, as well as some of the guidelines above (such as in-line text alternatives to PDF's) will help you with this, but there are other things you may need to do manually, such as enter "alt text" to make images accessible to screen readers. See this website for guidance: <https://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/chap5toolkit.htm>.
 - c. Format downloadable text files as PDFs; do not format documents as Word, WordPerfect, Pages, or other specific formats (they introduce a great many complexities and some users refuse to download or open such files); PDF is a platform-independent interchange standard readable on most computers in the world
 - d. Format image files as .jpg/.jpeg, or .tiff files
 - e. Format audio files as .wav, mp3, mp4, .m4a files
 - f. Format video files as .mp4, .mpg, .mov, .avi

- g. Check appearance of site on multiple browsers and computers

Web Page Development (to handle the overall process)

Web hosting services change year to year, so while the current ones we can recommend are www.weebly.com and www.wordpress.com, we also suggest consulting with faculty about new sites of which you are aware.

It is entirely your responsibility to ensure that your portfolio conforms with this document's overall guidelines. Also you should be well aware that it is up to you to choose and learn to use the necessary tools to prepare your portfolio. The Folk Studies Program will offer guidance and WKU offers free training on many web-related topics, but you should start learning to work with necessary tools early in your M.A. program.

Portfolio Defense

A link to your portfolio must be provided to the Folk Studies Graduate Director no later than 4 pm the day before you sit for comprehensive exams. You will defend your portfolios to the full faculty within three weeks of passing the exam.

At the portfolio defense, you should dress professionally and present yourself as you would at a job interview. You will begin by walking the faculty members through your portfolio in a way that makes content and organization clear. You should be prepared to say why you included (or did not include) specific items. Faculty members will then ask you questions and make suggestions. It is best to bring a pen and paper so you can take note of the suggestions. You may be asked to redo parts of your portfolio.