CARRS (AEE)
Portfolio Guidelines

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Approved by ANRECS CUE Fall 2002
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What is a portfolio?

Traditionally, artists and writers have used portfolios to organize and present their work for display or to find employment. Increasingly, other professions also use portfolios as evidence for assessing personal and professional growth, performance, learning and skill. In general, a portfolio can showcase:

…an individual’s growth and contributions as well as the impact of his or her life’s work. It can provide a method for employers to assess the quality and value of an individual’s work; it can serve as a tool for self-assessment; and it can provide the basis for career-long professional growth and development. (Fisher and Knauff, 2001)

In educational settings, portfolios have become an important assessment tool for evaluating a student’s mastery of information or skills and the process by which this learning occurred. Unlike traditional forms of assessment (e.g. such as tests and interviews), a portfolio can exhibit skills and abilities not easily demonstrated, “a professional’s progress, goals, efforts, attitudes, pedagogical practices, achievements, talents, interests, and development” (Winsor and Ellefson, 1995) and reveal information about “their beliefs, skills, knowledge, accomplishments, unique characteristics, and commitments” (Salend, 2001).

By maintaining a portfolio, a professional has concrete examples of his or her abilities, and “unlike traditional forms of assessment designed to evaluate isolated facts and skills, portfolios…capture student learning over time and across disciplines” (Shackelford, 1996). Also, the portfolio creation process requires that the professional reflects upon his or her accomplishments. The portfolio becomes a living body of work, constantly evolving as the owner learns, grows, and develops.

Professionals can organize and use their portfolios in many ways, but in general, DeFina (1992), Denzine (2001) and other portfolio experts highlight key features inherent to all types of portfolios. They:

- Are designed by the professional (i.e., the professional is free to choose his or her samples of work).
- Look professional (i.e., they are not scrapbooks).
- Are systemic, purposeful and meaningful collections of work.
- Include of a variety of artifacts and a diverse array of media and samples (e.g., photos, writing, pictures, video, etc.).
- Show achievements and accomplishments over time.
- Show evidence of reflection.
- Communicate a message to others about the professional.
What types of portfolios exist?

Portfolios can be used for a variety of reasons and in various contexts. One simple way of classifying portfolios used by Michigan State University’s Office of Career Services and Placement describes portfolios as either personal or professional.

Personal portfolios include information and artifacts that describe an individual’s beliefs, values, skills, interests, activities, etc. This document is inclusive of all materials related to oneself. One could think of it as a file cabinet or closet full of every award won, assignment completed and position worked. This document is primarily for one’s personal growth and development, and it serves as the basis for the professional portfolio.

Professional portfolios include information relevant to a specific task at hand. For example, a professional portfolio includes work examples needed to get a job or pass a class. Like a job resume, the professional portfolio should contain specially selected artifacts.

Denzine (2001) uses a similar classification system to describe two types of portfolios: the professional portfolio and the learning portfolio. Denzine divides the concept of professional portfolio into two subfunctions: general use and specific use. Denzine’s professional portfolio has more of a general use objective; while the learning portfolio is focused more on a person’s performance in a class or area of study. Key factors that distinguish a professional portfolio from a learning portfolio are that professional portfolios:

- Address objectives and needs beyond a specific class or curriculum.
- Include examples of a broader range of skills and abilities.
- Highlight both learning and doing in professional contexts.

Shackelford (1995) offers a more complex classification system. He divides portfolios into four categories: showcase, descriptive, evaluative and composite.

A showcase portfolio presents a person’s best work to exhibit career preparedness and/or mastery of a concept. This portfolio integrates the learning process with concrete samples illustrative of the person’s ability to accomplish specific tasks. (This portfolio format resembles the professional portfolio.)

A descriptive portfolio shows the development of a person’s project with the intent of assessing rather than evaluating progress. A descriptive portfolio is usually less detailed and reflective, and it focuses on stages of development for a work or project in progress. It can identify the person’s strengths and weaknesses as a means for assessing future courses of action.

An evaluative or working portfolio shows mastery of a specific skill or concept, usually for a formal learning, licensure or certification process. The focus of the document is on demonstrating mastery in a specified area. (This portfolio resembles a learning portfolio.)
The composite portfolio focuses on the workings of a group. The artifacts within this portfolio show the group’s progress, effort and accomplishments, in addition to detailing more interpersonal style information such as teamwork, leadership, organizational style, management style, etc.

Finally, Dietz (1994) describes portfolios in a manner similar to Shackelford and Denzine. Her “employment portfolio” is similar to a showcase or professional portfolio; what she terms “assessment portfolio” is similar to an evaluative or learning portfolio; and for “learner portfolio” is similar to a learning portfolio but more focused on personal applications rather than professional or academic skills.

With such a wide variety of labels used to describe portfolios, professionals could easily be confused by the literature. The chart below breaks down the important considerations when choosing a portfolio format.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primarily for personal growth</th>
<th>Contains broad range of items</th>
<th>Related to a specific task</th>
<th>Individual-based</th>
<th>Used for reflection</th>
<th>Used for evaluation</th>
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<td>✅</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Learner portfolio</td>
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</table>
Why should I develop a portfolio?

The Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, a working group of the US Department of Labor found, through a 1991 survey, that students entering the workforce lacked certain core competencies and foundational abilities. These workplace “know-how” skills included (SCANS, 1992):

- Use of resources.
- Information systems.
- Technology.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Basic learning skills.
- Teamwork.
- Thinking skills.

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) commissioned a report 21st-Century Skills, that compiled research from the 1990s to define four key categories for high-performance learning (Lemke, 2002):

1. **Digital age literacy**—basic science and technology abilities, information management, and cultural awareness.
2. **Inventive thinking**—ability to deal with complexity; curiosity and risk taking; and reasoning, problem solving, and decision making.
3. **Effective communication**—interpersonal skills and teamwork ability, understanding of personal and social integrity, and oral and written communication skills.
4. **High productivity**—ability to plan and prioritize tasks, ability to use real-world tools and technology, and a strong work ethic.

Looking at these lists, you may wonder how to show these skills in an interview. Shackelford (1995) and others believe that through the portfolio, students and professionals can exhibit and provide examples to support these skills. First, the portfolio creation process requires thought and reflection on the learning and experiences. Second, the selection and explanation of artifacts requires articulation of ideas about the learning.

Increasingly, the portfolio has become an important part of the evaluation process—both inside and outside the classroom. Most communications and educational professionals—along with artists, writers, academics and counselors—have professional portfolios.
What should I put in my professional portfolio?

Portfolios can include a wide variety of items, from written papers to multimedia projects. The important part when selecting projects for a portfolio is that all the artifacts must help satisfy the requirements and/or objectives of the portfolio and have something meaningful to contribute to the portfolio. Artifacts that one might consider for a portfolio include (MSU, 2000; Shackelford, 1996; and Salend, 2001):

- Resume.
- Personal statement.
- Transcript.
- Volunteer work.
- Awards or honors.
- Supervisor feedback and evaluations.
- Letters of recommendation.
- Letters of thanks.
- Evidence of participation in local, state, and national activities.
- Assessment of internships.
- Evidence of public speaking.
- Technical competencies (e.g., curriculum development, presentation skills, written skills, graphic design ability, etc.).
- Evidence of critical, creative, and systemic thinking ability.
- Samples of work (e.g., papers, videos, pictures, etc.).
- Evidence of personal management skills.
- Evidence of research and/or problem-solving.
- Evidence of teamwork and collaboration with others.

When selecting from items, remember that most portfolios include examples that highlight information on topics such as (Fisher and Knauft, 2001):

- Goals—either learning goals or outcomes for more specific portfolios, or career goals and mission statements for broader portfolios.
- Skills—highlight abilities and knowledge sets.
- Collaboration—work done with others and ability to interact in teams.
- Impact—outcomes and results of actions.
- Growth—personal and professional evolution over time.

For example, if an ANR communications student wanted to feature her trip to the National ACT Conference, she might have the following rationale for including such an artifact:
• Goals—to meet professionals and students from other organizations and universities.
• Skills—fundraising skills to earn the money to attend and networking and interpersonal skills during the convention.
• Collaboration—worked with other ACT members to raise money and plan the trip
• Impact—ideas from the session led to a new officer training program at MSU and got the student a summer job with Monsanto.
• Growth—experienced a new city and new ideas, learned more about herself and her professional goals.

While building the portfolio, one should remember the difference between the item and what the item shows. The item itself can show specific skills such as writing, photography, graphic design, curriculum development, etc. The description and discussion of the item show more intangible abilities such as growth, teamwork, motivation, multiculturalism, etc. To capture some of these more intangible abilities, one should write captions or reflections for artifacts (MSU, 2000, and Shackelford, 1995).

Shackelford (1995) offers some suggestions on helpful questions when choosing, describing and reflecting on artifacts:

• What have I learned?
• What is the value or purpose of that learning?
• What skills or abilities do I wish to document?
• Do these abilities match identified needs, goals or objectives?
• What evidence can I include to substantiate these abilities?
• Do materials adequately and accurately reflect my abilities?
• Does the portfolio reflect what I have learned and my ability to transfer, integrate and use it to solve problems?

Salend (2001) also offers some advice on selecting items:

• What does the item reveal about my skills, knowledge, growth, experiences, self-reflections, and attitudes?
• Is the item consistent with my educational philosophy and best practices
• Does the item demonstrate my best work?
• Is the item free of errors?
• Is the item authentic?
• Does the item show teamwork?
• What does the item reveal about me on a personal level?
• Does the item fit with the purpose and organization of my portfolio?
How should I organize my professional portfolio?

The most common portfolio formats are 2- to 4-inch three-ring binders or binders with folders. These formats allow you to add, remove and rearrange your artifacts depending on your needs as a student and professional.

Other popular choices include Internet-style portfolios, created like a WWW page, and multimedia CD-ROMs. These electronic choices allow you to incorporate video, sound, graphics and pictures easily into your documents; however, they require you to scan more traditional text-based artifacts such as writing samples, evaluations, awards, thank-you notes, etc. Hence, when choosing from the various formats, you should consider some of the following factors:

- **Content** - What types of items are you trying to highlight—mostly writing, photography, layout and design, public speaking, etc.? How often will you need to update and/or change your portfolio’s content? How much content will you have overall?
- **Cost** - How much can you spend on your portfolio?
- **Logistics** - Will you need to mail the portfolio? Will you need to have multiple copies? How will you transport it?
- **Access to technology** - Do you have the technology (i.e., scanners, printers, CD burners, etc.) and skills needed to design your portfolio? Will the recipient have access to the technology needed to see your work?

However you decide to format and present your portfolio, Heskett (1998) and Salend (2001) offer some general tips for any portfolio. First, all portfolios include some sort of table of contents. This feature could be a list associated with colored tabs within a binder or hyperlinks for an electronic format. The main idea is to make it easy for anyone looking at your portfolio to find specific artifacts quickly and easily. For example, an interviewer should be able to find your student teaching evaluation immediately, without sorting through a whole section on work evaluations.

Second, most portfolios include a professional cover page and contact information. An attractive opening page or cover adds interest and creativity to your portfolio. Make sure that your name, phone number, address, e-mail, etc. are included in the front of the document.

Finally, just as a resume uses a cover letter, a portfolio should have a letter of introduction. This letter explains the document’s objectives, organization and purpose for the intended viewer. This letter is especially important for portfolios that will be viewed your absence.

When organizing the individual artifacts within the document, you should use a logical, consistent, easy-to-follow format. Portfolios usually start with a personal statement, autobiography, mission statement, resume or vitae. This document can provide a framework...
for the entire portfolio. For example, the sections of your portfolio might follow the sections on your resume.

Some suggestions for ordering your artifacts:

- Follow the order of your resume or vitae.
- Follow the order dictated by the assignment or portfolio objectives.
- Organize the artifacts chronologically.
- Organize the artifacts by themes.
What are the ANRECS portfolio objectives?

ANRECS has developed the following objectives for agriscience and ANR communications students. These objectives are based on information from MSU’s Office of Career Services and Placement and the existing literature.

Objective 1: Personal growth and development

1.1 Personal mastery (i.e., knowledge of strengths, weaknesses, needs, etc.)
1.2 Teamwork
1.3 Diversity and culture
1.4 Motivation, quality and work ethic
1.5 Understanding of personal values and life’s mission

Objective 2: Professional growth and development

2.1 Oral and written communication
2.2 Technological literacy
2.3 Ability to critically and creatively analyze problems and offer solutions supported by logic and reasonable evidence
2.4 Mastery of key skills inherent to chosen field of study (i.e., mastery of your chosen curriculum)
2.5 Understanding of organizational cultures and personal role within the organization

Objective 3: Commitment to agriculture and natural resources

3.1 Understanding of a systems approach to problems
3.2 Understanding of an ecological worldview
3.3 Mastery of key concepts in the agricultural and environmental sciences

Objective 4: Commitment to service, community and ethical behavior

4.1 Commitment to extending knowledge beyond the academy (MSU)
4.2 Commitment to serving others
4.3 Commitment to ethical professional behavior
What is the purpose of the first-year portfolio (AEE 111)?

The purpose of the AEE 111 portfolio is to get students started on what will eventually be their professional portfolio. A student may think of his or her first portfolio as a descriptive portfolio; it is a work in progress. Specifically, the student should seek to show growth in objective 1, personal growth and development.

The first portfolio consists of the following required content:

1. Letter of introduction to the instructor.
2. Professional title page with graphics and personal information.
3. Table of contents or similar organizing element.
4. Mission statement, goals, and values.
5. Resume.
6. List of courses and grades.
7. Personal letter of recommendation (from a church leader, family friend, mentor, etc.).
8. Professional letter of recommendation (from a faculty member, employer or supervisor).
9. Writing sample.
10. Shadowing reports/evaluation.

Beyond these 10 items, students should select at least four additional artifacts that help them meet objective 1. For example, a student might select a group project from COM 240 that shows teamwork or something from an FFA visit to Detroit that shows cultural awareness. In addition to selecting and displaying these items in the portfolio, students should label all artifacts with appropriate logistical information (i.e., who, what, where and when).

For the final presentation in AEE 111, each student will answer a question related to objective 1. The class will develop this question during AEE 110 and 111. During the presentation, students will use visual aids and examples from the portfolio to answer the question. They will not walk the class through their portfolios. The portfolio creation process will help the students prepare for and complete the presentation; it is not intended to be the focus.
What is the purpose of the second-year portfolio (AEE 211 or AEE 311)?

The purpose of the AEE 211 portfolio is to further the portfolio started in AEE 111, with additional emphasis on objective 2, professional growth and development. The second portfolio should expand upon and show growth in objective 1 and exhibit basic skills associated with the student’s chosen career path. These skills may include writing, speaking, agricultural sciences, teaching and presenting, graphic design, photography, etc.

The following required content for the second portfolio is:

1. All the items from the first portfolio, with updates to the resume and other documents as needed.
2. One additional professional letter of recommendation.
4. Mentoring reports/evaluation.
5. Class projects (related to major).

Beyond these items, students should select at least six additional artifacts that help them meet objective 1 and/or 2. For example, a student might select photographs from a tutoring session that shows a commitment to teaching or a photography award that shows his or her artistic merits. In addition to selecting and displaying these items in the portfolio, students should label all artifacts with appropriate logistical information (i.e., who, what, where and when).

For the final presentation in AEE 211 or 311, students will present on their mentoring experiences, with special emphasis on how these experience shaped their professional growth and development. During the presentation, students will use visual aids and examples from the portfolio. They will not walk the class through their portfolios. The portfolio creation process will help the students prepare for and complete the presentation; it is not intended to be the focus.
What is the purpose of the internship portfolio?

The purpose of the internship portfolio is to further the earlier portfolios, with additional emphasis on objective 3, commitment to agriculture and natural resources. The third portfolio should expand upon and show growth in objectives 1 and 2, in addition to highlighting the student’s commitment to agriculture and natural resource issues and their professional development during their internship.

The required content for the third portfolio is:

1. All the items from the first and second portfolios, with updates to the resume and other documents as needed.
2. One additional professional letter of recommendation.
3. Internship products, reports, evaluation, etc.

Beyond these items, students should select at least eight additional artifacts that help them meet objective 1, 2 and/or 3. For example, a student might select a report on water quality that shows a commitment to conserving natural resources. In addition to selecting and displaying these items in the portfolio, students should label and reflect upon all artifacts. Reflections are a few sentences or paragraphs that explain why an artifact is important. When writing the reflections, refer to the questions discussed on page 7.

Students will submit their portfolio before and after the internship to the supervising faculty member or advisor. Additional information on the use of the ANRECS portfolio in the internship course is detailed in the internship information packet.
What is the purpose of the final portfolio (AEE 411)?

The purpose of the AEE 411 portfolio is to highlight a student’s learning and growth during his or her time at MSU. Though this portfolio is to be used primarily for job interviews, the final portfolio should also show a student’s progression as a professional and a citizen. Hence, the final portfolio should reflect all the ANRECS objectives, with special emphasis on objective 4, commitment to service, community and ethical behavior.

The required content for the final portfolio is:

1. All the items from the first three portfolios, with updates to the resume and other documents as needed.
2. Personal statement or autobiography.

Beyond these items, students should select at least 10 additional artifacts that help them exhibit objectives 1 - 4. For example, a student might select an agenda from public meeting on urban sprawl that shows a commitment to serving rural communities. In addition to selecting and displaying these items in the portfolio, students should label and reflect upon all artifacts. Reflections are a few sentences or paragraphs that explain why an artifact is important. When writing the reflections, refer to the questions discussed on page 7.
How do I run my final interview during AEE 411?

For the final presentation in AEE 411, each student will select a minimum of three people to serve on his or her interview committee. These people must include an academic advisor, a faculty member from AEE 411 and an outside professional. Students are encouraged to have additional professionals on the committee.

When organizing the committee, students will be responsible for inviting the committee; reserving the room; informing the committee members of the time, date and location of the final interview; obtaining the needed equipment for the session; explaining the purpose and format of the final interview; providing portfolio samples to the committee; and thanking the committee. In general, students should follow this timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of committee members and mailing of invitation letter</td>
<td>First week of October</td>
<td>First week of February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final time, date and location determined for the interview</td>
<td>First week of November</td>
<td>Second week of March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserving any equipment needed for the session</td>
<td>Two weeks before the presentation</td>
<td>Two weeks before the presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminder letters/sample artifacts to all committee members</td>
<td>One week before the presentation</td>
<td>One week before the presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct the interview</td>
<td>Last three weeks of the semester*</td>
<td>Last three weeks of the semester*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail thank-you letters out to all committee members</td>
<td>One week after the presentation</td>
<td>One week after the presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Instructors will advise students on the appropriate dates on the basis of the course outline for the semester. Whenever possible, presentations should be scheduled prior to finals week.

During the final interview, students are encouraged to start with a brief introduction that details what they have learned and how they have grown over their tenure at MSU. In the past, the best introductions have used visual aides. After the introduction, the floor is open for the committee to ask questions and initiate discussion with the student.

Specific room arrangement, location and duration will depend on the individual student. Typically, these interviews take about 1.5 hours, but they can last longer. The student should put sufficient time into thinking about how he or she wants the session to run and how long it should last. *Appropriate dress depends on the nature of the session and the committee.*
# Appendix A: Portfolio Content

## Organizing features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AEE 111</th>
<th>AEE 211/311</th>
<th>Third-year</th>
<th>AEE 411</th>
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## Required artifacts

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<th>AEE 211/311</th>
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<th>AEE 411</th>
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## Other features

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<th>AEE 411</th>
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</tr>
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<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Artifact labels</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* These materials include evidence (e.g., pictures, reports, samples, etc.) from mentoring, independent study, internship and similar experiences.
Appendix B: Sample invitation letter for the final interview

Monday, February X, 20XX

Dear Professional H:

As part of my AEE 411 course, students ask professionals and faculty members to serve on a final interview committee. This committee reviews the student’s final portfolio, asks interview-style questions, and offers advice. I am writing to ask if you would be available to serve on my committee.

The interviews take between one and two hours, and they are scheduled during the last three weeks of the semester, April XX – May XX. I have attached a list of the portfolio objectives used by my department and the information on the interview itself.

I hope you can find time to participate in my interview. Your guidance as a mentor and teacher has meant a lot to me. If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact me at 555-555-1234 or by email at studentj@msu.edu.

Sincerely,

J Student
Appendix C: Final interview checklist

When serving on a student’s final interview committee, please remember to evaluate both the product and the process of the portfolio (Collinson, 1995). When evaluating the product—the portfolio itself—you may want to consider the following:

- Do the portfolio and the presentation reflect the objectives put forth by the department?
- Does the portfolio contain professional examples of the student’s work?
- Are there items that you would recommend adding, deleting or rearranging within the portfolio?
- Is the portfolio organized well?

When evaluating the process—the thought and reflection behind the creation of the portfolio—you will want to look for a student’s learning, development and achievement over his or her time at MSU (Collinson, 1995). We ask that you consider the following:

- What has the student learned during his or her degree program and how has the portfolio contributed to that learning?
- How has the student grown personally and professionally over his or her time at MSU?
- Has the student mastered the skills needed to be a professional in today’s workforce?

When asking questions during the interview, please put emphasis on the portfolio and the portfolio objectives. Typical questions asked during the final interview:

- Looking at the items in your portfolio, which one are you most proud of?
- If you could add one item to the portfolio, what would it be?
- How do you think you have grown professionally since coming to MSU?
- Why have you chosen a career in agriculture and natural resources?
- How do you plan to keep learning? How will you be a lifelong learner?
- What was your most significant learning experience while at MSU?
- How did your internship help contribute to your understanding of being a professional?
Appendix D: Sample thank-you letter

Monday, April XX, 20XX

Dear Professional H:

I want to thank you for attending my final portfolio interview for AEE 411 on April XX, 20XX. Your presence as a former internship advisor and mentor meant a lot to me personally. Professionally, your guidance and advice over the years have helped me grow as a student, and I look forward to working with you next year during my student teaching.

It meant a lot to me when you reminded me to maintain my high expectations during my internship year. I know the pressures a young teacher can face in the classroom, and I really value your insight on my professional transition.

If you have any questions about my portfolio or would like to discuss my interview further, please contact me at 555-555-1234 or by email at studentj@msu.edu.

Sincerely,

J Student
Appendix E: Sample Artifact Label

**Title:** ANR career tri-fold brochure

**Objective:** Research, design and layout an educational brochure about an Agriscience teaching career

**Resources:** Individual assignment, Internet, Mason High School Agriscience teacher, computer

**Timeline:** 2 weeks

**Assumptions / Givens:**
- Minimum 2 hours research
- One san serif font for titles and headers and one serif font for body text
- Use 2 color scheme

**Skills:**
- Developed storyline and determined four broad organization categories (What is an Agriscience teaching career?, What is a day like?, What can you expect for pay?, What are your reward?) (30 min)
- Interviewed Mason High School Agriscience teacher to obtain 2 career pull quotes (1 hr)
- Photographed and obtained photo releases of Agriscience classrooms in action (30 min)
- Researched Agriscience teaching career 10-year salary projections (1 hr)
- Selected fonts (Arial – titles and Boca Raton – body), color scheme (MSU Green Pantone 341 and black) and layout style (30 min)
- Wrote and edited story copy - MS Word (1 hr)
- Graphed salary projections – MS Excel (15 min)
- Cropped and sized images for columns - Photoshop (15 min)
- Designed layout in tri-fold brochure format printable on 8 ½ x 11 stock with full edge bleeds – MS Word (2 hr)
Appendix F: Sources


