8-2 Final Project Website, Print-Ready Portfolio, and Professional Reflection

Thom Smiech

Southern New Hampshire University

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Professor Cassidy-Vanek

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Website: https://portfolio.trwebcreations.com/

Print-Ready Portfolio: https://portfolio.trwebcreations.com/Print-Ready_Portfolio.pdf

Professional Reflection: https://portfolio.trwebcreations.com/8-2_Final_Project.pdf

This term went by in a flash. Overall, this capstone experience allowed me to witness the culmination of two years of graphic and web design courses. It taught me to be open to both positive and negative criticism of my designs and be able to critique other students' designs. While this was a new experience, it is a natural process in the professional world. While I received very little feedback over these two years, I often offered lengthy weekly discussions in many courses. While they were professional discussions, I also wanted to splash them here and there with humorous situations or jokes to make anyone smile. Furthermore, they were detailed to give examples to others of my professional experiences, and the detail that I felt should be included in a discussion. Unfortunately, as much as I have tried, I could not do justice to any topic discussed in three sentences.

The problems I discovered when creating the web portfolio versus the print portfolio were file size and compression techniques. In the web design universe, the desired goal is to load a web page as fast as possible. As many sites are discovered or viewed via a phone, the longer-loading website will be terminated by the user. Therefore, the images should permanently be reduced in size using a compression method, whether Photoshop or an online service such as tinypng or Online-Convert. Compressing CSS/JavaScript using Minify could also improve the site's load time. On the other hand, for a print portfolio, image compression is typically not needed. Unfortunately, for this capstone, it was required to keep the file size down. While the

images were flattened in Photoshop and then placed into InDesign, the file size was over 200 MB. The dilemma of being a web designer kicked in, and I tried to compress the imagery. The undesired result when zoomed in Acrobat above 300% were pixelated images. Unacceptable. Many photos had to be reformatted and use a different compression method. The other struggles were with all the various shortcut commands in the Adobe Cloud and learning what each piece of software was capable of and its limits.

While many graphic design classes taught proper design techniques, putting the two portfolio pieces together, those techniques were quickly forgotten. While each portfolio format was designed correctly and utilized proper techniques, when the two merged, they could have played better together. Not that the changes would take forever to implement, but a balance and rhythm had to be created in both formats. There had to be cohesion in the pieces while creating a logical flow. What worked for my portfolio was alternating collateral pieces. For example, the order was a website, then a graphic design piece that included a food subject. Towards the end of the portfolio, the subject matter changed to marketing which flowed nicely into my branding collateral. The final pieces that were decided on were Java Been website, Foody Cookin' EPUB, Pasta Amore website, Pasta Amore collateral, LVTAT Prototype, Upper Crust Bakery, PPCC website, Fluid Grid, Amethyst Bay Resort, and Chris Gent | L.S. website.

While the critiques were minimal this term, the Professor pushed me to improve. "It does not need to be complex, bloated or cumbersome. Repeat after me: a little tells you a lot and anything is better than nothing" (Smith, 2015). For example, I often felt abusive when sending her twenty-page papers to read about my design choices on collateral pieces. However, each piece had six to seven questions to answer. There was no way I could do justice in my six-sentence responses while including outside sources and feedback critiques. It was great to help

that the Professor offered weekly Zoom meetings to discuss any issues the class was having. While online learning is convenient and email provides quick responses, real-life collaborations offer a more profound sense of understanding, feedback, and professionalism.

Like this capstone, each week's projects played a role in creating the larger final portfolio piece. There were questions about why we had to do this assignment, but in the end, it made sense. For example, after creating the two collateral batches, why did we have to refine them? However, as good as you may feel a design is, there is always room for improvement. Was it something that could be remarked as insensitive in another culture? Has every definitive rule been broken? Has the website not followed best practices and is not responsive or improved upon for accessibility issues? These past two years of classes and coursework are identical to this capstone. Each class and coursework were part of the larger picture. While the history courses were not fun and typically frowned upon and resented. However, like the journey at SNHU, the history topics showed what brought us to where we are today. It presented events that shaped us, technology, and graphic design. This is my public apology to the history courses.

When creating and refining the portfolio pieces, some changes were made from the Professor's critiques. For example, the logo on my branding stationary was too close to the bleed marks and had to be moved lower down the page so that it would not be cut off. A Python coding game was removed from the portfolio. While the game is creepy, challenging, and fun to play, it does not strengthen my graphic or web design skills. Originally the portfolio had screenshots of every web page and graphic layout page. They were removed in favor of the Professor's recommendation to streamline them online. The new format for the portfolio for online collateral was a screenshot of the website or a complete magazine spread with Q.R. codes that allowed to view online. The hardest pill for me to swallow was in Milestone Three, where the grade was a

B. At first, I was dumbfounded as I picked my jaw off the floor. I could not even read the critique and feedback. Finally, I came back to it and agreed with the feedback. The previous courses offered very little feedback as well. Most repeated comments were that the designs were great or they felt what I was going for. While this is welcoming, it offered no collaboration or push to try something different or better. Collaboration is a critical piece in design in graphics and on the web. It is not only how we grow as designers, but how the team of designers in a company grows, strengthens, and becomes an inclusive unit that benefits the company, clients, and those around us.

The number of images used in Java Been's collateral was very overwhelming. They were removed from the final portfolio piece. The same holds for LVTAT Hi-Fidelity Prototype. Before I utilized the Q.R. codes, this milestone suggested their use. Some mockups were changed in size to allow prominent allocation for the design artwork instead. Three to four pieces were removed from the portfolio to make the more vital pieces stand out. Finally, there was one page of the website where I enticed the viewer to let me know what was on their mind. I added a link to the contact page to automate the process for the viewer. The homepage was also updated with new information.

The lack of feedback and critiques held back the progress and improvements to the portfolio. Although through these past two years of learning, I went back to the fundamentals of design, both graphic and web, and began creating checklists and critiquing myself. While the later part was weird and challenging at times, it allowed for improvements to be made. It also gave me a split personality. Three students did offer feedback. Although it was all positive, nothing was proposed to improve the designs. I wonder if my lengthy discussions deterred fellow students from interacting with me. It is this lack of collaboration that made me feel isolated at

times. "Collaboration is important in the workplace because it often leads to more communication between colleagues and increased productivity" (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022). I questioned what I was doing or saying that turned others off. I reread my discussions, critiques, and feedback to check my tone, but nothing I could pinpoint. This is how it will be, and I can also count on myself to critique my designs. Growth.

These newly discovered strengths, the classes at SNHU, and proper design techniques have strengthened me as an individual and a professional. "Remember the first day of college when you had to introduce yourself to dozens of strangers, some of whom became your close friends? That is kind of what the job search process is like: pitching yourself to a handful of potential employers, searching for the one that is going to be a successful match" (Yang, n.d.). Before SNHU, I could barely use Photoshop. However, now I have the skillset and experience in the latest versions of Adobe Cloud, including Photoshop, Dreamweaver, X.D., Illustrator, Animate, Acrobat, and InDesign. Whether my career is in web design, graphic design, or a marriage of the two, I have the tools to succeed in the job market. The other skills I have learned or improved on while at SNHU have been time management, problem-solving techniques, proper research, communication skills, meeting deadlines, and staying motivated. I can add value to a company with my vast experience, training, and recent studies. Critiquing others at SNHU allows me to collaboratively inspire and establish creative strategies for clients. My portfolio represents a range of diversity of projects and design styles and illustrates my passion for visual design, typography, color, hierarchy, and branding. The portfolio annotations and methods illustrate that I can follow project parameters such as client requirements, user experience, technical constraints, and time management. The web design coursework has given me excellent problem-solving skills, UX/UI trends, techniques, and technologies in creating websites. Finally,

these past two years have allowed me to quickly learn new tasks, methods, software, and technologies.

Reflecting backward on my journey, there was no intention of becoming a graphic designer. My only goal was that of becoming a web designer with a degree. Today and from now on, I am proud to be a graphic designer and a web designer. I can mutually appreciate and enjoy them both simultaneously. By learning color theory, my eyes were opened to the many different symbolisms in color. For example, red is often used to represent love, danger, and energy. However, in Japan, it often symbolizes prosperity and good luck (Olesen, 2022). As an ethical designer, there is no way to be globally correct when color is involved. Knowing and understanding the targeted audience and its cultural fabric will help my designs be more inclusive and accessible. Whether it is graphic or web design, it is beneficial and necessary to understand any underlying or implicit biases, prejudices, or stereotypes. Not acknowledging that they exist could lead to detrimental results in the design.

On the other hand, in the design world, what if the client had strong biases against a group, they want you to design about? If it was the company, chances are I would quit; if it were a client, I would turn the project down and walk away. There are too many what-if scenarios to write about. Fortunately, the motto I live by has always led me to the positive side. "Always do things on the up and up. Always be honest and truthful. Treat people the way you want to be treated." Whether in design or life, I leave a positive impression on people. Hopefully, in the future, that will still be true. Following proper design rules and techniques and abiding by AIGA Standards of Professional Practices and W3C Standards will guide my future designs. In either graphic/web design, the final piece handed off to the client is communication in design (DeLane, 2020).

My professional goals are to succeed as a U.I./Front-end Web Designer and Digital Designer. After graduating, I envision joining a diverse and inclusive company that thrives upon the uniqueness of its team as a U.I. Web Designer anywhere in the world. "A diverse and inclusive workplace is one that makes everyone, regardless of who they are or what they do for the business, feel equally involved in and supported in all areas of the workplace" (Bush, 2021). Exploring the newfound teams, friends, and associates at work will expand my never-ending thirst for knowledge, learning, understanding, and bettering myself and those around me. If the company would like to compensate me for learning more in a Master's program, I would gladly accept. Life is energetic, peaceful, loving, and consistently learning.

Finally, these past two years at Southern New Hampshire University have prepared me for my future professional path. It is remarkable how insignificant I found some of the courses to give me knowledge that has led to vibrant and deep conversations with my friends and family. Something that I was not so remarkable with before my journey. I can finally design logos and branding guides, understand User Experience (UX) foundations and use color harmonies. Furthermore, I have the foundations to create animations, programming languages, and typography, professionally take photographs and learn how technology and graphic design affect the global neighborhood. The discussion boards and critiques have benefitted me in my design work and helped immensely in talking with clients.

Moreover, I am more comfortable talking professionally with graphic and web design terminologies. Although some of the Adobe tools (Illustrator and InDesign) were not used towards the end of my time at SNHU, the knowledge popped into my head as I had to utilize them for this capstone class. While I am unfamiliar with every Adobe software shortcut, there is

always time to learn them. I will always strive to be better with my design creations; along the way, I will try to help those I can. Always lifting them up.

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