TYPES OF WRITING:
Digication E-Portfolios

Do you know Digication offers users a Quick Start Guide? You may want to check it out before delving into this more detailed guide.

Getting Started: Defining the Purpose of Your Portfolio

When starting your Digication e-portfolio, it is important to have a clear purpose in mind. What material do you plan to present and why? Who is your audience? For example, if this is a WRD portfolio, the material you plan to present may be a series of drafts and reflections for several writing assignments. In this case, the audience is most likely your professor and your purpose to demonstrate and reflect upon your writing process. Or perhaps you intend to use your Digication portfolio to present samples of your work experience to potential employers. In this case, you most likely will not include any rough drafts but, rather, showcase your polished work product.

Once you have determined the purpose and audience for your portfolio, it is time to plan how you will organize it accordingly. Your Digication portfolio can be organized through the use of Sections and Pages. Sections, the principal mode of organization, appear in the horizontal bar at the top of your Digication portfolio below the main image banner. Pages appear in the vertical bar on the left side of the screen and can be used to further break down or categorize content within a section. For example, you might create "Reflections on Classroom Lectures," but further divide this section into pages labeled with the date of each lecture, so that the viewer can click on several links within the same section. Within each section and page, you can then insert various kinds of modules that will allow you to add text, media files, and links. A more in-depth discussion of these modules can be found below.

The Importance of Planning

Before starting your portfolio, it is a good idea to decide how you will organize your sections and pages. ***Please be aware that it is <u>not</u> possible to copy and paste an entire section or page in order to move the content to another location on your portfolio***. While thinking about the organization of your portfolio, it is important to keep in mind that your viewer will need some guidance in terms of navigating your site. Many current Digication users title their first section as "Home" (see DePaul alum Kelsie Kliner's portfolio for a good example of

this). This then serves as the welcome screen that introduces your viewer to your portfolio. You can use this space to let your viewer know the purpose of your portfolio, what he or she will find, and any other vital information. It might be helpful for you to think of this "Home" section as akin to an "Objective" statement on a resume.

Similarly, after creating a section, you will have the option of adding modules to the screen that appears as soon as you click on the title of a section. Some people use this screen to state the purpose or details of what that section will entail. However, if you choose *not* to add a module to this first screen and create pages within the section, then the first page's content will pop up after the viewer clicks on the section title.

Understanding Modules and Tools

Once you have set up the skeleton of your portfolio by creating all your sections and pages, the next step is to insert your content through adding modules. Modules represent different components of the content you want to share. For example, there are modules for adding text and modules for adding various media (images, video, and audio). Because Digication and online portfolios allow for the implementation of hyperlinks and multimedia, you may want to consider how adding these elements may be used to appropriately support your content.

Upon clicking on a newly created section, you will be presented with the option to "Choose a Template (Pre-Built Modules)" or to "Add a Module."
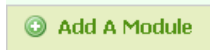
The template option simply adds several modules to the screen with which you can work and may present some confusion. If you are just beginning, choose the option "Add a Module" so that you can add content at your own pace. The following sections detail the functionalities for each module.

Rich Text Module

This module can be added to insert a body of text into a page of your portfolio. You can either type new text inside the box (and adjust font and other setting as if you were using a word processing application), or you can insert previously written text. To transfer text from a Word document into the module, you will need to use the "Paste from Word" button.

You can also copy/paste from other programs such as Mac's Pages or from other websites; however, the formatting and font may not transfer properly. In order to monitor this, frequently save your changes, and click on "View Text" to preview what your viewer will see on the screen. The way the text appears in the edit screen is not always consistent with its final view in "View Text." To adjust spacing and tabs, one must use the "Indent" and "Align"

buttons, as using the tab on your computer keyboard will not show up on the "View Text" draft. Other handy tools in this module include:

Insert Table

Pressing this button will open a window which asks for several criteria for the creation of your table. While it may seem intimidating, you only need to fill in two of the boxes: "cols," short for columns, and rows. This will specify the width and height of your table, in terms of number of cells. Once you click "Insert" you will be able to edit the table's contents as you would in Word or Excel. The cells will automatically resize in order to fit your text, though there is a horizontal limit.

If you decide you need to change the number of rows or columns, either adding or subtracting, you have to use the series of buttons to the right of the "Insert Table" button. Once you have created the table, the "insert/delete" buttons are the only way to modify the number of rows and columns.

If you find your table isn't quite the right size, even though it has the correct number of rows and columns, you can adjust it by clicking on the "Insert Table" button. Make sure your cursor is inside one of the cells of the table, and click "Insert Table" again. You will need to adjust the "Height" and "Width" fields. You can easily adjust the height field by adding line breaks as needed.

Width is more difficult. This field is measured in pixels, and is somewhat hard to adjust. If you enter a value which Digication cannot use (either too large for the page, or too small for all the text you have entered), Digication will not tell you, but will fail to change the size of the table. The following may be helpful in choosing an appropriate width for your table:

535	The full width of the page, approximately 70 characters, per row
400	Approximately 48 characters
300	Approximately 35 characters
200	Approximately 23 characters
100	Approximately 10 characters

It is important to note that the number of characters you can fit in a row is dependent on the size of the font and the number of columns. These numbers were achieved using 12 point Verdana in a single column.

Digication will optimize cellspacing, cellpadding, and border for you. These settings are best left alone, as they can be hard to manage.

Insert File

This feature allows you to turn any file from your computer into a downloadable attachment for your viewer. You can upload Word documents, PDF files, audio files, etc. The file you upload will appear as a link in the body of your text.

Insert Media

This button allows you to upload media that will visually appear in the body of your text and not as a downloadable link. The insert media function is best suited for inserting images or videos, as audio files do not properly display once you hit the "View Text" button. Audio files can be inserted with the Image/Video/Audio module detailed below.

Image/Video/Audio Module

From my computer

This option allows you to take your portfolio beyond text. If you have images, audio files, or video relevant to your e-portfolio, you can add them here. After creating the module, switch to the "Edit" tab, and click "Replace this Media."
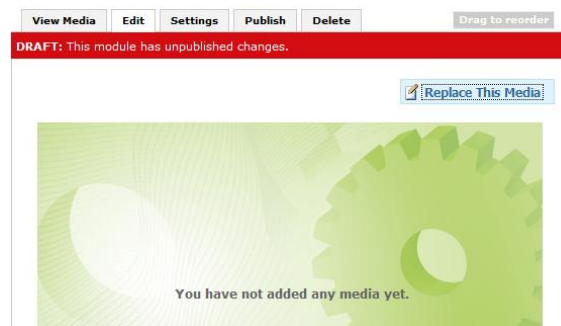
This will bring up a file browser, which you can use to locate the file you want to upload. The files can be no more than 20MB, and any file larger than 500 pixels wide will be resized. This means almost all images, audio files (MP3s) up to 20 minutes, and video files as long as 10 minutes can be uploaded. (However, at the time of this publication, Digication's video support is relatively new, and users may have difficulty playing videos uploaded to Digication).
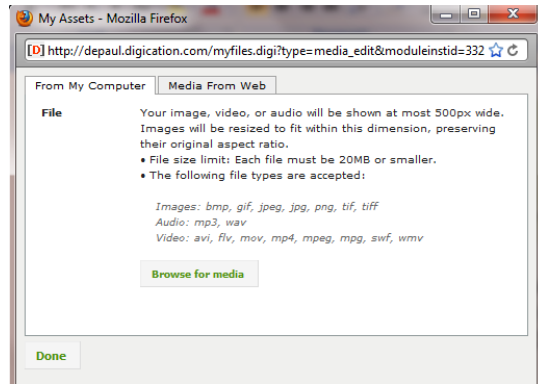
Given the limit on file size and the instability of uploading your video directly to Digication, uploading your video to a third-party site like YouTube or Vimeo may be a more prudent choice (see *From the Web*, below). Similarly, if you are looking to upload a large image or one where the details are important, try using Flickr or Photobucket, again via the "From the Web" tab.

 From the Web

Digication gives you the option to embed media from sites around the Internet--possibly sites you already use. While each site works a little differently, selecting the site you want to use from the drop-down menu will show you how to add the media. If you have never uploaded a video to YouTube before, Google's tutorial for the process should be helpful.

Gallery Module

 If you have multiple pieces of media, you might consider using the Gallery module. The Gallery module functions just like the media module, but allows you to showcase many different objects, which a user can click through at their leisure. You can also add captions to the media and delete individual elements of the gallery.

For a WRD portfolio, this tool is ideal for showing a series of revisions on a particular portion of a paper. Although the gallery function does not allow you to upload Word documents, you can convert these documents into image files. First, you will need to save your Word document as a PDF file (if you are using a PC, try CutePDF writer to "print" your PDF to file). Then, visit an online document conversion site (we recommend http://convert.neevia.com/pdfconvert/) to convert your PDF file to a JPEG file. (Multiple page documents will be converted into separate image files for each page). Once the file is converted, you will need to save it to your computer, and then upload it to the gallery module. Similarly, this method can be used to convert PowerPoint slides to JPEG files. For MAC Keynote slides, you can directly export these files as a JPEG file.

Contact Module

By inserting this module, you can enable viewers to send you an email without having to post your email address. If you are using Digication to display your work experience for potential employers, this tool is ideal for receiving further inquiries.

Further Customization of Your Portfolio

Creating a Banner Image

You may have noticed that many Digication pages have a banner or header image at the top of every page. The banner image can give your e-portfolio a unique identity, reflecting some important aspect of yourself. Digication has some particular rules about the size of banners, which may make it difficult to make your page look the way you want it to. Assuming you have already picked a banner image, this section will walk you through the process of making it work with Digication.

First you will need to upload your image to Digication--just to see how it looks. If you're lucky, Digication will choose the exact portion of the image you want to use. From any page on your e-portfolio, you can click "Portfolio Tools," and then "Settings." Scroll down to "Choose A Theme," and select "Custom Theme." Hit the "Browse" button under "Header Image," and locate your picture on your computer. Scroll to the bottom of the page, and click "Save."

Choose A Theme

Default Style   **Custom Theme**

More themes →

Customize Theme

Directory Icon

Upload New Image

[ ] Browse…

This is the icon that shows up in our directory when your e-Portfolio is listed. Your image will automatically be resized to 100x100 pixels.

Header Image

○ Current Banner

◉ Upload new Image

[ ] Browse…

This image will appear on the top of every page of your e-Portfolio. Your image will be resized to 779 pixels wide or less.

Digication may have selected the portion of the image you wanted. If you don't like the way it came out, continue reading, and we will figure out how to create a suitably sized banner. We'll be using the website Pixlr, a free in-browser photo-editor. Digication allows a maximum image size of 779x200 pixels, so first you should create a blank image that size. From Pixlr, click "Create a new image," and set it up with the name "Banner," a width of 779 pixels, and a height of 200. You can ignore the "Presets" bar. Hit "OK."
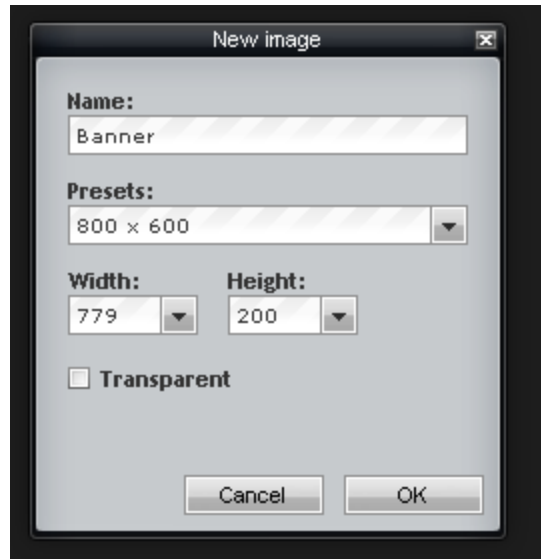
Now you need to open your image. From the "File" menu, select "Open Image," and locate your picture on your computer. Once it is open, select the marquee tool—it's the second button on the left in the "Tools" menu.

Drag a box around the portion of the image you intend to use as a banner.
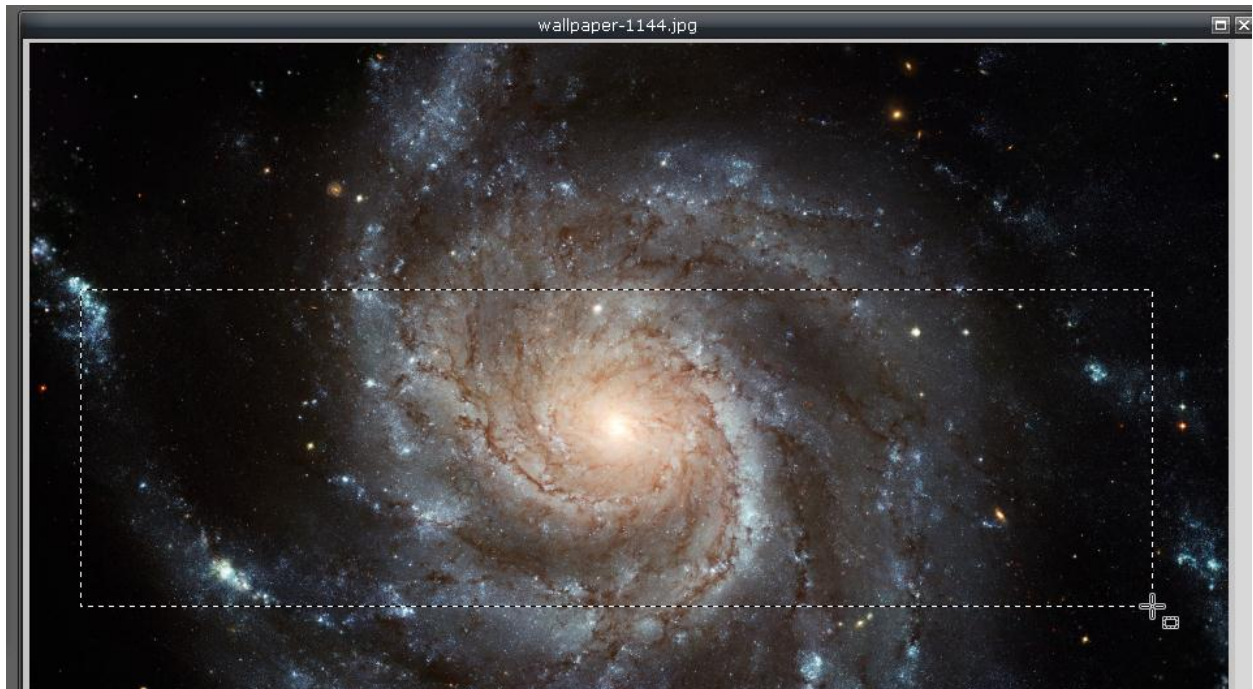
Now, copy this section by opening the "Edit" menu, and clicking the "Copy" button, or the keyboard shortcut (Ctrl + C). Switch to the Banner image you created at the beginning, and, from the "Edit" menu, click "Paste" (Ctrl + V). If you're happy, skip ahead to the "Saving" step. If not, continue reading.
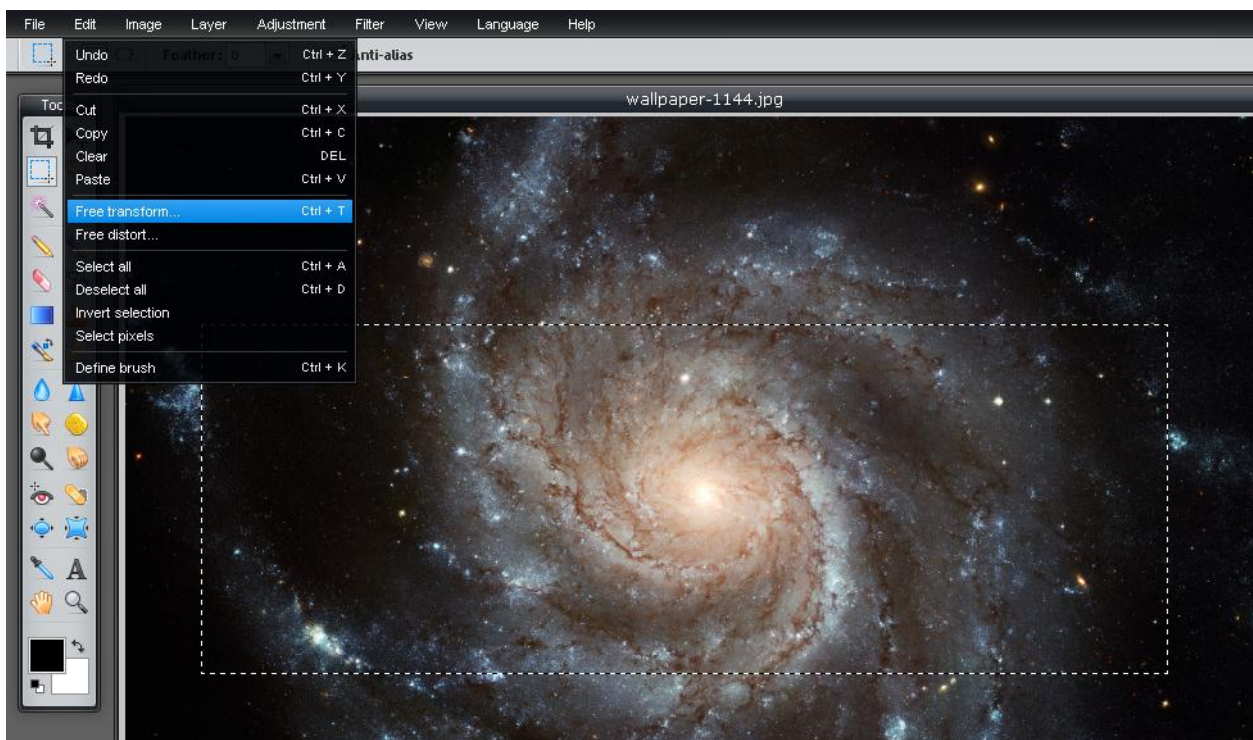
If the part of the image you want for your banner doesn't fit, you will have to resize it. From the "Edit" menu, select "Free transform" (Ctrl + T). Click the blue box in the lower left corner and carefully drag it to reduce the size of the image. When you have made the image significantly smaller, say 25% or so, hit the "Enter" key. Now copy and paste the image to your "Banner" image again, and check the size. This can take a couple of tries to get right. If you make your image too small, you can undo it by opening the "Edit" menu, and clicking "Undo" (Ctrl + Z).

When your "Banner" image looks the way you want it to, open the "File" menu and click "Save" (Ctrl + S). Save the file to your computer, and upload it to Digication as you did in the beginning of this process.
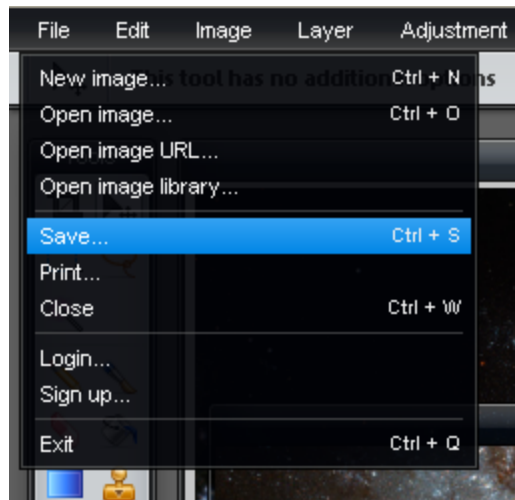
Backgrounds / Custom CSS

CSS is a computer language used to build websites. Digication allows users to write their own CSS to customize the look of their e-portfolio. Even if you know nothing about website building, you can easily make your e-portfolio unique by using the Custom CSS function.

Go to the Settings page of your e-portfolio and scroll down to Custom CSS. There is a field labeled "background" followed by a pound sign and six numbers or letters. Be sure to make a note of the default value. This is a hex code, and it tells the computer what color to display, in this case, for the background. To pick a color, this website lets you select a color and gives you the hex code in the box labeled "HTML Code." Copy this code to the background field in Digication, hit save and take a look. Digication allows you to change the color of a number of fields, so feel free to experiment and play around with it to make it your own. Every time you like the way your e-portfolio looks, copy all the settings to a document on your computer, and save it. That way, if you change something and break your e-portfolio, you can easily roll back to an earlier, better version.

Previewing and Publishing Your Portfolio

The "Preview" tab on the top of the screen will show you how your entire portfolio will look once it's published; whereas, the "Publish" tab will show you what content has currently been made public to whomever has access to your portfolio (see *Privacy Settings*, below). In order for you to work on sections that you might not yet have finished, there is a button at the top of each module you have created. Only by clicking "Publish" will you make that specific module viewable by others.

Adjusting the Privacy Settings

In order to monitor who has access to your Digication portfolio, click on the "Portfolio Tools" button in the top left hand corner of the screen, and then press "Settings." When you scroll down to the bottom of this page, you will notice that there are several privacy options from which to choose. Reflecting on the purpose and audience of your portfolio will help you determine who you wish to give access to it. For a WRD portfolio, you may just want to add your professor using the "Additional Permissions" section. In this section, also note that there is a dropdown bar for you to choose what kind of access the selected user or group has. On the other hand, for a portfolio intended for potential employers, you will probably want to select the "Public" option in order to make your portfolio viewable through various search engines. In almost all cases, however, you will want to keep yourself as the only administrator and everyone else as viewers so that you are the only one with access to editing your portfolio.

Further Resources

Make an appointment with a Writing Center Tutor (see this list for our Digication "experts")
Digication's E-Portfolio Help Guide
Digication's E-Portfolio KnowlegeBase
"Creating A Successful Online Portfolio" by Sean Hodge. *Smashing Magazine*. 4 March 2008.