What Mahara E-Portfolios is

The quote from the Mahara website states, "Mahara is an open source e-portfolio system with a flexible display framework. Mahara, meaning 'think' or 'thought' in Te Reo Māori, is user-centered environment with a permissions framework that enables different views of an e-portfolio to be easily managed. Mahara also features a weblog, resume builder and social networking system, connecting users and creating online learner communities."

The website is intended as a substitute for the CDs and DVDs that are currently being used for portfolios. It helps to address issues with distribution, privacy, file formats, and reliability that the other mediums have had problems with. That does not mean it is a perfect solution. It has its limitations and comes with a learning curve. It is designed to give the students a better platform for organizing and presenting their work.

What Mahara E-Portfolios does not do

- Mahara is not an assessment or grading platform like Blackboard. There is no way for a professor to check off assignments or milestones from within the website.
- It does not allow faculty to directly access student portfolios without their consent.
- It does not automatically organize student groups for you.

Concepts

Artifact / Content Block

An artifact is the individual piece of information that demonstrates an aspect of a user's abilities. These can include blocks of text, images, videos, resume information, file downloads (PDFs, Office Documents, etc), blog posts, and profile information. Artifacts are the base parts that make up a portfolio.

View

Views are a collection of artifacts arranged on a webpage that is targeted to a particular audience intended to demonstrate the portfolio owner's abilities and experience. For example, a user could have a view dedicated to showcasing their art. This view would consist of uploaded images and accompanying text blocks describing how the images were created. The view might then be made available to

the public and linked to from the user's social media site. Then a similar view could be created for a potential employer that also includes resume information but is only made available as a link sent by email that expires after a specified amount of time.

Group

Groups are a construct for allowing users to interact and collaborate with each other. They provide a place for creating common views, having discussions, and posting files. Depending on the type of group that is created, users can also submit personal views that are then locked from modification until a group admin or tutor reviews and releases it. Groups are also useful for simplifying access to personal views. For example, if you have a group that consists of Teacher Education faculty and staff then a student would only have to give that group permission to their view for assessment instead of having to identify individual people for each view they want to make available. Currently the creation of groups is limited to staff and faculty only.

Friend

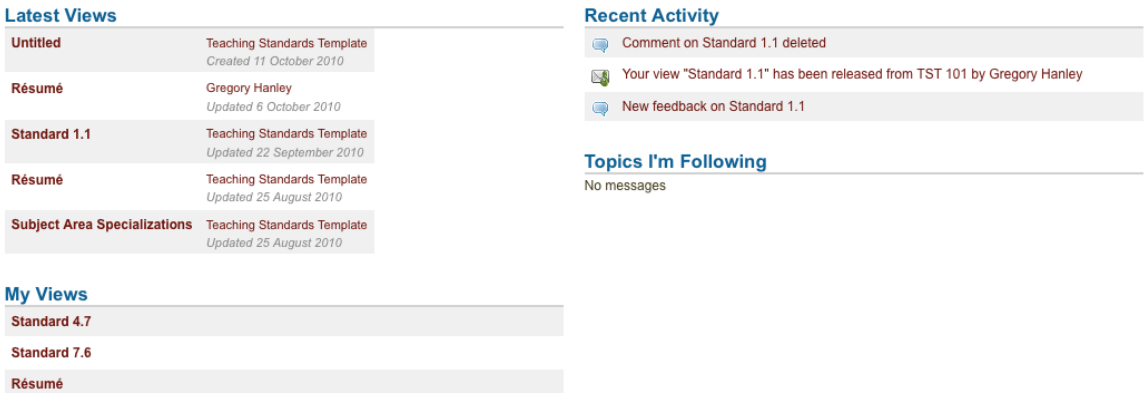
The social networking aspect of the site is fairly limited. At present it is only functions as a grouping mechanism for giving permissions to a user's views. Being friends doesn't automatically give someone access to a user's views unless they have explicitly given their "friends" access.

Site Layout

Home

When you first access the site you will be presented with the login screen. You login with your CMU Global ID and Password. Once you login it will take you to your Dashboard.

Dashboard



Your default dashboard is setup in four sections.

- **Latest Views:** A list of views that you have access to and have been most recently updated.
- **My Views:** A list of all of the views that you have created.
- **Recent Activity:** A list of events that affect you. Some examples are, someone leaving feedback on one of your views, a new private message from another user, and when a submitted view is released by a group admin.
- **Topics I'm Following:** A list of the most recent updates in group forums that you are subscribed to.

Your dashboard is actually just a View that can be customized if you would prefer other information when you first login.

Profile

The profile tab contains all of the static information about you that can be pulled into Views, but is centrally managed so you don't have to update a bunch of Views when something changes. The profile tab contains three subsections.

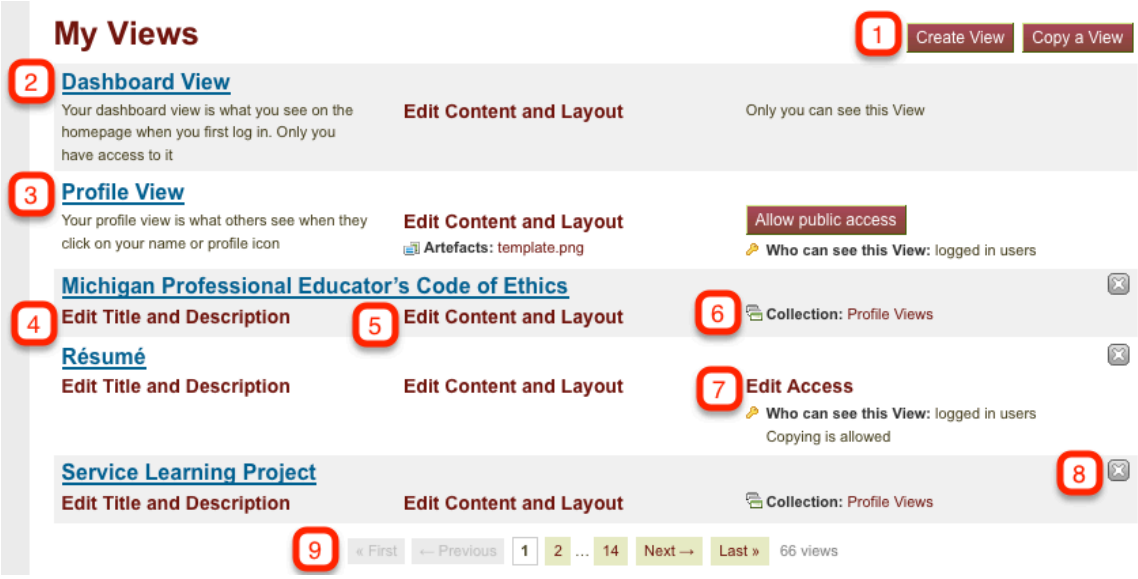
- **Edit Profile:** This section contains text fields for entering personal information about yourself. This includes name, contact information, instant messaging names, and occupational information.
- **Profile Icons:** This section allows you to upload profile pictures. You can upload up to 5 pictures for inclusion in views of varying professionalism.
- **My Resume:** This section is a resume builder that allows to you fill in more personal information, education and employment history, achievements, goals, skills, and interests. The information entered in this section can then be displayed in Views in a structured layout.

My Portfolio

This tab is where you will be doing the majority of your work with Mahara. It is where you create and manage your views, upload your artifacts, update your blog, manage your professional plans, and export views.

My Views

Views are like individual webpages that you use to organize and present your artifacts to targeted audiences. This section is for creating, and managing those views.



1. **Create / Copy a View:** These buttons are for creating a new view from scratch, or copying someone else's view and then modifying it to make it your own.
2. **Dashboard View:** This view controls what you see when you first login to the E-Portfolio site.
3. **Profile View:** This view controls what other people see when they click on your name or profile icon. You would usually only want to put general information about yourself in this view. This is also a good place to include a public blog.
4. **Edit Title and Description:** You would click on this link if you wanted to change the title or description of an existing view.
5. **Edit Content and Layout:** You would click this link if you wanted to edit the content of an existing view.

6. **Collection:** If a view is in a collection, it will display here and provide a link to the collection it is a part of.
7. **Edit Access:** You would click on this link if you wanted to edit the access rites of an existing view. This section also displays a summary of the those who can access the view.
8. **Delete:** This button allows you to delete a view that you no longer want. Deleting a View will not delete the artifacts attached to it, but it will delete any text box artifacts that you have created in the View.
9. **Paging:** These links allow you to browse the views that do not all fit in one screen.

Create View

Views are created by dragging and dropping content blocks into the View Layout area.

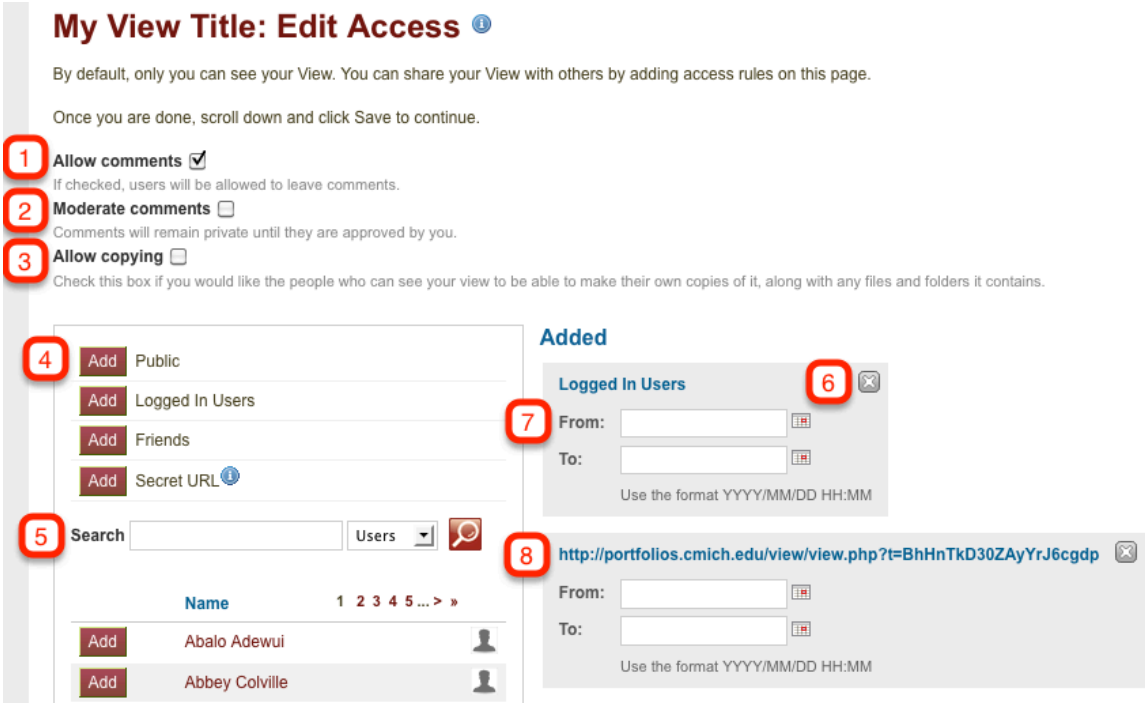
1. **Content Block Tabs:** These tabs contain all of the available content blocks or artifacts that you can drag down into your View.
2. **Content Blocks / Artifacts:** These include both internal and external blogs, uploaded documents, images, videos, collection links, custom text boxes, profile information, and resume information.
3. **View Column Layouts:** You can lay out a view with up to five columns. If you choose two, three, or four columns you will also be able to define different column widths.
4. **Layout Area:** This is where you drag your content blocks down to.
5. **Display my View:** This link is for previewing how the page will look to a other users.
6. **Navigation Buttons:** When you are finished editing the page you can continue on to naming the View.

Title and Description

After clicking on the "Next: Edit Title and Description" button you will be able to title, describe, and tag the view. You are also given the chance to decide how your name is displayed at the top of the page.

Edit Access

After clicking the "Next: Edit Access" button you will be able to decide who will have access to the view.



1. **Allow Comments:** This gives you the option to allow comments or not.
2. **Moderate Comments:** If you allow comments, then you also have the option to moderate them before they are posted for other users to see. This is useful if you have a public view where inappropriate comments could be posted and you don't want potential professional users to see.
3. **Allow Copying:** Setting this option allows those you have given access to this View the ability to copy it and use it as a base for their own view.
4. **Special Access:** These are special groups of users that you can give view access to.
5. **Search for Users and Groups:** This text box allows you to search for specific users and groups to give access to.
6. **Remove Access:** Clicking this button removes the specified view access.
7. **Define Date Range:** Defining a date range here will give view access to the user or group for a specific amount of time, before or after which they will

have no access to the View. This is especially useful when giving access to things like your resume that you wouldn't want a potential employer to have perpetual access to.

8. **Secret URL Access:** This is a special way to give view access to people who do not have an account on the E-Portfolio site. You could copy and paste the provided URL into an email, and the recipient would only need to click on the link to access the View. Defining a date range is highly recommended for this type of access.

Copy a View

Copying a view allows you to create a new view by using someone else's view as a template for yours. It will copy the content blocks of the target view and allow you to edit and add new content. This is useful for allowing users to maintain a common layout for similar types of views, and it also saves time.

My Collections

Collections are a way that you can group together sets of views that are related and you want to be able to list the group in a view and manage their access rites collectively. If you add a view to a group you will no longer be able to manage its access rites separately and it will take on the rites of the group.

My Files

This section allows you to upload and manage images, documents, and other files that you want to make available in your Views. Document types include Microsoft Office documents, PDFs, text files, etc. Each user has a storage quota that limits the amount of files that can be uploaded. This is intended to help curtail abusive users from using the site as personal file hosting, and to encourage users to not upload oversized videos and pictures that could make viewing you pages slow and cumbersome.

My Blog

The blog section allows you to create chronicled posts on any number of subjects that you would like. Then the entire blog, or individual posts, can be included in a View that you can maintain separate access rites on. One nice feature about the Mahara Blogs is you can maintain multiple blogs, so you could maintain a professional blog that you make available to everyone, but also keep a personal blog just for yourself or your group of friends.

My Plans

The plans section allows you to create task lists that can be either personal or professional. This could include a list of certifications that you need to acquire for a

desired job field, or even a list of classes you need to graduate your signed Major. Your plans can be displayed in a View that others can see, or even added to your site dashboard so that you are reminded of them every time you login to the Portfolio site.

Export

This section allows you to export some or all of your views to one of two formats.

- **Standard HTML Website:** This format is for exporting your portfolio views to HTML so that they can be posted to a personal web space, or saved to a CD for viewing in a web browser.
- **Leap2A:** This format is for exporting your portfolio in a format that can be imported into other portfolio systems. Unfortunately there don't seem to be many other systems it works with and it is unreliable on the few that it does.

Both export formats are saved in a standard zip file that can be opened in any modern operating system.

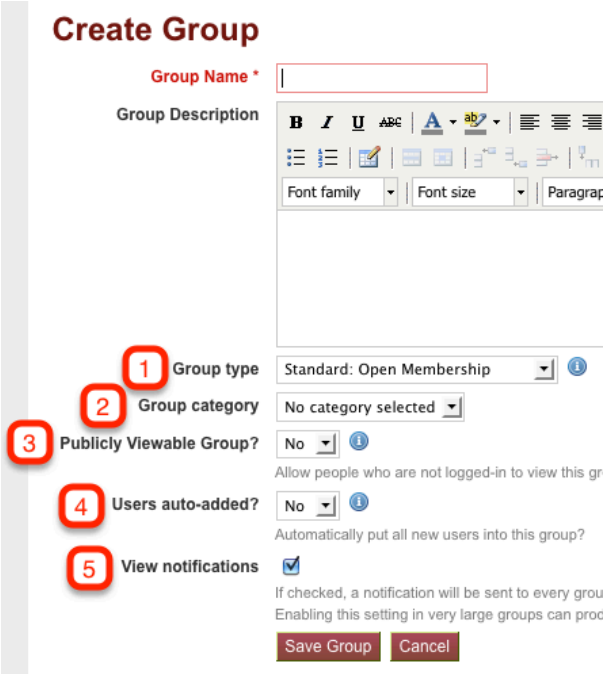
Groups

The Groups tab allows you to manage the social and cooperative features of the E-Portfolio site. These features include group memberships and friend relationships.

My Groups

This section allows you to view all of the groups that you are a member in, and if you are a CMU staff or faculty member you will also be able to create groups of your own.

Create Group



1. **Group Type:** You can choose from a number of options which determine how other users may join your group.

   Open Membership

   Setting your group type to Open Membership will allow any user of the site to become a member simply by visiting your group page and clicking the join button.

   Request Membership

   Setting your group type to Request Membership means that any user can request to join your Group, however as owner you can choose to accept or decline this request. The requesting member will be automatically notified of your decision.

   Invite Only

   Setting your group type to Invite Only means that only users that you have sent an invite to may join your group.

Controlled Membership

Controlled Membership is only available to Administrators and Staff, and allows you to add and remove people from a group directly.

Users cannot remove themselves from a controlled group.

Course Groups

Course groups are a special type of group which can only be created by Administrators and Staff of the site.

Course groups can contain tutors as well as ordinary members. All members of course groups can submit their Views to the group for assessment by tutors. When tutors give feedback on a submitted View, they can also attach a file to the feedback which is only visible to the View's author.

There are two types of Course groups:

Course: Request Membership

Users may join the group by requesting membership, described under the Request Membership heading above.

Course: Controlled Membership

Controlled Membership Course groups allow group administrators to add and remove people from the group directly. Tutors can only add people to the group directly.

This is designed to be used for a course-based group where the membership is defined by an external system (such as an institution's enrolment system) and you wish to replicate that membership in the group.

Users cannot remove themselves from a controlled group.

2. **Group Category:** Group categories are just a way to make it easier for users to filter the groups and find what they are looking for.
3. **Publicly Viewable Group:** If you say yes, most sections of your group will be viewable by anyone who visits your group, including people who do not have an account on this site. Everyone will be able to see the group member listing, and see all discussions in the forums. However, people will still have to become a member of the group before they can post to the forums. Regardless of this setting, your group file section and all files inside it will remain private.

4. **Users auto-added:** If you say yes, everyone who signs up to this site will be added to this group. Depending on the group type, the users may still have the option to leave the group. It is recommended to leave this option at No.
5. **View Notifications:** If checked, a notification will be sent to every group member whenever a member shares one of their Views with the group. Enabling this setting in very large groups can produce a lot of notifications.

Group Interface

About

This section displays a summary of the group, and also shows the views that have been submitted to the group. If you are a group admin, you can also edit or delete the group from this section.

Members

This section displays all of the members of a group, and also allows you to change member roles. A member can have one of three roles.

1. **Member:** This is the default role that allows a user to participate in forum discussions, see group views, download group files, and submit views.
2. **Admin:** This role has full control of the group. They can manage views, files, membership, and the forums. If the group is a "Course" type, this role can also review and release submitted views.
3. **Tutor:** If the group is a "Course" type, this role will be available. It has the same rites as an Admin, except it cannot manage users, create new forums, or edit the settings of the group.

Forums

This section allows members to have discussions. Users can subscribe to a forum and will receive notices when new posts are made. If you are the group admin you can also create new forums for specific topics of discussion.

Views

This section is for creating views for the group itself. If you are a group Admin it is also possible to modify the home group's screen from this section.

Files

This section is for uploading files that will then be available to the group for downloading. Only an administrator can add files to the root folder, but subfolders can be created that allow members or tutors the ability edit or upload files.

Find Groups

This section allows you to search for groups by name and category.

My Friends

This section displays all of your friend relationships and allows you to private message them, or remove them from the list.

Find Friends

This section allows you to search all of the users on the site and send them a message or send a friendship request.