Assignment 4
Collaborative Project: Internet Resource Guide

Submission: The designated "team leader" will be responsible for submitting the completed final draft of Assignment 4 to the ANGEL dropbox by no later than **8:00 PM on Sunday 4/13**. After this deadline, the entire group's grade will be reduced by one step (for example: B+ to B) for each day that it is late. I strongly recommend submitting the final draft as a PDF, thereby avoiding the risk for unexpected formatting changes.

In this project, you will be paired with several of your classmates to produce a collaborative technical document. Through this assignment, you will become familiar with online communication resources, possibly including research databases, industry websites or professional societies, and e-portfolios of individual students or professionals. Each of you will identify, examine, and evaluate three particular websites (for a total of twelve). You will present the information by writing an abstract for each.

You will need to make decisions about organization, format, and style as a means of creating a usable document for readers. The document must contain a table of contents and meta-discourse describing the decisions made in the document. Each of you will also write a formal email to me, thinking critically about the process of writing collaboratively.

Objectives
1. To practice working collaboratively at every stage of the communication process.
2. To become familiar with valuable resources available online.
3. To become especially familiar with the genre of the e-portfolio, which is the final assignment for the class.
4. To make decisions about organization, format, and style as a means of creating a usable document for readers.
5. To develop skills with writing abstracts.

Audience
Your audience will be a freshman student at Penn State, but it is up to you exactly how broadly or specifically you want to consider your audience beyond that. Your decision will likely depend, in part, on the composition of your particular group. I tried to create groups of four students who were in similar fields or shared similar academic interests, but in some cases this simply was not possible. Here are various ways you could approach your guide in light of audience:

- If all group members are in the same or similar fields, it makes most sense to write the guide specifically for a freshman in that field. For example, a guide directed specifically to a Computer Science major might include abstracts for that department's website, search engines that are valuable for research in that field, the website of an academic journal or professional society in that field, and e-portfolios of other Computer Science students at Penn State.
- If the group members divide nicely into two fields, you *could* consider dedicating half of the guide to each field.
- If the group contains a lot of diversity of fields, then you will probably want to direct your guide at Penn State freshmen more generally, or perhaps one who is undecided

about a major. What resources should all college students be familiar with? You could still use resources specific to your own field, but you will want to treat them as examples of *types* of websites.

Resources to identify in the guide
Each member of your group will locate and address three resources available online. Therefore, the guide will include a total of **12 abstracts**, along with the front matter. As you work on Assignment 4, I would be happy to comment on specific websites you identify, in case you are unclear whether or not they would serve as appropriate objects of analysis. You should include a variety of types of resources. Here are some possible resources.

- The PSU webpage for a particular department
- The website for a graduate program particularly strong in a given field
- Online resources available on the PSU library's list of free databases (what are databases you yourself have used in college?)
- The website for an academic journal
- The website for a professional society
- An online job-board
- E-Portfolios for students, teachers, or professionals in a field
- You CANNOT use resources like Wikipedia or Dictionary.com

Information to include about the resources/websites
For each resource that you identify, provide identifying information (title, URL, etc.). Also describe the resource in an abstract so that readers will understand its general function and its specific scope.

In writing **abstracts**, assume readers will ask the following questions:
- What is this?
- What is in it (content, scope)?
- How is the information relevant and useful for someone in my field?
- Are there any particular tips for using the resource efficiently?

Introducing your guide
Provide information about your guide and its use in an introduction. (In technical communication, an introduction to a document like this is often called **front matter**.) Consider introducing each section of the guide if readers will not understand why and how to use a type of resource. Be sure to cover these areas in your front matter:
Cover/Title Page
Front Matter
    Table of Contents
    Who the guide is written for
    What's in the guide (contents/scope)
    How the guide is organized for use
    Tips for using the guide

Additional Components to Assignment 4
In addition to the final product, I will have you turn in smaller components along the way.

On **Thursday (4/3)**, your group will have a peer review session for all of the abstracts.

By **Sunday (4/6) at 8 PM**, you will send me a **formal** email in which you reflect upon your experiences writing collaboratively on this assignment.

On **Tuesday (4/8)**, there will be a peer review day for a completed draft of the assignment.

Evaluation criteria
Barring exceptional circumstances, every group member will receive the same grade on this assignment. However, there will be moments of reflection and evaluation in which group members can formally notify me of problems within the group.

I will evaluate the guides according to these expectations:

Content	The guide is complete. All of the required information is present in sufficient detail. The content is appropriate for the selected audience.
Format and Organization	Readers will be able to find the information they need. The table of contents is clear and logically constructed. Related materials are grouped. The guide is "usable."
Style	Abstracts give specific information in efficient sentences. The sentences meet the standards outlined by Markel in his eight principles of effective technical communication, and they follow the tips for clear and concise writing located in the tenth chapter of the textbook.
Unity and Coherence	The elements of the document have been well integrated and result in an organic whole. Design and punctuation choices are consistent throughout. The collaborative nature of the assignment did not result in a sloppy or piecemeal product. Differences between contributions have been smoothed out.
Mechanics	Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are correct. Spelling and punctuation choices are handled consistently throughout.