Digital Badging:
An Introduction and Guide to Getting Started

Introduction to Digital Badging

Digital badges offer a visual way to showcase specific skills and accomplishments. They provide unique context and background about an individual that traditional transcripts or certificates simply cannot. They represent a more detailed picture than a CV or résumé as they can be presented in ever-changing combinations, creating a constantly evolving picture of a person's lifelong learning.

Here are some examples of what a digital badge can represent:

- Learning (school someone attends or online learning experience)
- Work (past internships or jobs)
- Program or club participation (volunteer, leadership)
- Accomplishment (won a competition or received an award)
- Skill (leadership, problem-solving, empathy)

Within the Mozilla Open Badges ecosystem, badges are issued by organizations, communities, or online platforms. Users can collect badges from multiple sources and display them across the web on job applications and social networking websites.

So What?

Online badges benefit students, employers, and educators on multiple levels:

- Provide students or learners with something measurable they can take away after an experience
- Give employers a visual way to understand the skillset of potential applicants at a glance.
- Make goals more tangible, including mastering workplace "soft skills" like communication, problem solving, and teamwork.
- Reward students for participation and validate accomplishments throughout pathway.

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Step by Step Guide to Creating a Digital Badge

Badges are intended to offer someone recognition and validation for a skill a student has gained, an experience completed, or evidence of qualifications. As you begin outlining the framework for a badge, there are various considerations that need to be taken into account. Below the steps to creating a digital badge are broken down by category.

Initial considerations

1. Who will earn the badge?
   Answers may include: students, teachers, employers, employees.
2. Who will be awarding the badge?
   Answers may include: teachers, employers, employees, government agency, non-profit organizations.
3. What online platform will be used for the distribution of the badge? Is this platform built on Mozilla's Open Badges framework?
4. Is the badge intended to be earned for a skill, an experience, a program, or mastery of a specific topic?
5. If you answered yes to more than one of the above options, then it is likely that multiple badges will need to be made.
6. Does the badge align to a specific position or field?

Assessment

An important part of creating your badge, is designing how it will be assessed. The assessment is part of quality assurance, and what gives credibility to the badge itself.

1. Does the badge align with any existing standards? Ex: Learning, professional, or state standards.
2. How will the work be assessed? Are there associated rubrics that need to be built? If rubrics must be created, build off of the initial considerations section, and identify the basic tenets you are seeking to demonstrate through the badge. It is recommended to keep this focused.
3. Does this badge have levels? If yes, it is possible you will want to consider minimum requirements for the higher levels.
4. Are there minimum requirements for the badge? Do prerequisites exist? Does an earner need to earn other badges prior to this one?
5. How long will it take someone to earn this badge?

Visual Design

When considering the design of the badge, the designer must take into account the use of art, text, background shapes, and color.

1. Is there a symbol or imagery that is commonly associated with the theme the badge is representing?
2. Identify appropriate an appropriate color scheme, shapes, and iconography.
3. Limit potential text to 1-2 words.

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Content

When a user clicks to expand the badge, there should be content that is appropriately descriptive of what the badge represents. It is also important to include content identifying who the digital badge issuer is.

1. The first description necessary is one that provides basic context to what the badge reflects. This does not get into any of the specifics around the badge details, but acts more as a title.
   - Example: This badge is awarded to students in an Engineering and Design Pathway. School.
2. The second description that must be built is for the badge consumer. This description should provide a third party context of what the badge demonstrates about the individual who earned it.
   - Example The badge is awarded to students in the Engineering and Design pathway. Students in this pathway are studying land surveying, computer mapping and analysis, GPS, and technology. They demonstrate an aptitude for problem solving, analytical skills, and mathematics.
3. The third and final description is for the badge earner. This description shows the individual what their badge demonstrates about their own work, and suggests to them how they might be able to market their own skills and experiences.
   - Example: You have selected the Engineering and Design pathway. This pathway includes land surveying, computer mapping and analysis, GPS, and technology. Questions? You've got answers! You've got the skills to solve any problems that come your way.

Badge Tech

1. How will earners be alerted to your badges? If your badge is issued online, how will you indicate to the earner that they've earned a badge? Consider letting folks know that they have the opportunity to earn a badge prior to awarding it.
2. At what point will the badge earner be notified that they have received a badge? What is the timing of that notification?
3. Where and how the badge will be issued? How will the technical requirements be addressed? There are a variety of issuing options available: your site, OpenBadger, another platform, etc.

Recap Checklist:

- Identify who will earn the badge.
- Identify who will award the badge.
- Select an online platform to host.
- Choose what the badge represent (one of following): Skill, experience, program, mastery of a specific topic
- Name industry sector with alignment.
- Build assessment and process for validating badge requirements have been completed.
- Design badge visuals to reflect the achievements or skills it reflects.
- Draft corresponding content that will serve as badge description.
- Create your badge!

Resources on Digital Badging

MacArthur Foundation
➢ A report from the Alliance for Excellent Education and the Mozilla Foundation details how a MacArthur-supported initiative to expand use of digital badges can improve learning and outcomes for students and adults. The digital credentials represent an individual's skills, interests, and achievements. They can be used to convey core academic knowledge as well as other modern day competencies that can't be measured by traditional assessments.
➢ Read more here: https://www.macfound.org/press/publications/digital-badges-help-young-people-adults-demonstrate-skills/

Mozilla Foundation
➢ Mozilla created Open Badges in 2011 with funding from the MacArthur Foundation and a network of partners committed to developing a new way to recognize learning wherever it happened – in and out of formal education and online. As part of this effort, the Open Badges technical specification which defines the requirements for what a badge must represent for both issuers and earners was created.
➢ Read more here: http://openbadges.org

HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory)
➢ What Counts as Learning: Open Digital Badges for New Opportunities is an early response to designing badge systems grounded in actual practice and is based on the lessons learned from the 30 Badges for Lifelong Learning projects. It provides a building block for anyone interested in designing open digital badge systems, and also for educators, policymakers, technologists, humanists, scholars, and administrators who have a stake in how badge systems might impact learning, assessment, and opportunities for lifelong learners.
➢ https://www.hastac.org/initiatives/digital-badges

LaunchPath
➢ Within the Mozilla Open Badges ecosystem, badges are issued by organizations or communities like LaunchPath using an open standard. Users can collect badges from multiple sources and display them across the web on job applications and social networking websites like LinkedIn. These badges can lead to job opportunities, support lifelong learning, and unlock new possibilities.
➢ Read more here: http://www.launchpath.com/Badging/tabid/353/Default.aspx

LRNG
➢ LRNG uses technology to capture learning wherever it happens, make it discoverable for all youth and make it count through digital badges.
➢ Read more here: http://about.lrng.org/products/

BadgeList
➢ The Badge List platform can be used in a multitude of different scenarios. This includes supporting teachers to create badges linked to specific class work and related to skills and competencies. Class-level badges can be linked to school-level badges to establish learning pathways between grades.
➢ Learn more here: https://www.badgelist.com/