



Quran Interpretation (Tafseer) Books ePortfolio: concept, content, and structure

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents methodical approach for structuring and organizing of known and prominent Quran interpretation (Tafseer) books into digital portfolio or ePortfolio. Tafseer books' ePortfolio can be efficiently used for building, creating, distributing digital and multimedia content on Quran, Tafseer, Quran and Islamic issues. Due to the uniqueness of Quran and most known Tafseer books, accurate and relevant information has to be of the highest importance, and needs to be authenticated by known scholars and/or institutions. The aim of this paper is to describe a systematic approach into organizing, structuring and developing ePortfolio for Tafseer books. Al Asfahani Tafseer book, “المفردات في غريب القرآن” - “**Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran**”, has been chosen as the first project for ePortfolio development. Overall steps of the content collection and building ePortfolio approach is presented in this paper with the different phases involved.

Keywords: ePortfolio, Digital content creation, multimedia, Content distribution, Quran interpretation, Quran, Quran Sciences, Tafseer.

1. Introduction

With the rapid advances in Information and Internet Technologies, Quran and Islamic Sciences resources lag behind in terms of digital content and resources available in the web. Although there are a large amount of digital content of Quran and related topics available through the internet, those resources are not well structured for efficient delivery through the web or/and to be used by third party applications or educational information systems such as eLearning and virtual learning environment in general (Andrews & Haythornthwaite , 2007; Tiakiwai ,2010).

Based on these facts, this paper describes and contributes to one important aspect of digitizing, organizing and structuring Quran resources, in our case Tafseer related books, for online and offline efficient delivery and dissemination. One efficient way for collection and structuring is to use digital Portfolio, electronic Portfolio (Haag & M. Cummings, 2006) ePortfolio is a collection of electronic evidence and content assembled and managed usually online over the Web. Such electronic resources may include text, audio, video, electronic

files, images, multimedia, blog entries (Mendoza-Calderón & Ramirez, 2006) is being used to manage learning by individuals, institutions, communities and organizations (Wesel, 2008). The present paper presents e-Portfolio structure, type of relevant content, output formats, online content delivery and dissemination types of Quran Tafseer books and related resources.

2. Tafseer books

Quran is the central religious text of Islam, which is the verbatim word of Allah (الله), the book of divine guidance and direction for humanity. It is the finest piece of literature in the Arabic language (Robinson, 2002). Tafseer, or Exegesis, is a body of interpretation, commentary and explication aimed at explaining the meanings of the Quranic verses, clarifying their importance and finding out their significance (Al-Tabari, 1987). In Islamic perspectives, it is defined as understanding and uncovering the Will of Allah which has been conveyed by the Quranic text, by means of the Arabic language. The different aspects of interpretations include:

- Clarification of the meanings of verses
- Extraction of laws and rulings
- Explaining the underlying thoughts
- Finding out the underlying reasons for parables
- Determining the style of the text and its eloquence
- Defining unknown or otherwise less used words

There have been numerous Quran tafseer books from classical to modern scholars, and in different languages. Each Tafseer book has its style, type of interpretation, context based base on words, themes, topics, meanings. The proposed e-Portfolio methodology is to capture and gather a variety of Tafseer books content and resources of well-known and recognized scholars.

3. Tafseer e-Portfolio Content and resources

Fig. 1 illustrates the various information that would be included in the Tafseer Book e-Portfolio. Six major categories are considered for Tafseer book:

- Author(s) ID: Author(s)' details, biography.
- Book Metadata: Title, Authors, Publishers, book relevant details.
- Book details: Abstract, Keywords, Description, Reviews.
- Book Content: Text format in Word/PDF files, indexing format, structured book extracts.
- Media: Text, Images, Audio, Video.
- Related Resources: Summary books, review books, presentations.

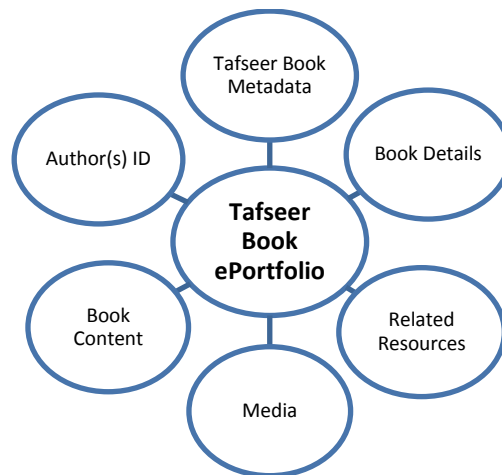


Fig 1. Tafseer e-Portfolio Resources

4. Tafseer Book e-Portfolio Structure

The overall ePortfolio structure for Tafseer books is illustrated in Fig. 2. This structure can be maintained through a dedicated web-based or PC-based application, which is a subject for another publication that is under preparation. There are two parts:

- **Content Management:** This deals with manipulating the various metadata, book details and other related details. Firstly, the acquisition and collection of the different book content, and the way it is stored in a form of a database or other storage structure. Secondly, the filling structure of the book resources. Finally, the way the Tafseer book resources is produced or used. This can be for online display through dedicated websites, or can be downloaded to be used in for authoring of third party application.
- **Content Delivery:** This deals with how the content can be delivered for online or/and offline usage. The online usage can be through virtual learning environment such as an elearning system, or e-Course/ e-Content development that can be used in Educational websites. For the offline usage, the book content can be downloaded in several formats such as database, XML files or text files. The latter format will help in developing learning objects, and authoring articles or even books. Furthermore, specific format would be useful and facilitate in incorporating and integrating Tafseer books content structure into dedicated applications.

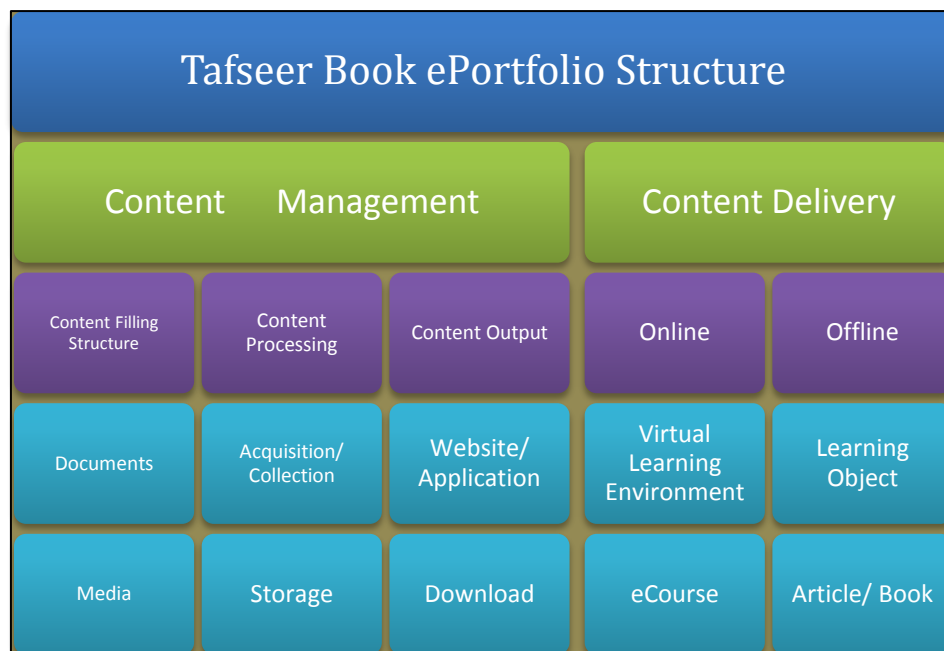


Fig 2. Tafseer Book ePortfolio Structure.

5. Eportfolio Implementation phase

The implementation phase is its initial phase. Al Asfahani Tafseer book, “المفردات في غريب القرآن” - “Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran” (Isfahani, 2001), has been chosen as the first project for ePortfolio development, because it is a well-known and very popular reference in this field specially in academia. The book is very well organized and structured with clear topics, themes, and categories. It is a very good candidate to be developed as the proposed ePortfolio structure. In this phase, it has been studied and its structure analyzed by an expert in this field, then an implementation plan for info and content extraction has been produced. Most of the metadata content details has been acquired and stored in a database. The process has taken some time because of the authentication procedure put in place to make sure of the accuracy of the content, and the way the Tafseer book content should be stored and presented. Furthermore, some inevitable manual editing has been involved to validate the data being entered.

6. Conclusion

Although the research project is at its preliminary development, overall concepts of Tafseer books ePortfolio has been presented with different phases of the concepts from content management to content delivery. Some work on the content has already been done on Al Asfahani Tafseer book, “المفردات في غريب القرآن” - “Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran”, which took some time to finalize because of the authentication process and the data validation. Furthermore, more tools are being considered for development that cover some aspects in the content acquisition and delivery.

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