

Portfolio 6

Review by: Chuck Reisz

Portfolio 6 is manufactured and sold by: **Extensis, Inc.**

Pricing: Portfolio 6, as I tested it, is a single user or small workgroup version that sells on line for \$199.00. There is a server version for larger work groups.

Other Vendors: Searching with Ask Jeeves, I found Portfolio 6 at prices ranging from \$174.95 to \$190.95.

System Summary: Extensis calls Portfolio an "Asset Management System". Extensis goes on to say "Portfolio provides folder monitoring, database management, thumbnail previews, streamlined cataloging and much more to help you organize, find and distribute your files with ease."

Portfolio can manage almost any digital file including photos, art works, movies and more. It is a cross platform system working on and with Mac OS and PC Windows.

The Read Me file included with the documentation probably best described the purpose of the system by the following sentence: *"Portfolio 6 is the fastest way for creative professionals to share, organize, retrieve and distribute the digital files they create and use every day."*

System Requirements:

Windows

Supports Windows 98/NT 4.0/2000/Me/XP
Pentium Processor (133MHz or higher recommended)
32 MB of System RAM
25 MB of free hard disk space
QuickTime 4.1.1 or higher strongly recommended

Macintosh is also supported

Installation was very smooth and user friendly. No surprises were encountered. Portfolio does not have an uninstaller. It directs the user to use the Windows Operating System uninstaller.

Documentation: The boxed version I tested has a full printed User Guide. I find printed guides very useful, especially during initial testing and use of the system. The electronic documentation includes a full user guide and a Quick Start Guide. The information contained in the guides is easy to understand. I did find the Quick Start Guide to be a better starting document for me because the system capabilities and options are so numerous that understanding of the full system eluded me. Going back to the quick start provided a concise but comprehensive base to start from.

The Target Audiences for Portfolio 6 is Graphic Design Professionals, Marketing Managers and Other Corporate Users and content publishers.

While I am not a professional as described above, I am looking forward to using to store, identify, classify, retrieve and distribute family photos. I currently have over 2500 photos on file with an additional 2500 or more photos and slides currently on hand to be scanned. The photos cover seven generations with some photos over 115 years old.

Features:

Features of Portfolio 6 include:

Simplify the process of maintaining images and associated information of digital files.

Images are stored in catalogs. Images within catalogs can have information such as keywords and descriptions attached to them. Galleries can then be created having selected images from the catalogs. An image may be used in multiple galleries without duplicating the image.

Save space in maintaining digital catalogs by storing the original file or image only once and using it in multiple galleries.

Provide an almost infinite amount of information concerning a digital file. If Portfolio does not have a designated set to store an item, it provides for user defined custom information fields.

Keyword capabilities allow an unlimited number of keywords to be associated with any one document.

Distribution of digital images is facilitated by a Collect & Publish feature, which can be used to stage selected digital images. These digital images can then be used to create CD's for distribution.

A Browser Program is available in both Windows and Macintosh formats. Portfolios created in either format, Windows or Macintosh, can be read by either platform by using the proper browser. The browser can be distributed with a Portfolio catalog or it can also be downloaded free from the Extensis Web Site. It can perform all of the functions that Portfolio 6 can perform except it can not be used to add, update or in any way change the files. This capability allows the "owner" of a catalog to distribute files or portfolios to customers, family or anyone else along with a program to view and search those files. An electronic user's manual for the browser is available and can be distributed with the browser.

E-mails with digital files can be established in Portfolio and sent thru your normal E-mail system.

Web Pages can be created using Portfolio.

Find capabilities are very flexible and fast. Find dialog is activated as a dropdown from the toolbar. It is simple to use even when complex searches are made. Find can be conducted across more than one catalog. **Quickfind** is a new feature in Version 6 which adds to portfolio's already powerful find capabilities. It has a box on the toolbar where a word or several words can be entered and an immediate search is conducted. Search fields are designated by the user and can be easily changed to meet the present need.

Digital files can be moved across system borders using a drag and drop feature.

Portfolio Express provides a floating palette that makes cataloged digital files available from other programs without opening the Portfolio system. For example Portfolio Express can be used to find a photo and transfer a copy to a Word Document or an E-mail.

FolderSync is a new with the release of Version 6 Portfolio. FolderSync assists in keeping Portfolio catalogs synchronized with the digital images in those catalogs. For example renaming a digital image will also reflect a change in any Portfolio catalog it is associated with.

SUMMARY

Portfolio has what seems to be an endless list of features and it also has multiple ways to accomplish most tasks. For example the user guide lists seven ways to enter keywords and five ways to avoid keying in keywords. Other features also spell out multiple ways to accomplish other tasks. There is an almost endless list of tasks and methods of accomplishing your objectives. This provides more than ample freedom for using creativeness in managing digital files. This freedom does come at a price which is a higher level of complexity in the user interfaces part of program. This complexity should not be a problem for anyone who will be using the system on a regular basis but it does add to the learning time for the system. A simplified user interface for the browser would facilitate the use of the program by a “customer” who receives a CD but who may not be a regular user of the system.

My favorite features:

CD creation is built into the system. This feature when combined with the **Portfolio Browser** provides a great way to distribute meaningful digital files with associated data.

Quickfind and other Find capabilities provide excellent searches with rapid results.

Information storage for cataloged items is almost without limits. If you can define and collect information there is a way to store and then locate that information.

Gallery Views can be customized to provide a more pleasing presentation especially for thumbnail viewing. For example frames can be added to the thumbnails. The user can choose the information to be included in the view.

I would be remiss if I didn't include **Portfolio Express and FolderSync** in my list of favorites.

Areas that can be improved:

The **slideshow presentation** does not measure up to the excellence of the overall Portfolio system.

There are **two slideshows, manual and timed**. When running in **timed mode**, the viewer can pause and restart the slide show or they can stop the slideshow; there is no capability to move forward or backward. In the **manual slideshow** mode, these options are available along with the

capability to move forward or backward one slide at a time or move to the beginning or end of the presentation. The manual mode also provides some editing capabilities. I would suggest combining the two modes so that while running in timed mode, the viewer would have the capability to not only pause in the presentation but also to move forward or backward in the presentation and then continue on timed mode when desired.

It would also be useful if the viewer can start **the slide show on any highlighted picture** and also to **toggle between** the slide show and the record information.

Slideshow presentation offers the choice to show pictures in the actual picture size of full screen. Portfolio treats a full screen presentation as literally using the full screen for the picture. This results in the slide show controls being imposed on horizontal or landscape pictures. Also the commentary selected for the caption is placed at the very bottom of the screen. In a couple of cases where I tested a CD produced by Portfolio on other computers, the print was pushed so low that it was not readable on the screens. I would suggest having a **border** around the picture where the slide show controls can be placed on the side of the picture. The picture "captions" would then be placed in the border area where they would not get crowded off of the screen.

Slideshow Captions can be any data field selected by the viewer which is a great feature. However if a caption is too long to be shown on one line, letters start getting pushed off of both ends of the screen. **Word wrap** would be a welcome solution for this situation.

In addition to the Caption at the bottom of the page, it would be helpful to **show the filename at the top of the page**. This would allow for easy identification when referring to a given image.

The **User Interface on the browser could be simplified** and made easier to understand by including only those items that would apply to the Browser. For example the file button would only offer the selection of Open, Close, Page setup, Print and Exit. The other selections are not viable options for the browser. The Edit button may not have any options that would apply to the Browser. Simplifying the interfaces would make the system more user friendly to the recipient who may not work with Portfolio other than occasionally reviewing photos submitted in Portfolio format.

Portfolio 6 gets my vote as being a very good system for cataloging, identifying, classifying and distributing digital files. With some improvements in the "slide show" capabilities and some simplifying of the browser interface it can be a truly excellent system for these same capabilities while providing a means to truly showcase these same digital files.

Most of the suggestions I have made are features that I have found in other digital file management systems.