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Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2005 12:12 PM
Subject: Summary of a recent call with IBM

Last Friday afternoon (Nov04) Bernie Gleason arranged a conference call and I had the opportunity to chat with Bernie, Mike King, and Chris Davia from IBM Higher Education. The conversation focused on two topics (1) standards and (2) interoperability specifically in relation to uPortal.

We spent some time discussing uPortal services that are being re-developed as external services outside of the uPortal framework. The external services are viewed as advantageous from an interoperability perspective since they would be available to multiple deployed applications, however it's not know how closely aligned these external services will be with industry practices or what additional work would be necessary to integrate them with other applications. Currently, the most prominent of these projects is the Groups and Permissions Service (GAPS) – headed by Dan Ellentuck at Columbia University.

Additionally, we talked about the upcoming proposal to the Moodle Partners to create a series of JSR168 compliant portlets to display data (such as last grade and cumulative grade listed by course and next assignment listed by course) from Moodle in uPortal. We also discussed a series of services proposed for development including: Authentication, Authorization, and Directory each of which would be modeled after the JISC eFramework Common Services Architecture. One of the opportunities of developing these services will be collaboration and agreement on the business message definitions and standards to be used. Chris said that he would like to help and suggested a meeting. We are in the process of arranging this and hope to be able to bring Chris, Peter Kharchenko, Mark Norton, Craig Counterman, and myself together somewhere on the east coast (Boston was suggested).

Mike asked about interoperability of portlets and WebSphere in regards to the proposed services. The intent is to make the services available to any application. The services could be added to the WebSphere implementation allowing portlets requesting the services to run just as they would under uPortal. This discussion led to one about open source databases then to open source business models. The Derby/Cloudscape/DB2 stack was mentioned and was outlined as a good example of a scalable migration path where Derby was being used for development, quick-starts, and small implementations, Cloudscape was being used for medium sized implementations with the option for support, and DB2 was available for Enterprise implementations with full support.

Our meeting ended with a discussion of some of the folks that have been particularly helpful while we've been working on these projects including, Rich Thompson at IBM (also Chair of OASIS WSRP) who helped us understand the WSRP specification and his vision for interoperability and recommended WS Security for our WSRP implementations, Scott Cantor from Ohio State University and his help with SAML and Shibboleth, and Scott Wilson and his help on how to dynamically include a WS-Security header in Apache Axis.

Take care,
Justin