

e-Literate

What Michael Feldstein Is Learning About Online Learning...Online

Art Pasquenilli and the Sun Microsystems Legacy

by JIM FARMER on FEBRUARY 18, 2010

This is a guest post by Jim Farmer.

Email a few days ago reported Art Pasquenilli would not be transitioning from Sun Microsystems to Oracle Corporation.

Art and his colleagues in Sun Global Education made significant contributions to higher education. We recognize their contributions and see, in retrospect, how their initiatives have benefited and will continue to benefit higher education.

A Collaboration

Sun recognized early that collaboration across institutional boundaries and even country borders would improve information technology infrastructure. Partnering with IT leaders in higher education, Sun began by funding some small conferences of Java developers that later, with Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funding, became the uPortal project. They thought early face-to-face meetings of developers would foster collaborative development—and it did. This experience set the pattern that, with minor changes, served the Sakai project—the Sakai conferences—and now the Kuali project—Kuali Days. The lesson: people who know each other informally work together more productively

Developing IT Leadership

For a number of years Sun Global Education sponsored the World Education and Research Conferences. Higher education IT executives from major universities were invited. But Sun and the WERC participants identified emerging IT leaders and included them in the WERC. For example, the very successful ESUP Portail Consortium in France and Ladok in Sweden began from conversations at WER Conferences. These leaders continue to serve their universities—several now in executive positions.

The Tidal Wave of Data

Art's passion was electronic libraries. With several leaders in the library community, Sun sponsored the initial PASIG (Sun Preservation and Archiving Special Interest Group). Under the

leadership of Michael Keller; Stanford University now co-sponsors PASIG and have taken responsibility for the website—a planned transition typical of Sun initiatives. Art and his colleagues accurately forecasted the tidal wave of data coming from research and, to a lesser extent, the proliferation of journals and books. This came at a time resources available to university libraries was decreasing. Recognizing that cooperation was the only way to increase capacity and services with limited resources, PASIG focused on the use of information and computer technology to help meet these needs. The PASIG meetings and the materials coming from the presentations became a valuable resource for all college and university, and public librarians.

Their work also helped shape later versions of MIT's DSpace and University of Virginia's Fedora software. Both are now mature and mission-critical products. Implementation is growing—often based on information librarians learned from PASIG. Never the most public, Art was typical of the Sun Globe Education people who worked diligently to foresee the future, to develop Sun products and services to meet the demanding requirements, and to support the dialogs needed for implementation and results.

For Art and others from Sun Microsystems Global Education, our best wishes. Whether you transition to Oracle Corporation or to some other organization, we hope you will remain working in our community. At this time we need your passion, experience, and leadership.