

Notes from a Conversation with uPortal Chief Architect Peter Kharchenko Washington, DC, 23 July 2005

Summary

- The basic uPortal 3.0 is nearing completion and testing could begin; development now focuses on publishing and subscribing and administrative channels. So far testing during development has been limited to a single JSR 168 portlet—the Google portlet from the CREE Project.
- The “services” version of Columbia University’s Permissions and Groups (PAGS)—now a separate application—will be implemented in uPortal when it is available. The forthcoming Sakai authentication and hierarchy (sometimes called structure or super-structure) API may be different from the uPortal API though both had some relationship with the OKI OSIDs (OKI Service Interface Definitions) in the distant past.
- The development version of uPortal 3.0 includes the WSRP consumer and WSRP producer using a modified version of WSRP4J from the Apache Software Foundation. [The uPortal team has not submitted any suggested code to the WSRP4J project; SunGard SCT’s Vishal Goenka has, based on his development of the WSRP version of Sakai].
- uPortal 3.0 should be available by the end of the year for testing and training.
- Although there are some use cases for distribution/aggregated layout—the feature that distinguishes uPortal from commercial portals—it is unlikely there will be any development of this capability before the end of the year because of limitation on resources. Documentation of the more complex use cases would be helpful.

Background

Peter Kharchenko was in Washington, DC Thursday through Sunday 21-24 July to work with uP 3.0 principal developer Michael Ivanov. We had a brief opportunity to discuss status of uP 3.0 development, the future of distributed/aggregated layout, and the uPortal project after the current development for Sakai is completed.

Discussion

Peter said programming on the basic portal itself was near completion; integration with the forthcoming PAGS (Permissions and Groups) would follow some further work by Dan Ellentuck. WSRP consumer and producer are included. The CREE Google portlet had been used as the single channel for testing. Subsequently additional channels have been used for testing. Some further work may be needed on layout fragments; testing can begin when publish and subscribe and administrative portlets are available.

Peter commented uPortal 3.0 was an opportunity to improve the design of uPortal 2.x as well as base it on the JSR 168 portlet specification and incorporate WSRP support.

Peter said he was hoping to converge distributed layout management and aggregated layout management in the sense the portal would support both. Peter commented: “As an initial step, we would directly support both ALM and DLM in a form that they currently exist in uP2.x. As a second stage, we would work on a version that would converge requirements.” Layout management is common to both. He agreed that layout priority is an important capability—not fully implemented in either DLM or ALM—since there are a number of different factors that may influence the layout. Not only faculty and student preferences but third-parties, such as the Columbia University example where the registrar wants to pre-empt layout position, need to be accommodated.

Sakai’s work on WSRP is being done separately by Vishal Goenka, SunGard SCT. Peter said Michael Ivanov would be a better source of information on status and next tasks.

In response to a question about his future availability to work on uPortal 3.x, Peter said he had plans to accept a post-doc in the Boston area, but hasn’t had any time to learn what is available. He planned on taking two months off; one to bring his documentation current in Russia and one month of “vacation.” But, of course, Peter doesn’t have any concrete plans, and this may turn out to be different He doesn’t know what his future work demands would be.

He confirmed that he had not heard of any plans for or discussions about work on uPortal 3.0 beyond December when Sakai funding terminates.