

Report to the JA-SIG Board

uPortal 2.0

The "team" from IBS, im+m, Columbia, Yale, UBC, and others I could not identify have been working intensely to "complete" uPortal 2.0. Project Manager Ken Weiner published a list of remaining items and is working only on those items. Several of team members are perfectionists, which makes Ken's leadership challenging. Several colleges and universities are working on channels (portlets) that will be important. For example, the University of Hawaii is developing a WebISO implementation. UBC's mail channel is being adapted.

Ken Weiner continues to predict a November/December release though some of his e-mail suggests some strain. (I notice that he has been working about 15 hours per day).

uPortal Relationships

Thursday, October 25, Campus Pipeline announced their use of uPortal in the new Lumina product line. A copy of the press release was published on the JA-SIG and Educause Portal listserves.

WebCT said their tripartite agreement prohibits them from endorsing any portal except Campus Pipeline. WebCT are asking their attorneys for an interpretation of their agreement. I commented that WebCT is not being asked to use uPortal, but rather to make their content available as uPortal channels.

Based on discussions between Prometheus General Manager Bo Davis and architect Mark Resmer and uPortal's Peter Kharchenko, Prometheus is considering and may soon announce use of uPortal for the next major release. Prometheus will gradually convert from its Cold Fusion heritage to Java. Note: Mark Resmer was the principal architect of the IMS standards. Davis and Resmer were meeting with MIT OKI project staff the previous week.

I had asked Blackboard if they were willing to announce the RSS Channel that links uPortal to the Blackboard portal. Blackboard has been silent. This channel was described in a recent Blackboard meeting and briefing by Peter Kharchenko, Ken Weiner, and Justin Tilton.

uPortal architect Peter Kharchenko will be meeting with infiNET Solutions November 12th. InfiNET Solutions has the QuikPay and QuikChek applications. InfiNET is going to make these services available through uPortal for Loyola University of Chicago, and plans to offer the uPortal channel to its clients. (The University of Illinois, Columbia University, and Southern Christian University are infiNET Solutions clients). On

September 5, 2001 infiNET announced a partnership with Blackboard; infiNET will make its applications available with Blackboard's learning system.

infiNET Solutions will be integrating uPortal with their software products under an agreement to implement uPortal and the infiNET products for Loyola University of Chicago. No formal announcement has been planned. A meeting with infiNET about integration architecture has been scheduled for November 12th.

Related Activities

I attended the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council's XML Forum meeting this week. The focus is on student loan and student records data exchange. The student loan standardization effort is based on the Department of Education's Common Record and the National Council of Higher Education Loan Program's CommonLine. The student record standardization is an XML version of the ANSI EDI transaction sets.

I prepared notes on the meeting for Educause. I will give a briefing to Educause's Advisory Group on Administrative Information Systems and Services on Monday, October 29th. The notes and briefing slides are available to anyone who is interested. Educause is a PESC member and monitors the XML Forum activities.

Observations

Apparently uPortal is attractive to commercial software companies. This suggests the design is superior enough to current products that companies do not want to compete. Ken Weiner and Justin Tilton made this judgment following their early September meeting with the corporate portal vendors.

With these "partnerships" uPortal 2.0 support will be available from several companies that have established customer support operations as well as those that focus on systems integration. If the uPortal user base expands sharply, this will make developing uPortal channels more attractive for commercial software vendors. In turn this suggests the potential to team with others, such as Epicentric, to have a channel standard.