



Sakai Newsletter

April 20, 2006

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1. Sakai Services Seeking a New Home

For several years now the University of Michigan has hosted a number of services for the Sakai Community, including Collab (the Sakai instance supporting community activities, such as the Sakai mailing lists), and Jira/Confluence (the issue management and wiki/blog system for Sakai). The Sakai Foundation is interested in identifying other institutions that might be able to host these services. If your institution is interested in hosting one or both of these services -- they do not need to go to the same location -- please contact the Sakai Project Coordinator, Peter Knoop (knoop@umich.edu).

Some of the details of the current University of Michigan configuration for these services include:

Collab (<http://collab.sakaiproject.org>)

- Two identical production servers, one primary, one failover
- Run latest released version of Sakai
- Uses virtual hosting through NetScaler and Oracle database instance
- 24/7, on-call support for hardware/software/database problems not related to Sakai code

Jira/Confluence (<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/jira> and <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence>)

- Two identical servers, one for production, one for staging to test upgrades and help troubleshoot configuration issues with production server
- Uses virtual hosting through NetScaler and Oracle database instance
- 24/7, on-call support for hardware/software/database problems not related to Sakai code

2. Vancouver Sakai (with OSP) Conference Updates

This is an exciting time in our preparation for the 5th Sakai (with OSP) conference. We have over 80 great session proposals in and the conference -- with its longer sessions tailored to audiences (like developers and faculty, just to name a few) -- looks like it will be chock full of great content and opportunities to connect with colleagues.

A few reminders:

-- The last day to get the discounted rate for guest rooms at the conference hotel -- the lovely Sheraton Wall Centre -- is Friday April 28, 2006.

Make your hotel reservations today at http://www.sakaiproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=175&Itemid=525

-- As we plan to have large enough rooms for each session, it helps to know how many of you are planning on attending the conference. Please register for the conference today at http://www.sakaiproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=171&Itemid=520 As you register, you can also fill out the facebook!

-- If you have proposed a presentation for the Vancouver conference, you will be notified of whether your presentation proposal has been accepted by Monday, April 24.

-- It's not too late to propose a technical demonstration at <https://sakaiproject.org/conference/proposals/>

Please contact me with any questions you have about this upcoming conference! Hope to see you in Vancouver,

Wende Morgaine
Conference Planning Co-Chair, Sakai Foundation
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3. Do You Have a New Project?

Do you have a project that you're thinking about or just getting started on? Are you working on something that isn't quite ready for Contrib yet? Are you looking for collaborators to help out with design and development? If so, then why not list your project in the "Proposed Projects" section of the Sakai Directory:

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/MGT/Proposed>

The projects listed there may be little more than ideas or they may represent initial development work that has not yet reached the Contrib Project level. They are presented in the hopes of connecting interested parties with each other in order to further development of these ideas.

If you'd like your effort to be listed, please contact the Sakai Project Coordinator, Peter Knoop (knoop@umich.edu), and provide the following information:

- Project name
- Brief description of your project's goals
- Contact info (e.g., your Jira/Confluence ID or your email address)
- Jira ID (if your project addresses a Feature Request)

4. Sakai 2.1.2 is Now Available!

Please visit:

<http://sakaiproject.org/release>

Thanks to all the designers, developers, testers, and support folks who helped us get it out the door!

Sakai 2.1.2 offers functionality improvements in addition to the latest round of fixes to issues unearthed in the 2.1 code; since 2.1.1, 391 reported issues were addressed and 72 enhancements were incorporated. Among the key improvements are better integration between the Assignments and Gradebook tools, and significant refinements based on Rutgers University's contributions to Sakai's WebDAV and Access servlets. See the release notes for a complete list of the fixes in 2.1.2, including details on those changes

which may impact local customizations:

http://cvs.sakaiproject.org/release/2.1.2/release_notes.html

Open Source Portfolio (OSP) will also be releasing a bundled version of OSP 2.1 and Sakai 2.1.2, which is targeted for mid-April. See the OSP website for more details: <http://www.osportfolio.org> The 2.1 series is marked most prominently by the inclusion of course sections and making several of the bundle tools "section-aware," but there are other new tools and many improvements to the code. Release 2.1 is also the first level of release to include provisional tools from the broader community. See the documentation area for more details: <http://cvs.sakaiproject.org/release/2.1.2/#documentation>

The next major Sakai release will be 2.2 and is planned for mid-June 2006. Feature freeze for this release is scheduled for 1 May 2006. Other important dates, as well as status and planning summaries of Sakai projects, can be found here: <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/MGT>

If you are interested in volunteering to help develop Sakai 2.2 or future versions, please contact the Project Lead(s) for the Sakai Project that interests you, or the Sakai Project Coordinator, Peter Knoop (knoop@umich.edu). A listing of Project Leads can be found here:

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/MGT/Directory>

Thank you,

Peter Knoop
Sakai Project Coordinator
knoop@umich.edu

5. CSUN and Sakai Accessibility

Two presentations at the CSUN (California State University, Northridge) 2006 Conference (March 22 - 24) were particularly relevant to Sakai -- one by Victor Tsaran and Nate Koechley on Yahoo!'s work with accessible DHTML and AJAX, and another by IBM's Becky Gibson on JavaScript and AJAX Accessibility. Yahoo! has made a number of their JS widgets available, and will continue to do so.

Copies of the presentations haven't been posted yet, but I've posted Becky's slides to the accessibility page on Confluence:
<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/2ACC/CSUN+2006+Conference>

Here are three links that describe the highlights of the conference:

1). Rich Schwerdtfeger's (IBM) blog:

[http://www-](http://www-03.ibm.com/developerworks/blogs/page/schwer?entry=csun_2006_wrap_up_theme)

[03.ibm.com/developerworks/blogs/page/schwer?entry=csun_2006_wrap_up_theme](http://www-03.ibm.com/developerworks/blogs/page/schwer?entry=csun_2006_wrap_up_theme)

2). Info about how XHTML 2 will facilitate accessibility by incorporating

-- Role attribute and Meta modules

-- Access key replacement called the access element:

[http://www-](http://www-03.ibm.com/developerworks/blogs/page/schwer?entry=understanding_new_w3c_xhtml_2)

[03.ibm.com/developerworks/blogs/page/schwer?entry=understanding_new_w3c_xhtml_2](http://www-03.ibm.com/developerworks/blogs/page/schwer?entry=understanding_new_w3c_xhtml_2)

3). Frank Hecker's (Mozilla) Blog:

<http://www.hecker.org/mozilla/csun-2006-conference-report>

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6. Sun Microsystems Partners with Unicon to Promote Sakai Environment to Higher Ed Faculty & IT

Unique Portal Lets Educators Quickly Test Sakai with Little Cost and No Risk

PHOENIX, AZ - April 17, 2006 -- Unicon, Inc., the leading independent provider of open source-based enterprise portal, collaboration, learning, and integration technology for higher education institutions, today announced a partnership with Sun Microsystems to power the Academus Open Campus portal with a high performance Sun Fire Server running the Solaris 10 open source operating system. Unicon's Academus Open Campus is a portal that allows academic institutions to evaluate the latest teaching and learning technologies with no/minimal investment of software licenses or IT resources. As Sakai Commercial Affiliates, Unicon and Sun Microsystems are promoting the Sakai Collaborative and Learning Environment with a free Sakai Test Drive and Sakai Pilot Program. For more information, visit www.academusopencampus.com

Sun Microsystems and Unicon are supporting the promotion and implementation of the Sakai Collaborative and Learning Environment through numerous sales, marketing, and educational industry events. Both companies are also strong contributors to the open source and community source movements in higher education with technologies from JA-SIG (Java Administration Special Interest Group.), and uPortal. Additionally, Sun provides a significant amount of system support as well as scalability testing for the Sakai environment. Future areas of cooperation between Sun Microsystems and Unicon will

include performance and scalability testing in Sun's labs and recommending application bundles for small and medium-sized institutions.

"Sun is committed to providing educational institutions with the tools they need to facilitate the successful adoption of e-learning technologies and best practices," stated Kevin Roebuck, Worldwide Marketing Manager for e-Learning Global Education and Research Group at Sun Microsystems. "Sun and Unicon share a joint commitment to great open source solutions like Sakai and helping schools reduce risk, save money and promote inter-operability through open standards."

"Sun continues to make significant contributions to the Sakai Project through its strong outreach, successful programs, and support of Unicon's Academus Open Campus environment, which makes it convenient for faculty and institutions to investigate and Pilot Sakai," stated John C. Blakley, CEO of Unicon, Inc. "Together our companies are offering fresh choices and sound technology solutions for higher education based on open source and community source technologies."

7. Want to Help Build Sakai?

Even before Sakai 2.1.2 was out the door, initial work on the next version of Sakai was already underway. If you're interested in volunteering your time as a developer or have your own development project in mind, now is as good a time as any to get involved. There are a number of bug fixes and tasks to tackle for 2.2 (and beyond). The recent Requirements Polling process also identified a number of issues of great interest to the broader Sakai community, many of which are waiting for someone to step up and take them on.

If you'd like to volunteer to develop Sakai, either contact the Sakai Project Coordinator, Peter Knoop (knoop@umich.edu), or, if you already have an existing component in mind, then contact the Project Lead for the component you are interested in helping out with. Depending on a variety of factors, such as your area of interest, level of experience, and the availability of existing Project Team members for mentoring, there are generally three routes your effort can take:

(1) Small Change -- A volunteer is interested in seeing a small change made to accommodate their needs. The Project Team agrees that this is a good change, trivial to develop, and needs to be done right away; in this case, an existing committer takes it upon them self to implement the change. The work is described in a Jira Task and resolved by the appropriate committer upon completion.

(2) Short Term Mentor -- Sometimes a useful change requires more resources than are currently available on the Project Team, or the change represents a good opportunity for a new volunteer to gain development experience in Sakai. Under ideal circumstances, an existing committer from the Project Team will mentor the volunteer and guide the development effort. Such mentoring may entail helping with design documents, providing reviews, or suggesting best practices for implementation, etc. Once the code is developed, the mentor can help review, test, and then commit the volunteer's contribution. The work is parsed into a series of milestones in Jira Tasks and resolved by the appropriate committer upon completion of each step.

(3) Project Team is too busy -- At times, the committers on a Project Team will simply be too busy to provide guidance to a volunteer in the time frame required. This is not the ideal situation; however, it is one that may well be all too common during the early years of Sakai, when we are committer-limited. In such cases, the volunteer will have to address the problem as best they can with limited assistance from the Project Team and the rest of the development community (sakai-dev). Their modifications can initially be made available to community as a Jira Contributed Patch. As time permits, an existing committer will review and integrate the patch into Sakai's source tree. (Before such efforts are undertaken, however, the Sakai Chief Architect, Chuck Severance, csev@umich.edu, should be consulted on recommended approaches and basic mentorship possibilities that will make life easier in the long-run, especially for when it's time to integrate the modifications into Sakai.)

As folks step up to help out with development they will gain valuable experience with Sakai. Over time, these volunteers can move on to join Project Teams as their experience and availability permits.

8. A Sakai Baby

Sara Catherine Donnelly
10/29/2005
7 pounds 3 ounces and 19 1/2" long
Brian Donnelly, UC Davis



9. Events

5th Sakai (with OSP) Conference in Vancouver
May 30 - June 2, 2006

http://www.sakaiproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=319&Itemid=527

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI)

6th International Meeting

York Moat House Hotel, York

6 and 7 July 2006

<http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/events/jisc-cni-2006/>