



## Sakai Newsletter

May 4, 2006

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### 1. Article about bSpace -- From a confusing smorgasbord to one-stop shopping

In the past, faculty members who wanted to offer their students a course website had a confusing array of options: Blackboard, WebCT, and, most recently, bSpace. Over the past two years Educational Technology Services (ETS) has been working to simplify that menu. Its efforts to provide a single, flexible, and robust enterprise system have entailed integrating the campus's course websites into Berkeley's systems, including the registrar's database, the human-resources database (HRMS), the campus authentication system (CalNet), and the campus directory.

ETS previewed bSpace last fall with a limited number of faculty members; by fall 2007 it will be the only collaborative and learning environment (CLE) that ETS supports. "bSpace represents a quantum leap forward from Blackboard and WebCT," says Christina Maslach, vice provost for undergraduate education and instructional

technology, who oversees ETS. "In bSpace, faculty and students will find a rich, full-service teaching and learning environment that will streamline administrative tasks, allow sharing of all types of course materials, and promote dialogue and collaborative engagement. bSpace is not just limited to instructors and students in courses. It can support scholarly research, student groups, staff projects — any campus effort that involves collaboration across multiple individuals and units." ETS's goal is for bSpace to become second nature, says Mara Hancock, the unit's associate director of learning systems. She envisions that staff will use bSpace for their committee work and then, having gained familiarity with the system, be able to help faculty integrate it into their teaching and learning. Faculty who use bSpace for their collaborations will find the transition to the classroom seamless, says Hancock.

WebCT will be phased out by next fall, though Blackboard will remain available until fall 2007. Both WebCT and Blackboard are proprietary tools for which the university must pay an annual license while enjoying limited input into their functionality. bSpace has the advantage of being "community source" — an open-source product built by the Sakai Foundation ( [www.sakaiproject.org](http://www.sakaiproject.org) ), an international consortium of universities, colleges, and private companies in which Berkeley has been a key partner. "Choosing Sakai allows ETS to prioritize modifications to the system, adding functionality based on the needs of Berkeley's faculty, students, and staff," says Karen Miles, manager of ETS's training and support group. bSpace can also take advantage of a wide variety of learning and collaboration tools generated by the larger Sakai community, such as a wiki tool from Cambridge University or a new discussion-forum feature from Foothill College.

#### Techno-neophyte turns early adopter

Though Melinda Erickson had used Blackboard for two semesters, she describes herself as less experienced with technology than some faculty members. Erickson, a lecturer in College Writing Programs, signed up for the bSpace pilot program because she sensed the technology could help her enhance the course.

Erickson created a basic skeleton for the site she planned to use for CWR 1A, an introductory academic-composition course, by posting a welcome announcement, the initial homework assignments, and several subject-related links. Early last fall Erickson took her class to ETS's computer lab so she and they could get practice navigating the site together. "I think the students were very honored to be a part of this pilot study," she says, "especially when they learned that the intent is to have all courses eventually available on bSpace. They liked getting in on the ground floor."

Erickson selects a theme for the course each semester she teaches it. Last semester that theme was "music in our lives," in support of which bSpace enabled her to post MP3 audio files to the course website. ETS staff have helped out along the way, she says: "There are certainly problems that I've had that I couldn't solve on my own. I've appreciated the ease with which I've been able to get answers."

## More classroom kudos

This semester, Lisa Rubens, a historian and editor in the Regional Oral History Office, is teaching a new course, *Changing History: Women at Berkeley*. Rubens, who had never used a course website before, hasn't had any difficulty working with bSpace. "I think it's terrific," she says. "It's been a very convenient mode of interacting with the students and keeping the course up to date."

Rubens opted to use bSpace because she suspected it would allow her a level of flexibility that's helpful in a new course. "I knew the syllabus would change and that I'd be adding materials as we went along," says Rubens, who has periodically updated the syllabus online.

In the class, Rubens' 19 students break into project teams to select and research women who attended Berkeley, whose experiences here proved formative, or who work on campus. "A lot of communication needs to take place between the students," explains Rubens. "We met very systematically for half a semester, but now we've broken into work groups; I need to communicate with the students, and they need to communicate with their team members."

Richard Rhodes, associate professor of linguistics, also appreciates the ease with which it's possible to contact his students using bSpace. "I used to repeatedly download the class list from BearFacts to do mass e-mails, since students come and go in the first five weeks of class." Because bSpace is linked to the registrar's database and the campus directory, enrollment information and student e-mails are automatically updated on its course websites. That innovation is a welcome change for Rhodes, who says bSpace has "knocked hours off my class management."

## Ch-ch-ch-changes

Instructors who wish to create a course website for the fall need only log into bSpace ([bSpace.berkeley.edu](http://bSpace.berkeley.edu)) with their CalNet ID and passphrase to begin the process. To help faculty make the switch to bSpace, ETS will be offering workshops over the summer and fall. In addition, an extensive FAQ in the training section of the bSpace portal shows how to accomplish basic tasks using step-by-step illustrated instruction. Individual consultations for faculty and GSIs are also available; those interested should fill out a request form on the Educational Technology Services website ([ets.berkeley.edu](http://ets.berkeley.edu)).

ETS's Miles acknowledges that making the switch from other CLEs has resulted in some faculty changing the way they approach the design of their course website, because bSpace's tools are different from those in Blackboard and WebCT. "Hopefully," she says, "with our workshops, consultations, and training materials, we have a support system in place to make the change as smooth as possible."

By Wendy Edelstein

Berkeley Public Affairs

This article can be found at:

[http://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2006/05/03\\_ bspace.shtml](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2006/05/03_ bspace.shtml)

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## 2. uPortal Requirements Call-to-Action

The JA-SIG Board of Directors extends an open invitation to participate in the evolution of the next generation uPortal.

Enterprise portals have quickly become the de facto gateway to online campus services. uPortal is one of the most widely deployed open source enterprise portal frameworks, having been developed by and for higher education and adopted by hundreds of institutions and the eResearch community in over twenty countries. It is also the core of several commercial enterprise portal products, reaching colleges and universities in a variety of deployment options and support models.

The uPortal project has reached new levels of maturity as adoption continues to grow and a new wave of institutions search for campus portal technology. Thanks to on-going contributions from institutional developers and commercial partners, the project has successfully transitioned from primarily grant funded to a self-sustaining open source project. In addition to maintaining the current production versions and working on future releases, the community has recently formalized development plans and a release strategy.

JA-SIG seeks to expand community guidance for both near-term enhancements and longer-term vision for uPortal. Specifically, input is sought in three areas: 1) Tell us your vision of the ideal higher education enterprise portal; or 2) List requirements, features, standards, or specifications that are important to you; and, optionally, 3) Describe detailed scenarios or use cases illustrating the requirements.

More information about how to participate can be found at <http://www.uportal.org/participate.html>. The culmination of this effort will be available on the JA-SIG wiki and presented at the June 4-6 JA-SIG Conference during Community Source Week in Vancouver, British Columbia.

We welcome your participation in evolving uPortal to continue to meet the needs of higher education and we look forward to working with you.

On behalf of the JA-SIG Board,

William G. Thompson, Jr. JA-SIG Board uPortal Liaison Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey wgthom@rutgers.edu

Jonathan Markow JA-SIG Board Chair jjmarkow@gmail.com

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### 3. Sakaibrary: Linking to Scholarly Electronic Resources from within Sakai

The University of Michigan and Indiana University Libraries are working on a project, called Sakaibrary, to develop open source software tools to integrate access to library licensed digital content within the Sakai collaboration and learning environment.

A major component of Sakaibrary is using a context-sensitive linking framework, such as OpenURL, and a link resolver, such as SFX, to be able to link to resources from within Sakai. The Sakaibrary project is currently collecting information about link resolver environments at various institutions all over the world.

If you are knowledgeable about the link resolver environment at your institution and are interested in advancing and merging both library and Sakai technologies, you may also be interested in the Sakaibrary Link Resolver Survey. With the information collected, the Sakaibrary project will be able to provide a breadth of information about the current state of link resolvers in use across the globe. The project will also be able to design a system for linking to licensed scholarly e-resources from within Sakai more effectively.

If you have any questions or comments about the Sakaibrary Link Resolver Survey (<http://www.lib.umich.edu/surveys/linkresolver/>) or the Sakaibrary Project (<http://dlib.indiana.edu/projects/sakai/>), please feel free to contact Gaurav Bhatnagar ([gghatnag@umich.edu](mailto:gghatnag@umich.edu)).

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### 4. Article in Carnegie Perspectives by Toru Iiyoshi with nice mention of Sakai

From the Introduction...

A while back there was an article in The Chronicle of Higher Education, "Open Source Is the Answer. Now What Was the Question?" The question, according to Toru Iiyoshi, is "How can open education's tools and resources demonstrably improve education

quality?" And in this Perspectives, Toru, who directs the Foundation's work using new media and emerging technologies, laments that this question is not asked nearly enough.

Toru challenges his fellow advocates for open education to tackle three challenges that stand in the way of real impact on teaching and learning: the need to couple educational tools and resources with information that allows others to use them effectively; the need to bring more rewards to the work of documenting and building on shared educational work; and the need to build larger collaborative communities for sharing and building knowledge. The changes Toru is calling for reflect a need to transform academic culture in fundamental ways, making this a compelling piece even for those who haven't yet thought much about open source tools and resources.

Lee S. Shulman, President

Introduction and reader comments:

<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/conversations/sub.asp?key=244&subkey=1580>

"Opportunity is Knocking: Will Education Open the Door?"

by Toru Iiyoshi

Over the past year, I participated in several national and international meetings where representatives of leading initiatives, institutions, and organizations convened around the topic of shared and collaboratively developed "open source" educational tools and resources. Participants struggled thoughtfully and enthusiastically with questions of access, new development, and sustainability. Yet one of open education's most critical questions—how can open education's tools and resources demonstrably improve education quality?—was rarely mentioned. Unfortunately, this omission from the conversation mirrors the education community's serious lack of understanding about the transformative potential of open source education.

Read the full article:

<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/perspectives/sub.asp?key=245&subkey=1151>

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## 5. 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:

Make your hotel reservations today at

[http://www.sakaiproject.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=175&Itemid=525](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](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!

-- 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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## 6. The Sakai 2.2 Default Skin Contest!

The Sakai Default Skin Working Group is pleased to announce the first-ever Sakai Default Skin Contest!

The purpose of the contest is to invite community members to build a better UI mousetrap with the goal of improving Sakai's out-of-the box usability and visual appeal. The new skin will be a modest step towards the larger goal of creating a better Sakai user experience, and we encourage everyone in the community to submit designs. The top 3 skins will be announced and shown at the Vancouver Conference.

Some key points are: -- Develop your skin using the 2.2 Quickstart Sakai at:

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/SKIN/Quickstart+Sakai> -- Submit your skins using the form at: <https://sakaiproject.org/skin/> -- Submission guidelines can be found at: [https://sakaiproject.org/skin/skin\\_contest\\_rules.php](https://sakaiproject.org/skin/skin_contest_rules.php) -- Deadline for skin

submission is May 19, 2006 -- Voting will be held between May 22 and May 31, 2006 --  
The top 3 skins will be announced in Vancouver

(Skin developers, please note: due to planned changes in the underlying portal structure, we will need to edit submissions in order to run them in Sakai 2.2.)

Thank you for taking part in this important contest. As the top entry will become the default, out-of-the-box public face of Sakai, it is incumbent upon us as a community to choose a skin that offers our users the clearest, most readable, and intuitive interface possible. We recognize that not everyone is a professional in these areas, but we encourage those who are casting votes to keep these concerns in mind.

If you want guidance in forming a better vote, or simply wish to enhance your knowledge in these areas, please review the links in the contest rules potential to impact thousands of users around the globe on a daily basis, we must consider our design and votes carefully. Just remember: Beauty is more than skin deep!

Thank you for your considered participation,

The Sakai Default Skin Working Group

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## 7. Sakai Blog in The Netherlands

The University of Amsterdam and the University of Twente have a weblog, mostly in English, relating to Sakai. Please take a look at it (and comment!) if you are interested in what we are trying to do there.

<http://sakai-nl.blogspot.com>

Recent entries describe a gathering of people and institutions interested in Sakai in The Netherlands on April 19. There will be a follow-up meeting on May 22.

Regards,

Wytze Koopal, Msc  
[w.y.koopal@utwente.nl](mailto:w.y.koopal@utwente.nl)



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## 8. Who's Building Sakai?

You are! In response to our call for volunteers (see last newsletter) to help meet the development needs of Feature Requests and Requirements submitted by the community, the following volunteer efforts are getting underway:

### REQ-87 What's New? tool (Recent Activity)

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/dUE> . When any user (regardless of type) accesses a worksite, they will have access to a tool which summarizes worksite activity and updates since their last login. This will allow users to easily identify any new or updated materials without having to search throughout the website for changes. If nothing changed since the last login, the tool would report "No new changes or additions since last login".

### REQ-375 Timed Release of Resources <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/wj8> .

This is a proposed modification to the Resources tool (or potentially a new tool that works with Resources) that will display Resource items only after a specified time. It could also retract them and no longer display them at another specified time.

### REQ-378 Ability to customize order of Resources

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/a0E> . Instructors should be able to set documents/files within and outside of folders, as well as folders in resources in whatever order they choose, rather than having documents appear in alphabetical order. An instructor may have several folders, and files outside of folders, in the Resources area - Homework, Assignments, Images, Maps, Research Resources List. Currently, Sakai puts these items in alphabetical order. This occasionally forces faculty to rename their resources in manipulative ways simply to have the arrangement of folders and files happen in the way they wish. The site owner should be able to determine the order in which folders and files appear. The site owner should also be able to determine the order in which documents/files within a folder appear.

Are you interested in volunteering? Please contact the Sakai Project Coordinator (Peter Knoop, [knoop@umich.edu](mailto:knoop@umich.edu)) for more information.

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## 9. OSP 2.2 to be provisional in Sakai 2.2

The Open Source Portfolio - OSP 2.1 BETA is being released this week running on Sakai 2.1.2. Also this week, OSP 2.2 is being prepared to participate fully in the next round of Sakai QA slated to start next week. I'm excited for the Sakai community that OSP can now be used with the latest release of Sakai. OSP 2.1 is being released as a BETA, so the OSP development team can focus on a production release fully synchronized with Sakai

2.2 in June. 5/1/2006 - OSP 2.1 running on Sakai 2.1.2 6/16/2006 - OSP 2.2 running on Sakai 2.2

The OSP is a set of Sakai tools that support portfolio activities. Individuals can collect items, reflect, design portfolios, and publish to designated audiences. Instructors and program administrators are able to provide structure and guidance to the individual's work that include step-by-step (sequential) wizards, matrices of goals/standards, and hierarchies to organize related work.

To learn more about the release and the tools, read the OSP 2.1 whitepaper:

[http://www.rsmart.com/assets/understandingOSP\\_Dec2005.pdf](http://www.rsmart.com/assets/understandingOSP_Dec2005.pdf)

... and visit the OSP Website: <http://www.osportfolio.org>

Two ways to get started with OSP:

Install the OSP 2.1

<http://wiki.osportfolio.org/confluence/display/DEV21/Install+OSP+2.1>.

Participate in Sakai 2.2 QA:

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/QA/Sign+Up+for+the+2.2+QA+effort>

Chris Coppola  
rSmart

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## 10. 4th IMS Global Learning Consortium Advanced Learning Technology Conference

As one of the local co-hosts, I would like to invite the Sakai community to join us for the 4th IMS Global Learning Consortium Advanced Learning Technology conference in Indianapolis, Indiana, 19-22 June 2006. I have attended each of these since its inception, and this unique working conference is a highly valuable tool for advancing interoperability and innovation for learning technologies.

The format is slightly revised this year, so I encourage your review of the program at <http://www.imslobal.org/altlab2006/>. Discounted early registration ends on 5 May, so I encourage you to get registered and make hotel arrangements if you will be able to join us.

Cheers,

Brad Wheeler , Indiana University

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## 11. The JA-SIG Summer Conference program is now viewable

The JA-SIG Summer Conference program has now been posted on the conference web site <http://www.ja-sig.org/conferences/06summer/>

- Pre-Conference Seminars
- General Sessions
- The View from the Mountains - Enterprise Strategies
- From Sea to Sky - System Implementation and Deployment
- Gateway to the Specific - Technical Development
- Birds of a Feather Sessions
- Kiosks

We are pleased to announce that Hal Stern will be our Tuesday Keynote Speaker at the Vancouver JA-SIG Conference. Hal holds the title at Sun Microsystems of Vice President and Chief Technology Officer for Software. Hal has played several key roles at Sun during the past 15 years, including CTO and Chief Architect. His areas of specialization include architecture, performance, reliability, networking, and high availability. Get a preview of Hal's personality at <http://blogs.sun.com/stern>. He blogs regularly about everything from ice hockey to software to 70s art rock bands!

Register before 6th May and there is a saving of \$75.00 off the conference fee and \$25.00 off the seminar fees. The JA-SIG conference registration fee includes all conference program materials, admission to all conference sessions, refreshment breaks, a reception Sunday evening, light breakfasts each morning, luncheons on Monday and Tuesday, and a Monday evening dinner and reception.

The Westin Bayshore Resort and Marina is the site of the JA-SIG Vancouver Conference. JA-SIG has negotiated a special rate of CAD\$219 per night for a single or double occupancy room, subject to room availability. This rate is subject to provincial (10%) and federal (7%) taxes. To receive the discounted rate, go to <http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/booking/reservation?id=0601207980&key=2A1D4> and follow the instructions for making your reservations online, or you may call the Hotel directly at +1-604-682-3377, or call Westin's toll-free Reservation number at +1-800-WESTIN-1. Be sure to mention that you need the JA-SIG group rate.

Conference Program Committee  
email Program Committee: [jasig-june-2006@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:jasig-june-2006@interchange.ubc.ca)

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## 12. Volunteer to Resurrect and Lead a Sakai Discussion Group or Working Group

Over Sakai's history there have been a lot of great ideas put forth, often resulting in the formation of a Discussion Group or Working Group. There have not always been sufficient volunteer resources available, however, to pursue the idea and see it to fruition. As a result there are a number of such groups with Confluence Spaces and Collab Sites that have been inactive for sometime.

We're looking to identify interest in continuing the discussion and work on the issues raised in these groups by seeking volunteers who are willing to commit the time and energy to leading and or participating in them. A directory of all Sakai Discussion and Working Groups can be found here:

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/MGT/Discussion+Groups>

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/MGT/Working+Groups>

If you are interested in participating in one of these groups, but you don't see any recent activity, such as emails on their Collab site or postings to their Confluence space, then consider volunteering to help lead and catalyze the group. With the 5th Sakai Conference in Vancouver only three weeks away, now would be a great time to get conversations started that could be followed up with face-to-face and BOF (Birds-Of-a-Feather) meetings. After the conference we plan to archive and retire groups that have not exhibited any recent activity.

Please contact the Sakai Project Coordinator (Peter Knoop, [knoop@umich.edu](mailto:knoop@umich.edu)), if you are interested. Thanks.

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

### JA-SIG Summer Conference

13<sup>th</sup> Semiannual meeting

June 4-6, 2006

[www.ja-sig.org/conferences/06summer](http://www.ja-sig.org/conferences/06summer)

4th IMS Global Learning Consortium Advanced Learning Technology conference  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
June 19-22, 2006  
<http://www.imsglobal.org/altlab2006/>

Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and the Coalition for Networked  
Information (CNI)  
6th International Meeting  
York Moat House Hotel, York  
July 6-7, 2006  
<http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/events/jisc-cni-2006/>