



## Sakai Newsletter

June 15, 2006

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### 1. Indiana Releases Sakai 2.2 into Full Production

Indiana University was the first institution to release Sakai 2.2 into full production as part of its locally branded Oncourse CL 2.2 release on June 11, 2006, opening the fall semester to faculty. With this release being nearly one month ahead of the official Sakai 2.2 release, IU relied heavily on the support of the Sakai community and was not let down. The following enhancements were exposed at IU in this release: OSP 2.2, Gradebook integration with Message Center, Gradebook integration with Assignments, ad hoc group support in Assignments, FCKEditor -- a new rich text editor, RWiki, and CSS skin enhancements. Over the coming month, additional functionality will be exposed such as ad hoc group support in Resources and Schedule.

- Lance Speelmon, Manager, Online Development, Indiana University

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### 2. rSmart Releases its rSmart Sakai CLE

rSmart, the leading provider of support and services for open source educational software, is pleased to announce the release of its rSmart Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment (CLE). This offering features:

- Stability and Reliability
- 24 x 7 Customer Support
- Customer Knowledge Base
- Maintenance Updates
- Guaranteed Response Time
- Warranty and IP Assurance
- Bugs and Patch Support
- Documentation / User Guides

Based on the most up-to-date Sakai community release, the rSmart Sakai CLE contains a refined and enhanced user interface, designed to better facilitate collaboration and learning. In addition to this vetted set of Sakai tools, the CLE also contains the most up-to-date version of the Open Source Portfolio (OSP) tools, enabling schools to make use of 33 distinct tools in a secure, integrated environment.

With this release, rSmart has made a concerted effort to determine how this collection of open source tools should work together, to redesign the interface, test the software, and to package it in a way that's flexible enough to support a wide variety of different user populations with divergent technical and functional needs. We encourage everyone to play in our Sakai Sandbox (<http://www.rsmart.com/products/cle/try>) -- there's absolutely no obligation. The rSmart Sandbox provides:

- Free access to all of the rSmart Sakai CLE tools, including the latest versions of Sakai and OSP
- A private course site with Instructor, Teaching Assistant, and Student accounts
- Ability to join and view other sites with pre-populated course content
- Access to on-line help and tutorials

For more information on the rSmart Sakai CLE or any of our other product offerings, please visit us at: <http://www.rsmart.com>

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### 3. View the New Sakai 2.2 Skins

The new Sakai 2.2 skins (as determined by the community) are now available. They will be included in the Sakai 2.2 release. See the submitted skins and more details about the results of the Skin Contest here:

<https://sakaiproject.org/skin/results.php>

- Aaron Zeckoski

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#### 4. Vancouver Sakai Conference Continues Tradition of Shared Learning

The 5<sup>th</sup> Sakai Conference with the Open Source Portfolio met in Vancouver, May 30 to June 2. The conference was attended by 487 participants from 192 colleges universities, government agencies and businesses. Twenty-five countries were represented. The conference included 119 sessions and group meetings covering diverse topics including how to use Sakai, development, sustaining the Sakai community, pedagogy and learning technology, and information technology and architecture. The conference included 24 tech demos and 21 officially scheduled birds-of-a-feather (BOF) meetings, in addition to many spontaneous BOFs. Mozilla's Mitchell Baker gave the keynote address.

The December conference will be held in Atlanta, Georgia.

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#### 5. Comments from Conference Participants

- It was wonderful to put faces to the names I interact with on a daily basis. I found the exchange of ideas was overwhelming/exciting -- there is so much everyone would like to do with Sakai! I look forward to reflecting on the progress that has been made in Atlanta.  
- Megan May, Indiana University
- It was really encouraging to see the number and breadth of the presentations. I was mainly interested in library and repository issues surrounding Sakai, and there were a large number of relevant sessions. In retrospect, maybe there were too many -- I was able to attend sessions almost exclusively on these topics, and so may have missed opportunities to branch out during "off" times. Another striking aspect of this conference was the broadening of the number of institutions contributing really meaningful work. It indicates to me that the community as a whole is moving in the right direction.  
- Jim Martino, Johns Hopkins University
- I was really intrigued by Mitchell Baker's (the keynote) description of how the Mozilla project moved from a suite of tools that tried to meet the needs of all of their users including the special needs of 20% of their users, to the product of Firefox that focused on the needs of 80% of their users. She described this transition as painful, but really healthy for the organization and ultimately their product. In

the session with the board after Mitchell's talk, it seemed that our new Executive Director, Chuck Severance, also recognized the need to point Sakai toward the 80% of our users. From the comments and questions of the audience, the 80% of users seems to especially lie with those involved with teaching and learning.

- Marc Brierley, Stanford University

- I liked the longer breaks between sessions, which gave me plenty of time to talk to the presenter if I needed to, get a drink, answer email, or have a decent conversation. I thought the bootcamp was a good learning experience and we got a lot of good feedback from the attendees. I feel like the conference is a natural place for developers to get together and learn from each other. I thought the check-in and badges were much improved from previous conferences -- no long lines, and I thought the badges looked a lot more professional and colorful.

- Aaron Zeckoski, Virginia Tech

- At each conference since the first one in Denver, I've seen the Sakai community grow more mature. In Vancouver I think we transitioned from a majority interested in understanding what "they" were doing, to a majority that know we \*are\* they. I saw lots of people with great ideas holding themselves accountable. Sakai's greatest opportunity (and challenge) is to maximize the potential of so many eager contributors, and I think we're headed in the right direction..

- Chris Coppola, The rSmart Group

- The atmosphere at the Vancouver conference was different from previous conferences. More attendees were well-informed about Sakai at this conference, so in addition to answering questions about Sakai, we were able to ask some of our own questions and receive answers from non-core institutions. This is exciting and one of the main reasons why we embarked on the Sakai journey in the first place. It goes without saying that Karaoke night was the best community bonding experience ever! I look forward to future Sakai conferences with a growing community.

- Kristol Hancock, Indiana University

- The conference in Vancouver was the fifth Sakai/SEPP conference I've attended, and it was deeply gratifying to see how the Sakai community has matured over the past three years. It is a testimony to both our leaders and participants that we are moving smoothly from a grant-based project to a true collaborative community. Everywhere were signs of vitality, new ideas, and commitment to the vision of Sakai that we share. Recognition of the new Sakai Fellows is a very positive way to recognize new and established voices in the community. The commercial affiliates are also coming into their own and demonstrated clearly their support for the

community. Like all of the previous conferences, Vancouver was a great place to meet old and new friends, to network with people, and explore projects. Overall, the quality of the presentations and sessions was good and I look forward to continuous improvement in future conferences.

- Mark Norton, MIT

- Vancouver was the 2nd Sakai Conference that I attended. It was great to meet some fellow Europeans again and to meet some new colleagues from the worldwide community that Sakai is becoming more and more. I was very impressed by the presentations Unisa gave at the conference. Furthermore, I was pleased to see Chuck Severance being appointed Executive Director. I hope that we can make the first European Sakai Days in Luebeck (Sept 6 & 7) as much a success as the “original” Sakai conference has become. So... see you next time in Luebeck or in Atlanta!

- Wytze Koopal, University of Twente

- Despite the confused look I wore on my face at the conference, I was having a great time...I always look like that. It was very inspirational. Before the event, I was not sure why I was attending really, since I knew that it was taking me away from a checklist. It was not any particular event that inspired me, although Mitchell's talk was so very pertinent; rather it was the meta-environment... it was just-be-nice time peppered with a lot of smart talk.... I love it.

- Jon Gorrano, UC Davis

- For me, the conference at Vancouver revealed two critical characteristics about the Sakai Project in 2006:

Enthusiasm continues to build for Sakai not only in the developer community, but in the broader communities of faculty and their support staff. Many if not most of those looking at Sakai today are thinking of it as much more than a course management system, but as an enterprise framework based on solid, open standards with a loosely coupled design that allows for integration and promotes innovation. The technology demos on Thursday evening confirmed the dynamic nature of the project and justify this enthusiasm.

The Sakai community is also maturing and becoming techno-realistic about Sakai, which is a good and inevitable step in the evolution of any new technology. Creating robust and feature-rich software is challenging. I am very much encouraged by the realistic outlook shared among conference attendees that Sakai not only has value today but justifies our enthusiasm for the future. I overheard a new member of the community say that "Sakai will be the platform of choice over the long haul."

- Scott Siddall, The Longsight Group

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## 6. Events

### 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/>

### 1st European Sakai Day

Luebeck, Germany

September 6-7, 2006

<http://www.oncampus.de/sakai>