



## Sakai Newsletter

August 24, 2006

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### 1. Press Release: Sakai Foundation Engages Software Freedom Law Center to Advise on E-Learning Patents Threat

August 17, 2006 -- In the wake of recent efforts to limit the free and open sharing of innovation for online learning, the Sakai Foundation has retained the Software Freedom Law Center (SFLC), an organization directed by Eben Moglen and dedicated to providing advice and legal services to protect and advance free and open source software, to evaluate the recent Blackboard patent, its impact on the educational community, and to advise on legal matters regarding the patent.

Students, faculty, tax payers, and the general public have benefited from a decades long pattern of true community- and user-driven innovation in educational software. This work has been widely shared to further enhance the effective use of Information Technology for teaching, learning, and research. The Sakai Foundation and Sakai's open source collaboration and learning software embody these values by giving anyone the freedom to innovate, reuse, and share in the area of online education and research.

The recent announcement by Blackboard that it is attempting to assert patent rights over simple and longstanding online technologies as applied to the area of course management systems and e-learning technologies, and its subsequent litigation against a smaller commercial competitor constitutes a threat to the effective and open development of software for higher education and the values underlying such open activities.

Sakai has engaged the SFLC to assess and respond to the patent, but the Foundation believes that the core issue is much broader than the current technology in question. Sakai is working with the SFLC and others of like mind to develop a long term common defense effort, and encourages everyone to contribute to the SFLC to support its efforts now and in the future to aggressively challenge bad patents in the area of educational and research software.

The Software Freedom Law Center (<http://www.softwarefreedom.org/>) is an organization which provides legal representation and other law-related services to protect and advance Free and open source software. The SFLC is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and donations made to it are fully tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

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## 2. Charles Sturt University Selects Sakai as the Basis of its Learning Management System

After an extensive evaluation process Charles Sturt University (CSU), Australia's largest provider of distance education, has selected the Sakai framework as the foundation for its online learning management system (LMS).

In June 2006 the evaluation process short listed two possible framework solutions, Moodle and Sakai. After further detailed analysis Sakai was selected on the basis that its overall philosophy was better aligned with the strategic aims of the University.

A phased implementation approach will be adopted for the LMS rollout starting with an 'out of the box' trial of the Open Source Portfolio (OSP) e-portfolio product in October. The OSP, a fully integrated portfolio product within the Sakai framework, will be released to a limited audience initially, with further trials and consultation to occur in 2007.

The entire Sakai framework will be implemented for the start of 2008 academic year. It is expected that developments will continue to be extended indefinitely.

The Executive Director, IT at CSU said "CSU has been in production with Sakai for project and research collaboration since early 2006. The decision to adopt Sakai as the replacement for our in-house LMS will allow us to implement an integrated scholarly collaboration environment across our entire community"

Mike Rebbechi  
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### 3. 6<sup>th</sup> Sakai Conference in Atlanta, December 5-8, 2006, Updates

#### **Call for Proposals**

The call for proposals will open on August 15. The deadline for proposal submissions will be September 30, 2006. Presenters will be notified by October 15 if their proposal has been accepted.

#### **Conference Registration**

Conference Registration will open in early September.

#### **Hotel Information**

Atlanta Marriott Marquis 265 Peachtree Center Ave. Atlanta, GA 30303

The room block is already set up. To reserve a room, call and ask for the Sakai Group at 1-800-MARRIOTT, 1-888-855-5701, or 404-521-0000. The room rate is \$134/night for a single/double/triple/quad. And we will get a discounted sleeping room rate of \$7.95 per day for in room internet connectivity.

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### 4. The Daily Californian: "Berkeley Campus to Expand Use of Online Class Portal"

Management System bSpace to Replace Existing Web Sites, Link to School Registrar's Database

A new Internet portal for students and faculty to exchange information is set to enter widespread use this fall, allowing students to access information for multiple classes from a single Web site.

UC Berkeley's new electronic "collaboration and learning environment"-bSpace-will replace current class management tools Blackboard, WebCT and CourseWeb by the end of the school year, said Victor Edmonds, director of Educational Technology Services on campus.

The campus began testing the software last year, with 40 faculty members taking part in a trial run of the software, said Karen Miles, who is heading the transition to the bSpace system.

More than 200 classes will use bSpace in the coming semester. Although some faculty have chosen to keep using Blackboard for certain features, the campus plans to phase out other systems completely by 2007.

Like current software, bSpace allows professors to make announcements, distribute documents and even create online quizzes.

But the tool also offers a new feature that enables faculty to collaborate with each other using a wiki tool, similar to the one used by the popular Wikipedia Web site.

The most significant departure from older systems, however, is bSpace's integration with other online campus online resources.

Currently, students must sign up for each class Web site individually. With bSpace, class Web sites are linked to the registrar's database, allowing for automatic updates of online class rosters.

The portal is also linked to the campus' schedule of classes and the campus directory, Miles said.

The primary reason for the switch to bSpace from previous systems, according to Edmonds, was to give the campus more control over the software in use.

"The main reason was more control. We didn't want our destiny in the hands of some other company," Edmonds said.

Earlier systems were created and owned by separate companies, which charge the campus a licensing fee.

On the other hand, bSpace is UC Berkeley's version of software developed by the Sakai Project, a group of universities who are trying to create an open-source class management tool. Because of this, the software is available for free to the university.

"We figured at one point that it would cost well over \$1 million to use other commercial software for licensing, integrating, and support," Edmonds said.

Edmonds said the goal of bSpace and other online systems is to streamline the teaching process.

"The first thing the faculty wanted us to do was eliminate the drudgery (of teaching)," Edmonds said. "That right away makes the class more directed to teaching and learning."

by Matt Koh

This article can be found on The Daily Californian website,  
<http://dailycal.org/sharticle.php?id=21096>

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## 5. MyUCDavis Introduces SmartSite

Anyone who has recently visited MyUCDavis will have gotten a whiff of SmartSite, the new online course management section of the campus Web portal.

SmartSite is powered by Sakai, an online collaboration tool whose name might be recognized from Food Network's "Iron Chef." The show features Chef Hiroyuki Sakai as one of the competing chefs. The online system is making a name for itself on MyUCDavis.

According to Michael Giardina, communications analyst for the Office of the Vice Provost of Information and Educational Technology (IET), because Sakai is open-source software -- meaning it can be distributed and used by anyone -- universities can collaborate to create a system that can be customized and updated to keep up with constantly evolving technology.

Andy Jones, faculty liaison for Media Works, program manager for the Faculty Mentoring Faculty program, and faculty liaison for the Teaching Resources Center, said Media Works has been considering a solution for updating MyUCDavis for a while.

"We knew we wanted to adopt something," he said. "SmartSite was a great opportunity to take advantage of the resources available."

Jones taught SmartSite to interested faculty members through the Faculty Mentoring Faculty program and is pleased with the software.

"I'm very excited to introduce SmartSite to many more faculty," Jones said. "It's flexible enough, and accommodates new tools for many teaching or learning styles. It is an effective resource for faculty across the disciplines."

In addition to course management, students and faculty can register their personal groups, projects, and research with SmartSite - an option that was not available with MyUCDavis.

Some of the new features offered with SmartSite include chat rooms with fellow classmates, virtual office hours that allow direct communication between students and teachers or TAs, and wikis for posting questions or responses.

Andy Jones, who is also a University Writing Program lecturer, has used the Sakai software for courses he taught during the summer, including UWP 104D: Writing in Education. Mario Lopez, a senior political science major who is currently taking UWP 104D with Jones, believes SmartSite is a positive change for UC Davis.

"[The tools on SmartSite] are a more complete package than MyUCDavis," he said.

"[In my past experience], not all of my professors have used MyUCDavis, and when they did, they would not always update it regularly," he said. "I didn't like it because it was inconsistent."

Eugene Yu, a junior, is using SmartSite for the first time this summer.

"I think the chat room [feature on SmartSite] is very creative and may be an interesting way to connect students in the classroom," he said. "Instead of exchanging e-mails or asking for AIM screen names, they could simply log onto the chat room and discuss their work and ask for help."

IET is also working with the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine and UC Davis School of Medicine on versions of SmartSite tailored to meet the individual schools' additional needs.

According to Jan E. Ilkiw, professor and associate dean of Academic Programs within the Department of Surgical and Radiological Sciences for the School of Veterinary Medicine, the veterinary version of Sakai is called Collaborative Educational and Research Environment, or CERRE. It was piloted last spring and will be available for a "full school roll-out" this fall.

Not all of the tools will be available for use this fall. The Gradebook and Quiz and Survey tools still need improvements before they can be implemented.

"IET is releasing SmartSite slowly and carefully so that it's as bug-free as possible," Jones said. "Since working with IET for just over a year, I'm really impressed with the faculty-centric approach. They listen to concerns of faculty and students, and present approaches and tools that reflect those concerns."

Colleen Belcher  
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## 6. User's Support Café is Open

A User's Support Café has been started on the DG:User site in Confluence where members of the community can now post tutorials and other types of support materials that they would like to share with others. It is in a bare bones form right now. But it will allow us to start building a library of support materials.

When you log in, you will be able to add a page, enter some metadata information into a form, and then either upload or link to your materials. Link to the User's Support Café: <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/USER/Home>

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## 7. Sakai Mentioned in the U.S. National Commission on the Future of Higher Education Report

Promoting open-source projects, including Sakai, can be found on page 24 of the report, under Recommendation #4, thanks to James Duderstadt, President Emeritus and University of Michigan Professor of Science and Engineering.

Recommendation #4 -- "With too few exceptions, higher education has yet to address the fundamental issues of how academic programs and institutions must be transformed to serve the changing needs of a knowledge economy. We recommend that America's colleges and universities embrace a culture of continuous innovation and quality improvement by developing new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve learning, particularly in the area of science and mathematical literacy."

*On Page 24 -- "The Commission encourages the creation of incentives to promote the development of open-source and open-content projects at universities and The Commission encourages the creation of incentives to promote the development of open-source and open-content projects at universities and colleges across the United States, enabling the open sharing of educational materials from a variety of institutions, disciplines, and educational perspectives. Such a portal could stimulate innovation, and serve as the leading resource for teaching and learning. New initiatives such as OpenCourseWare, the Open Learning Initiative, the Sakai Project, and the Google Book project hold out the potential of providing universal access both to general knowledge and to higher education."*

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## 8. Three New Sakai Video Reports from Chuck Severance

Sakai Video Report: IMS Common Cartridge Demonstration at Alt-I-Lab 2006

Produced: June 22, 2006

<http://sakaiproject.org/media2/2006/altidemo06/altidemo06.htm>

This video shows the successful demonstration of IMS Common Cartridge at Alt-I-Lab 2006. The demonstration included content from Pearson Education and McGraw Hill. The LMS systems that were able to handle the content were Blackboard, WebCT, Angel, and Sakai. It was a very successful demo - and a worthy follow on to last year's Tool Interoperability demonstrator in Sheffield, England. View the video.

Sakai Video Report: Sakai Overview

Produced: August 18, 2006

<http://www.sakaiproject.org/media2/2006/overview/overview.htm>

This video gives an overview of the Sakai Collaborative and Learning Environment (CLE) product, how Sakai is used in teaching, learning, collaboration, and portfolios, how the Sakai community works, how Sakai works to improve interoperability through standards, and some technical detail about Sakai. Length 10 minutes - Windows Media 300kbps. View the overview video.

Sakai Video Report: Sakai and uPortal at UNISA - Johan van den Berg

Produced: June 6, 2006

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~csev/media//2006/johan/johan.htm>

This video was taped while at the Sakai meeting in Vancouver. Johan discusses their upcoming project to integrate uPortal and Sakai to produce the UNISA campus portal. Johan attended both the Sakai and JA-Sig meetings and described the UNISA approach to both communities.

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## 9. Edufilter Interview with Sakai's Brad Wheeler: "Catching up with Sakai"

I must admit to not knowing as much about the Sakai project as I should, given the project's profile since its official launch about two years ago. Although Moodle seems to be dominating the OSS CMS/LMS market, certainly in terms of coverage on the blogosphere, Sakai's profile keeps growing with some large institutions adopting it and participating in development.

From the Sakai website:

Sakai is an online open source Collaboration and Learning Environment. Many users of Sakai deploy it to support teaching and learning, ad hoc group collaboration, support for portfolios and research collaboration.

Sakai is a free and open source product that is built and maintained by the Sakai community. Sakai's development model is called "Community Source" because many of the developers creating Sakai are drawn from the "community" of organizations that have adopted and are using Sakai.

Certainly, the feature set looks impressive as does the list of partners.

After reading this post on Zacker.org -- Sakai vs. Moodle -- I decided to get in touch with Brad Wheeler, a co-founder of Sakai and current serving Vice Chair of the Sakai Foundation Board, to find out a little more about Sakai. Brad is also an Associate Professor of Information Systems and teaches an MBA program at Indiana University.

Brad was kind enough to answer a couple of questions for Edufilter.

*What was the driving force behind setting up the Sakai project?*

Rational economics and strategy for the future. In 2002, IU assessed continuing to advance our very popular home grown "Oncourse" system or to buy from the commercial marketplace. The public report is available - A Course Management System Strategy for Indiana University. Neither was a great option. Our economics were very favorable with great control of destiny in our homegrown system, but as an island, I knew we would struggle to keep pace with the very best innovation for teaching and learning. Michigan had reached all the same conclusions. We agreed to share code in 2002 and that ultimately led to what became the Sakai Project concept (with others) in late 2003.

*What has the uptake rate been like? Is it meeting your expectations?*

For the eight campuses of Indiana University, Sakai is already our default Course Management System. We've had over 90,000 unique logins and auto-load it with over 26,000 courses each semester. Some faculty moved last year and others are moving this year as we prepare to retire our old system.

Beyond IU, the uptake has been at the right pace. I'm delighted with the breadth of engagement from five continents. The project is only now 2.5 years old and has put out five releases. I think the 2.2 release really puts Sakai into full consideration for those that were waiting for a little more maturity in the software. Changing a CMS is a three year venture for most institutions, so many are now in the pilot evaluation year.

*What is different about Sakai when compared to other OSS CMS systems such as Moodle or Drupal? Why do you think people should choose Sakai?*

Since I've not taught with Moodle or Drupal, I can't speak to relative strengths. I can say that Sakai was conceived as a Collaborative Learning Environment (CLE) for enterprise-scale use. It is being used for eScience, scholarly portals, university committees, and all forms of collaboration in addition to supporting residential and distributed education. We saw this as a way to move to a Faculty Workbench concept where many of the tools they need for their teaching, research, and service roles are all there together. Likewise, students can use it for their teams and committees beyond courses too. One of our faculty recently told others on a call with a National Science Foundation project that "we do everything in Sakai for our collaboration." A slight exaggeration, but its use beyond courses is accelerating quickly.

The broad community is also very important. The Sakai Conferences are now really about everything it takes to succeed – training, support, system administration, etc. The explosion of sharing among the Sakai community at the institutional level has been a remarkable development during the project's second year.

*Sakai is open source -- can anyone contribute to the code base or become a member of the project?*

Absolutely. Sakai has a very active Developer community and many improvements have come from individuals as well as developers who work in universities. There are a set of committers and review processes just like many other open source projects. The technical community works on a meritocracy.

*Can you give us a scoop on some new features/initiatives Sakai users can look forward to in the near future?*

I'm very excited about the Sakaibrary work to further integrate licensed library content into Sakai. See Integrating Licensed Library Resources with Sakai. There are some very cool synchronous tools for audio/video/whiteboard being developed in the UK. The GradTools work from Michigan is also a good one to help grad students through their degree programs. Sakai is laboring hard with IMS on the Tool Interoperability and Common Cartridge work. The 2.2. release also has full integration with the Open Source Portfolio. This helps mainstream courses, portfolios, collaboration, and more into a common, open platform. Faculty and students can then readily invoke the tools that serve their needs. I knew we were on the right path when an academic department called me recently seeking for us to deploy a Sakai tool built at another university that they had seen at their professional conference.

*How do you see the recent Blackboard patent award effecting Sakai development?*

It is difficult to see how these attempts to assert patent rights are in the interest of students, faculty, and tax payers. IU's deployment of these enterprise-class concepts for educational software date to 1997 and 1998 as documented in the Wikipedia entry, thus we've made no changes in our plans nor am I aware of changes from others who are working together through open source sharing. The Sakai Foundation has retained the Software Freedom Law Center and Eben Moglen to advise us on these matters as assess the veracity of the patent claim and other efforts to limit the free sharing of educational software that has long been a value of higher ed institutions. Our announcement.

With the emergence of companies such as RSmart it seems to me the often heralded argument that OSS does not have the same support as commercial tools is no longer valid. What do you think about the whole OSS vs Commercial CMS argument?

Is someone really still talking about that? With 13 Sakai Commercial Affiliates and competitive bidding on support and implementation services around open intellectual property, I'd say "argued, answered...dismissed." Our commercial affiliates have no IP claims on the work of the Sakai Project, and yet they are choosing to be great contributors in many ways. In a field of sixteen candidates with .edu's having about 85 votes and .com's having about 11 last year, Members of the Sakai Foundation elected Chris Coppola of rSmart to the board. Why? Because rSmart had been working in the discussion groups and helping the community. Markets work. Other affiliates are doing likewise too.

*What are the technologies behind Sakai?*

Enterprise Java is the core, but we've got connectors for tools in other programming languages as well. We are database agnostic. We use web services, Spring, and Hibernate.

And let me add one more...

Sakai has shown colleges and universities how to invest together and develop software using open source practices. We are repeating that with the Quali Financial System that will have its first release in early October, and a Research Administration System announcement is forthcoming. These projects, more than anything, represent a new Coordination Model for higher ed to pool and leverage its resources. It is working because it is held together by incentives rather than contract. Everyone has walk away rights to the code at any time. The value of the community entices them to participate.

by David Tosh

This article can be found on the Edufilter website, <http://edufilter.org/?p=7>

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## 10. Unicon to Host Sakai Developer Training with Mark Norton October 16-18 in Chandler, Arizona

Unicon, Inc., the leading independent provider of open source-based technologies and professional services for the online campus in academic institutions, will be hosting a Sakai Developer Training with Mark Norton October 16-18, 2006. Participants are required to be experienced Java web application developers with a working knowledge of SQL databases. This innovative training will show developers how to integrate Sakai into a campus enterprise environment, engaging them in a series of hands-on exercises which includes development of a User Directory Provider and Group Provider, integration of the new Collaboration and Learning Environment service, Web Services activity to demonstrate site creation, and writing Java code against a MySQL database running on a local network.

“My goal is for participants to learn Sakai from an integration perspective,” stated training leader Mark Norton, Director of Specification Development for the IMS Global Learning Consortium. “To understand how Providers work and to get a feel for other powerful integration techniques such as Web Services, developers will be able to immediately begin work on their institutions instance of Sakai.”

Participation is limited. For more information or to register for the workshop, visit the training section of [www.unicon.net](http://www.unicon.net).

### Workshop Topics and Exercises

- Overview of the Sakai Platform
- Installing the Sakai Training Environment
- An Introduction to Sakai services including:
  - User Services
  - Security Services
  - Collaboration and Learning Environment Services
- Enterprise Integration
- Sakai Web Services

### About Mark Norton

Mark Norton is an independent consultant in the field of technology-based learning. He has developed learning and course management systems since 1996 for industry and academia. As Director of Specification Development for the IMS Global Learning Consortium, Mr. Norton guided the creation of several key learning standards and was an early participant in the Open Knowledge Initiative. He is a contributing architect to the Sakai project and has been involved in many of its support programs and activities.

### Company Contact:

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## 11. Accessibility Working Group Update

The Accessibility Working Group is discussing ideas for the December Sakai Conference, including a panel of Accessibility Technology (AT) users and a birds-of-a-feature session (BOF) featuring hands-on use of AT equipment for designers and developers. Tell us what you would like to know about accessibility and Sakai by joining the conversation: [accessibility@collab.sakaiproject.org](mailto:accessibility@collab.sakaiproject.org)

In related news, accessibility evaluations of Sakai 2.2 are still coming in. They are posted at this address:

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/2ACC/2.2+Results>

There are still tools left to review and participation is much appreciated. Go to this address to see what remains and choose a tool:

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/2ACC/2.2+Tools+List>

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## 12. In Praise of Open Source and Responsive Developers

Our second week of running 2-2-x in production during termtime is approaching an end, and inspired by the fact that things are running smoothly, I thought I'd share two thoughts for the day,

1. It's great to be able to fix things yourself when you need to,

and

2. It's even better when other people fix things for you really quickly :-)

So this is a special thank you to responsive developers who resolve bug reports speedily and improve the software continuously for all of us.

It's amazing to be able to file a Jira, see a fix within a day or two, and move the same fix into production within a week (depending on 2-2-x branch updates and local releases).

So special thanks for speediness to developers who have resolved issues recently for us such as Zhen Qian (Assignments and Site Info), Josh Holtzmann (Section Info), Ian Boston (Search, Wiki) and the whole CARET team, Gonzalo, Nuno from UFP and many others.

Your hard work contributes to improving user experience, reducing frustration and support costs, and making Sakai a better and more robust product.

Cheers, Stephen

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### 13. Making it Easier to Work Between OSP and Sakai

The OSP Jira and Confluence have recently been moved from osportfolio.org to sakaiproject.org. Look for the OSP components now in Sakai Jira, and the OSP Confluence spaces in Sakai Confluence with the prefix "OSP-"

Reminder, the OSP email lists have also changed:

devel@groups.osportfolio.org --> sakai-dev@collab.sakaiproject.org  
Discussion on this list should be among those developing for OSP and about development specific topics. In the past we've blended development and functional discussion on the one list. See below, we'll move our conversations about functionality, portfolio thinking, and use to the existing portfolio list in Sakai which we (OSP) started some time ago but haven't really used yet.

tech-help@groups.osportfolio.org, users@groups.osportfolio.org --> sakai-user@collab.sakaiproject.org  
This list should be used by users and implementers of OSP/Sakai to discuss issues, ideas, etc. and get help from other users.

ospnext@groups.osportfolio.org, design@groups.osportfolio.org --> portfolio@collab.sakaiproject.org

This is the list where we should be talking about the future of OSP, Portfolio Thinking, and other topics about the design and use of OSP.

Chris Coppola  
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## 14. Realignment and Conversion of Sakai Discussion Groups

Locating relevant information and figuring out where to ask questions about Sakai can be a challenge for newbies, sometimes even for seasoned Sakai veterans as well. To help improve the situation we plan to reduce the number of general discussions to a more manageable collection targeted at specific Sakai audiences (e.g., developers, instructors, researchers, user support, system administrators). These "forums" will be created mostly by aggregating the low-traffic Discussion Groups with related, higher-traffic sites (e.g., DG: Development, a.k.a. sakai-dev); or, for very topic-specific Discussion Groups, conversion to Working Groups.

Below please find the proposed mappings of existing Sakai Discussion Groups to their new Sakai Forums. These groups will continue to have both a Collab Site and a Confluence space. Comments and suggestions are welcome; please reply directly to me or to [management@collab.sakaiproject.org](mailto:management@collab.sakaiproject.org) for further group discussion. The realignment and clean-up will take place on Thursday, August, 31, 2006.

Instructor Forum (DG: Pedagogy, DG: Assessment Tools, DG: Portfolio)

Researcher Forum (DG: Research)

User Support Forum (DG: User)

Sysadmin Forum (DG: Production)

Developer Forum (DG: Development, DG: Content and Authoring, DG: Enterprise, DG: Library & Repositories, DG: Portal, DG: User Interaction, DG: Web Video and Audio Tools)

Advocate Forum (DG: Strategy and Advocacy)

Open Forum (DG: Open Forum)

DG's to be converted to WG's:  
DG: Commercial Affiliates  
DG: European Sakai Community

DG: Migration  
DG: I18N & L10N

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## 15. Events

### 1st European Sakai Day

September 6 - 7, 2006

Luebeck, Germany

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

### Unicon's Sakai Developer Training with Mark Norton

October 16 - 18, 2006 in

Chandler, Arizona

For more information or to register for the workshop, visit the training section of [www.unicon.net](http://www.unicon.net)

### 6th Sakai Conference

December 5 - 8, 2006

Atlanta Marriott Marquis

Atlanta, Georgia

[sakaiproject.org](http://sakaiproject.org)

### LAMS Conference 2006

First International Learning Activity Management System (LAMS)

Conference December 6 - 8, 2006

Conservatorium of Music

University of Sydney

<http://lamsfoundation.org/lams2006/index.htm>