Sakai Newsletter

December 14, 2006

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1. Results of the Sakai Foundation Board Elections

The results of this year's Sakai Board elections were announced at the Welcome Reception of the 6th Sakai Conference with OSP in Atlanta.

-- John Norman of the University of Cambridge has been elected Chairman of the Board.

-- Joseph Hardin, University of Michigan, is the new Vice Chairman.

-- Lois Brooks of Stanford University was re-elected as a Board Member.

-- Clay Fenlason, Boston University, has been elected to the Board and will fill the position vacated by Chuck Severance.

These positions became official on Friday, December 8, 2006.

2. Blogs, Podcasts, and Other Sources of Information about the Atlanta Conference

-- Sakai Atlanta Conference podcasts and presentation media. (Click on the speaker icons or the yellow and white presentation icons.)
https://sakaiproject.org/conference/admin/schedule.php

-- Planet Sakai blog   http://www.planetsakai.org/

-- Dutch Sakai News and Opinions blog   http://sakai-nl.blogspot.com/

-- Online by Nature blog -- In the recently published blog "Online by Nature," you will find some impressions from Andreas Wittke relating to the Sakai Conference in Atlanta in the German language. If you are interested in news about Sakai, other Learning Management Systems, Authoring Tools, Open Content, Web development… and of course some travel experiences (with photos) written by the oncampus-team in Luebeck, then go to the weblog: www.onlinebynature.com

-- URLs to blogs and responses concerning conference sessions dealing with patent -- These include the lunch discussion and the extended session with Eben Moglen and Richard Fontana afterwards:
http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/PAT/URLs+to+Atlanta+Sakai+Conference+Patent+Discussion

It is off the WG: Patents page:
http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/PAT/Home

3. Kaleidoscope Launches World's First International Open Archive for Research on Technology Supported Learning

Grenoble -- The Kaleidoscope Network of Excellence has just launched TeLearn at www.telearn.org, the world's first internationally available Open Archive for technology-enhanced learning. TeLearn takes research results from across Europe drawn from diverse and converging disciplines such as computer, social and education sciences and puts them in one place. This contributes to one of the overarching drivers of Kaleidoscope -- to reduce duplication, so shaping the scientific evolution of the field.

TeLearn will benefit not only researchers, but also teachers, policy makers and the public, offering insight into up-to-date research in the field of ICT-supported learning. Dr. Nicolas Balacheff, scientific manager of the Kaleidoscope Network, sees the establishment of the Open Archive TeLearn as an important contribution to the further development of research in the field. "Thanks to TeLearn, scientists from extremely diverse fields have the opportunity for easy access to current research on this topic at any time," explains Balacheff. "This will make research more transparent and more effective." Furthermore, the systematic archiving of scientific works, which will make possible the direct comparison of results, will stimulate scientific competition in a positive way.

To download the rest of this press release, open this URL and click on your preferred language: http://www.noe-kaleidoscope.org/pub/lastnews/press/releases/

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4. Comments from Attendees about the 6th Sakai Conference with OSP

"As my first introduction to formal Sakai conferences, the winter Sakai conference in Atlanta was extremely worthwhile. The Implementation Track, of which I have particular interest, was strong and eye-opening for institutions in all phases (just looking through production) of Sakai implementation. It is apparent that many institutions are getting out of the technical weeds and are searching for experience and inspiration on how to migrate to Sakai and drive people to use it. I believe conferences like this past one are instrumental in allowing institutions to share their success stories and their lessons learned."

-- Katie Valenti, Unicon

"The conference made it obvious that Sakai is maturing as one would hope and is becoming a viable CMS for institutions using vendor software to begin to consider adopting instead of or in addition to their current system."

-- Dale Voorhees, University of Central Florida

"I think that it's very useful for us, and I suppose also for the rest of the community, to be able to see in these conferences which problems other entities have had and how they have solved these problems.

Some of the presentations we attended in Vancouver have been very useful for us for solving similar problems that we had at our institution, and I think that some

presentations at the Atlanta conference will also be very useful for us in the following months."

- Federico Jesús Carvajal Rodrigo, Technical University of Valencim Spain

"When I asked various people at the conference what they felt was the emerging theme of the week, the most common answer I got was along the lines of 'Sakai is growing up.' The healthy profusion of community-driven projects, increasingly visible focus on pedagogy and user experience, and rising awareness of organizational growing pains that the community is experiencing around planning and communication are all signs of healthy growth."

-- Michael Feldstein

"Enjoyed the conference, was able to get some insight as to what is being focused on at the moment, what's coming up and importantly, a chance to speak face-to-face. Also what struck me is how important communicating is becoming, who is doing what and where to get information, especially as the community is getting bigger.

To the organizers, thank you, a job well done."

-- Gregory Doyle, University of Capetown, South Africa

"The deeper involved I get with Sakai and the Sakai community, the more the conferences become a kind of family reunion. It's great to see everyone all together, but I'll need a few months to recover.... :)"

-- Tony Atkins, Virginia Tech

"Sakai moves fast, don't miss this train !

Sakai is no longer an interesting project but collaboration movement every university should look at seriously when developing an elearning infrastructure. The Sakai framework is getting mature and a growing number of additional tools are available.

From a European perspective the emphasis is still on developing software and tools. We hope that pedagogy and new innovative ways of using Sakai by teachers and students will attract the same numbers on the Sakai conferences as the more technology-driven sessions at present.

The great thing about attending a Sakai conference is that everybody present is truly focused on working together on solutions on present day problems. The emphasis is on possibilities and learning from each other.

I enjoyed a nice conference and I hope to meet the whole Sakai family next June in Amsterdam."

-- Frank Benneker, University of Amsterdam

"A few things:
- The networking services were fantastic this time, big thumbs up!
- The tech demo night was much better than past conferences, well organized and lots of neat projects to see!
- Huge kudos to Susan Hardin who is the unsung hero behind all these conferences. Without her they would be pure chaos."

-- Aaron Zeckoski, Virginia Tech

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5. Some Conference Stats

Participants at the 6th Sakai Conference represented 144 institutions from 13 countries in 6 continents:

Australia
Canada
Germany
Algeria
Spain
United Kingdom
Grenada
Ireland
Japan
Netherlands
Turkey
United States
South Africa

(These stats were tallied at the end of Day 1.)

6. U. de Lleida and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State U. Receive Mellon Awards

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded $650,000 in prizes to ten not-for-profit institutions in the first annual Mellon Awards for Technology Collaboration (MATC). The Mellon Awards honor not-for-profit organizations for leadership in the collaborative development of open source software tools with particular application to higher education and not-for-profit activities. More information on the awards ceremony, including podcast interviews with some of the recipients, is available at www.cni.org

The awards were presented December 4, 2006, at the Fall Task Force meeting of the Coalition for Networked Information by Sir Timothy Berners-Lee, Director of the World Wide Web Consortium and the inventor of the World Wide Web. The ten recipients were selected from among more than 200 nominees.

$50,000 was awarded to the Universitat de Lleida (Lleida, Spain, www.udl.es) for work on the Sakai course management system (www.sakaiproject.org). Universitat de Lleida was recognized by the Committee both for its work in making the Sakai course management system available in the Catalan language and for its extraordinary efforts around the introduction of consistent support for internationalization into Sakai under very tight deadline pressures. Lleida intends to use the award to further enhance and extend Sakai's internationalization capabilities.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Blacksburg, VA, www.vt.edu) will receive $50,000 for work supporting the Sakai course management system (www.sakaiproject.org). Virginia Tech was recognized by the Committee for its essential contributions to quality assurance in the Sakai course management project, as well as for its innovative use of Moodle and Sakai as programming projects in computing classes. The University plans to use the award to develop a new lab-notebook tool for Sakai.

7. European Task Group for Implementing Open Source LMS Solutions

Four weeks ago a European working group was founded during a Blackboard/WebCT user meeting with the objective of implementing open source LMS solutions, e.g., Sakai in their institutions.

The reasons for this decision were the Blackboard patent, the pricing model, the lack of support from the Blackboard Company and the missing Web 2.0 tools and the bad integration of interfaces to other systems.

There are already some big European Universities participating in this task force and they are looking for new partners!!

By developing together migration tools -- not each University on their own -- these institutions will profit from synergies and build up a strong network among each other -- where your institution can participate!!!

The leader of this task group is oncampus from Luebeck University of Applied sciences. Please contact Andreas Wittke (wittke@oncampus.de) for more information. We are still looking for more partners in this project.

-- Andreas Wittke,
 wittke@oncampus.de

8. Call for Participation in OSP 2.4

Are you using OSP? Is your university interested in using portfolios for accreditation, program assessment, or student learning? If so, the Open Source Portfolio (OSP) community needs your help!

OSP's proposal for community participation, along with the features we are working on for 2.4 can be viewed at: http://issues.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/7IQ

Our code freeze for 2.4 is March 15, so with little more than ten weeks to go, our deadline for contributions is coming up fast.

Please make a pledge to contribute to the OSP 2.4 project. To pledge funds which will be used to fill gaps in the team, or to pledge your contribution on a specific part of the project, please contact Melissa Peet at ijb@umich.edu.

9. Unicon Announces New Cooperative Support Program for uPortal

Unicon, Inc., the leading independent provider of enterprise portals, applications, and professional services for the online campus in academic institutions, today announced it has started a new uPortal Cooperative Support Program for higher education. Modeled after Unicon's unique Sakai Cooperative Support Program, the uPortal Cooperative Support Program features a dedicated team of expert development and technical support specialists for uPortal to provide direct technical support and assistance to individual subscriber institutions in the program. This new cooperative support program is consistent with the open source philosophy of contributing features and fixes towards the

overall progress of the uPortal, as the resulting enhancements will be shared with the open source community. It also addresses individual institution's need for a predictable cost support solution for uPortal.

"Unicon is a long-standing and consistent supporter of uPortal and JA-SIG. We've developed and contributed numerous technology enhancements to the community and consider ourselves as one of the true market leaders in implementing uPortal's full enterprise capabilities," stated John C. Blakley, CEO of Unicon, Inc. "Our new cooperative support program for uPortal will finally give academic institutions a first class way of helping solve their own support problems while also helping the community as a whole."

"Having strong commercial partners is a key component to the JA-SIG uPortal success story," said Bill Thompson, JA-SIG Board Member. "Unicon's continued support for JA-SIG uPortal and its community of adopters is manifest by their new cooperative support program which offers institutions another path to success with uPortal."

About Unicon's uPortal Cooperative Support Program
Participation in the program requires an annual subscription fee that enables institutions to access the support services and also funds a dedicated support and development team. Support issues are managed on a priority basis with an escalation mechanism available for high priority issues. All development work performed by the team will be undertaken in direct participation uPortal open source Web portal initiative. The uPortal Cooperative Support Program is a strong complement to Unicon's professional services for uPortal which include various bundled services comprised of implementation, project planning, installation, configuration, branding, and training components.

Unicon's uPortal Cooperative Support Program Provides Institutions with:
- An experienced, reliable vendor accountable for their uPortal deployment.
- Help with uPortal production issues.
- Direct and timely assistance with reported software defects.
- Answers and advice to general product questions.
- Ongoing software maintenance for past, present and future releases of uPortal.
- The ability to influence code development priorities for future uPortal releases.
- Visibility into the support team's activities.

About uPortal
From the Java Architectures Special Interest Group (JA-SIG), uPortal is a free, open source, open standard enterprise portal collaboratively developed by higher-education, for higher-education. Utilizing Java, Extensible Markup Language (XML), JavaServer Pages Technology (JSP) and Java 2 Platform Enterprise Edition (J2EE) technologies, the uPortal framework enables easy, standards-based integration with authentication and security applications, single sign on secure access, and end user customization.

10. Unicon Webinar -- Learn More About Sakai and Its Functionality -- Friday, December 15 at noon EST (gmt -5)

Are you curious to learn more about the Sakai collaboration and learning environment? The Sakai Project provides an application framework and the course management tools needed to create worksites suited for courses, projects and research collaboration. Sakai is free to use, free to develop, and freedom for education. See its functionality and what this community source technology can do for your educational institution.

There were so many people who could not attend the last webinar that we are scheduling another one for this Friday. You are invited to join Unicon for a free guided tour of Sakai on Friday, December 15th with one of Unicon's top trainers, Patty Wolfe. Her comprehensive expertise in Sakai will provide a fulfilling webinar event where viewers receive in-depth knowledge of the tool suite.

When: December 15, 2006, 12:00 pm EST gmt -5 (10 am Mountain)

The Webinar will be conducted both online and over the phone, to allow you the best opportunity to ask questions and explore the technology thoroughly. Once you sign up for the Webinar, you will be sent a direct URL for the session. Seating is limited, so sign up early!

To register for the webinar, go to: http://www.unicon.net/press_room_551.html
email: info@unicon.net web: http://www.unicon.net

11. Configuration Viewer Tool is Now Available

Currently, the configuration viewer displays most options that can be set in a sakai.properties. It displays the current value of each property, hints about what the property does and what values it accepts. The tool as it stands has been tested with 2.2.X and 2.3.

For information about the tool and installation instructions (including the location of the source code), please visit:

http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/CNFV/

Much thanks to Aaron Zeckoski and Antranig Basman. This tool would not have come into being without the great work they've done on the Sakai App Builder and RSF respectively.

Tony Atkins
anthony.atkins@vt.edu

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12. Events

eLearning Africa 2007
KICC -- The Kenyatta International Conference Centre
May 28 - 30, 2007
Nairobi, Kenya
http://www.elearning-africa.com

Sakai Amsterdam Conference
Movenpick Hotel Amsterdam City Center
June 12 - 14, 2007
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
www.sakaiproject.org