Sakai Newsletter

February 22, 2007

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1. 7th Sakai Community Conference Updates

------ Call for Proposals is Open
The Call for Proposals for the 7th Sakai Community Conference in Amsterdam is now open! Develop your proposal and submit it at:

https://sakaiproject.org/conference/proposals/index.php

The deadline for submissions is March 15.

------ Hotel Reservations
The conference will be held at the Moevenpick Hotel Amsterdam City Centre. Sakai needs the support of the community in helping to keep the conference expenses as low as possible. You can do this by booking your room at the conference hotel as early as possible. If our room block requirements are met, we will receive substantial conference

service discounts. Take advantage of the increased opportunities to spend more time with your colleagues at the conference by staying at the hotel.

The hotel is non-smoking. It is on the water's edge between the adjacent Passenger Terminal Amsterdam and Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam's newest Music Hall. The Sakai conference rate of $195 euros per night (approximately $250 U.S. dollars) will be available for June 9 to June 17, 2006. There will be free wireless internet service in your room and throughout the hotel.

There are three ways to reserve a room: online, by phone, and by Fax. Go to http://sakaiproject.org/conference/amsterdam and click the "Hotel Information" link for further information about reserving a room.

------ Conference Logo
If you have an idea for a conference logo for t-shirts and polos, please send the your idea to Pam Dietz (pld@umich.edu).

------ Conference Registration
Online registration for the conference opens March 11, 2007

------ Conference Website
Look here for regular updates and information:
http://sakaiproject.org/conference/amsterdam

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2. Agora -- Online Meeting Tool for Sakai, Beta Available for Downloading

The centre for e-Science in Lancaster University (UK) has released this week the first beta version of Agora, an online meeting tool integrated in Sakai. This tool features:

- Multivideo conference
- Collaborative whiteboard
- Shared desktop
- Moviecasting
- Instant messaging
- Recording capabilities

This very first beta version can be installed easily in any Sakai server (2.2 or above). For running the clients it is necessary windows XP or 2000 (we are preparing versions for Linux, Windows Vista, and Mac but it will take a while).

As a beta version, this is a testing version. We are looking for people for helping us in finding bugs, giving us comments, critics and suggestions. Also it would be nice if developers with skills in graphics programming, JNI, QuickTime for java, JMF,

experience with codecs, etc. will collaborate with us in this open source project.

Also, in this testing and continuous improving process we would like to keep in contact as much as possible with the collaborators in order to maximize the value of the feedback.

All the information about Agora can be found in http://agora.lancs.ac.uk (This page is changing almost everyday with updated information.) There you can find the binary files for downloading and installing. Source code will be available next week (we need to solve little issues with licensing -- very likely it will be Apache 2.0 licence) and copyrighting.

For any doubt or comment please contact us.

Regards,

Agora Team

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Centre for e-Science
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Rob Allan (r.j.allan@dl.ac.uk) has added an Agora page to the Sakai VRE Project website: http://tyne.dl.ac.uk/Sakai/download.shtml

3. TransformAble Now Part of Sakai

The TransformAble package is now a part of Sakai. TransformAble is being developed by the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre at the University of Toronto. It is useful for users who want to customize Sakai's appearance to improve the readability and accessibility. TransformAble consists of two parts:

StyleAble is a component that generates customized style sheets based on a user's stated preferences, allowing them to control the overall appearance of the site, including the font size, face, foreground colour, background colour, highlight colour, and link

appearance. User preferences are created through a tool currently called PreferAble, which (once un-stealthed) can be added to any workspace.

StyleAble is now available (but disabled) in the new Velocity portal. When you check out the portal from the branch, the TransformAble code will be included, in a subfolder 'transformable.' Building the new portal will build transformable as well.

To activate StyleAble, you will need to set
portal.styleable=true
in sakai.properties

We're continuing to fix bugs and improve the user experience in preparation for the 2.4 release, so you'll probably see lots of activity from us over the next little while.

We will shortly be updating the Confluence space at
http://issues.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/TRAN/Home
with more background information and our release plan.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback, we look forward to hearing from you.

Anastasia Cheetham
a.cheetham@utoronto.ca
Adaptive Technology Resource Centre

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4. 2.1.x-ers: Important WebDAV Security Patch for /dav/attachment/*

Hey, All:

As I hope all of your security contacts know already, a WebDAV vulnerability was located that allowed read/write/modify/delete access to the yourdomain.edu/dav/attachment/ folder and its subfolders.

In order to close this hole, it was decided that no one, including the admin user, should have dav access to the /dav/attachment/ folder, its subfolders, and their content.

As a result, a patch was written (thanks, Lance!), ported to 2.1.x (thanks Jenn at Yale!), reviewed by one of the Foundation's technical leads (thanks, Chuck!), and, finally, QA'd by myself.

This patch has been applied to the 2.1.x maintenance branch (r21083); I have also uploaded the 2.1.x patch to SAK-7672:

http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/jira/browse/SAK-7672

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or Anthony Whyte (arwhyte@sakaifoundation.org), the Sakai Foundation's security lead.

Thanks,

Brian Jorgensen
brian@moosetrout.com
Sakai 2.1.x Branch Manager

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5. Sakai 2.3.1 Released

The Sakai Foundation announces the release of the Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment, version 2.3.1.

Sakai 2.3.1 is a security update that addresses two critical security vulnerabilities in the Sakai 2.3.0 maintenance release. Anyone running unpatched versions of 2.3.0 should upgrade to 2.3.1 immediately.

Demo, binary and source installs of Sakai 2.3.1 are available at:

http://source.sakaiproject.org/release/2.3.1/

Sakai 2.3.1 closes the following security vulnerabilities:

1) directory listings of Sakai content hosting collections open to unauthenticated and unauthorized web browsing of email attachment folders.

2) attachments exposed to unauthorized viewing as well as addition, alteration or deletion through a WebDAV client.

Although no reports of exploitation have been received you should consider carefully the security implications these vulnerabilities pose to your Sakai installation(s).

In addition, Sakai 2.3.1 includes fixes for four additional issues:

1) Gradebook tool: runtime exceptions when accessing with existing information. 2) Resources tool: usability issues when folders are populated with a large number of entries. 3) Admin Workspace: slow performance when viewing resources. 4) A Script to add content.hidden permission to existing worksites.

The security vulnerabilities outlined above also affect earlier versions of Sakai. If you are running Sakai 1.0.0, 1.5.x, or 2.0.x we recommend that you upgrade your system

immediately to Sakai 2.3.1. If you are running Sakai 2.2.x we recommend that you upgrade your system immediately to Sakai 2.2.3:

http://source.sakaiproject.org/release/2.2.3/

If you are running Sakai 2.1.x, the maintenance branch has been patched commencing with revision 21083.

Special thanks are due members of the Sakai community who identified and closed these security vulnerabilities.

Anthony Whyte
arwhyte@sakaifoundation.org

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6. Sakai 2.2.3 Released

Sakai 2.2.3 is a security update that addresses two critical security vulnerabilities in the Sakai 2.2.x maintenance releases. Anyone running unpatched versions of 2.2.x should upgrade to Sakai 2.2.3 immediately.

Demo, binary and source installs of Sakai 2.2.3 are available at:

http://source.sakaiproject.org/release/2.2.3/

Sakai 2.2.3 closes the following security vulnerabilities:

1) directory listings of Sakai content hosting collections are open to unauthenticated and unauthorized web browsing of email attachment folders.

2) attachments are exposed to unauthorized viewing as well as addition, alteration or deletion through a WebDAV client.

Although no reports of exploitation have been received you should consider carefully the security implications these vulnerabilities pose to your Sakai installation(s).

The security vulnerabilities outlined above also affect earlier versions of Sakai. If you are running Sakai 1.0.0, 1.5.x, or 2.0.x we recommend that you upgrade your system immediately to our most up-to-date release, Sakai 2.3.1:

http://source.sakaiproject.org/release/2.3.1/

If you are running Sakai 2.1.x, the maintenance branch has been patched commencing with revision 21083.

Special thanks are due members of the Sakai community who identified and closed these security vulnerabilities.

Anthony Whyte
arwhyte@sakaifoundation.org

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7. Improving the Sakai User Experience

Members of the Sakai community,

If the Sakai user experience is important to your organization please read on. The Sakai leadership team has decided to establish a new Foundation staff position to lead community effort toward an ever-improving user experience. The Sakai UX Lead will develop and execute a plan for Sakai's user experience that leverages and expands community talent focused on the user experience.

We have heard clearly that the Sakai user experience should be a key area of focus and believe this position is a step toward clear and measurable progress.

Support this important initiative. The Foundation needs support from your institution to implement this strategy. The most straightforward way to show your institution's support is to pledge some funding for the position. Many of you have asked the Foundation to provide a way for members to show support for a particular initiative or aspect of the Foundation. The Sakai board is responding to this need with a program that allows members to "pledge" funds to support projects, staff positions, or other initiatives that are important to your institution. To date, $20,000 has been pledged for this position.

Take this to your leader. We've learned over the past few years that messages like this don't always reach the right people within our membership. We need your help to make sure this message gets to the right people. If you don't have budget authority to contribute on behalf of your institution, and you believe this initiative is important, please take this message to the right person at your institution.

One of the great strengths of our community is our ability to bring our collective energy and resources to bear on a common objective. We know that the improving the user experience is an objective worthy of our collective attention. Please show your support today. Contact chris.coppola@rsmart.com to discuss this further or to pledge a donation. If you have current UI design or usability capacity in your organization that you can contribute to the project, contact Mara Hancock: mara@media.berkeley.edu. We have established a space in Confluence to provide additional details and provide up-to-date information on this initiative.

Thank you,

Chris Coppola
Director, The Sakai Foundation

Position Description
http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/download/attachments/36695/Sakai+UX+Design+Lead.doc

UX Lead FAQ
http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/SBCO/UX+Lead+Initiative#UXLeadInitiative-FAQ

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8. Portfolio4u -- Sakai Hosting, Training and Implementation Services for Schools and Organizations in the Netherlands

Portfolio4u delivers for-fee Sakai implementation and hosting services to schools in the Netherlands. There are more now more than 40 schools and organizations assisted by Portfolio4u in their experiences and experiments with Sakai! Portfolio4u provides consulting, training, customization and Sakai hosting in a professional data center in Amsterdam. These services allow schools to get started using Sakai quickly and professionally. Portfolio4u maintains partnerships with fellow Commercial Affiliates IBM Corp. and Sun Microsystems and has been dedicated to educational portfolio software since 2001.

"We see the opportunity to formally join the community as a way to financially support the efforts of the Foundation and to enhance our cooperation. We look forward to working more closely with the community as a Commercial Affiliate and seeing many members of the community in June in our home city, Amsterdam."

Jim Doherty, Director
Portfolio4u
jim@portfolio4u.nl

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9. New Concurrent Users Milestone for Vula, the University of Cape Town's Sakai

Hi all,

Just sharing a milestone for us -- today [February 16] was the first day of our new academic year (which runs from February - November), and we exceeded 500* concurrent users for the first time. Our previous peak was 474 mid-term in Sep 06.

We have a lot of large courses doing tutorial signups on Vula. Nothing melted down :-)

Cheers,

Stephen Marquard
University of Cape Town
stephen.marquard@uct.ac.za

* That's 500 users on two servers, Dual Xeon 3.6 GHz 4G RAM each. One runs mysql, nfs (sharing SAN storage) and 1 tomcat (with a low priority), the other one runs 2 tomcats.

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10. Sakai Accessibility Testing -- Need your Participation!

Accessibility testing for Sakai is underway, with a small, but dedicated group pitching in. Thank you in particular to Indiana University and the University of Michigan for their help.

With some additional participation we can make this the most thorough review to date. Please take a moment to go to the Accessibility Review Page and sign up to review a tool (or two!):

http://issues.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/XIk

Our target for completing the review is a week from Friday (March 2), but we'll gladly accept your help after that date. Dedicate a morning to help make Sakai available to everyone on your campus. Thanks!

Mike Elledge
Sakai Accessibility Team Lead

Megan May
Sakai QA Coordinator

Gonzalo Silverio
Sakai Interface Developer

11. Blog: E-Science within the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences: Enabling Collaboration through Sakai

From the blog www.craigbellemy.net: "Collaboration is fundamental to scholars in the arts, humanities and social sciences. It has deep roots through the production of co-authored works, the analysis of text and cultural objects, and the peer dissemination of research results. Collaboration is also essential in the formation and advancement of scholarly ideas through collaborative discussions at conferences, seminars, tutorials and other dialogical exchanges."

To read more, please go to:
http://www.craigbellamy.net/2007/02/22/e-science-within-the-arts-humanities-and-social-sciences-enabling-collaboration-through-sakai/

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

JA-SIG Summer 2007 Conference
June 24 - 27
Denver, Colorado
http://www.ja-sig.org/conferences/07summer/index.html