



## Sakai Newsletter

March 22, 2007

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### 1. 7th Sakai Conference in Amsterdam

KEYNOTE SPEAKER -- Hal Abelson is a founding director of the Free Software Foundation and of Creative Commons. He also serves as consultant to Hewlett-Packard Laboratories. At MIT, Abelson is co-director of the MIT-Microsoft Research Alliance in educational technology and co-head of MIT's Council on Educational Technology. He is also active in MIT's OpenCourseWare and DSpace (institutional digital archiving) initiatives.

Abelson is Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at MIT and a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. He is winner of several teaching awards, including the IEEE's Booth Education Award, cited for his contributions to the teaching of undergraduate computer science. Abelson's research at the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory focuses on 'amorphous computing', an effort to create programming technologies that can harness the power of the new computing substrates emerging from advances in microfabrication and molecular biology. He is also engaged

in the interaction of law, policy, and technology as they relate to societal tensions sparked by the growth of the Internet, and he is active in projects at MIT and elsewhere to help bolster our intellectual commons.

CONFERENCE PROPOSAL UPDATE -- We received a record-breaking 170 proposals by the March 15 deadline!

#### THE CONFERENCE TRACKS --

Teaching and Learning Track -- In the Teaching and Learning Track, instructors and all those interested in exploring new pedagogies can share innovative examples and discuss their use of technology (regardless of the scale of their Sakai implementation). Presentations that highlight best practices tied into current Sakai functionality (i.e., using a variety of different tools), and presentations that focus on alternative approaches to engage students while delivering on educational objectives, are welcome.

Technology Track -- Targeted at programmers, developers, and system administrators, this track covers the technical aspects of Sakai. It will focus on topics such as Java technologies (Spring / RSF / Portlets), programming best practices, and server technologies like Tomcat.

User Experience Track -- The goal of User Experience track is to showcase the human side of Sakai, bringing together presentations which address the design, use, and support of Sakai. It will cover topics related to user interface design and usability, accessibility, user support, and more.

Researcher's Track -- The Researchers' track highlights the use of Sakai to facilitate collaboration in the research community. Presentations will include best practices for facilitating research activities with Sakai, as well as results from a range of recent research on the use of Sakai in research settings.

Implementation Track -- The intended audience for this track is administrators, Information Technology management, and the like, who are interested in implementing Sakai in their organization. Sessions will include opportunities for sharing implementation experiences.

ONLINE HOTEL RESERVATIONS -- The Movenpick Hotel online reservation system has been fixed. To make a reservation, please use the special Sakai Conference Movenpick reservations form:

<https://www.trustinternational.com/mBooker/moevenpick/2B?LANGUAGE=en&i=sakai-conference&property=TXL-MK-HKAMSHH>

Note that if you will be making reservations that include a night that is outside of the June 8 to June 17 room block, you should fax your reservation or call your reservation in directly to the hotel. If you use the online reservations system and ask for a room outside

that date, it may incorrectly tell you that the block is full, or that the room rate is not available for that night.

If you are trying to make reservations within the Sakai dates of June 8 to June 17 and still receive messages that the room block is full, please contact Mary Miles at [mmiles@umich.edu](mailto:mmiles@umich.edu) immediately so she can help to resolve any problems.

**AIRLINE DISCOUNT** -- Northwest and Continental Airlines have offered Sakai a zone discount program for the Amsterdam conference. This discount will be effective June 2 through June 24, 2007. To take advantage of this program, you must follow these steps:

- Contact Conlin Travel at 1-800-783-9559 and identify yourself as being with the Sakai Conference.

- Ask the travel representative for the zone discount program available through Northwest Airlines and Continental.

Please be aware that a \$37 charge is applicable to each ticket, but the savings should more than offset that charge. Discounts will vary depending on the part of the world you are flying from.

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## 2. Sakai 2.4 QA Update

Sakai 2.4 QA kicked off on March 19 and testing is ongoing. Four days into the 6-week cycle there are 727 JIRA issues awaiting verification and 87 verified tickets. So much to do, so very little time!

The community needs your support in ensuring that this is best release to date. The earlier a bug is caught in the testing cycle, the better chance there is that we will have time to address it.

You may be asking yourself how those at your institution can help! There are a few ways

**\*\*\* ADOPT A TOOL FOR REGRESSION TESTING \*\*\***

There are still quite a few tools categorized as 'Core' that need someone to 'adopt' them (run a regression test). There typically isn't a lot of change going on in these tools so they should be routine and typically have very detailed test plans. These include Discussion, Help, My Workspace (Account, Preferences, Profile, Membership, etc.), News, Presentation, Wiki, Schedule, Post'em, Web Content, and WebDAV.

If you are interested in digging deep, areas that need attention include Portal changes,

Drop box (ensure Resources change hasn't had a negative impact), and Section Info/Site Setup (lot's of changes relating to CM).

There are also 4 new provisional tools that could greatly benefit from some community testing: MailTool, Page Order Helper, Polls and User Membership. While test plans aren't yet available, explorative testing often yields great results.

\*\*\* WORK THROUGH THE QA AWAITING VERIFICATION FILTER \*\*\*

For those that have only have a bit of spare time here and there, working off the JIRA filter that lists items awaiting verification is a great way to make a difference.

If you will have any time available, please sign up on the 2.4 Release page at <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/QA/2.4+Release> and join the QA WG collab site.

For more information, please contact Megan May ([mmmay@indiana.edu](mailto:mmmay@indiana.edu)).

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### 3. Samigo (Tests and Quizzes) 2.4 Update and Plans

I'm writing to provide an update on Samigo 2.4, which is in QA now along with the rest of Sakai. Improvements, new features, and future plans are noted below.

Colleagues from five other schools joined Stanford to contribute code to the Samigo 2.4 release, including new features, performance enhancements, and, of course, bug fixes. In addition to the Stanford team, contributors to Samigo 2.4 include: Lisa Wilson and James Renfro, UC Davis; Dave Ross, Albany Medical College; Joshua Ryan, Arizona State; and Diego del Blanco Orobitg and Raul Mengod, Universidad Polit cnica de Valencia. A gold star goes to Stephen Marquard, University of Cape Town for his analysis, testing and advice. Notes below highlight the changes and contributions.

Many new features were added in Samigo 2.4, and are detailed on the Samigo project page at <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/SAM/Home>

Performance improvement:

Samigo's stability and performance continue to be the top goals and continue to improve, and this release includes many improvements. Details are on the Samigo project page.

Unicon will join the Stanford team to work with Linda Place, the maven of performance and load testing at the University of Michigan, and her team, who have graciously offered to do a thorough load test of Samigo 2.4. We'll update you as the analysis progresses.

Future plans:

After the release of 2.4, the load testing is our next big milestone. The outcome of this process will inform the 2.5 release.

Ideas for features and extensions continue to pour in, and we would look forward to planning the roadmap with the community. We'll begin by working with the upcoming Sakai requirements process. The Sakai requirements team will solicit community requirements for the entire product, including Samigo, this spring. Once this process is complete, we will work with the requirements team to analyze the results relating to assessment. We plan to host an assessment summit for contributors to work together on the roadmap for upcoming effort, likely during the summer.

I'll be in touch again to update you about the plans for Samigo 2.5 and the upcoming assessment summit.

Lois Brooks  
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#### 4. JA-SIG Summer Conference Registration Now Open! Sakai Proposals Still Welcome!

JA-SIG With Altitude!

June 24 - 27, 2007  
Denver, Colorado, USA

A special reminder to the Sakai community: The Summer JA-SIG conference is offering a full Sakai track featuring two Sunday seminars:

"Introduction to Sakai" given by Anthony Whyte of the Sakai Foundation and University of Michigan

"Development in the Sakai Framework," a cafe bootcamp given by Aaron Zeckoski of Cambridge University

The Call for Proposals continues to be open for Sakai presentations, kiosks and BOFs (birds-of-a-feature meetings). We invite you to submit your proposal at <http://www.ja-sig.org/conferences/07summer/index.html> by clicking on the Call for Proposals link. Proposals that cover integration topics relative to Sakai and uPortal and/or CAS are especially welcome.

Registration for the Conference in Denver is now open. Visit the main conference site at <http://www.ja-sig.org/conferences/07summer/index.html>

Registration details can be found at <http://www.ja-sig.org/conferences/07summer/registration.html>

Early registration ends May 20, 2007.

We are very excited that we have a rich and diverse set of pre and post conference seminars on Sunday and on Wednesday afternoon. Topics include Design, CAS, uPortal, Sakai, Ajax, Quali, Spring, HyperContent and more. See the program posted at [http://jan-tng.mannlib.cornell.edu:8080/jasigconf/program.jsp?conf\\_id=jasig12](http://jan-tng.mannlib.cornell.edu:8080/jasigconf/program.jsp?conf_id=jasig12)

Hope to see you in June in Denver!

2007 JA-SIG Summer Program Committee

Susan Bramhall, Yale University, Chair  
Tim Carroll, University of Illinois  
John Fereira, Cornell University  
Cris Holdorph, Unicon, Inc.  
Brian McGough, Indiana University  
Jason Shao, Rutgers University  
Anthony Whyte, University of Michigan  
Paul Zablosky, University of British Columbia  
Jim Helwig, University of Wisconsin - Madison, Board Liaison

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## 5. Defining the Scientific Evolution of Technology Enhanced Learning: The Kaleidoscope 2007 Symposium

November 26 – 27, 2007  
Hotel InterContinental, Berlin

This Symposium aims to particularly attract those concerned with research in Technology Enhanced Learning. The aims of this two day Symposium are to demonstrate the value and impact of interdisciplinary research, working with partners across Europe, to outline how synergies between research activities from across the network have been translated into concrete achievements, to define excellence in your research field - explain how it can be recognised by stakeholders from your own and other research communities, to show how learning and education in society can benefit from the outcomes of your research, to confirm Kaleidoscope's legacy and how it can continue to contribute to education and learning across Europe and beyond.

The number of spaces available for participants is limited in order to ensure maximum involvement and participation on the part of all those taking part. The organisers of the Kaleidoscope Symposium will select participants on the basis of the registration form which should be completed and submitted to the organisers before 1 September 2007. The working language of the conference is English.

If you intend to participate, please go to the website  
[www.noe-kaleidoscope.org/group/symposium/Registration/Stakeholders/register/](http://www.noe-kaleidoscope.org/group/symposium/Registration/Stakeholders/register/)

Germany Contact:  
Sally Reynolds  
ATiT, Belgium,  
[sally.reynolds@atit.be](mailto:sally.reynolds@atit.be)  
<http://www.noe-kaleidoscope.org/group/symposium/>

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## 6. Article in Campus Technology by Wende Morgaine -- "More Than Open Source: A Second Look at Sakai"

From the article:

"Sure you have been hearing about Sakai, the open source collaboration and learning environment, but you've probably also heard that campuses that have implemented Sakai have huge IT budget and lots of staff. So you haven't tried it yet, and you wonder why you should. Why go through the hassle and expense? After all, it's just an "open-source" version of the CMS you already use, right? Wrong."

To read the rest of the article, please go to:

<http://campustechnology.com/articles/45387/>

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## 7. Unicon and San Joaquin Delta College Contribute Newly-Developed uPortal Features and Code to uPortal Community

New Features Include an Email Preview Portlet and Updated News and Alerts Channels

Unicon, Inc. has announced that the uPortal development work done for San Joaquin Delta College (SJDC) has been contributed by the college back to the uPortal community. Unicon's recently-completed work began as a project in the fall of 2006 to develop and implement new features to the SJDC campus portal which included an Email

Preview Portlet and a News and Alert Channels. The new features are designed to benefit students, faculty, and administrative staff members of the online campus by providing them with a highly-accessible, personalized view of updated and relevant information after they login to the Web site. The act of contributing newly-developed features and source code to a community is consistent with the philosophy of open source software.

"These latest feature enhancements developed and contributed on behalf of San Joaquin Delta College are great additions to the uPortal open source community and the college should be commended for its citizenship participation in higher education," said John C. Blakley, CEO of Unicon, Inc. "Academic institutions are increasingly choosing open source applications as alternatives to proprietary solutions when it becomes time to upgrade or migrate to a different platform. In most cases, open source software is significantly less costly than proprietary software and also benefits the higher ed community as a whole."

"SJDC has committed to the development and use of open source software such as Quali Financials, Quali Student and uPortal. We have been a user of open source products and welcome the opportunity to continue to contribute in return." said Ralph Olstad, the SJDC uPortal project manager. "Unicon got us off to a good start on the project by developing our first portlets, providing training and project management services."

About uPortal's New Email Preview Portlet (EPP): The new EPP provides an interface where users can see a predetermined number of unread messages in their inbox in a small window within the portal. When the user clicks on the email in the preview window, a new browser window is launched and the user's mail inbox is presented. Unicon built a new portlet to provide this functionality, leveraging the Spring MVC framework. The EPP is a JSR 168 compliant portlet and can be configured to work with any IMAP server.

About uPortal's New News and Alerts Channels: The updated channels allow for two different types of announcements (Alerts vs. News) to be authored. Unicon modified the previous USC channels to allow for different property files to split the Alerts functionality into one channel and the News functionality into another. The two instances of the channel also utilize different style sheets, which allows for custom styling appropriate for the announcement type.

Short Chronology of Channel Development & Evolution of Community Source Software:

November 2004: Columbia University contributes its open source uPortal "Announcements Channel" software code to the JA-SIG open source repository.

March 2005: USC hires Unicon to make updates to the open source news channel to add more functionality, user interface refinements, and administration capabilities. USC then



contributes the updated "Announcements Channel" back to JA-SIG open source repository and uPortal community.

March 2007: Unicon completes development work for SJDC to create an "Email Preview Portlet" and to make improvements to the open source "News and Alerts Channel". SJDC is now contributing the features and software source code back to the uPortal community.

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## 8. Sakai Video Report: Open Source Portfolio 2.4

The Open Source Portfolio stakeholders had a meeting November 13 and 14, 2006 in Phoenix, Arizona to evolve OSP and come up with the objectives for the Sakai 2.4 releases. Community members from all over the world attended the two-day meeting. Here is a 5-minute Flash video:

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~csev/media/2007/osp24/osp24.htm>

Charles Severance

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## 9. 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](http://www.sakaiproject.org)

JA-SIG Summer 2007 Conference

June 24 - 27, 2007

Denver, Colorado

<http://www.ja-sig.org/conferences/07summer/index.html>

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