



Sakai Newsletter

April 19, 2007

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1. Sakai Foundation Executive Director

The Sakai Foundation seeks an extraordinary individual to fill the role of Executive Director.

This is a challenging position requiring extensive experience in leading and cultivating communities and organizations, which may be gained through a combination of professional experience and education. This position requires excellent leadership and communication skills, understanding of the collaborative nature of the Sakai community, knowledge of software development practices, and demonstrated effectiveness in managing staff and resources.

The position description, desired qualifications, and information for prospective applicants can be found at <http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/SBCO/Executive+Director+Job+Description>

On behalf of the Sakai Foundation board of directors,

Lois Brooks

2. Pushing Back the 2.4 Release Date to May 21

Colleagues,

After the recent QA meeting, it is clear that the release of 2.4 must be pushed back to May 21, 2007. This is necessary to preserve the quality of the release and allow for the serious level of QA and release testing that it requires.

Historically, as we edged closer to the expected release date, we have seen development activity settle down. For this release, this is not the case: more than 100 JIRA items are on track to be included in the 2.4.0.11 tag. For comparison purposes, at this point in the 2.3.0 release, fewer than 25 JIRA items remained; this number dwindled to 16 and then 5 in the final tags.

In this tag, the large number of JIRA items relate directly to the user experience, an area that Sakai has tried to make great strides in during the past year. One of QA's guiding principles was that things should get better for the users when they use Sakai's 2.4.0. The delay in the release date is crucial to achieving this important goal, as we balance timing of the release and its quality.

Our current plan is to release the 2.4.0.11 tag and then proceed with the following criteria for the rest of the JIRA items we are tracking:

- 2.4.0.12: Will only include Critical and Blocker level fixes
- 2.4.0.13 and 2.4.0.14: Will likely only include Blockers, but this is subject to reassessment by the release team.

Again, both the development and QA teams are working hard to produce a quality release for the community.

Please let me know if you have any questions,

Megan May
mmmay@indiana.edu

3. Sakai Assessment - Summary of Activities

Dear colleagues:

Assessment is a particularly dynamic area of Sakai at the moment. On behalf of all project members (Lois Brooks, Joseph Hardin, Vivie Sinou, and Glenn Golden), I'm writing to provide a summary of activities and thoughts about future development. This is a short summary, and anyone who wishes more detail will find urls and contacts at the end.

Sakai's legacy tool, Tests and Quizzes (often called Samigo) has been in provisional status for quite some time. It's performance and reliability have improved significantly over time, and many schools are reliably running Tests and Quizzes in production. However, others report problems, particularly those who place a heavy load through large, high stakes testing. Test and Quizzes offers rich functionality. The code base has grown and evolved from its early days at Indiana and Stanford, with a lot of additions and iterations in the intervening few years. In short, the richness and complexity on the front end is matched by complexity in the code base.

In reviewing Tests and Quizzes, Glenn Golden of the University of Michigan concluded that for reliable high performance assessment functionality, a new code base was needed. This work has been undertaken as the Mneme project, with the goal of supporting online testing in a reliable and high performance way. Mneme will unfold in two phases. First, a component for the learner / test taker will be available that works with tests authored and graded using Tests and Quizzes. This "delivery" module will be available this summer for use in Sakai 2.3 and 2.4. This delivery module is required to be compatible with the Tests and Quizzes database to achieve this interoperability. Mneme / Delivery will have functionality that is close to Tests and Quizzes in this release.

The University of Michigan IT group, under the leadership of Linda Place, will conduct thorough load and performance tests of the pieces of assessment code listed above, the four Test and Quizzes modules, and the Mneme Delivery module. Unicon, a Sakai Commercial Affiliate, is bringing additional expertise to the load and performance testing process. The purpose of these tests is twofold, to give detailed information to the community about how the code performs to guide adoption choices, and to guide programmers' efforts. These tests are slated for May.

Over the next year, Tests and Quizzes and Mneme planned activities are:

- Mneme - Test Center will be completed with 4 modules (Delivery, Test Manager, Grading, Question Pools) and a new database design, and is scheduled to be available in December 2007. Descriptions of these components can be found on the website ([link](#))

below). Mneme - Test Center will be released independently of the Sakai Foundation releases.

- Tests and Quizzes will continue work on performance and features. Currently six schools are contributing to Tests and Quizzes, so the feature set and code base are continually improving. Additionally, the Sakai requirements process will bring forward ideas for new features, which will inform developers' work. As a component of Sakai, new versions of Tests and Quizzes will be released in conjunction with Sakai releases. One important note for the community is that Tests and Quizzes will continue to be supported while Mneme has a chance to develop.

As of June 2007, Sakai implementers will have the following assessment options:

(1) Run Tests & Quizzes

(2) Run Mneme / Delivery *with* T&Q 2.3 or T&Q 2.4 (redirect T&Q to use Mneme's delivery). When students are logged on, they will access Mneme's delivery module; instructors will see T&Q's authoring/grading/pools.

The results of load testing and pilots this spring will further help the community to assess risks and make a choice for fall. As of December 2007, Sakai implementers will have an additional option to run Mneme - Test Center 1.0.

In a community-driven process, there are numerous ways in which products evolve. Technology implications, the requirements process, evolution of features, and other related efforts in the community will impact product directions. In a community-driven project, the work is more organic than centrally dictated, though by next winter we will all have a clearer picture of the evolution of assessment technology in Sakai.

Assessment forums at the Amsterdam conference in June will allow more opportunity for community input, so if you are interested, please look for those sessions. Additionally, an assessment summit is tentatively planned for July or August at Stanford, following the end of the requirements process, where contributors can come together and work on a roadmap. More information about this will be forthcoming.

For more information:

Tests and Quizzes web site: <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/SAM/Home>

Mneme web site: <http://etudesproject.org/mneme>

Tests and Quizzes (Samigo): General discussion and futures: Lois Brooks, lbrooks@stanford.edu Features: Marc Brierley, marc.brierley@stanford.edu Technology: Lydia Li, lydial@stanford.edu

Mneme - Test Center: Features and Project lead: Vivie Sinou, SinouVivie@foothill.edu
Architecture and Construction: Glenn R. Golden, ggolden@umich.edu

4. Sakai California Symposium

The Claremont Colleges and the University of California, Santa Barbara are hosting the first Sakai California Symposium ("SakaiCAL") to be held at Claremont McKenna College on Monday, 9 July 2007 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (PDT GMT -7)



After attending the Sakai Conference in Atlanta last December, we saw the potential benefit of a local California meeting as a forum to continue conference discussions, share information with other Sakai users who are faced with common questions and challenges, and to explore areas where we can all enhance our use of Sakai through collaboration.

Information and registration for the symposium is available at <http://web.cgu.edu/sakaisymposium/>. Participants will be added to the Sakai project site for the symposium hosted by the University of California, Santa Barbara.

The Claremont Consortium is comprised of five undergraduate colleges, two graduate universities, a library system and business office; please visit <http://www.claremont.edu/> to find out more about us. After a four-month trial period, we enjoyed a successful launch of Sakai 2.2 starting in Fall 2006, and upgraded to version 2.3 in January. Even though all college classes are in production, we are migrating some courses from WebCT, Moodle, and WebCrossing during this transition year.

The University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) formed its first CMS group in April 2006. UCSB started piloting Sakai 2.1.2 in Summer of 2006 and now is piloting Sakai 2.3. UCSB has plans to pilot both Sakai and Moodle and then make a decision upon a primary CMS in Summer of 2008.

- Candice Cetrone- Scripps Information Technology - Tel: 909.621.8250 -
candice.cetrone@scrippscollege.edu 34:06:13N 117:42:38W

- Melissa Zhuo - Instructional Technologist - Claremont McKenna College - 850
Columbia Avenue Claremont, CA 91711-6420 - Office: (909) 607-7147 - Email:
melissa.zhuo@claremontmckenna.edu

- Susan Roig - Director, Academic Technology, Claremont Graduate University -
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607-8412 - Fax 909-607-7285 - susan.roig@cgu.edu - www.sungardhe.com

- Steve Miley Manager, Academic Systems Instructional Computing - Phelps 1521 - University of California - Santa Barbara Santa Barbara, CA 93106-4100 - Tel: (805) 893-7191 - FAX 893-8758 - steve.miley@ic.ucsb.edu - <http://www.ucsb.edu/>

5. Amsterdam Sakai Conference -- Updates

DRAFT CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

See the current schedule at: <http://sakaiproject.org/conference/schedule>

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=sakaiconference&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 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.

6. Gradebook *Partners*

On February 23, 2007, the University of California at Berkeley convened a meeting they called a Gradebook Summit. The meeting was called to gather groups interested in discussing the next development steps for the Sakai Gradebook Tool. In particular, Gradebook had been developed by Berkeley up till this date, but Indiana University was in need of significant enhancements by Summer 2007. This timeline was too ambitious for Berkeley's available resources and the attendees were looking for a strategy to address this situation. In attendance were 3 from Berkeley, 2 from Oracle, 2 from the Thomson Corporation Learning Group, 3 from UC Davis, and 2 from the Sakai Software Foundation. Indiana participated by Video Tele Conference.

In relatively short order, the group, under Mark Norton's direction, presented both its primary interest and needs with respect to Gradebook as well as the potential resources it might provide to further its development. It was clear that everyone had progress as a priority and even the commercial partners had something concrete to contribute. Indiana

agreed to take on the development of a *Categories and Weighting* addition to the tool and to complete the work by June. Others volunteered code already developed, wire-frame prototypes already underway, work related to IMS standards and facilitation of future group meetings.

In general the group discovered itself as a team of *partners* who agreed to work together (and to meet virtually on a monthly basis) to plan and manage work towards the next release of Gradebook, and to ensure that work undertaken by Indiana in the short term would be reviewed and re-factored for official integration into the 2.5 Sakai release later in the year. This latter work would be coordinated with other development/tool groups as required. Since the original summit there have been two virtual meetings, one of which went through the wire-frame specifications in detail. The next will review Indiana's initial look into the code and the development progress.

An exciting outcome of these meetings has been the general sense that this group may have discovered at least one strategy for managing code development and cross institution interactions in the community source environment. The clear sense of openness with respect to both resources and goals spawned a mutual trust that has now been shown to pave a path for shared work. We will be watching this project with great interest over the next several months to see if we can keep communications and interactions open with all the partners. Progress on the Gradebook work can be tracked in the foundation's confluence site at <http://issues.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/SG2X/Home>

Kirk Alexander
Sakai Program Manager
University of California, Davis
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7. Spring in Amsterdam

June is a great season to travel to Amsterdam. The Sakai conference will be a wonderful experience and city is busy with live during the day and night. Just to give all the Sakai friends some pointers to prepare your trip to our city I made up a small list of interesting websites:

The general website of the City of Amsterdam for its foreign visitors
<http://www.iamsterdam.com/>

The website of the Holland Festival, a high quality cultural festival during May and June. Some the events will take place in the theatre (Muziekgebouw aan het Ij) which is next door the conference venue <http://www.hollandfestival.nl/#festival/pagina/128>

Also next door is one a well know jazz club, Bimhuis
<http://www.bimhuis.nl/info.php?lang=en>

The last minute ticket shop is the place to try to a ticket for all kinds of concerts and theatre performances in the city
<http://www.lastminuteticketshop.nl/main.cfm?country=en>

The website of the GVB offers all you need to know on using the public transport system in the city. Amsterdam has an extensive public transport network using busses, trams and metro. The website includes different maps of the transport system
<http://www.gvb.nl/english/travellers/touristguide/index.html>

And finally if you just want to escape the conference for a moment the well know stedelijk museum, modern art, is just around corner <http://www.stedelijk.nl/>

Fred Benneker
frank.benneker@uva.nl

8. South Africa Programmers Cafe

We are currently running the South Africa Programmers Cafe Bootcamp in Potchefstroom, South Africa. The cafe is running from April 16th - April 20th, 2007. There are about 22 people from various South African institutions in attendance. Aaron Zeckoski (me), Antranig Basman, and Tony Atkins are presenting on various topics ranging from Sakai development and RSF to Server configuration and deployment. We have pictures from the cafe available in Flickr if anyone wants to take a look:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tags/programerscafe07za/>

Read more about the South Africa Programmer's Cafe Bootcamp here:

<http://aaronz-sakai.blogspot.com/2007/04/south-africa-programmers-cafe.html>

Aaron Zeckowski

9. JA-SIG With Altitude!

June 24-27, 2007
Denver, Colorado, USA

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 programmers' cafe given by Aaron Zeckoski of Cambridge University

Followed by Sakai presentations and BOF's:

- Tool Interoperability Roadmap: Sakai, uPortal, JSR-168, WSRP, and much more, Charles Severance, Sakai Foundation
- Bringing Sakai to Campus, Mike Zackrison, The rSmart Group
- Customizing Portfolio Tools in Sakai, Hannah Reeves, The rSmart Group
- Tuning Sakai for Production, Jason Shao, Rutgers University
- Introduction to RSF: Part One, Aaron Zeckoski, Cambridge University
- Introduction to RSF: Part Two, Aaron Zeckoski, Cambridge University * Sakai-SIS Integration Using Data Extracts, John Bush, The rSmart Group
- Birds of a Feather, Issues and Pitfalls CAS-ifying Sakai, Jen Bourey, Yale University
- Overview of Pluto, David DeWolf, Three Pillar Software
- Georgia Tech Sakai Implementation, Katie Valenti and Cris Holdorph, Unicon, Inc.
- Integrating External Services With Sakai, Jason Shao, Rutgers University
- Start Here! Charting a Successful Sakai Implementation, Mike Zackrison, The rSmart Group
- Building Portable JSR-168 Portlets that Work in Sakai and uPortal, Charles Severance, Sakai Foundation

The full JA-SIG conference program has now been posted and registration is open.

We are delighted to offer a rich and diverse program of seminars and presentations on topics including Design, CAS, uPortal, Sakai, Ajax, Quali, Spring, and Portlets. Adding excitement to the conference, each day includes an excellent key note speaker.

Phil Windley: Identity Matters: The Social and Economic Impact of Digital Identity

Matt Raible: Comparing Java Web Frameworks

Matt Asay: Community Capitalism: The Art of Corporate Involvement in Open Source Communities

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.

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 Ferreira, Cornell University Cris Holdorff, 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

10. Job Opening at Georgia Tech: Senior Software Engineer

Job Title: Senior Software Engineer

Description: Georgia Tech is looking for an experienced J2EE developer to be a leading force in the development of online collaboration tools for teaching and research. The majority of this work will be in concert with an open source community, Sakai, which brings together instructional technologists drawn from the best talent at over 120 institutions across the globe, and Georgia Tech is drawing together a focused team to drive the leading edge of this broader effort.

Responsibilities and duties will include:

- Technical leadership for full development cycles, under the general supervision of the Director of Educational Technology and in cohort with other software developers.
- Collaboration with users, Instructional Designers, Project Managers, and Educational Technologists across Georgia Tech and the Sakai project to translate requirements into scalable services and useful tools.
- Serve as one of the key representatives to the Sakai consortium, and participate in meetings with a multi-institutional team of software developers to plan requirements for the functionality and usability of Sakai and other community source tools.

Strong communication and interpersonal skills, along with creativity and a self-starter mindset, will be critical for success in this highly collaborative, open source development arena. We are looking for an individual who is passionate about good, useful and usable tools for teaching, learning and research.

Minimum qualifications: Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Engineering, Information Science, Library Science or related field. Three or more years of significant development experience in an object oriented development environment. Additional experience may be substituted for education. Understanding of Java application frameworks (e.g., Spring, EJB3), Java servlet container or application server environments (e.g., Apache Tomcat, JBoss). Experience with OR/M persistence technology such as Hibernate. Experience with source control management. Demonstrated experience with the Unix operating system and environment and multiple programming languages. Strong analytical and problem solving skills with the ability to evaluate options, develop and recommend solutions. Ability to work independently and creatively within a collaborative, dynamic environment. Excellent oral and written communication skills and interpersonal skills.

Preferred Qualifications: Master's degree in Computer Science, Engineering, Information Science, Library Science or related field. Experience with IT in a higher education environment. Experience with Java build tools such as Maven or Ant. Ability to work in an API environment and experience with SOAP and/or REST. Experience with programming best practices, including design patterns and unit test development. Experience evaluating new technologies and developing functional requirements through use case analysis. Ability to communicate with technical and non-technical individuals, including the ability to prepare project documentation to support training and best practices. Experience contributing to an open source project a strong plus.

Apply online with job #CEW6004 at
<https://ea.ohr.gatech.edu/displayjobs.asp?Catagory=3&typeofjob=ext>

11. 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, 2007

Denver, Colorado

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

Sakai California Symposium -- "SakaiCAL"

Claremont McKenna College

Monday, 9 July 2007 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Claremont Colleges and the University of California, Santa Barbara

<http://web.cgu.edu/sakaisymposium/>

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

Hotel Intercontinental, Berlin

November 26 - 27, 2007

Berlin, Germany

<http://www.noe-kaleidoscope.org/group/symposium/>

1st International Conference ONLINE EDUCA MOSCOW 2007

September 30 - October 3, 2007

President Hotel

Moscow, Russia

http://www.online-educa-moscow.com/index_eng.php