Sakai Newsletter

October 4, 2007

Latest News
  The JA-SIG Winter 2007 Unconference is Coming!

LATEST NEWS

The JA-SIG Winter 2007 Unconference is Coming!

Registration fee for the November 12th-13th, 2007 JA-SIG Unconference: $225 Nightly rate at the Rutgers University Inn and Conference Center: $84 Two days talking,

learning, teaching, planning, coding, and hanging out with your peers--and with the uPortal, CAS, Fluid, JSR-168, SpringMVC experts: Priceless!

NEW INFORMATION! HOW TO REGISTER!
Dates: November 12-13, 2007 November 14-16th, 2007 (optional post-conference activities)

Place: Rutgers University Inn and Conference Center, 178 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, NJ; phone: 732-932-9144

Registration Fee: $225 (Includes lunch and snacks)

Inn Rooms: $84/single/night (w/breakfast)

WHAT'S AN UNCONFERENCE?
"An unconference is a conference where the content of the sessions is driven and created by the participants, generally day-by-day during the course of the event, rather than by a single organizer, or small group of organizers, in advance." -- Wikipedia

JA-SIG has always been about people coming together to share and learn in an open environment, and this is what an "unconference" is all about. As demonstrated by the success of the Summer 2007 Conference mini "BarCamp" (another spontaneous approach), the unconference format fits very well with our community values and goals.

The November event will provide both spontaneous and planned opportunities to collaborate on all JA-SIG community initiatives and topics. (There will not be a separate Winter Conference or a Fall uPortal Developer Meeting.)

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?!
It's up to you! Ideas people are talking about so far include the following:

-- Lightning Talks - Volunteers talk for up to 10 minutes. Any topic goes.
-- Code Clinics - Bring your uPortal, portlet, or CAS code or problem and work on it with Core developers
-- Screencast Factory - Show off your work while a facilitator captures it to share with the community.
-- UCamp - Fluid Project members will lead a workshop and collaborations about user experience design and accessibility.
-- Strategic Planning - What should JA-SIG be focused on next year? In three years? Join the conversation.
-- How-tos. How-not-tos. Tips and techniques.

As part of the unconference format the final schedule will be determined in real-time, interactively with the attendees.

OK, I'M INTERESTED! HOW DO I REGISTER?
If you're planning to join us, please do the following:

1. Register for the Unconference right here: https://www.concentra-cms.com/register/start.action?confId=28

2. Visit and Add your Name on the Unconference Planning Site on the JA-SIG wiki. This is a great place to indicate your interests -- what you'd like to discuss, learn, share or teach.

3. Call the Rutgers University Inn and Conference Center at 732-932-9144 to reserve a room for your stay. Hurry! Rooms are limited, and the conference rate will only be held for a brief period.

4 Take a look detailed hotel, travel directions, and other information at http://www.ja-sig.org/wiki/x/SoF7

5. If you are unable to book a room at the University Inn and Conference Center, consult this list of other nearby hotels: http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/leadconf/hotels.pdf.

See you at the Unconference,

The Winter 2007 Unconference Organizers

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1. From the Executive Director

As you may know, I just returned from an invigorating trip to the NY/NJ area where I dropped in on 5 different Sakai member institutions. You can find a summary of the trip on my blog at http://sakaiblog.korcuska.net or, of course, at http://www.planetsakai.org. I also spent two days at the Fluid Summit in Toronto. If you don't already know, the Fluid project is a Mellon-funded effort, centered at the University of Toronto, to improve the usability and accessibility of a variety of systems, including Sakai. There's too much to say about the great things going on in the Fluid project for this space, but by the time this reaches you I should have an additional blog entry regarding Fluid. You can also read about the goings-on at http://www.fluidproject.org.

My next trip is to EDUCAUSE at the end of the month. Please let me know if you'll be there and would like to meet.

UX Improvement Project Update:

The Sakai Foundation recently announced the UX Improvement Project. This is an initially small effort to make an impact on Sakai usability, which will work closely with

the Fluid team and hopefully will be extended based on its initial success. We've received a number of expressions of interest and are going to be moving forward in the next few weeks. If your institution has resources (people or financial) to contribute, please contact Peter Knoop (knoop@umich.edu) by Friday, October 12th. We will begin to assemble a team and refine the project scope once we have an idea of who is willing and able to participate.

Michael Korcuska Executive Director, Sakai Foundation
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2. Sakai Board: Call for Nominations

The Sakai Elections Work Group is pleased to announce the opening of nominations for three positions on the Sakai Foundation Board of Directors. The current terms for Vivie Sinou (Foothill College), Jutta Treviranus (Toronto) and Brad Wheeler (Indiana) expire in December. Brad and Vivie have indicated they do not intend to stand for re-election. The Sakai Foundation is dedicated to the design and development of collaborative, open source software in support of education, research and related scholarly activities. The Board of Directors provides leadership for the Sakai Foundation by serving the interests of the entire Sakai community, promoting the objectives of the Sakai Foundation, representing and coordinating Foundation projects, ensuring that project management is consistent with the Foundation's mission, and that the Foundation operates within its fiscal resources. The Board of Directors meets at least twice a year at such times and places as designated by the Chair. Board members regularly conduct Board business electronically. Monthly audio conferences have been the norm. Board members are not compensated for their work but expenses will be reimbursed in line with Foundation policies. Nominees will be expected to confirm that their institutional leadership approves of this commitment of time if elected.

Board members shall serve for a term of three years. Board members may serve only two consecutive terms. More detailed information about the Sakai Foundation and the responsibilities of the Board of Directors can be found in the Bylaws of the Sakai Foundation.

Nominations must be emailed to sakai2007elections@umich.edu **no later than 5:00 PM EDT (GMT-4) on Sunday, October 21, 2007**. Anyone can be nominated to stand for election to the Board. Self-nominations are also allowed. Receipt of any nomination you submit will be confirmed. The Elections Work Group will notify all nominees, explain the expectations for board members and confirm their willingness and ability to run for election. If they agree, additional information about them will be solicited.

Board members will be elected by the institutional and corporate representatives as specified in the Sakai Foundation bylaws. A current list of institutional and corporate representatives has been posted at http://sakaiproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=233&Itemid=462 .

The election is scheduled to be conducted online in early November with results announced in early December.

Thank you very much for helping us present the most qualified slate of candidates. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sakai Elections Working Group
Carl Jacobson
Mary Miles
Ian Dolphin

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3. Pai-Chai University in South Korea Pilots Sakai

A new Sakai pilot has been launched by the Pai-Chai University in South Korea.

Contact: Prof. Jong-Dae Park
jdpark7@gmail.com
Pai-Chai University

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4. Sakai Deployment at St.Petersburg State Polytechnic University

The Distributed Computing and Networking Department of Saint-Petersburg State Polytechnic University, Russia is pleased to inform the Sakai community about the successful deployment of version 2.4. The Sakai deployment project is coordinated by Dr. Alexander Yu. Glebovsky, while technical management of the server and software is performed by Dr. Peter V. Trifonov. The system was integrated with Microsoft Active Directory and a homegrown course information system. Currently there are five production and two experimental course sites.

We are working on a Russian translation of the Sakai user interface in collaboration with Smolny College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Saint-Petersburg. More than 50% of Sakai components are already translated.

The system is available at https://dcn.ftk.spbstu.ru/portal/

Peter Trifonov, petert@dcn.infos.ru

5. Article from University of Capetown Daily News: "Vula signs up 1000th site"

28 September 2007 -- It came as a sweet surprise to geological sciences lecturer Dr. Christie Rowe to learn she had created the 1000th course site on Vula. And to celebrate the event, the Vula team had a special cake baked for the department.

For those who've never ventured into Vula territory (Vula means "open" in several South African languages), this is UCT's official online learning environment, first implemented in 2006.

It's based on a new open-source learning, collaboration and research content management system, built on a technology developed by a consortium of universities that include UCT, MIT, Stanford, the University of Michigan and Indiana University, and many others around the world.

Since its introduction there's been a rapid uptake across campus. Rowe's GEO2004S site (structural geology) was the 1000th. Rowe teaches structural geology to second-year students. This year it's a big class of 28 students.

What does she enjoy about VULA?   "It's very practical and accessible to students."

For Associate Professor Laura Czerniewicz, director of the Centre for Educational Technology, Vula's home, events like this show the value of the system. "We're very pleased with the uptake and its value is being demonstrated faster than anticipated."

Author: Helen Théron

You can see the article here: http://www.news.uct.ac.za/dailynews/archives/?id=6451

6. Sakai Newport Beach Conference Updates

For more information about each of the following, please go to: https://sakai.educonference.com/conference/index.php

** Registration is now open **

** Transportation ** -- For transportation from John Wayne/Orange County Airport to the Hotel: The complimentary shuttle picks up guests on the every hour on the half-hour, from 6:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.. Attendees should follow the signs to Baggage Claim; then proceed outside the baggage claim area, cross the street to the Taxi/Hotel Shuttles Pick-Up area. The van is white with red lettering stating Newport Beach Marriott Hotel on the van. Make sure they look for the Newport Beach Marriott shuttle as there are several

Marriott hotels in Orange County. The van is a complimentary service based on first come, first serve. The van will hold about 10 guests and their luggage at a time.

From Hotel to the John Wayne/Orange County Airport: The shuttle leaves the hotel every hour on the hour for the Airport beginning at 6am. The last trip to the airport leaves at 10pm. A belllman will make an annoucement in the main lobby of the hotel prior to leaving for the airport. A guest may also wait in front of the hotel.

There is also transportation available from LAX:
Prime Time Shuttle, #800-733-8267, www.primetimeshuttle.com, Reservations are accepted 6AM-12 Midnight and should be made 24 hours in advance, Hours of Operation – 24 hours, One way Fare – Approx. $45.00, Round Trip - $85.50

Super Shuttle, #800-258-3826, www.supershuttle.com, Reservations are recommended 24-48 hours in advance, Hours of Operation – 24 Hours, One way Fare – Approx. $51.00 Round Trip – Approx. $102.00

** Pre-conference sessions ** -- The following pre-conference sessions will be offered: Introduction to Sakai, Introduction to OSP, Pedagogy Session, the U-Camp, and the Programmer's Café.

** Post-conference sessions ** -- Sakai Faculty Training: Cerritos College, in conjunction with the rSmart Group, will be offering two free sessions: The Sakai Faculty Training is designed to guide faculty through the process of configuring and customizing Sakai course sites. The Sakai Administrative Training is designed to guide your institution's Sakai administrators through the process of configuring and customizing Sakai.

** New track names ** -- The tracks have been renamed: Using Sakai, Deploying Sakai, Building Sakai, Multiple Audiences, and Showcasing Sakai. If you submitted under the old track names, not to worry as the track leads will place in the appropriate track -- you don't need to re-submit.

Mary Miles
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7. The University of Virginia will Replace Toolkit with Sakai

Oct. 4, 2007 – The University of Virginia announced today that it has selected Sakai, an open-source online collaboration and learning tool, to replace the Instructional Toolkit as its course management system.

The announcement was made by Milton Adams, vice provost for academic programs, and James Hilton, vice president and chief information officer.

"The transition to Sakai will provide U.Va. with a space for online collaboration and teaching in the 21st century, where universities must support both residential and distance education to fulfill their core teaching and research missions. The new system will better support teaching and learning, ad hoc group collaboration, e-portfolios and online research collaboration throughout U.Va.," said Adams.

The Advisory Committee on Instructional Technology and Course Management, which includes faculty representatives from the schools, Information Technology and Communication and the provost's office, evaluated the strategic implications of both open-source and commercial approaches. Hilton said the committee recommended an open-source solution rather than a proprietary one for several reasons, chiefly because open-source systems enable institutions to customize programs in ways that commercial products don't allow.

"Participation in a community-source solution is in alignment with the culture of the academy. It enables universities to grow the software further and in directions that are unique to their needs, while contributing their code back to other project developers," said Hilton. By choosing Sakai, U.Va. joins institutions including Yale, Stanford, Indiana, Georgia Tech, the University of California-Berkeley, Northwestern, Michigan and Virginia Tech.

Hilton explained that Sakai offers many newer Web technologies, such as wikis, chat, project groups and assignment submission with feedback that Toolkit -- a program developed at U.Va. – has been unable to support. All features now available through the Toolkit will also be available through Sakai, he added.

"Sakai provides a single environment which supports both course content and course administration and provides collaboration tools for researchers – thus helping to blur the distinction between the laboratory and classroom and between knowledge creation and digestion," Hilton said.

Sakai has been in a pilot phase, known as "Collab," at U.Va. for the past 18 months. To date, more than 600 online worksites have facilitated the collaborative and instructional work of more than 5,000 users in project teams, research consortia, advisory boards, committees, working groups and courses.

Both Instructional Toolkit and Sakai will be supported during a two-year transition period. Early adopters and those who want to use Sakai's framework for new tools and features can begin as early as January 2008. More courses and users are expected to switch throughout 2008, while those who wish to continue using Toolkit may do so. After the spring 2009 semester, all new course Web sites will be created on Sakai. Toolkit will be placed in read-only mode for access to previously offered courses.

No name has been chosen for U.Va.'s implementation of Sakai for both course management and online collaboration. The project team is soliciting ideas for a name from the University community. Name suggestions can be submitted online at collab.itc.virginia.edu.

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8. IU Announces Onestart.iu.edu Version 2 and its Integration with the Sakai-based Oncourse System

Indiana University is proud to announce both the release of our new enterprise portal, Onestart.iu.edu version 2, but also the integration between it and the Sakai-based Oncourse system. Customers now have access to an Oncourse tab within the enterprise portal where they can enumerate all site memberships and drill down into the tool list per site.

Please see the following screenshot: http://tinyurl.com/3xchan

As demonstrated by the screenshot, the tab loads by default with all site memberships collapsed. The user can then drill into a given site and choose a particular tool to launch. Clicking on the site name or a tool launches a new browser window directly into the site or tool they selected. The integration is accomplished with a custom RSS feed based on proxy authentication whereby Onestart transforms the XML into the user interface within the Onestart portal.

OneStart is Indiana University's Web-based application portal that provides a common front door to online services at all IU campuses. OneStart offers easier and more direct access to the multitude of services available for students, faculty, and staff. The goal for OneStart is to create a virtual campus community -- a place to study, work, collaborate, and have fun!

Lance Speelmon
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9. The rSmart Group Announces the rSmart Sakai CLE 2.4.1

On September 27, the rSmart Group announced the availability of the rSmart Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment (CLE) 2.4.1. Based on Sakai 2.4.x community code, the rSmart Sakai distribution includes newly certified platform support, up-to-date context sensitive help, a select set of new features and over 60 fixes or functional enhancements.

 "We're greatly encouraged by the increasing maturity of the Sakai product, the rapid

pace of distributed innovation, and the steady growth of the Sakai community around the world," noted Hannah Reeves, rSmart's CLE product manager. "It's exciting to see a relatively new open source software application compete successfully with commercial applications that have been in the market for over a decade, and we're proud to be supporting this shift toward open innovation in the software world."

In a speech delivered at Gartner's recent Open Source Summit, Mark Driver, Gartner research VP declared, "Open source is going to come into your network whether you like it or not. It has become completely impractical to avoid the subject at all." rSmart's president Chris Coppola comments, "We believe participation in open source communities makes sense. It's the most effective way for universities to leverage investment in IT while taking advantage of the innovation afforded by open architecture in products such as Kuali and Sakai and enjoying freedom from proprietary licenses. It's gratifying to see that industry analysts such as Gartner are finally beginning to acknowledge the inevitability of open source software adoption."

As the leading provider of support and services for open source applications in education, rSmart believes in the promise of open source to bring innovation to education and is committed to making this a reality. rSmart backs up this commitment by making its CLE distribution freely available from its corporate website under the terms of an OSI-approved open source license. The rSmart Sakai CLE enables educational institutions to reap the benefits of open source software with the ease and predictability of commercially produced applications.

10. Conditional Release

Georgia Tech is working in conjunction with Unicon to create a new service for Sakai that will permit the execution of specialized logic in response to events fired from other Sakai services. The first tool to take advantage of this facility will be Resources; an instructor will be able to hide or show a resource on the basis of a student's grades in the gradebook.

The new conditions service has broad applicability to tools and services in Sakai. Tool authors will be able to add behavior that changes dynamically with changes in Sakai state.

For more information, see the project's Confluence space:

http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/CIIe

or contact the technical lead, Zach Thomas, zach@aeroplanesoftware.com.

11. WebCT CE 4.1 to Sakai Migration Tool from the University of New England, Australia, is Ready for Use

All,

The WebCT CE 4.1 to Sakai tool that we've been working on is now available for use. We have spent some time working on the documentation and we've added new features. It is based on Rutgers' WebCT Migration utility.

I had a lot of queries about it so hopefully this will help out all of you migrating from WebCT CE 4.1 to Sakai. We just ran ~ 880 WebCt units through it and migrated all of their content and quizzes using it and it went great. We learnt a lot about IMS along the way so this will pave the way for more IMS-based tools produced by UNE.

To read more about the tool or download it, go to

http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/MIG/UNE+Migration+Utility

Steve Swinsburg
sswinsb2@une.edu.au

12. Sakai Poll: What Contrib Project Tools are You Using in Your Sakai Deployment?

Contrib Projects in Sakai represent interesting new ideas for functionality to support teaching and collaboration. Generally Contrib tools are early in stages of design and development and are busy focusing on getting things right in terms of supporting the teaching and learning or research use cases driving their design. This means the experience the community has with them in terms of robustness and stability maybe limited. Over time, such tools will typically move from Contrib into the official Sakai release, as it demonstrates its reliability and usefulness, and as individual members of the community gain experience with using it in their production deployments of Sakai. So, if you are currently using or plan to use soon any of the current Sakai Contrib Projects' tools, please participate in this poll.

To participate in the poll, you need to visit Collab, which is the Sakai instance supporting collaboration in the Sakai community. (If you do not yet have an account on Collab, you can self-register using the New Account tool found on Collab's gateway page at http://collab.sakaiproject.org; and then you will need join the "Announcements" site using the Membership tool.) The polling question is located in the Polls tool in the "Announcements" site, and the following URL should take you directly there, after

prompting you to log in: https://collab.sakaiproject.org/portal/site/sakai-educ/page/0402419e-9ceb-413f-001d-71b23f32bd30

Thank you for your participation.

Peter Knoop -- Sakai Project Coordinator
Tony Atkins -- Conference Committee Tool Carousel Lead

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13. Top Ten Sakai Accessibility Issues

Hi Everyone--

I've gone through the list of items found in accessibility reviews, made them more consistent and ranked them according to priority. Please take a look at them when you have a spare moment at this URL:

http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/cAAv

I've attached an html file containing a complete list of the issues in Jira.

Any feedback would be greatly appreciated.

Michael S Elledge
elledge@msu.edu

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14. Position Announcement: Electronic Portfolio Project Manager

Virginia Tech is expanding its ePortfolio initiative. An ePortfolio has many of the same purposes as traditional portfolios; however, portfolio materials within an ePortfolio can be easily collected, reflected upon, and shared via the Internet. Project goals on our campus include providing a robust software environment to document student career development and capture student reflection, specific teaching and learning objectives within courses and programs, and emerging institutional assessment and accreditation needs. The ePortfolio initiative continues Virginia Tech's tradition of providing exemplary learning technology support for emerging pedagogical and institutional needs and will be an important component of the University's assessment practices.

As a professional faculty position in the Learning Technologies division of Information Technology, the ePortfolio Project Manager will play an important leadership role in the evolution of ePortfolios at Virginia Tech. Responsibilities will include the following:

- Identify and collaboratively support faculty and administrative leaders to guide the growth of the project

 - Develop and lead faculty development seminars

- Refine and advance the functionality of the ePortfolio software and related content management systems

 - Provide guidance to faculty and departments for applications of ePortfolio that include assessment, student learning, advising, and student career development

 - Collaborate with the Office of Academic Assessment regarding faculty applications of ePortfolio for program assessment and accreditation

 - Manage translation and development of faculty and departmental portfolio requirements
 - Support ePortfolio planning, testing, and programmatic launch efforts

 - Coordinate user requests to determine implementation needs, providing guidance to Learning Technologies programming staff

 - Assist in the development of ePortfolio adoption campaigns within departments and campus-wide

- Engage with the emerging nation-wide field of ePortfolio and related discussions of learning theory, new technology, and assessment; contributing to the software's overall improvement; and working with others to insure that Virginia Tech- specific needs and requirements are visible and viable

The ePortfolio Manager position is restricted and is renewable annually.

Qualifications: Master's degree in an education-related field demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of learning technologies or an equivalent level of training and experience; sophisticated knowledge of and experience with the educational uses of new digital technologies; experience in program leadership; demonstrated ability to provide excellent support for faculty or students; experience teaching in either a classroom or workshop setting; familiarity with classroom and curricular assessment strategies; ability to work effectively in team environments; ability to troubleshoot complex software; and the ability to make presentations to diverse groups of people.. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills required. Qualified applicants from all fields are welcome. Preferred qualifications: Doctoral degree; experience in a higher education setting. Interested applicants will find more information about this position and the application process at http://jobs.vt.edu. Please search for job posting # 070979. Additional questions regarding this position should be addressed to Dr. C. Edward Watson (edwatson@vt.edu).

Virginia Tech is an Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Institution.

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15. Events

Eportfolio 2007 Conference
October 17 - 19, 2007 Maastricht, The Netherlands
http://events.eife-l.org/ep2007/overview

AuSakai 07
November 5 – 6, 2007
The Australian National University, Canberra
http://ausakai.anu.edu.au

JA-SIG Winter 2007 Unconference November 12 - 13, 2007 (November 14 - 16 –
optional post-conference)
New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA
http://opensource.meetup.com/74/calendar/
http://www.ja-sig.org/wiki/display/JCON/Winter+2007+UnConference+Participants
(See the announcement in this Sakai Newsletter.)

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/

Online Educa Berlin Hotel Intercontinental, Berlin
November 28 - 30, 2007
Berlin, Germany
http://www.online-educa.com/

8th Sakai Conference
Newport Beach Marriott December 4-7, 2007

Newport Beach, California, USA
https://sakai.educonference.com/conference/index.php

e-Learning 2008
February 16-19, 2008?St. Petersburg, Florida, USA
http://www.itcnetwork.org/elearning2008.htm

eLearning Africa 2008
May 28 – 30, 2008
Accra International Conference Centre
Accra, Ghana
http://www.elearning-africa.com

Portal 2008 "Measurement & Assessment" Conference
Gettysburg College
June 3-6, 2008
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, USA
https://biz.gettysburg.edu/it/portal08/index.cfm